

Research on the Space Narrative Strategy of the Movie "Food, Pray and Love"

Jiajia Xu^{1,*}

¹Fuzhou University of International Studies and Trade, Fuzhou, Fujian, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 15974242@qq.com

ABSTRACT

The film "Eat, Pray, and Love" is about Elizabeth Gilbert, a famous American female writer, who grew up in a space of decline, conflict, poverty, and exotics by enjoying food in Italy, praying and meditating in India, giving love in Indonesia and finally understanding the true meaning of life after a setback in marriage and affection. The growth of its mind is realized in a space of decline, conflict, poverty, and exoticism. Therefore, the mode of representation of film travel space is politically strategic, and Elizabeth's presence is an indication of the acquisition of identity and the dissemination of American cultural values.

Keywords: representation, travel, identity, other

I. INTRODUCTION

The film "Food, Prayer and Love "(Eat, Pray & Love) is Ryan Murphy's self-directed film, adapted from a memoir of the same name written in 2006 by Elizabeth Gilbert, a leading female American writer. The book is well-regarded for the theme of woman's self-search and is known as the "bible of healing department "(Oprah, American Queen of Talk Show), which was best-selling in the New York Times for 187 weeks. And the film also made a huge commercial profit because the heroine Elizabeth seeks the theme of self and the true meaning of life. The theme of Elizabeth's self-growth is the main plot of the film. However, as Elizabeth's itinerary unfolds, the film presents a feast of landscapes: the fashionable modern city of New York, the historic but declining ancient capital of Rome, the slum-chaos of India, and the exotic idyllic Indonesia. The way the film travels in time and space makes one wonder whether the film's intention is to set a model for the growth of a new woman. Elizabeth is a traveler across the border and the narrator of the travel narrative. She produces herself in the travel space, but also produces and narrates the travel space, and endows the space with identity and narrative. How does Elizabeth produce herself in space and produce travel space? What narrative strategy did she adopt to characterize the travel space? What is the purpose? This paper will use Henry Leifever's spatial theory to analyze the four coding spaces in the film, explore the characteristics of the spatial representation of the film, and then dig out the hidden motive behind the spatial representation pattern.

II. STARTING POINT: THE PERSON WHO MOVED THE "I" CHEESE

Traveling is a commonplace part of life. Traveling here means crossing the boundaries of different groups of people and cultures[1]. In essence, travel is a change in the space in which travelers live. Travelers move from one space to another, leave some place, pass through some place, take the initiative or be forced to experience directly the other's culture, character and mind change, and then return to the starting point or reach the preset place in a brand new manner. This is the most universal metaphor for travel. Elizabeth's year-long trip is seen in the film's storyline for the growth of the mind. However, "space is not the scientific object of ideology and politics; space is always political and strategic"[1]. Space is not a pure neutral container, but a product of the ideological activities of the subject. The activity of the subject in space "endows a series of events and spaces with narrative identity"[1]. Elizabeth's travel schedule It seems to be for personal spiritual growth, but in the depths, it is a political, strategic exercise of power. This point from the brigade travel point can be seen the clue.

Travel consists of three stages: departure, journey and return. The starting point defines the motivation of travel and the initial meaning of travel [4]. New York is the starting point of Elizabeth's travel, an international metropolis, in the economy, culture, education, entertainment and other aspects of the world's top level. Photographers use plenty of panoramic and looking-up footage to present New York's modernity, economic sophistication, as well as the progress and power of civilization: majestic tall buildings, stylish and elegant

lives, ambitious people. However, shots that use a large amount of panorama and angle of elevation also render barriers to communication, distance and alienation between people through thick, tall walls. Photographers turn to delicate close-up shots to describe subtle emotional relationships. After the banquet, in a scene on Elizabeth's and Stephen's drive home, the photographer cleverly used the narrow, dimly lit interior space to form a contrast of light, color and spatial dimensions with the panoramic, shiny New York space, suggesting that Elizabeth and Stephen's emotions were in trouble. As you can see from the car window, it is raining outside, the street lights are dim, Elizabeth and Stephen are not speculating, one wants to travel, the other wants to study, the atmosphere is awkward, Elizabeth's expression of disappointment and loss. In the representation of Elizabeth's indoor space, the photographer through the lighting effect to further render Elizabeth's mood. He turned off all the light in the room and let the faint light from the outside enter the room, so that the bright furniture was darkened, and Elizabeth could no longer see her shadow in all that had been painstakingly created, which aggravated her sense of loss. Emotional inability to communicate became the trigger for Elizabeth's trip. The estrangement between people and human feelings is the inevitable byproduct of the rapid development of metropolitan economy and the root of people's lack of happiness in life. New York's megacities have spawned prosperity and thus created barriers to emotional communication.

New York as the starting point for travel is Elizabeth's society and culture. The soil of life is also the mother of Elizabeth's identity, because "the physical features of the spatialized body are derived from space, from the energies that are deployed and used in space"[5]. The subject acquires a special energy from space to acquire identity. Like her husband, Elizabeth is a typical New Yorker: successful in business, rich in life, fashionable and elegant, with a touch of Confucianism, but with problems of intimate communication. Photographers also used angle-of-view footage to highlight an emotional setback still without irrational, civilized, elegant, humorous image of the Iron Lady. On Elizabeth's way to the theatre with her good friend Delia, the photographer first Using the angle of view lens, along the tall building down the camera, overlooking the street, followed by the angle of view lens push back. Looking up in the lens, the building is huge, and Elizabeth is not small at all, but appears tall and powerful, moving on. Even in the midst of marriage and emotional distress, losing her family and losing money, she obeyed the call of her heart, insisted on her dream of travelling around the world when she was young, embarked on the journey of self-searching on the basis of advances, rebuilt herself, and created another modern version of America's self-made life. Entrepreneurs are no longer strong tough guy, but a

white woman of iron blood and tenderness. Elizabeth is living sculpture of the goddess of liberty. She holds high the torch of the burning American dream, advocates freedom, refuses to ossify, dares to challenge new plight, changes self, renews self, constructs self. Elizabeth's presence is therefore a reference to American cultural values. The Declaration of Independence states that a happy life is the right of the American people. Elizabeth's unhappy marriage and emotional crisis are a departure from the Declaration of Independence. Divorce and leaving is to cut off the malignant tumor of life, put the self in a strange space, sharpen the mind, find the opportunity to approach God, and gain the balance of the mind. The inward dimension of travel is the abandonment of barriers, the repair of pain, the restoration of communication, and the acquisition of happiness; the outward dimension is that American society, in its plight of development, reviews itself inwardly and removes lesions in order to set sail again in the world trend – the original meaning of travel. To cover up the bloody wound, the film puts a mysterious veil on Elizabeth's trip - the prophecy of the nine-generation witch doctor heir to Bali, Keitu Leyer.

III. TRAVEL: "I" TERRITORY, "I" DECIDE

The departure of the journey is the experience of "leaving " or " leaving " and is the starting point of the journey. The journey is the traveler's experience of crossing borders and space [4]. According to the Henry Lefevre's law of space, life "produces itself and that space in space" [5]. The subject forms the identity of the self in the space, and at the same time, because of its posture and the state of energy, it also gives space In identity. Elizabeth is a traveler and narrator of travel space and travel events. She exists in space, is a part of space, but also produces space. her subjectivity determines the state of the spatial energy exhibition. The space of travel is the object of her gaze, with a strong Elizabethan value. Henry Lefevre thinks of every living body in it Before they have an impact on the physical field (tools and objects), before they produce themselves by absorbing nutrients from that field, before they do so It is empty before it breeds itself by producing other bodies There is room for it at the same time." [5] The premise of space production is the existence of life body. The life-body needs energy to sustain the life-life activity, which has an impact on the surrounding environment, and then the production space. Therefore, Elizabeth first solves the problem of survival as an individual. For the misfortune of marriage and affection, Elizabeth felt that she had lost her appetite, her vitality, and her passion for life. She needs to regain her appetite for food and passion for life. During her journey, she depended on space and was "the constituent of space" and "the product of space" [5]. Photographers have used plenty of panoramic and overlooking footage to present the

glorious years of Roman history and the grandeur of the Augustine Mausoleum. In the vast complex of ancient buildings, Elizabeth did not have the tall image in New York, she looked very small. Photographer Elizabeth's eyes featured shelves that supported the giant roof, especially after the ruins of Augustine's tomb had been ransacked, burned, and decayed. Although brilliance has ceased, destruction has brought change and development. The heavy experience gave Elizabeth the courage to change and face it. By remembering, New York's space is embedded in the Italian space, from which it gains relief, forgiveness, and understanding. The power of rebirth in destruction. Elizabeth represents a lack of history in America. Returning to the ancient capital, edifying the humanistic atmosphere of Italy, realizing the philosophy of life in the origin of history and culture, and rediscovering the way to happiness, also enriched the meaning of happiness in the United States. Elizabeth chose Italy as the first stop of the trip, with the aim of replenishing the positive energy of history and culture through the space of Rome, and cultivating the cultural carrier of physical and mental health.

Normally, however, the energy captured by an organism is not exactly the energy it needs, and excess energy is stored or consumed. Its exhibition and expansion takes the organism as the center, puts the main body of "I" in the center position, and needs the existence of "other" as the premise of energy expansion. The film places Elizabeth's main position in the center of space, and all activities take her as the axis. She is the planner of the travel route, she leads the story and drives the story process. She persuaded her Swedish friend, Sophie, to enjoy the food. Her family in Italy hosted a Thanksgiving dinner to spread the love of God and the true American culture. She advised the confused Indian girl in India and prayed for her marriage; she had a "sister" relationship with Wayne, a single mother in Bali, and had built her house under the name of her birthday. Elizabeth is not a victim who needs to be saved. Instead, she is the redeemer of fringe cultures, the herald of light in backward regions, the propagator of advanced civilizations and the gospel of God. Elizabeth's main appearance scenes in Italy, India and Bali suggest her angelic identity. In the first scene, Elizabeth enters the scene of the door of Kettle, the lens is slightly upward, Elizabeth comes in from the halo, down the steps, Elizabeth seems to be an angel from the sky. In the second act, in Italy, Elizabeth ascends the tall building, and the photographer takes a bird's-eye view of the ancient city of Rome with a panoramic view, and leads her with humor to the lottery ticket given by God, suggesting that Elizabeth's trip is the will of God. In the third scene, although on the way to India, the footage shows poverty, noise, squalor, chaos and conflict, but when Elizabeth arrives at the retreat of India, the dawn of silence appears in the sky, and

Elizabeth's arrival brings order, quiet, peace to the chaos. In fourth scene, Elizabeth rides to her home in Cato with pleasure in the morning sunshine. She freely crosses the boundaries of defining space as the embodiment of angels, observing, examining, and criticizing real life in the name of God. Where is God, Elizabeth's starting point? When Elizabeth enters New York, she takes the down stairs and enters the "bottom" world. The American culture represented in New York is God's culture.

Space is not only an energy supply machine, giving identity and energy to the subject, but also it is a mirror. What I see in the mirror is an upside-down self. "The other" comes out to reflect 'the self'. [5] 'The other' exists to show who I am and the object of self-energy expansion. "I" stand in front of the mirror posture, determine the "other" body and "I" look at the "other" angle. Elizabeth presents travel space depending on her viewing posture and angle. As a white woman in the upper American society, she experiences ruined civilization, marginalized and backward foreign culture, and constructs a cultural space different from New York's spatial characteristics. Heterogeneous spaces, groups, and cultures reinforce the central/marginal, eastern/western, civilization/backward, modern/broken dualistic opposing mechanisms. Social spatial relations actually represent social relations and identity [2]. The dualistic space embodies the delicate relationship between countries, and also paves the way for Elizabeth to spread American cultural values and gain the identity of other countries, including audiences.

By means of violence or the power of love, the ego makes the "other" the object of energy expansion, thereby infiltrating the ideology of the subject into the "other" and gaining the "other" identity". The film realizes the expansion of space by establishing Elizabeth's central position, constructing the space of difference, and infiltrating American cultural values into the space of Italy, India and Bali through great love.

IV. A NEW START

"Space, in one sense, is chosen as a journey of the same kind, but in another, it provides a variety of paths of special value." [5] Space serves travel and is experienced through travel. Arrival is the end of the journey and the fulfillment of its purpose. The film begins with panoramic footage from the beautiful scenery of Bali and ends with a long shot of its seascape. Bali is the beginning of the story and the end of Elizabeth's one-year journey. After a spiritual trip to Italy and India, Elizabeth's status in Bali changed from traveler to tourist, from asceticism to enjoyment. "Just a change in position, or a change in environment, is enough to make a fragment of the object appear." [3] The position of the subject has changed, and the

different components of things have been presented. Tourists pursue the pleasure of vision and the satisfaction of desire. The landscape meets the leisure, relaxation and indulgence of the light-watchers to cater to their consumption needs [4]. Elizabeth's residence in Bali is a secluded villa in the field, a quiet, private romantic place that presupposes the staging of a romantic love story. Through the gaze of travelers, Elizabeth turned Bali's daunting "dangerous mountain and water" and barren land into a pastoral friendly land, and gradually became the center of the marginal land and the dream land of the urban people.

As a tourist, Elizabeth, on the basis of further expansion of space energy, formed a "sister alliance" and "marriage alliance". Allies are for economies with economic power or countries with important strategic positions. Wayne represents Indonesia's trans-Asian and Oceania, one of the founding nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Southeast Asia's leading economies. Elizabeth's contribution to Wayne reflects many of the natural disasters that have taken place in Indonesia over the years and the process of democratization, helping the Indonesian people to rebuild their homeland. Elizabeth and Felipe's encounter in Brazil is actually a collage of "mature partnerships" between the United States and Pakistan. Brazil and the United States have long maintained traditional, close political and economic ties, and the United States is Brazil's main trading partner and largest creditor. Brazil's economy has overtaken Britain for the first time, becoming the world's sixth largest, according to the latest annual global economics ranking published by the centre for economic and business studies, a think tank, on December 26, 2011. Felipe represents a wealthy and loyal Brazil, who, like Elizabeth, has the experience and dreams of travelling around the world and is a "good husband" for life. The alliance reflects the delicate political and economic relationship between the United States and Indonesia and Brazil, and demonstrates the romantic idea that the United States wants to forge a strong, friendly and cooperative relationship with the powerful.

V. CONCLUSION

Elizabeth is a perfect modern woman with intelligence, personality, beauty, charm and dreams. She has everything most modern women in the world desire: a successful career, a decent life, and a deep love for her husband. However, because of the seemingly innocuous moaning pain, she volunteered to give up everything she had, plan her itinerary, produce and describe the travel space. The space for travel "alters the traveler's relationship with the place and regulates the traveler's perception of the world, of the self and of him"[4]. The space of travel interacts with the subject, which makes the subject grow and gain the cognition of the world, self and others. The purpose of

Elizabeth's heroic journey is to let the world know themselves, to acquire the identity of the "other" to the "self", and to spread the cultural values of the United States. The spatial representation of the film is precisely through the construction of differences and through warmth. The power of love to expand America's ideological frontier and preserve its friendly relations with other countries.

References

- [1] Tang Hongfeng. *Modernity of Travel: A Study of Travel Narrative in Late Qing Novels* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2011: 16
- [2] Li Hua Zhao. *Space Politics: A Study of Tony Morrison's Novels* [M]. Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2011.
- [3] [Finland] Kay Michalon. The metaphor of "narrative is travel": between the spatial sequence and the open result [J]. Gan Ximei, translated. *Jiangxi Social Sciences*, 2010(1): 35-42.
- [4] Eric J. Leed. *The Mind of the Traveler: from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* [M]. Basic Books, 1991.
- [5] Henry Lefebvre. *Architecture of Space* [M]. Cultural Studies. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press, 2010.
- [6] John Urry. The 'Consumi' of Place [J]. *Discourse, Communication and Tourism*. Adam Jaworski and Annette Pritchard (ed.). Channel View Publications, 2005: 20-21.