

Chapter Five

Conclusion

After I have scrutinized Winterson's *The Passion* from three seemingly irrelevant perspectives of theories in the previous chapters, now this chapter aims to demystify the correlative relations among four celebrated litterateurs, Kristeva, Baudrillard, Lefebvre, and Winterson, and then attempts to analyze the peculiar situation of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation with the help of three theoretical frameworks and one literary work.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Kristeva re-awakens people's attention to the significance and irreplaceability of the maternal body, along with the maternal function, in the process of the subject formation. This maternal body, termed the semiotic chora by Kristeva, is composed of uncertain, indeterminate, and non-expressive pulsions and oral, anal, and scopic drives. Due to its lack of unity, identity, or deity, the semiotic chora, full of polymorphous and undifferentiated materials, includes an anarchic and formless circulation of sexual impulses and energies. In this regard, the concept of Oedipalized speaking subject is interrogated and replaced by that of a questionable subject in process/on trial, which merely happens in poetic language. In contrast with the semiotic, the symbolic is also indispensable, for it is the site of unified texts, cultural representations, and knowledge, and offers an exit for those non-signifying raw materials to express. In addition to the fact that both the semiotic and the symbolic are mutually coexistent and interrelated, Kristeva further accentuates the dialectical relation between these two disparate spheres, asserting, "the collision between semiotic operations [...] and symbolic operations [...] actually produces an infinite fragmentation that can never be terminated" (Kristeva 1980, 174). That is to say, the dialectical relation of the semiotic and symbolic spaces challenges the rigidity of the traditional binary oppositional structure

in one way and displays a new strategy of oscillation between different spaces in another.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Baudrillard re-exalts the status of the concept of the simulacrum already present in the Western metaphysics and re-defines the meaning of simulation by the map-without-territory metaphor. On account of the precession of simulacra, the territory does not precede the map; instead, the map precedes and engenders the territory. Moreover, in his theory regarding three orders of simulacra, Baudrillard indefatigably highlights the third order, in which the real, influenced by simulation, becomes volatile and collapses into the hyperreal, a site of infinite possibilities of difference. There is not any form of binary oppositional system in the space of hyperreality, for the effect of implosion has disorganized the stark distinction between reality and simulacrum. Contrary to explosion, implosion is an inward movement of collapse, by which all meanings or messages of social, political, economic, cultural, and sexual fields topple together, thus resulting in the chaos of the society. Accordingly, what Baudrillard strives to emphasize is the undeniable fact that the distinction between reality and simulacrum has been interrogated by the effect of implosion, so that it is inevitable for us to notice the symbiotic phenomenon and the spatial oscillation between the real and the simulated.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, Lefebvre re-presents a science of space, for which “[e]pistemologico-philosophical thinking has failed to furnish the basis” (Lefebvre 7), and he intends to manifest “how space serves, and how hegemony makes use of it, in the establishment, on the basis of an underlying logic and with the help of knowledge and technical expertise, of a ‘system’” (Lefebvre 11). In Lefebvre’s threefold trialectics, spatial practice—the perceived space prior to the other spaces—is regarded as materialized, socially produced, and empirical space, inclusive of a level of competence and performance. Representations of space—the conceived space tied to the relations of production and to an order—are considered to be the dominant space, where scientists,

planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers “identity what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre 38). Representational spaces—the lived space embodying complex, coded symbolisms—are viewed as the dominated space, directly lived by inhabitants and users, where the peripheries, the margins, and the marginalized struggle for emancipation. Therefore, spaces of representation signify the possibility of “counterspace” against any form of regulative order and the locality of meaning in a culture. While proclaiming the perceived-conceived-lived triad of spatiality, Lefebvre particularly foregrounds the dialectical relation in spatialization, which aims to call into question the Western episteme of binary tradition.

Although in appearance these three theorists seem irrelevant to each other, in fact they do have something in common: Kristeva questions the artificial dichotomy of gender distinction by stressing the coexistence of the semiotic and symbolic spaces; Baudrillard obscures the conventional border between the real and simulated spaces through the function of implosion; Lefebvre interrogates the chronic system of binary opposition by proffering a spatial trialectics. Roughly speaking, all of them endeavor to challenge the Western logocentric tradition by means of their individual subversive theories concerned with space. In my interpretation, what they accentuate in opposition to the dominant ideology of dichotomy focuses on two points. Firstly, the fact of symbiosis between the semiotic and symbolic spaces, between the real and simulated spaces, and between the perceived, conceived, and lived spaces, has been proven to be reasonable and understandable by the three theorists. Secondly, it is more important to indicate the necessity of oscillating between different spaces, for the way of spatial oscillation brings about the possibility of subversion eventually, whether in sexual or social issue.

For Kristeva, once the notion of subjectivity is no longer as stable as it has seemed to be for a long time, on account of the effects of both paternal and maternal functions

arising from the symbolic and semiotic spaces, the socially constructed gender distinctions are faced with unprecedented challenges. That is, what people generally perceive as the criteria to judge a person's gender is not a naturally innate product but an artificial one of society. "[G]ender' denotes the cultural practices or cultural media that enable these desires to be played out" (Glover xxvi). Thus, in light of Kristeva's sexual politics, the fact of the indeterminacy in gender identity destabilizes the steadiness of the subject, which traditionally has to ground its position in the symbolic order through the process of oedipalization and castration. In this sense, Kristeva's subject presents a certain level of unstableness by way of oscillating between the semiotic and symbolic spaces, neither of them can exist without the other.

For Baudrillard, in the current code-governed society, "simulation is master, and nostalgia, the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials, alone remain[s]" (Baudrillard 1983, 72). The effect of simulation becomes a dominant scheme, resulting in the break of the boundary between reality and simulacrum. In this view, Baudrillard highlights a very unique space called hyperreality, where the contradiction between the real and the simulated is erased due to the function of implosion. Accordingly, all kinds of dichotomies in the modern society collapse into a universe of simulacra dominated by simulation models and codes. Therefore, what Baudrillard emphasizes is the fact of spatial symbiosis of the real and the hyperreal, and in a broad sense, is the significance of spatial oscillation between these two different spaces.

For Lefebvre, his spatial trialectics not only subverts people's conception of space as an empty container or abstract category but also interrogates the principle of binary oppositional structure. As he asserts, "The triad perceived—conceived—lived, along with what is denoted and connoted by these three terms, contributes to the production of space through interactions" (Lefebvre 246). It is these dialectical interactions between the threefold spatialization in a given society that Lefebvre considers as the possibility of

subversion against the dominant episteme of the Western tradition. Take some aspects of Rome as an example to illustrate the relationship in Lefebvre's theory of space. Spatial practice refers to the Roman road, which "links the *urbs* to the countryside over which it exercises dominion" (Lefebvre 245) and allows the city to declare its political concentration. Representations of space include both "the *orbis* and the *urbs*, circular, with their extensions and implications" (Lefebvre 245) and the military camp, a closed, parted, and fortified space. Representational spaces contain both the masculine and feminine principle simultaneously. More importantly, in Lefebvre's terms, "[r]elations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable, not are they 'positive' in the sense in which this term might be opposed to 'negative'" (Lefebvre 46). The dialectical relations between the spatial triad reveal the significant truth of spatial symbiosis on the one hand and imply the operation of spatial oscillation between diverse spaces on the other hand.

Metaphorically speaking, Kristeva, Baudrillard, and Lefebvre share the identical notion of space in their singular fields; that is, the notion of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation penetrates these three theorists' essence of spatial theory. Whether in sexual or social issue, they insist that the phenomenon of the coexistence between different spaces is an indispensable foundation which aims to transcend the limits and oppositions of the Western dichotomy. Moreover, to move back and forward between the ostensibly contradictory spaces, such as the semiotic and the symbolic or the real and the simulated, becomes another insistence they hold with a view to providing a strategy of subversion under contemporary society. In light of their specific spatial dialectics, there are some advantages worthy of notice.

Under the circumstances of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation, the orthodox concept of subjectivity is the first to be faced with challenges. Traditionally speaking, the Cartesian subject "depends on its ability to see itself as unique and as self-contained,

distinct from others, because it can think and reason” (Mills 33). But once taking the effects of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation into consideration, we find that the status of the subject is only socially constructed. In other words, it is the man-regulated standard of the society that constrains the subject from doing what is forbidden or what does not correspond to its social status. Accordingly, the subject encounters a crisis, no longer appearing as stable as it used to be. This subject-in-crisis is capable of disintegrating all the restraints imposed by the logocentric society, thus emancipating itself from a specific role that it has to play in the social community. According to Kristeva’s rationale concerning the aspect of sexuality, the uncertainty of the subject releases itself from the gender role dogmatically defined by the patriarchal authority. The subject is not supposed to be masculine or feminine any more; rather, it has the right to perform any kind of gender identity it prefers. In addition, after experiencing the fragment of gender identity, the subject is confronted with the problem of simulation, a typical phenomenon in the contemporary society. On the basis of Baudrillard’s logic, under the operation of implosive function, it is inevitable for the subject to suffer from the inability of distinguishing reality from simulacrum. As the boundary between reality and simulacrum has been effaced in the process of implosion, the subject cannot differentiate these two contradictory spaces any more. Instead, the subject maintains a state of oscillation between the real and simulated spaces, a condition that again interrogates the completeness of subjectivity. The notion of symbiosis and oscillation of the real and simulated spaces challenges the rigidity of the binary oppositional system on the one hand and offers an opportunity of subversion against any form of dominant power on the other hand. Likewise, the situation of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation also occurs in Lefebvre’s spatial trialectics, which underlines the trialectical relations between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. This spatial triad not only questions the idea of opposition in the conventional dichotomy but also provides us with

a brand new perspective to examine the notion of space differently. In spatial practice, the subject perceives the surroundings first, portraying in its mind the outlines of the city in which it lives. In representations of space, the subject feels the controlling force originating from the authoritative system, which methodizes the usages of different places and regulates the permissive activities. In representational spaces, the subject directly “lives” in a place where it belongs, that is, directly utilizes a space at its will, regardless of the rule or the law that those-in-power prescribe. Therefore, representational spaces can be regarded as the potential counterspaces, which are directly employed by most of the outsiders exclusive of the mainstream episteme of dichotomy. In the interrelation between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces, Lefebvre particularly focuses on the dialectical implication of the spatial triad, for this dialectical relationship reveals an opportunity for those under suppression to free themselves from the binary tradition.

From the analysis above, we learn that Kristeva, Baudrillard, and Lefebvre have one thing in common: figuratively speaking, they all strive for the liberation from the shackle of the binary oppositional system. Although the strategies they adopt are not entirely identical, the fundamental spirit of subversion against any form of domination does exist in their individual theories. That is why I insist on interpreting Winterson’s *The Passion* from three theoretical angles, with an attempt to delve into the essence of the four distinguished litterateurs’ thoughts.

In my interpretation, Winterson’s second novel, *The Passion*, is apt to exhibit the unanimous assertion of three theorists, that is, the phenomenon of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation. Since the story of the novel mostly happens in the city of Paris and of Venice, these two different spaces of city become the focus of my thesis. From Kristeva’s perspective, the city of Paris can be seen as the symbolic sphere while the city of Venice as the semiotic sphere. Similar to the symbolic and semiotic spaces, Paris and Venice are

indispensable for the characters of the novel during the period when they grow up. For instance, were it not for the city of Paris, Henri would never have an opportunity to gather his passion for Napoleon and Villanelle, both of whom disappoint him later. Were it not for the city of Venice, Henri would never find out his own art and his new position in the world. This happens to Villanelle too. She escapes from her husband's manipulation and encounters Henri in Russia, where she realizes the necessity of going back to the hometown. Eventually in Venice, Villanelle lives a boatman's life freely and independently, though emotionally she loses Henri for good. Accordingly, for one thing, the spatial symbiosis of Paris and Venice is indispensable and for another, the spatial oscillation between Paris and Venice plays a vital part in the development of the characters.

From Baudrillard's perspective, the functions of simulation and implosion work successfully, though differently, in the city of Paris and of Venice. For instance, the map is needful in Paris because it has simulated reality by imploding the boundaries in between and has become a simulacrum that usurps reality. Hence, people in Paris, including Napoleon or Henri, perceive the sense of territory through the tool of the map, which means realer than the external surroundings. However, the map does not function at all in Venice because the city of uncertainty changes every day like a living organism. According to Villanelle's viewpoint, the city of Venice disintegrates the map's simulation and implodes the standardized principle that a rationalized city has. No wonder an Oedipalized soldier like Henri, who is under the patriarchal domination, loses his sense of direction in Venice, whereas a marginalized boatman like Villanelle, who is free from patriarchal obstacles, re-defines her location of life in Venice. To sum up, the operation of Baudrillard's simulation and implosion demonstrates the fact that the division between reality and simulacrum is erased; in my words, the spaces of reality and simulacrum coexist in a broad sense and the characters of the novel undergo the stage of oscillation

between the real and simulated spaces.

From Lefebvre's perspective, the spatial triad operates differently in the city of Paris and of Venice. For instance, in the field of spatial practice, representations of space work more aggressively than representational spaces do in the city of Paris, which is built up by following Napoleon's despotic instruction. However, even in the rationalized Paris, there are still some spaces of representation, such as the kitchen tent, special camps, the billiard room, and the church, all of which provide the marginalized characters with the possibility of fighting back to the domineering power. In addition to Paris, Venice also contains both representations of space and representational spaces, though the function of the latter is more powerful than that of the former within the domain of spatial practice. Since the only one representation of space in Venice—the public garden—fails to govern the mercurial city at Napoleon's will, spaces of representation, such as the Casino, the bridge, and the madhouse, prevail over the dominant space, thus making Venice an unconventional, hard-to-dominate, and non-rationalized city. From the examples of Paris and Venice, we observe again the spatial symbiosis of Lefebvre's trialectics, which highlights the dialectical, rather than oppositional, relations between the spatial triad.

As analyzed above, all of the characters in *The Passion* are inevitably affected by the operation of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation. Henri, the male protagonist, experiences the mental development from single-minded obsession of Napoleon and Villanelle to self-awakening with the discovery of his own discursive art when he moves between two city spaces. Villanelle, the female protagonist, receives the similar transformation during the period of oscillating between two city spaces, from an anti-traditional, androgynous person loving a woman but marrying a man, to an independent boatman rowing her boat in the river and taking care of her daughter well. Napoleon, the emperor, undergoes the course from an egoistic dominator ambitious of power in Paris to a lost ghost hanging about San Servolo lonely.

In conclusion, Winterson presents in *The Passion* the operation of spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation, both of which have the critical influence on the maturity of the characters' mentality. Most important of all, these two emphases—spatial symbiosis and spatial oscillation—not only link the thinking of Kristeva, Baudrillard, and Lefebvre, but also shed light on what Winterson endeavors to present in the form of the novel, that is, the unremittingly dialectical relations between different spaces. It is also on the principal focus that this thesis aims to elaborate.