

Original Paper

An Analysis of the Construction of the Multiple Spaces in *The Scarlet Letter*

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the classic writers of American romanticism, wrote many classic works throughout his life, including The Scarlet Letter, the representative of romantic novels and his outstanding masterpiece. Extensive attention has paid on it since it was published. Many literary critics use different theories to explain this work, many of which explore the theme including good and evil, love and hate, and culture under the influence of Puritanism. However, previous researches have paid less attention on the space feature of The Scarlet Letter, and in the traditional narratological research, the space factor has also been ignored for a long time. In this thesis, the author will take space as the starting point based on the relevant spatial theory and spatial narrative research results, and interpret the multiple space construction in The Scarlet Letter in detail, further analyzing the narrative strategy adopted by Hawthorne in order to explore the cultural connotation of the multiple spaces constructed in his works.

Keywords

The Scarlet Letter, space theory, multiple spaces, Nathaniel Hawthorne

1. Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the most outstanding romantic novelists in America. *The Scarlet Letter* is Hawthorne's masterpiece, which happened on Puritan New England during the colonial period, and the plot is based on a crime of adultery that Puritans regarded as the most sinister at that time. From a humanitarian perspective, the novel explores various moral and philosophical issues related to evil and humanity, as well as the harsh requirements and severe punishment of the Puritans on the social figures at that time, which fundamentally reflects the shortcomings of Puritanism.

Many foreign scholars have analyzed this work from different perspectives, the research is mainly divided

into two directions; on the one hand, the writer himself: from the family history of the writer to the life of the writer; on the other hand, it is aimed at the work itself, which includes studying Hawthorne's aesthetic theory, political views from the works, Empirical attitude and influence on other writers.

However, due to the emphasis on time in traditional narratology, the status and role of space in narrative has been ignored for a long time. The trend of thought in philosophy in the 20th century influenced critics' aesthetics of the literary world. The importance of space became increasingly prominent. Some far-sighted humanists began to introduce the dimension of space into the field of social science, from Henri Lefebvre's space theories in his work *The Production of Space* to Joseph Frank's theory of "spatial form", the theoretical paradigm of artistic analysis of modern novels has been initially established, and "spatial form" has gradually become a modern novel's creative technique, analysis mode, and judgment standard.

Since the trend of space narrative theories sprung up, there are kinds of literature works about the application of space theories, both at home and abroad, some focused on the art of space narrative and the application of space theory in Hawthorne's writing, for example, the paper *Space Narrative Structure and Its Artistic Effects On The Scarlet Letter* written by Yuan Xiaohua and Yang Jincai, which based on the analysis of the spatial narrative relationship between the "Customs" chapter and the whole novel; some focused on the different spaces constructed in Hawthorne's works, which are named topographical space, psychological space and social space. For example, in *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Artistic Narration—Aesthetic Space in The Scarlet Letter* written by Huang Shihai and Zheng Zhifang, in the process of interpreting the construction of spaces in *The Scarlet Letter*, readers appreciate the narrative skill employed, enjoy its artistic effects and then discern the destiny of the principal characters and social reality.

Although considerable progress has been made, some unexpected and intriguing findings are still worth attention. There lacks a systematic overview of multiple spaces in *The Scarlet Letter*, most of them study the application of the space theory in *The Scarlet Letter* independently, without mentioning the space construction. As one of the founders of space theory, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre divided the spatial form into three types: topographical space, psychological space and social space. Besides these three spaces, the writer will focus on another space in *The Scarlet Letter*, which is textual space. It is hoped that with the help of space theory, based on the intensive reading of the text, *The Scarlet Letter* will be analyzed in detail, and the application and reflection of the space theory will be summarized, which will not only achieve the application of this theory, but also a new perspective on *The Scarlet Letter*.

2. Topographical Space in *The Scarlet Letter*

Topographical space is the place where characters exist, and it is closely related to their actions and psychological changes. The choice of space scene has a great correlation to the development of the story and the presentation of the theme. Focusing on the combination of topographical and orientational

metaphor is a major feature of Hawthorne's narrative. As Lefebvre put it, "space is never empty, it always embodies a meaning" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154).

The Scarlet Letter has covered various themes, including Puritanism and morality, affirmation of women's resistance, guilt and punishment. But no matter what the theme is, it is impossible to speak directly, the author must rely on the arrangement of the characters, the description of the character, and the development of the plot. Hawthorne needs to visualize the theme he wanted to express through a carrier in his creation, so he intercepted a short section in the long history, the early period of New England of America, as a stage to show that particular period of history which influenced by Puritans. Hawthorne used this stage to construct his story, but at the same time, it will be difficult for readers to understand since they might not be familiar with this part of history. In order to allow readers to better understand and accept the story as well as bring readers into that relatively unfamiliar history, Hawthorne has carefully crafted his work based on this closed time. One of the important methods he chose was spatial form. In his novels, even the basic time factor is vague. Without mentioning the detailed time of this early period of New England history, he also flickered at the specific time length, and put more energy on the architecture of space rather than the process of time. From the perspective of modern space narratology, the destruction and rejection of time sequence is precisely the most obvious feature of the spatial form.

2.1 Enclosed Topographical Space

Enclosed topographical space, as the name implies, refers to the closed buildings in Hawthorne's works. These buildings are often gloomy and obscure, giving people a sense of depression and suffocation, while a glimmer of light is mixed in the gloom.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, chapters in novels are mostly named after space scenes and characters, for example: the "prison door", "market place", "governor's hall" in, and all these spaces have their own profound meanings, which reflect the theme and cultural metaphor that the author wanted to express.

2.1.1 Prison Door

The first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* is "Prison Door". In this chapter, Hawthorne describes the prison door as "the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes" (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 62). This description gives readers a feeling of being closed, solid, indestructible and unavoidable. "The wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the New World" (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 63). According to the author's description, the prison door is particularly desolate after being weathered, and therefore gloomier. The description of prison door highlights the suppression and harsh punishment of people by British colonial government and Puritanism at that time. However, not only the people in society but also everything in nature must follow the law of nature, that is, to pursue the free development of personality, truth, goodness and beauty. So in this desolate and gloomy scene, a bunch of wild roses appeared, "with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance

and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 63). This bunch of beautiful red flowers is like a ray of light and hope in the darkness, which at the same time foreshadows the source of freedom and true love that Hester seeks. Through her own efforts and various virtues, Hester turned herself from a spurned adultery into an “able” and “admirable” woman, and even an “angel” to some people.

2.1.2 Dimmesdale’s Study and Chillingworth’s Laboratory

Mr. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth lived together in a house owned by a devout widow. In terms of their respective living spaces, Dimmesdale lived in a library full of books, while Chillingworth’s is a laboratory. The room of Dimmesdale faces the sun, and the surrounding walls are covered with veils which were embroidered with religious stories; Chillingworth’s room faces the shade, and although there is some equipment such as a distiller and some compounded drugs in the room, it seems that this laboratory is not designed for experiments. After Chillingworth suspected that Dimmesdale was Hester’s lover, the urge of revenge continued to rise, and he began to test the secrets of Dimmesdale and continued torturing him in spirit. His secret revenge plan was like his room, facing the shadow, which cannot be shown or seen. The incomplete facilities in the laboratory, to a certain extent, also revealed the fake identity of Chillingworth.

2.2 Open Space

2.2.1 Forest

Forest is Hawthorne’s favorite scene, and there are a lot of descriptions of forest in *The Scarlet Letter*. Although the forest appears many times, it represents different meanings. On the one hand, it represents danger and sin, on the other hand, it symbolizes freedom and life.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, forest represents nature, and people can remove the camouflage and enjoy themselves. It is wild but also covert. It can give people endless freedom without revealing their secrets. It can also tolerate everything in the world, including beauty and ugliness, good and evil. Hester can take off the red letter “A”, get rid of the insults from society and experience a life of freedom and equality; Little Pearl can also play and run freely in the forest and enjoy a carefree childhood. The forest is their refuge, as well as a refuge for all the people oppressed by Puritan thought. Hester had two meetings in the forest, one with Chillingworth and another with Dimmesdale. In these two meetings, they all showed their hidden side of themselves.

In the first meeting, Hester first actively communicated with Chillingworth for she could not stand his long-time mental torture of Dimmesdale. Chillingworth also removed his mask of a doctor, but a man who was betrayed by his wife and was eager for revenge, so he exposed the true intention to stay with Dimmesdale in this conversation.

The meeting of Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest is one of the most unforgettable scenes in the novel. In this uncivilized free realm, the most respected priest in the town finally had the courage to undertake the fact of being Hester’s lover and Pearl’s biological father and began to pour out his

bitterness in these years.

Besides, the forest also shows its sinful side. In the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*, the forest always appears as a dark and mysterious image. People in the novel always evade or even fear its existence, which is equivalent to human beings evading to acknowledge the existence of their inner evil. All the people kept from the forest except the witch Mrs. Spencer, Pearl, an elf who is afraid of nothing, Hester and Dimmesdale, the two “sinners”.

2.2.2 Scaffolding

Scaffolding, which plays an important role in the development of the story, appeared many times in this book. Hester, holding her child on the scaffolding, was interrogated and humiliated. The scaffolding here was the place where the criminals were interrogated. Another appearance of the scaffolding was when Dimmesdale stood on it and confessed, at this time, scaffolding, which symbolized a court of the soul, became a place where people confessed their sins. In the end, scaffolding, where Dimmesdale confessed everything, became a symbol of liberation and release of soul.

3. Psychological Space in *The Scarlet Letter*

In addition to constructing topographical space to reflect the spatial features, the three-dimensional representation of the character’s psychology is also one of the factors that reflect the novel’s spatial form. Psychological space is a certain spatial characteristic that shows characters’ psychological activities, such as memory, imagination, when creating a narrative work. Compared with the traditional fiction which make a replica of reality, modern novelists believe that psychological space is a reflection of the more real world. Modern novels focus on the real psychological space of characters constructed through narratives of dreams and streams of consciousness, and express their private, fuzzy, and contradictory inner world through their psychological space. Hawthorne is good at grasping the psychological features of characters with sharp observation and rich imagination and was able to make psychological activities more vivid. In *The Scarlet Letter*, not only the titles of some chapters are named after the characters, but each chapter focuses on one or two characters. In addition to describing the topographical space of the character's activities, Hawthorne also demonstrated the construction of psychological spaces of each figure.

3.1 Psychological Space of Freedom and Courage

When Hester first appeared on the scaffolding, she is indomitable and arrogant, but her heart was heavy and full of pain. Unable to get relief from the outside world, Hester had to seek help from her inner world—the world of her memory and imagination. “Standing on that miserable eminence, she saw again her native village, in Old England, and her paternal home: a decayed house of grey stone, with a poverty-stricken aspect, but retaining a half-obliterated shield of arms over the portal, in token of antique gentility. She saw her father’s face, with its bold brow, and reverend white beard that flowed over the old-fashioned Elizabethan ruff; her mother’s, too, with the look of heedful and anxious love with it always wore in her remembrance, and which, even since her death, has so often laid the

impediment of a gentle remonstrance in her daughter's pathway. She saw her own face, glowing with girlish beauty, and illuminating all the interior of the dusky mirror in which she had been wont to gaze at it" (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 74). Through the description of her inner world, readers can construct a more well-rounded image of Hester. Hiding herself within the psychological space, she gained the courage to stand people's blame and insult. The stubbornness and tenacity of her inner world supported her to greet a new life after the end of her imprisonment and to live in this world in a new capacity. On the surface, she is obedient to everyone, but in her mind, she is very different. In the topographical space, Hester generally remained silent, and endured the bullying of Puritans from adults to children. She atoned her sin with the scarlet letter on her chest and accepted people's ugly accusations, however, she didn't take it as a shame. Instead, she sewed the letter A with a fine red cloth, surrounded by fine embroidery made of gold threads. In her opinion, this was a kind of warmth, which was her pursuit of true love as well as courage to live. She detached herself from the outside, thinking and examining women's progress in the world. She is fearless and hopes to make a bit change. In the topographical world, Hester is like a cold, flesh-free sculpture, but in the psychological world, she lives a very different life, a life full of independent spirit, free thinking, romantic feelings, and passion.

3.2 Psychological Space of Fear and Pain

The protagonists in most of Hawthorne's works struggled in the abyss of sin and cannot escape. Mr. Dimmesdale is such kind of person who was tortured by sin all the time. On the one hand, he is a respected priest who pursues asceticism; on the other hand, he is a young man who is depressed but not without emotion. This respected priest had been in the conflict between Puritan asceticism and personal emotions since he fell in love with Hester. As a priest, he hopes to abandon humanity and overcomes personal emotions. When their relationship was discovered, Dimmesdale was not punished and he did not have to show his crimes to the public, but in fact, he was punished more cruelly than Hester. It was his holy identity of Puritans and priest, as well as his guilt to Hester, his desire to confess his sins publicly and the pressure of Chillingworth that tortured him deeply. He struggled for his sins for seven years, and the public's admiration was a great affliction for him, so often he locked himself in his room and constantly whipped himself, hoping to get a little peace. However, the priest could not save himself, and he could not relieve his pain by abusing his body. He was pained, depressed, and almost collapsed. Readers will finally figure out that the holy, sublime priest in the topographical space actually lived in a psychological space full of sin, hypocrisy, remorse, and condemnation.

3.3 Psychological Space of Darkness and Malice

Chillingworth is a scholar with short stature, dark skin and old face. He is lonely and cannot feel the warmth of family. Although he did not expose the name of his wife's lover in public, he carried out his revenge plan in a more insidious way. He followed Dimmesdale as a parishioner, striving to gain his trust. He kept approaching the priest as a doctor in order to explore the priest's personality and temperament rather than caring about his illness. Chillingworth exploited the priest's trust and ruthlessly destroyed his already painful soul, making the pastor constantly think that he was sinful,

hypocritical and dirty. Although served god, he was accompanied by the devil, which is undoubtedly a fatal blow to a devout Christian. After tormenting the priest again and again, he experienced a crazy pleasure, like a Satanic demon. Revenge flooded Chillingworth's mind, twisted his mind, and transformed him from a normal person into a devil. After the priest died, he lost his only spiritual sustenance and soon died. In short, Chillingworth actually lived in his own spiritual world, a world full of hypocrisy, cruelty, revenge, darkness, arrogance, and punishment.

4. Social Space in *The Scarlet Letter*

Social space is also an element of novel, it is the specific social and historical environment in which the characters were living. Actually, it is the product of social communication, all the activities of people are in the network of social relations. Social space is based on the topographical space, providing a wider and more abundant mental environment of various activities. The space in literature not only serves as a scene for characters to live and experience, but also bears the role of conveying social values and ideology. Scenes from the small town in Boston to the market are all the elements of social space where various stories ferment, each space constructed together formed the background of this story. This part will focus on the important narrative role that social space plays in the whole novel.

4.1 Influence of Puritanism Reflected in Social Space

The story took place in Boston in the 17th century. The inhabitants were the first generation of immigrants who settled here from 1620 to 1630. They were Puritans who came to the New World under the persecution of England.

4.1.1 Separation of Church and State

From Hawthorne's description of the scaffolding, we find that this topographical space centered on the scaffolding presented the social relations at that time. Members of the theocratic government of Boston, including the governor, his staff and priest are sitting on the balcony. Putting the priest and judge on the balcony at the same time implied that in a theocratic country (the country dominated by God), the state is the arm of a church and is responsible for enforcing laws. In *The Scarlet Letter*, state and church are identical. The religious men founded the colony from the purpose of religion, so the ministers forced the courts to make and pass laws in favor of religion. Adultery like Hester's sexual misbehavior, which broke the religious regulation, was often regarded as a state crime. There was too much authority that church had because the Puritans left their homeland to escape religious persecution, and the church was allowed to take a tight control on actions and standards of people's daily life.

4.1.2 Socio-cultural Space Composed by Holidays and Carnivals

In the first 20 chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*, through the presentation of spaces such as prisons, markets, the governor's hall and forests, the character's psychology and space are closely connected. The multiple meanings of space are used to portray the round characters and excavate the complex and diverse psychological reality of the characters. However, the above space is mainly for the activities of individual characters. When it comes to the last three chapters of the novel, the author changed the

narrative method and used a wide-angle lens to bring all the characters in the story together in a panoramic manner, showing readers a vast social and cultural space. The “market” in the novel, similar to the square in the modern sense, is an integral part of urban public space and a place to record important historical events and leave a collective memory. The public topographical space of the market is not only a container of life, but also an open place where different life experiences and different values meet and collide. It is an extremely vital part of urban culture. Traditional culture, ethics, religious consciousness, regional customs, worldly customs, and activities and carnivals of people in specific environments constitute the cultural space in the narrative.

In the market, a cultural space formed by festivals and religious missions, Hawthorne brings all the characters in the story together: people of different ages, genders, occupations, and statuses, such as blacksmiths, prisoners, governors, priests, witches, soldiers, residents, sailors from across the ocean, Indians in the forest. They all appeared on the festival market. There was rare “excessive joys” on people’s faces, “how cheery is everybody’s face today. The children have come from their schools, and the grown people from their workshops and their fields, on purpose to be happy” (Hawthorne, 1996, P. 267). And Puritans, who have been depressed for a long time, are allowed to release all their joys in this day, “Puritans compressed whatever mirth and public joy they deemed allowable to human infirmity; thereby so far dispelling the customary cloud, that, for the space of a single holiday, they appeared scarcely more grave than most other communities at a period of general affliction” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 267). In this special day, “the people were countenanced, if not encouraged, in relaxing the severe and close application to their various modes of rugged industry, which at all other times, seemed of the same piece and material with their religion” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 268). The hard and simple life of religion that must be pursued in general is somewhat eased in this festival. Everyone comes to the market in their best clothes. In the festival square, there is an equal and free relationship between people, without the constraints of religious morals as well as the suppression of the center of power. In the carnival square, people get rid of the constraints of daily life and the oppression of religious regimes. The repression and distortion of the city are set aside in the square of freedom, the square is full of forces that subvert authority and center, and people pursue individual desires and expressions here. Hawthorne also described unique public events, such as fencing competitions, performances, and Election Day sermons regarded as the climax of the day, which presented readers with a picture of the Puritan period. On the one hand, it expressed the New World colonists’ heritage and cultural heritage of the Old World; on the other hand, it also reflects that this carnival festival and activity is a very different state from the traditional Puritan way of life. The carnival of the festival has freed people from the constraints of the dominant Puritan rules, bans and reality for a while, and gained some freedom.

5. Textual Space in *The Scarlet Letter*

Gabriel Zoran put forward the notion of textual space in *Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative* that textual space was influenced by three aspects which are “the selectivity of language, the linearity of the

text, and the perspectival structure” (Zoran, 1984, p. 305). This part will focus on the analysis of textual space in *The Scarlet Letter*.

5.1 Narrative Point of View

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne flexibly used the multiple narrative perspectives of omniscient narrative and character’s narrative, providing multi-perspective reading space. The method of the character’s point of view shortens the distance between the reader and the character. The readers can experience what the characters in the novel see and think, making the reader truly feel the real existence of the art world. And since the psychological activity of the depicted object cannot be wholly perceived by the characters of the novel, the narrator shifts to the mode of omniscient perspective, allowing the reader to observe everything with the psychological perspective of the characters of the novel, and directly feel the pain and disgust, contradictions and struggles inside the characters.

5.1.1 Omniscient Point of View

In order to help the reader better understand the novel and shorten the distance between the reader and the novel, Hawthorne used the method of omniscient narration to describe the plot, scene, environment and the inner world of characters. This narrative technique can easily intervene both in the literary scene and the description of the novel, it displays a panoramic picture vividly. At the same time, the application of the omniscience narrative technique is closer to the reader’s perspective, and it has also sufficiently narrowed the distance between the author and the reader.

At the beginning of the novel appeared such a scene: the men in the town were unshaven, and the adult women wore headscarves, these people were talking about the woman Hester. Their discussions have continued, while not only attracting readers’ interest in reading, but also broadening the perspective of narrative. At the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*, people in the town were of different shapes, and they also showed the idea of closed and narrow-minded town residents in the era. In the form of a first-person “I”, the author describes the town’s customs, living habits, and so on. Intangibly, the reader is deeply immersed in the core of the work and is close to the protagonist’s heart, which has sufficiently narrowed the distance between the reader and the author.

In the text, the narrator was familiar with the situation of each character, calmly introducing the development and changes of the character, entering the character’s heart systematically, and describing the psychological feeling of the character with accurate portrayal. In the mode of omniscient narrative, the author often makes public comments on characters and events through the mouth of himself. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the narrator often talks directly with the reader to intervene in the story process. Sometimes it introduces background knowledge and makes comments. For example, after Hester and Chillingworth met, the narrator stood up and said “Let men tremble to win the hand of women, unless they win along with it the utmost passion of her heart!... to be reproached even for the calm content, the marble image of happiness, which they will have imposed upon her as the warm reality” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 207). Sometimes, the omniscient narration plays the role of pointing out that the event may actually be another case, providing readers with “multiple choices” for reading. For example,

Dimmesdale reunited with Hester and Pearl on the balcony at night, when he said “the daylight of this world shall not see our meeting”, “a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 182). The light was strange and solemn, and the street scenes showed strange images under the light. The narrator believes that the actual existence of this phenomenon is nothing more than a lonely witness who imagined it, “We impute it, therefore, solely to the disease in his own eye and heart that the minister, looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter—the letter A—marked out in lines of dull red light” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 183). Therefore, the reader has two choices: one is the symbolic meaning of the scarlet letter appeared in the sky, and the other is the pastor’s illusion. The omniscient narrative allows readers to decide for themselves which situation is true for “selective reading”.

5.1.2 The Character’s Point of View

Besides all-known perspective, the descriptions of Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth mostly adopted the method of character’s point of view, observing another person from a specific person’s perspective, and use different characters to demonstrate each figure.

As to the description of Hester, before the debut of Hester, the narrator allowed the reader to observe Hester from the perspective of a group of Puritan women, who rebuked Hester as “malefactress”, “hussy”, in the following part, the moment Hester exited the prison and the description of her appearance are also shown through the audience’s point of view.

The description of Pearl is demonstrated through Hester’s vision and thinking. In Hester’s mind, Pearl is the gift from god and her only wealth as a mother. Apart from the description of Hester’s mind, readers can also create the figure through the talk of the neighboring townspeople, who, “seeking vainly elsewhere for the child’s paternity, and observing some of her odd attributes, had given out that poor little Pearl was a demon offspring” (Hawthorne, 1996, p. 119). Hawthorne created the image of Pearl through the view of both Hester and townspeople.

Through the character’s narrative, Hawthorne assigned narrative responsibility to the characters in the novel, and expressed different viewpoints through the perspective of the characters. After getting rid of all-knowledge narration, the narrator shows the reader what the characters in the novel see and hear, allowing readers to choose between different narrative voices.

5.2 *The Weakening of Time*

The form of space includes abandoning the temporal factors such as linear order and causality in the narrative structure, and adopting a narrative method of synchronicity. The narrative no longer focuses on the events of sequential development but focuses on multiple events occurring at the same time. One of the major features in *The Scarlet Letter* is the weakening of time.

Although the storylines and main characters of *The Scarlet Letter* are fictitious, the background of the story is real. Hawthorne placed the entire story in the context of New England under the Puritan colony of the 17th century, but he did not explain the specific time, as a result, there were not any detailed years appeared in the book. However, the development of each story usually has a clear background.

Hawthorne's solution to this dilemma is to intersperse real historical characters and historical events. Therefore, *The Scarlet Letter* interspersed many historical events that occurred in that era, such as the story of Saint Anne Hutchinson, the famous witch expulsion case in Puritan history, and the Pequod war against the Indians by the colonists.

The subtitle of *The Scarlet Letter* is "A Romance". Compared with popular novels and English realistic novels, Hawthorne's novels are romantic because they deviate from the social and historical realities of the United States. The story did not start the storyline in sequence and lacked the coherence of the beginning, development, climax, and ending of the story nor used the techniques such as flashback or interpolation. Instead, it intercepts a small part of the love story to structure the entire work. Hawthorne's romance, as a new literary form, is different from traditional romantic works. He pioneered literary creation with his own style, and his romance focused on using imagination to reveal people's inner world. During that period, people believed that the novel should be a realistic reflection of people's life experience and objective truth. But Hawthorne's romance focused on digging into the subjective inner truth. He only made a brief mention of the omitted plot when necessary, so the beginning of the story is that Hester's extramarital affairs were exposed and she was punished by the church. As for what her previous life was like, how was the relationship between she and Dimmesdale developed, there is no detailed description in the novel.

The dilution or absence of the time factor in the story will inevitably make the space factor play a more important role. Thus, the dominant factor in the content of *The Scarlet Letter* is space, which is also very significant in the subtitles of the novel. The titles of most chapters in the 24 chapters are named after specific spatial scenes and characters. It is the transformation of these specific topographical spaces that help the narrator complete the narrative of the story, the psychological depiction and image of the characters. Not only is there a lot of space description in the story content, but the organization and arrangement of the story structure is also based on the space factor.

5.3 Plot Juxtaposition

Plot juxtaposition refers to several plot clues interspersed together in a work at the same time, and there is no obvious relationship between the plots, but they all serve to express a theme or central idea. Such a combination no longer follows a linear development of causality.

Although there are different themes in *The Scarlet Letter*, they were all expressed by the three main characters, and shared several themes, and each showed some profound connotations. Although the three protagonists have a complicated and intricate relationship, but relative to the theme of performance, each of them can be a narrative clue individually. The tragic story of the three of them shows the suppression of humanity by Puritanism, but the experience of Hester can also be used as a complete story to show the oppression of women and secular feelings by Puritanism, Dimmesdale's experience is also a strong complaint against Puritanism, and Puritanism is also indispensable for the cause of tragedy of Chillingworth; as for the moral theme, Hester is a manifestation of self-salvation.

Dimmesdale also achieved self-salvation in another way, while Chillingworth slipped to the abyss of sin when facing the choice of good and evil.

Take “The Minister’s Vigil” as an example, after the humiliation of Hester’s on the scaffolding, Mr. Dimmesdale suffered seven years of torture because of remorse, and was constantly tortured by this hidden enemy Chillingworth and unfortunately began to be unconscious. On one night in May, under the influence of nocturnal disease, he boarded the scaffolding where Hester stood seven years ago. Hawthorne juxtaposed several plot clues and described the reaction of Dimmesdale with the help of several characters who appeared separately, showing his tense mental state specifically: remorse and self-blame, wanting to show the sinful cricket with impulses, as well as the pain and great fear of the consequences revealed by sin. These alternate characters have their own reason, and there is no substantial connection between each other, but only a few juxtaposed plots instead. One after another, they stimulated the tight and fragile nerves of Dimmesdale. In this scene, his tremendous pain caused by the seven years of mental torture had been shown by many ways, which also suggested that the peak of his pain was coming.

6. Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the novel *The Scarlet Letter* from the perspective of different spaces constructed in this novel, which are topographical space, psychological space, social space and textual space. Analyzing these four parts helps us better understand the construction of each space in this novel, especially the textual space, which integrated analysis of narrative skills and narrative structure of *The Scarlet Letter*. After this study, the purpose that Hawthorne used the strategy of weakening time sequence is clear, which is relative to the history background and his creative characteristics; the analysis of social space provided a larger background, which effected people’s daily life and even the social operation mechanism; the three main kinds of psychological spaces discussed in this paper allow us to create a more detailed and specific inner world of each character; and even the seemingly inanimate geographic space has played a vital role in the embodiment of the theme and changed our previous understanding of the geographical environment in the novel.

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