



An Analysis of Three Narrative Spaces in *Young Goodman Brown*

Wenhui Lv

School of Foreign Studies, Anhui Normal University, Anhui, China

ABSTRACT

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This paper provides an analysis of three narrative spaces of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*, focusing on Gabriel Zoran's spatial criticism theory. The above three narrative spaces include topographical space, chronotopic space and textual space. The topographical spaces refer to the Salem Village and the forest, which play a vital role in shaping the characters and expressing the "original sin" theme of the story. The chronotopic spaces reveal the rest state of Faith in synchronic relation and the motion state of Brown in diachronic relation, which show the double-side of humanity. The textual spaces like imagery and omniscient perspective increase the artistic charm of the story's language. The study highlights how the three narrative spaces collectively enhance the thematic impact of *Young Goodman Brown*, showcasing the evil nature of human beings. The paper concludes by discussing the broader implications of the above findings for understanding Hawthorne's narrative techniques and suggests directions for future research in this field.

KEYWORDS:

Nathaniel Hawthorne,
Spatial Narrative,
Topographical Space,
Chronotopic Space, Textual
Space

INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a narrative analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* from the perspective Gabriel Zoran's spatial criticism theory. Focusing on the three narrative spaces, the study delves into the topographical space, chronotopic space and textual space of this story. Special attention is given to the influences of the above three narrative spaces on the plot, character and theme.

The analysis pays attention to the three narrative spaces of *Young Goodman Brown*, aiming to enrich the reader's appreciation of the narrative charm in this story. The paper introduces the significance of Nathaniel Hawthorne as an excellent writer who is good at narrative techniques.

Corresponding Author: Wenhui Lv

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Chapter One includes four sections, the first section introduces Nathaniel Hawthorne, highlighting his significance in American literature and focusing on his narrative techniques of *Young Goodman Brown*. The second section provides an overview of the setting, plot and character of *Young Goodman Brown*. The third section is a brief introduction to Gabriel Zoran's spatial criticism theory. The fourth is a literature review of *Young Goodman Brown*. from narrative perspective.

Chapter Two of this study delves into the three narrative spaces within Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*. This chapter is meticulously divided into three major components: Topographical Space, Chronotopic Space and Textual Space. In exploring topographical space, the study focuses on the physical space where major characters experience a series of mysterious and terrifying events. In exploring chronotopic space, the study explores the different states between Brown and Faith from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. In exploring textual space, the study selects the imagery and omniscient perspective to analyze the

language feature in *Young Goodman Brown*.

In the end, Chapter Three concludes this paper from two sections. The first section highlights how the three narrative spaces collectively shape the thematic impact of *Young Goodman Brown*, contributing to a deeper understanding of Hawthorne's artistic mastery. The use of topographical space, chronotopic space and textual space reflects the superb narrative technique of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The second section specifies the limitations and further suggestions of this paper, which states some directions for future studies of this field.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 An Introduction of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the greatest fiction writers of 19th-century American literature. A master of the allegorical and symbolic tale, he remains best known for the novels *The Scarlet Letter*(1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables*(1851). Unlike Dickinson, Melville, and Thoreau, who are now viewed as classic American authors, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his works were never completely ignored by the public and various critics. The Puritan heritage molded Hawthorne's view of the world and influenced his writing greatly. Hawthorne struggled with his religious faith most of his life, believing that faith was a separate thing from religion. Though often considered to be a devout Puritan believer based on the morals discussed in his stories, he instead focused on what his personal faith in humanism and spirituality. Hawthorne views that it is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent and circumstances may rouse it to activity. *Young Goodman Brown* is such a short story, revealing the evil in both hero and heroine and suggesting the failure of Brown's puritan practices.

1.2 An Introduction of *Young Goodman Brown*

Young Goodman Brown is one of the profound short stories collected in *Twice-Told Tales*. The story illustrates Hawthorne's allegorical theme of human evil. In the manner of its concerns with guilt and sin, it exemplifies what Melville called the "power of blackness" in Hawthorne's work. The tale carefully portrays a young Puritan named Brown who ventures into the forest to meet with a stranger. It soon becomes clear that he is approaching a witches' sabbath, and he sees with horror that prominent members of his community are participating in the ceremonies. Ultimately, Brown is led to a flaming altar where he sees his wife, Faith. He cries out to her, "Resist," and suddenly finds himself alone among the trees. He

returns home but loses forever his faith in goodness or piety.

1.3 An Introduction of Spatial Narrative Theory

At the end of the 20th century, spatial narratives attracted a great deal of attention from scholars. Since then, scholars have started to shift their previous attention toward time, history, social relations to narrative space in literature. Joseph Frank(1945) publishes a paper called *Spatial Form in Modern Literature in Sewanee Review*, and in it, He firstly mentioned term Spatial Narrative. Chatman(1978) pioneers the two concepts of "story space" and "discourse space" in the article *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. And the former describes where the story is happening, while the latter refers to where the describer tells the story. Bakhtin(1981) proposes the concept of chronotope in the field of literature in his article *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*. Chronotope is not a static state but has dynamic artistic characteristics. Gabriel Zoran(1984) creates a spatial theoretical model in *Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative*. He emphasizes that space is a constructive process in which readers actively participate. Some Chinese scholars complement Zoran's spatial narrative theory as one of the most intricate, practical and highly practical theoretical approaches to date (Long 12; Chen 78). Zoran sees the narrative space as a whole and creatively proposes three levels of spatial representation in narrative: the topographical level, the chronotopic level and the textual level. Therefore, the representation of space is not a combination of many individual scenes, but a complex and fine spatial complex constructed by a series of mobile scenes, covering many topographical, chronotopic and textual factors.

Topographical space is a "space as a static entity."(Zoran, 315) The construction of this space can be achieved through direct description, as well as through narrative, dialogue, or prose style texts to reproduce this space. Analyzing the text at topographical level helps readers understand the characters and gain a complete and deep understanding of the context and setting of the text.

Chronotopic space refers to "the structure imposed on space by events and movements."(Zoran, 315) Zoran uses this term to describe a specific aspect and define it as an integrated category of space and time that can be defined as motion and change. In reproducing chronotopic space of the world, it can distinguish between synchronic and diachronic relationships. In the synchronic situation, there exist objects "at rest" and others "in motion", and the relation between them is relative. Rest is a situation where there must be a specific spatial background,

while motion is the ability to cut oneself off from the spatial background and transform it into a different background.

Textual space is represented by the verbal text. "The structure under discussion is not that of the text itself as a verbal medium, not that of its linguistic materials, but rather an organization of the reconstructed world"(Zoran, 319). These structural schemata in textual space are mainly related to the verbal text in three aspects, namely the selectivity of language and its effects, the perspective structure and the linearity of the text. The first is the selectivity of language. Due to the inability of language to express all the information of space, the description of space is often vague and not specific. The detail of narration and the selectivity of language determine the effect of spatial reproduction in narrative. The second is the perspective structure. The perspective of the text will affect the reconstruction of space in the narrative, and the "there" that transcends the fictional space of the text and the "here" that is confined to the fictional space of the text will form different points of attention. They can transform each other during the narrative process, but different focuses will produce different spatial effects. The third is the linearity of the text. The order of language and its conveyed information in the narrative process affects the direction and trajectory of spatial movement and change.

1.4 Literature Review of *Young Goodman Brown* from Narrative Perspective

There have been dozens of researches on *Young Goodman Brown* in foreign and domestic countries. Some of them focus on religious ethics, humanity, and images of women. In terms of Hawthorne's writing style, some of them analyze the name of the characters and the image portrayal, the image of the scenery, the plot of the work, and the Christian archetype. Other perspectives are employed to explain the symbolic significance of the results, interpreting the diversity, ambiguity, and contradiction of symbolic meaning in the story. The early papers concentrate on the historical background, symbolism, narrative structure, and theme in *Young Goodman Brown*.

Previous studies examining the narrative techniques of *Young Goodman Brown* by Nathaniel Hawthorne are relatively scarce but offer valuable insights into the writer's literary and narrative significance. Walsh(1958) puts forward the story's three fold symbolic pattern. Hawthorne's symbols are expert, subtle, and brilliant enough to dispose the reader to overlook any narrative deficiencies. Hostetler(1982) analyzes the work from the narrative techniques. Hawthorne's structure and theme imply that one could create a positive human existence through

honest relationships. the repeated theme of Hawthorne's novels. Qi Wenjin(2012) links *Young Goodman Brown* with Joyce's *The Dead*. Hawthorne adopts the narrative structure of the trilogy and symbolism, which helps to reveal the evil and darkness inside human nature. Meng Xueqin and Zhang Qin(2015) apply spatial criticism to question the whole existence of *Young Goodman Brown*. The forest space controls people's thoughts and life. At the same time, it also shows the suffering of the severe distortion of human nature and the personality of the individual spiritual space of the characters under strict social space monitoring.

These studies offer valuable perspectives on the narrative analysis of *Young Goodman Brown*, contributing significantly to a broader understanding of its literary and narrative significance, but Hawthorne's narrative charm in this story has not received enough attention. In this context, this paper intends to study three kinds of narrative space in *Young Goodman Brown* from Gabriel Zoran's spatial criticism theory and explore Hawthorne's superb narrative techniques.

2. THREE NARRATIVE SPACES IN *YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN*

2.1 Topographical Space in *Young Goodman Brown*

Topographical structure is at the highest level of reconstructed space level, and it is regarded as a self-existence, independent of existing structure of the world and the order of the text. It encompasses "the horizontal structure of the world, relationships such as inside and outside, far and near, center and periphery, city and village, etc., it may also include contours signifying the vertical organization of the world and representing the opposition up-down"(Zoran, 316). As Zoran further explains "The topographical space is conceived as a kind of map based on elements from the entire text, including all its components. This space can be divided up according to the modes of existence of its units. These modes of existence may overlap with the factor of topographical location, for example the world of man". In *Young Goodman Brown*, Hawthorne describes two main topographical spaces: The Salem Village and the forest. Two different topographical spaces accommodate two different social environment and the spiritual development of Brown. On the one hand, Hawthorne shows the specific characteristics of these two topographical spaces through careful description, which provides the background for plot and character shaping; on the other hand, with the transformation of topographical space, the theme gradually shows up, thus showing the mood and thinking of

Hawthorne in different topographical spaces.

2.1.1 The Salem Village

The story begins in the village of Salem as Brown prepares to leave his home for a party in the forest. Life in the village is calm and orderly, but Brown's heart is full of curiosity and longing for the unknown. This topographical space sets the backdrop for the journey Brown is about to embark on.

The Salem Village represents Brown's daily life and social environment, where he grew up and lived. Here, Brown is an ordinary villager who maintains a normal relationship with his family and neighbors. The people in the village are familiar to him, including his wife Faith, the priest, and other villagers. These characters played a steady and traditional role in Brown's life. The Salem Village represents the superficial order of society and traditional values. Here, people follow social norms and religious teachings. However, Brown's experience reveals that even in such a seemingly innocent society, there is a dark side to human nature. The village's religious atmosphere and strict social norms provide the backdrop for Brown's inner conflict, as he struggles between adhering to community norms and exploring the unknown and indulging his desires. Besides, the people of the Salem Village live under the watchful eye of the people around them, and over time, everyone becomes a moral hypocrite.

The calm and familiarity of the Salem village contrasts with the forest that is about to be entered, symbolizing a safe and known world.

2.1.2 The Forest

The forest is the main setting of the story, where Brown experiences a series of supernatural events and Revelations (Li Jiao, 134). He meets various characters and witnesses their sins and secrets, which shakes his faith in himself. The scenes in the forest are full of symbolism, representing the dark side of the human heart and the complexity of morality.

The forest is a symbol of mystery and the unknown, a place where Brown attends secret gatherings. Here, he meets a variety of characters, including travelers, Native Americans, and even his ancestors and respected figures in the community. The characters reveal their unseen side in the woods, challenging Brown's ideas about humanity and religion. The forest is a place to explore the depths of humanity and the spiritual world. It symbolizes the temptation, sin and conflict in the depths of the human heart. Brown's experience here made him realize that even the most respected figures could have skeletons in their closet, which had a profound impact on his beliefs and values. The forest serves as a space for

transformation and revelation, prompting Brown to recognize the complexity of human nature and universal sin.

Brown's move from the sunny Salem village to the dark and scary forest means that he is moving from safety to danger, which also implies that Brown is moving from purity to sin (Wilfred, 96). The above two topographical spaces symbolize the change of character, and indicate the twist of Brown's destiny.

2.2 Chronotopic Space in *Young Goodman Brown*

The term chronotopic is introduced into literary criticism by Bakhtin, who uses it to signify the entire complex of space and time together, including physical objects, events, psychology, history, etc. Here, Gabriel Zoran uses it to signify "what may be defined by an integration of spatial and temporal categories as movement and change." Therefore, when using the chronotopic space to reconstruct the text, people should make a difference between synchronic and diachronic relations. The chronotopic relations contains motion and rest. In other words, in zones of action, some objects are in the motion, compared to them, some are at rest. In *Young Goodman Brown*, Hawthorne describes two main chronotopic spaces. In the diachronic level, the paper interprets the motion state of Brown, and in the synchronic level, shows the rest state of Faith. The totally different chronotopic spaces between two major characters highlight characterization.

2.2.1 The Motion State of Brown in Diachronic Relations

Brown lived in the United States during the 19th century, an important period in history when American society was undergoing dramatic changes, including the religious revival, the Industrial Revolution, and westward expansion. In the context of American society during this period, individual identity and social status were constantly challenged and reshaped. As an ordinary villager, Brown represented the plight of ordinary individuals facing temptation and belief crisis in the society at that time.

Brown's character has a sense of curiosity and adventure, which makes him choose to explore the forest in the story. His character reflected the American desire to explore the unknown and to question established norms. Brown's adventure is also a challenge to his own sense of self and worldview. Brown's actions in the story symbolize the individual's struggle in the face of his inner evil and the temptations of the outside world. His experience reflects the complexity of human nature and the difficulty of moral choice, as well as the test of personal faith and morality in society at that time.

Brown moves through the story from curiosity to

disappointment, to despair and irony. His actions drive the plot and ultimately lead to his disillusionment with society and doubts about his faith.

2.2.2 The Rest State of Faith in Synchronic Relations

Faith is a symbol of those individuals in society who maintain stability and hold fast to their faith. Her name itself implies faith and purity, reflecting the moral and religious expectations of society at the time. In the face of social turmoil and temptation, Faith maintains a rest state, which reflects her adherence to traditional values.

Faith has stable and conservative character. She is disturbed by Brown's risky behavior and tries to maintain Brown's faith and innocence through the symbol of the pink ribbon. Faith's character represents a fear of change and uncertainty and a preference for tradition and stability. The static state of Faith emphasizes resistance to change and temptation, as well as adherence to traditional beliefs. Her presence is in stark contrast to Brown's, highlighting conflicts and challenges in personal ethics and beliefs.

Although Faith does not appear much in the story, her symbolic significance runs through the whole story. Her pink ribbon is a symbol of Brown's Faith, as well as his memory of Faith and desire for a better vision. Faith's rest state contrasts with Brown's motion state, revealing the theme's discussion on faith and doubt.

2.3 Textual Space in *Young Goodman Brown*

As for the level of textual structure, Zoran said, "it encompasses the structure which is imposed on space by the fact that it is formed within the verbal text. The objects structured belong to the reconstructed world, but the structure itself is imposed on them by the linguistic nature of the text." In *Young Goodman Brown*, James Joyce mainly uses imagery and omniscient perspective to obtain the textual space of the novel. The use of these two narrative techniques not only shows rich textual space, enhances the artistic charm of the novel, but also makes the characters three-dimensional and vivid, and the theme can be better displayed.

2.3.1 Imagery

The word "imagery" means "a specific image that evokes associations: it can be a word or phrase that describes a specific object, scene, or action, which has a extended meaning." (Baladick, 218). First of all, the forest as a topographical space is an important imagery in the story. It represents temptation and loss. Brown's journey into the forest symbolizes his inner struggle and temptation, and the darkness and mystery of the forest reflect the moral test he is about to

face (Sun Liang, 51). In addition, the road in the forest also symbolizes the gradual blurring of the boundary between good and evil in Brown's life. In the course of his exploration, he constantly finds that the people he respects may also participate in evil rituals, thus reflecting the complexity of the coexistence of good and evil in human nature.

The staff is a symbol of his religious beliefs and moral values. During the journey, he relied on the rod to support himself, as did his religious morality. When Brown goes deep into the forest and finally gives up the walking stick, it symbolizes that he has abandoned his faith and moral code, choosing to associate with the evil presence in the forest, and this act marks the destruction of his moral sense. Besides, the pink ribbon, given to Brown by his wife Faith, represents youth, purity and love. Mark Van Doren remarks that "few things in fiction are more startling or more important" (Wagenknecht, 61). In the story, a pink ribbon is tied to a tree branch, and as Brown goes deeper into the forest, the color of the ribbon becomes dim, symbolizing the gradual loss of love and purity in his heart.

In general, Hawthorne uses these images to show the hero's moral and faith trials, as well as the complex and subtle struggle between good and evil in human nature. Through these symbolism techniques, Hawthorne not only deepens the theme of the story, but also makes the work have a broader interpretation space and far-reaching thinking value.

2.3.2 Omniscient perspective

Hawthorne's use of the omniscient perspective in *Young Goodman Brown* is intended to provide a comprehensive story experience that allows readers to delve into the inner world of the protagonist while also understanding the complex themes of the story from multiple perspectives. Omniscient perspective not only helps to promote the development of the plot, but also helps to deepen the discussion of good and evil, faith and human nature.

The omniscient perspective allows the reader to see inside Brown's inner workings and understand his conflicts of thought and emotional changes. For example, when Brown meets the old man in the forest, the reader can sense his hesitation and fear, as well as his wavering faith. Through the omniscient perspective, readers can gain a fuller understanding of Brown's character and his moral values. This perspective reveals Brown's understanding of good and evil, as well as his struggles and choices in the face of temptation.

The omniscient perspective shows the complexity of human nature. Brown's experience opens the reader's eyes to both good and evil in human nature and the different choices

people may make in the face of temptation. The omniscient perspective gives the reader an insight into Brown's moral values and his understanding of good and evil. This perspective reveals Brown's moral struggles and his doubts about his own moral judgment and that of others.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Major Findings

Young Goodman Brown is a work of great narrative tension, and Hawthorne's superb and unobstructed spatial narrative skills make it rich in reading and interpretation. From the perspective of topographical space, the Salem Village and the forest, as the physical space where Brown experience a series of mysterious and terrifying events that profoundly change Brown's views and beliefs about the world. From the perspective of chronotopic space, the rest state of Faith in synchronic relation represents a fear of change and uncertainty and a preference for tradition and stability, while the motion state of Brown in diachronic relation reflects the American desire to explore the unknown and to question established norms. The textual space shaped by Hawthorne is reflected in the creation of imagery and omniscient perspective, these two enhances the mysterious atmosphere plot. The narration of multi-level spatial dimensions contributes to the development of the drama plot and the highlight of the themes. In conclusion, the three spaces produce a remarkable effect in shaping characterization, promoting plot development, deepening the theme and fostering artistic effects in the novel. The analysis sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how narrative spaces enhance the character description and the theme of sin and conflict in the depths of the human heart, inviting continued inquiry into *Young Goodman Brown*.

The above findings have broader implications for appreciating Nathaniel Hawthorne's novels and understanding how narrative space contributes to the character portrayal and theme prominence. Besides, the study underscores the importance of exploring such narrative devices to unveil layers of meaning and thematic resonance within poetic works.

2.2 Limitations and Further Suggestions

While the study contributes significantly to understanding the characters and theme of *Young Goodman Brown* and the narrative techniques of Nathaniel Hawthorne, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. One limitation is the research horizons need to be broadened. A comparative exploration across multiple stories of Hawthorne or other writers in the same period may be unveil recurring narrative patterns or

variations, thus offering insights into Hawthorne's narrative techniques in his works. Another possible limitation could be the subjectivity and the author's limited knowledge cannot be avoided completely in completing the study. The above limitations may be the deficiencies of the paper but also the potential points for further research in future study.

In conclusion, while this paper advances the comprehension of *Young Goodman Brown*, recognizing its limitations paves road for future research to build upon these foundations and further illuminate the intricate world of Hawthorne's novels and his narrative techniques.

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