

Analysis of the Gothic Aesthetics of “The Fall of the House of Usher” from Spatial Narrative

Zhuxin Xie

School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, 430070, China

Keywords: The Fall of the House of Usher; Spatial narrative; Topographical space; Chronotopic space; Textual space

Abstract: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" is a classic Gothic novel that has captivated readers for decades. The story presents an unforgettable atmosphere of terror and suspense and has distinct spatial characteristics. Influenced by the Western narrative theory of "spatial turn," the concept of "spatial narrative" emerged in China in the late 20th century and has become a hot topic in literary and narrative studies. Based on the spatial narrative theories of Frank, Chatman, and Zoran, this paper will analyze and interpret the work "The Fall of the House of Usher" from three aspects: topographical space, chronotopic space, and textual space. The analysis reveals the positive role of spatial narrative in the development of the novel's plot, the shaping of character imagery, and the revelation of the character's inner thoughts, making readers feel the novel's unique Gothic aesthetics. This research hopes to provide a new perspective on the study of Edgar Allan Poe's works and offer new materials for developing spatial narrative studies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Edgar Allan Poe is considered a great Gothic writer and has a unique place in the history of literature. Poe's works continue to be admired as classics, replete with Gothic themes such as foreboding atmospheres, terrifying descriptions, macabre plot twists, death, madness, surreal subconscious states, and characters torn apart by inner turmoil. The Gothic element is not only horror but also contains beauty. Horror is born from beauty, and things are often more beautiful and sublime because of horror. Like Edgar Allan Poe's, Gothic elements are not pure horror but more of a revelation of beauty and an interpretation of life. It makes people feel excited and gives them deep thoughts. At the same time, Poe's Gothic novel is also relevant. It reflects the alienated psychological state of people: loneliness, fear, anxiety, and despair. In the novel, readers can place themselves in a safe place where they are not harmed by destructive imagination, and at the same time, they can enjoy the aesthetic pleasure brought by horror, thrill, and darkness.

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," written in 1839, is a classic of this kind of work, highly concentrated in this novel has the most horrific and classic Gothic style elements: mysterious and depressing atmosphere, highly ornate but gloomy and decaying ancient castle mansion, frightening dead body resurrection, etc. The utilization and exploration of space in the work

break the traditional understanding of space during the romantic period, surpasses readers' reading expectations, and reaches the ultimate exploration of space, forming a unique spatial meaning in this work. The novel tells the story of the "collapse" of an old family, that is, "I" was invited by my childhood friend Roderick Usher to the gloomy Usher House as a guest, and then witnessed Usher's insanity, Miss Madeleine's resurrection from the dead, and the successive deaths of the brother and sister. Eventually, "I" fled in haste, and the House collapsed and was swallowed up by the lake.

1.2 Theory

Traditional narrative fiction tends to prioritize time, considering the narrative must unfold in a sequence of events within a time frame. Often space needs to be noticed or relegated to a secondary role. However, modern and postmodern novelists have consciously employed space as an integral component of their narrative strategies. Space serves not only as a backdrop but is also a conscious technique and means of expression. In these works, authors utilize space to depict time, structure the narrative, advance the plot, and explore the themes of their works. Such writings create spatial effects that can only be fully appreciated by readers who use their imaginations and senses to perceive the work as a whole.

With the "spatial turn" catalyzing the humanities, literary studies have similarly shifted towards embracing space as a fundamental principle of understanding alongside time and history. Rather than viewing space as an inert, indifferent background, scholars now recognize space's interpretive and polysemic dimensions, particularly in reproducing space in literary works. The concept of "spatial narrative" began to appear in the late 20th century and attracted the attention of domestic scholars. After the 21st century, it gradually became a hot topic in literature and narrative research and a high-frequency word in the title of literature research papers.

The field of spatial narrative research was initially pioneered by foreign scholars, whose ideas and writings have contributed significantly to its ongoing evolution.

In 1954, Joseph Frank pioneered the theory of spatial form in the novel in his article "The Spatial Form of the Modern Novel," creating a new paradigm in literary studies.

Another scholar, Seymour Chatman, introduced the concept of "story-space" in his treatise "Story and Discourse," which refers to the place or location of actions or events in a story. He argues that "the dimension of story-events is temporal, while the dimension of story-existents (characters and settings) in story-space is spatial [1]."

In contrast to the above, Gabriel Zoran delves deeply into the spatial organization of narrative literature in his work. In his paper "Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative," he inventively suggests three levels of narrative space: the topographical space, which refers to space as a fixed entity; the chronotopic space, which refers to the spatial structure formed by events and movements; and the textual space, which is the space represented in the text. Zoran also suggests locating the "scene," the fundamental spatial unit, at the textual level, where the reader generates an abstract idea, the concept of the field of vision, while reading, deciphering, and reconstructing their perception. Therefore, he highlights that space is a process of original creation by the author and active engagement by the reader. This is still the most practical and highly theoretical theory of space.

1.3 Outline

Although previous studies have covered several perspectives, studies based on spatial narrative theory are still inadequate for the novel "The Fall of the House of Usher." This article will analyze the three spatial levels in "The Fall of the House of Usher" based on the spatial narrative theories of Frank, Chatman, and Zoran: topographical, chronotopic, and textual.

2. Literature Review

2.1 About the author and novel

Edgar Allan Poe is widely regarded as one of the most unconventional writers in the history of American literature. He skillfully employed “Gothic” elements to structure his narratives, develop his plots, flesh out his characters, and explore complex psychological themes. His literary techniques and theories were vastly different from the mainstream literature of his time. However, his pioneering sensibilities led to a need for more understanding from readers, writers, and critics for many years. It was not until the 20th century that scholars recognized the profound impact of Poe’s creative vision. Today, he is commonly acknowledged as a trailblazer of modernist literature, a seminal figure in the history of the short story, a pioneer of psychoanalytic criticism, and the father of the modern detective novel.

Since its publication, scholars have explored the Gothic aesthetics of “The Fall of the House of Usher” from multiple perspectives. They interpret the novel from the themes, characters, atmosphere, writing techniques, artistic features, and other aspects. To be more specific, Kendall thinks that Madeline is a vampire and Roderick is her final victim[2]. Wang Guifen and Zheng Hengqi analyze the four levels of vocabulary, syntax, rhetoric, and articulation in the novel from the perspective of stylistics[3]. Zhang Xiaoying compares “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher” to explore the modernist features in Edgar Allan Poe’s death-horror novels and analyzes Edgar Allan Poe as the revelator of modernist literature. Zhang Zhao and Zhang Qiaoyi analyze the psychological changes of the novel’s main character, Usher, from the perspective of Jung’s personality theory, using shadow, anima, and personality mask theories to explore the fundamental causes of Usher’s tragedy and explore Poe’s detailed portrayal of the character[4]. Bai Shenshen considers *The Fall of the House of Usher* as a literary text full of musical qualities. By discussing the functional significance of music in the text, he finds that the novel’s imitation of music is an ideal rather than a pessimistic expression of Poe and has a profound aesthetic and cultural significance[5].

Furthermore, in spatial narrative analysis, Fang Ziying has observed that the plot of this renowned horror novel is justified through its narrative focus and its meaning, both of which are primarily derived from the spatial constructions within the story. These constructions are anchored in the minutiae of spatial depiction rather than the veracity of the plot itself[6]. Hua Lina reveals the non-negligible relevance of the gloomy atmosphere of the Usher House and the family's decay and destruction of space[7]. Li Tong also mentions Poe's use of the extraordinary power of fear to break through the shell of society in an attempt to reveal the most hidden inner world of man and explore the death instinct. In Poe's exploration of the human spiritual world, the depiction of space plays a supporting role in the sublimation of the theme[8]. Despite the existence of some literary analyses in this area, a more specific and detailed exploration of the spatial narrative is still needed, and there remains ample room for future development.

2.2 Theoretical framework

According to Zoran, topographical space can manifest as a range of distinct, relatively independent spatial concepts, such as towns, villages, the interiors of houses, and isolated islands[9]. Alternatively, it can take on abstract spatial forms that represent the characters’ existence in the narrative, like reality and dreams. To construct topographical space, Zoran suggests that authors can use direct descriptions, as well as memories, descriptions, and dialogues between characters.

Chronotopic space includes both co- and ephemeral relations. The former describes how objects, whether stationary or moving, are spatially related at any given point in the narrative. The latter refers to a specific path or direction of spatial progression in a particular narrative text, which can be

impacted by different factors, such as the author's intent, the character's motivations and actions, and obstacles in the plot. The chronotopic space portrays the narrative's dynamic intersection of time and space. This is where the story unfolds in a particular location while the location continues to exist and transform, influencing the plot's advancement.

Textual space refers to the space presented within the text itself. According to Gabriel Zoran, this spatial form is composed of various narrative techniques, such as juxtaposition and flashback, which convey a sense of co-temporality. Through this textual space, a psychological space is created, unique to each author's choice and use of language. This psychological space can significantly affect the reader's experience and interpretation of a text. In the horror novels of Edgar Allan Poe, language is used as a powerful tool in the narrative process. Every word is carefully chosen, and each description is crafted to create a specific effect. Through the use of multiple images and the technique of juxtaposition, Poe creates a unified effect, or what he calls the "aesthetics of unity of effect." His goal is not only to scare his readers but to allow them to share his creative vision and understand the underlying themes of his works.

2.3 Importance of spatial elements in Gothic Literature

In Gothic literature, unlike other kinds of literature, the spatial elements are not all reflected in the apparent geographical and "space-time" space. However, some are presented more subtly and in more diverse forms, such as the use of textual space and the creation of psychological space. The use of spatial elements is essential in Gothic literature, as these elements not only help to create an overall atmosphere and mood in the work, build suspense and suspense, and accumulate explosive plot points but also allow readers to explore psychological themes and sort out the logical clues of the novel, thus better understanding the literature itself. Also, because of the fallibility of memory and the shortcomings of using traditional narrative techniques to shape character images, some creative writers use spatial elements to portray character images vividly.

Moreover, in Poe's Gothic novels, the reader is sometimes presented with a method of regulating the balance of mind and body that is not readily accepted by the reader and is harmful. However, it must be admitted that while reading Poe's Gothic novels, horror and ugliness occupy the reader's aesthetic vision. In the words of horror and evil, Edgar Allan Poe also achieves the aesthetic function of sublimating and purifying human morality and spirit[10]. When space is used to express Poe's implied thoughts and the inner thrust of the novel, it is also evident that Poe's fictional technique allows the reader to know the moral and ethical teachings of the sea under the inculcation of art, but not in a didactic and straightforward and boring way, but in a novel and impactful way.

The use of language is diverse, but in any case, using spatial elements can help people appreciate the work from another dimension, explore the author's careful design, and feel the pure artistic beauty of Gothic literature.

3. The Topographical Space of "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Enclosed spaces serve as a natural setting for exploring utopian and anti-utopian societies and often serve as a fertile ground for the creation of detective novels and gothic tales. Edgar Allan Poe often sets the objective place of the story in a relatively closed space, such as a small abandoned house, a deserted wood, or a secluded street. He explores the psychological and emotional changes of the characters in the confined space. The characteristics of the space set the theme of the novel and determine the overall style of the novel.

3.1 Architectural appearance

In the article "The Fall of the House of Usher," typical Gothic architecture is chosen as the place of the story. This architectural style flourished on the European continent from the 12th to the 16th centuries, boasting characteristics such as ethereal, slender, towering, and sharp features. Through exceptional architectural techniques, gothic architecture effectively conveys strong emotions of mystery, mournfulness, and sublimity. The distinctly irregular shapes of spires and towers in Gothic architecture represent the intense emotions that the architects were feeling. The essence of Gothic architecture lies in its ability to express human self-consciousness in a fierce and uncontrollable fashion designed to evoke strong emotional responses, be it awe, pity, sympathy, or fear. These notions of terror, passion, and intensity are also the very foundations of Gothic literature. The primary characteristic of Gothic literature is its subjectivity, as it portrays extreme events and bizarre and horrifying scenes and strongly expresses personal emotions with emphasis on irrational elements while probing the depths of the human psyche.

3.2 The exterior space of the House

In the course of the text, Poe uses the narrative from far to near, from outside to inside, to shape this Gothic architecture and lead the reader into the Usher House. With the presentation of this space, the novel's themes are also limited to thrillers, spirits, death, etc. At the beginning of the novel, "through a singularly dreary tract of the country...upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain-upon the bleak walls-upon the vacant eye-like windows-upon a few rank sedges-and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees", these very horrific Gothic style words paint a vivid picture of a desolate wilderness, where there is no sign of life and the oppressive external space evokes a feeling of despair and hopelessness. This effectively establishes a gloomy and depressing tone for the entire novel. At the same time, the entire environment is closed and isolated, in line with the setting of an old and declining family with a single hereditary lineage. Nevertheless, this external space is constantly and intensely changing, from being haunted by "leaden-hued vapor" to being enveloped by "unnatural light" to the appearance of a "blood-red moon." These changes contrast with the dull and depressing interior space of the House of Usher, which remains unchanged for a long time, implying the possibility of change and making the final ending of the collapse of the House of Usher seem more reasonable. The depth of the space effectively renders the atmosphere and makes the plot more explosive.

3.3 The interior space of the House

As we move from the open space outside the House to the space inside, from Usher's room upstairs to the cellar where Miss Madeleine's coffin rests, the author depicts the space in detail with the first person's gaze, and along with the narrator's walking observation, also leaves the reader full of imagination for the image of the owner of the House, adding a complete sense of suspense and tension to the story. For example, Usher's room is "large and lofty," with "narrow and pointed windows" and a "black oaken floor" surrounded by "dark draperies," such a deep, gloomy space can reveal that the owner of the House is by no means an active, optimistic, life-loving person, but more likely to be a lonely, depressed, sickly person. The appearance of Usher's siblings is undoubtedly a prelude to confirming the large number of space descriptions in the previous article and is an accurate answer to the reader's speculation. Poe purposefully uses spatial descriptions to highlight the lonely, sensitive, and even psychologically distorted characteristics of the hero, Roderick, and the weak and dying state of the heroine, Miss Madeleine, under the torture of illness.

3.4 Reflection of social space

"The Fall of the House of Usher" may seem exaggerated in its Gothic horror elements. However, when examined from a spatial narrative perspective, the accumulation of Gothic imagery such as the "mansion of gloom," coffin, iron door with immense weight, etc., all reflect the inner desire to barricade and restrain the female characters in the story forever. This desire culminates in death, as Roderick Usher buries his sister alive, driven by both a disturbed mind and a need to control her. Based on the decline of the Usher family described in the article, it can be assumed that Miss Madeleine may soon marry and leave and that death is the only way to prevent her escape. Essentially, Poe follows the conventional Gothic fiction approach but also materializes the personal spiritual world into a tangible spatial narrative, reflecting the unique psychological state of America during the Great Transformation in the early 19th century.

Thus, while the House of Usher serves as the story's physical backdrop, it functions more as a surreal landscape of the characters' psyche rather than a tangible setting within society. As such, the space embodies the characters' existence and mental states and significantly informs the work's plot, characters, and overarching themes. It serves as the foundation upon which each aspect of the novel develops and progresses.

4. The Chronotopic Space of "The Fall of the House of Usher"

4.1 Weakening of time

A narrative is fundamentally an act of language, inherently linear and temporal. As a result, most literary studies have traditionally focused on the temporal aspects of literary works, ignoring the spatial dimension of the language used. However, in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the significance of spatial narrative is demonstrated to its fullest extent. The plot development is entirely based on the spatial framework, and it is difficult for readers to feel the existence of time because Poe deliberately avoids using a large number of clear time indicators. Whether it is the "day in the autumn" mentioned at the beginning of the story, or the subsequent "several days," "one evening," "some days," or "the night of the seventh or eighth day," these words and phrases only vaguely indicate the passage of time. As the story progresses from the House of Usher's surroundings to Roderick's room and finally to the vault housing the coffin, the transformation and depth of the spatial settings propel the narrator closer to the truth and the story's conclusion. From reuniting with childhood playmates to witnessing the death of a good friend and even being swallowed up by the tarn in an instant after the collapse of the House, all the changes seem to have happened in the blink of an eye. The sin of Roderick burying his sister alive could no longer be concealed within the sealed House after my visit. The truth was ultimately revealed, yet the tragedy still ended in sorrow. The whole story weakens time and emphasizes space, which is a paradoxical and absurd creation.

The story's tension is created through the construction and interweaving of different spaces, and with every shift and change comes a corresponding shift in the reader's psychological space. This style of writing not only advances the narrative development in a logical spatial sequence but also enhances the eeriness of the story plot, emphasizing the horror theme of the novel. The story ends with an explosive finish that leaves the reader caught up in the escalating tension created by the plot but caught off guard by rapidly changing events. It firmly grips readers' interest in reading and leaves them with endless reflections on the unique and shocking horror effects.

4.2 The symbolic meaning between space and characters

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," the old House is the only setting where the characters move,

and the plot unfolds. From the moment the narrator takes his first look at the House, he notes “a barely perceptible fissure,” which serves as both a potential indication of the House’s imminent collapse and a symbol of Roderick’s approaching mental breakdown. The intrinsic connection between the House and its enigmatic owner, Roderick, provides a special symbolic significance to the House, playing an essential role in character development and thematic emphasis. The deteriorating state of the House symbolizes Roderick’s decline in vitality, and the increasingly dilapidated space in which the story unfolds sets the tone for the fate of the novel’s characters. In essence, the House of Usher can be viewed as Roderick Usher’s body, and the gothic gloom of the dark interior serves as an embodiment of his tormented psyche. As the novel progresses, exploring the House becomes as much a process of delving deeper into the true nature of Roderick as it is a reminder of the impending specter of death, driving the narrative towards its climactic finale of decay and mortality. This special symbolic significance is embodied in the following:

First, the description of Usher House’s exterior mirrors Roderick’s appearance. “Bleak walls,” “vacant eye-like windows,” and “rank sedges” correspond to “cadaverousness of complexion” and “hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity.” Both suggest that Roderick is a gloomy and lifeless character. Interestingly, the text notes, “No portion of the masonry had fallen ... a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones.” This paradoxical description also extends to Roderick’s physical appearance, with “ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous luster of the eye.” Both Usher House and Roderick exist in a state of contradiction, seemingly lifeless yet emitting an eerie vibrancy.

Secondly, closure acts as a shared characteristic between the House and Roderick. The interaction between space and character is reciprocal - space influences the characters' psychology, evoking emotions such as terror and tension. At the same time, characters also leave their mark on the space they occupy. In this sense, this closure fuels a vicious cycle that results in the story's tragic end. In the novel, the Usher siblings are raised in the Usher house, living an isolated life. Roderick, however, is already plagued with a family history of mental illness, rendering him susceptible to extreme stress, introversion, and depression. Although the shelter of the environment protects them from the outside world’s incursion and offense, it invariably results in mental torture and exhaustion for them. Even I, a new visitor from the outside world, felt uncontrollable sadness when I first entered the House of Usher. Roderick’s long-term anxiety and panic in a confined space contributed to his mental disorder and psychological distortion. Hence, the interplay between characters and space drives the narrative progress, cultivates conflicts, and magnifies the novel’s sense of thrill.

Lastly, regarding fate, the author focuses on the description of space and bestows upon it an individual destiny. “A barely perceptible fissure” foreshadows the possible collapse of the House of Usher at the beginning of the story. Ultimately, in conjunction with the deaths of the Usher siblings, the House appears to have reached its limit and crumbled. At this juncture, the inextricable link between character and space becomes apparent. In the absence of the Usher siblings, the Usher House would be an isolated and decrepit property. With the Usher House, the activities of the characters in the story could have unfolded.

5. The Textual Space of “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

5.1 Image juxtaposition

“Juxtaposition” is a narrative technique that juxtaposes separate but thematically relevant episodes and images within a narrative. This technique involves incorporating scattered elements that may not directly contribute to the main plot but are still integral to the overall theme or message of the work.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," Poe juxtaposes multiple images in his narration, which obstructs the flow of narrative time and highlights the form of space. "Images include 'objects' and

'events,' mainly consisting of mental images of concrete objects and events in the external world. The importance of imagery is self-evident whether it is for human cognitive activities or literary and artistic creation." [11]. In the novel, Poe references a particular painting by Roderick, which depicts "the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device." This painting is highly similar to the vault where Miss Madeline's body is placed later in the story and can boldly be imagined in conjunction with the female physiological structure based on the brother-sister incest implied in the novel. However, in any case, the spatial imagery of the painting points toward death. In addition, the author also mentions a ballad, "The Haunted Palace," in which the verses outline "a fair and stately palace," with "pearl and ruby" decorating the doors, just like the House of Usher in the old days; the owner of the House of Usher was like the king in the palace, "wit" and "wisdom," accompanied by "Spirits moving musically." The juxtaposition of these descriptions with the dilapidated House of Usher and the deranged Roderick is a stark contrast, emphasizing the inseparability of the fate of the House and its owner.

In particular, Poe uses a spatial image, the "tarn" next to the House of Usher. The lake acts as a mirror, sometimes reflecting the desolate and decaying shadow of the House. However, it is also shrouded by a "pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued." This layer of fog around the lake reflects the consciousness of Roderick's mind. As described in the novel, "his action was alternately vivacious and sullen," mirroring the changing state of his mind. The use of spatial imagery in this way adds to the story's overall atmosphere and deepens our understanding of the character's psyche.

5.2 First-person narrative perspective

Poe implements first-person narration, allowing the reader to understand the entire story space from the narrator's perspective. As Liang Yao (2011) explains, "The narrator in Poe's works is the protagonist, which erases any gap between the narrator and the narration and enables the reader to penetrate the main character's spiritual world. Poe's tales of the weird are rooted in the mysticism of the spiritual realm, and the first-person perspective meets this requirement [12]." As the narrator, "I" play the role of the horror story's creator, magnifier, and portrayer. However, "I" also function as a character in the narrative, an object that is disturbed by the horrific environment. The story's setting from the character's perspective is not just the tangible realm within the narrative but also the space as perceived by the characters, projecting their psychological reactions. For instance, when "I" enter the House of Usher, the description of "the Gothic archway," "the somber tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies," the peculiar family doctor, and other sensory details that "I" witnessed and experienced become integral components of the narrative that the reader fully embraces without any dilution. The abstract nature of the text adds to the richness of the reader's imagination [13].

Secondly, the use of the first-person point of view not only creates a sense of immersion but also crucially contributes to the eerie atmosphere of the story. As the narrator, although I shared a childhood friendship with Usher, I knew very little about his family, his House, and his siblings [14]. The story is riddled with gaps and needs to be completed, leaving many areas of uncertainty and ambiguity. Furthermore, as revealed in the novel, I am a psychologically sensitive person prone to mysterious thoughts and associations. Some perceptions and thoughts that arise during a trance or nervous overstimulation may be perceived as muddled delusions of the self. Despite these constraints, rather than discouraging readers from continuing with the story, they instead arouse a strong sense of curiosity which compels readers to actively engage in the construction of the story [15]. This participation increases the pleasure and experience of reading such a mysterious and dangerous tale.

Furthermore, in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the narrator can also be interpreted as a rational

voice intentionally created by the author to witness death and represent external stimuli invading Usher's psyche.

5.3 Exquisite text brings purification of the human soul

Poe displays a remarkable ability to construct readers' interpretation of objects through intricately crafted descriptions and immersing them into the novel's atmosphere. His choice and usage of language are positive techniques to establish the atmosphere[16]. He utilizes the general characteristics of human physiology and psychology to build the novels' ambiance, captivate, and even maneuver the readers' psyche to form a spiritual relationship between the author and the readers.

From the initial sentence of the novel's description of natural spaces, Poe uses words such as "dull," "dark," "soundless," "oppressively low," "alone," "singularly dreary," and other descriptive terms, which immediately create a somber sensation for the reader[17]. This generates a blend of melancholy and horror and sets a sorrowful tone for the plot. As we read further, similar words and phrases will be applied more often, and horror will be expressed more extremely. However, while we may fear the threat that the words convey to our minds in horror-filled novels, we know full well that it will not be encountered in real life[18]. In other words, in the absence of real danger, fiction makes people feel safe while experiencing extreme danger and death. Not only do people get a special kind of relaxation and pleasure, but they also get a kind of "purification."

Poe had a more profound interest than just external horror. His goal was to delve into the horrors that lie inside each person and explore them. In his textual space, he aims to bring the spiritual connections often concealed in our subconscious to our conscious awareness[19]. He encourages us to bravely confront and deal with them by doing so. Along with the unpredictable plot development, Poe's impactful words stir up courage and strength in the reader's heart to overcome the horror and encourage people to face their true selves bravely.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of the topographical, chronotopic, and textual space used in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" reveals that space serves not only as the setting of the story and a necessary element of the narrative, but can also be utilized to symbolize time, structure the novel, and drive the narrative progression forward. At the same time, exploring the spatial description in literature reveals its ability to set the mood, depict characters' psychological and personality traits, emphasize themes, increase the vibrancy of the storyline, and enhance the artistic impact. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" is a masterpiece that exhibits exceptional literary quality. Reexamining this Gothic novel from the perspective of spatial narrative enhances our understanding of Gothic novels and enriches the practical application of spatial narrative theory. More importantly, it allows them to rediscover the profound beauty of the "horror of the mind" that lies at the heart of Poe's work.

References

- [1] Chatman S. *Story and Discourse [M]*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- [2] Abbes S K. *Chronotope and Imagination in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" [D]*. 2016.
- [3] Guifen Wang, Zheng Hengqi. *Gothic Aesthetics in The Collapse of the House of Usher -- from the perspective of Stylistics [J]*. *English Plaza*, 2018, No. 095 (1): 6-8.
- [4] Zhao Zhang, Zhang Qiaoyi. *An interpretation of The Fall of the House of Usher from the perspective of Jungian personality Theory [J]*. *English Plaza*, 2020, No. 131 (23): 10-13.
- [5] Xinxin Bai. *Musical elements in Edgar Allan POE's The Fall of the House of Usher [D]*. *China Foreign Affairs University*, 2022.

- [6] Ziyang Fang, Ying Fang. *On the spatial narrative in The Fall of the House of Usher* [J]. *Drama House*, 2018, No. 293 (29): 212-213+216.
- [7] Hua Lina. *Spatial interpretation of Edgar Allan POE's The Collapse of the House of Usher* [J]. *Modern Commerce and Industry*, 2020 (12): 212-213.
- [8] Xueqin Li. *Analysis on the Gothic style in Edgar Allan POE's novel The Fall of the House of Usher* [J]. *Author*, 2013, No. 536 (20): 67-68.
- [9] Zoran G. *Towards a theory of space in the narrative* [J]. *Poetics Today*, 1984 (5):309-335.
- [10] Tong Li. *Spatial representation of Edgar Allan POE's horror novels* [J]. *Journal of Tianjin University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2013, 15 (05): 476-480.
- [11] Diyong Long. *Spatial Narratology*. Shanghai Normal University, 2008.
- [12] Yao Liang. *From Hoffman to Allan POE -- On the Development of the "horror and grotesque" aesthetic form* [J]. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2011, 41 (01): 171-173.
- [13] do Vale N S S, Moura C. *Spatiality In Gothic Literature: An Analysis Of The Fall Of The House Of Usher By Edgar Allan Poe* [J]. *Revista De Letras-Ju çara*, 2020, 4(1): 421-435.
- [14] Kendall L H. *Vampire Motif in the Fall of the House of Usher* [J]. *College English*, 1963, 24 (6):450-453.
- [15] Nadal M. *Trauma and the Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher"* [J]. *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, 2016, 17(2): 178-192.
- [16] Poe Edgar Allan. *The fall of the House of Usher and other writings* [M]. Penguin UK, 2003.
- [17] Pang W, Wang D, Hu S. *Gothicism in the Fall of the House of Usher* [J]. *Advances in Literary Study*, 2015, 3(01): 15.
- [18] Qi J. *The Gothic aesthetic in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Thomas Hardy's "A Pair of Blue Eyes"* [J]. *Neohelicon*, 2022: 1-22.
- [19] Weisheng T. *Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic Aesthetics of Things: Rereading "The Fall of the House of Usher"* [J]. *Style*, 2018, 52(3): 287-301.