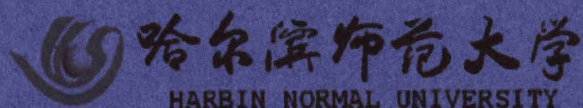




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# 硕士学位论文

空间批评理论视阈下的《砖巷》研究

学科专业: 英语语言文学

研究方向: 英国文学

作者姓名: 兰柳

指导教师: 张莹 副教授

哈尔滨师范大学

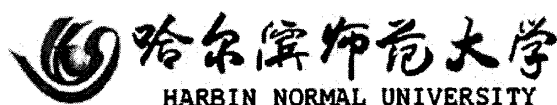
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导 师：张莹 副教授

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master

**A STUDY OF *BRICK LANE* FROM THE  
PERSPECTIVE OF SPATIAL CRITICISM**

<b>Candidate</b>	: Lan Liu
<b>Supervisor</b>	: Zhang Ying Associate Professor
<b>Speciality</b>	: English Language and Literature
<b>Date of Defence</b>	: June, 2019
<b>Degree-Conferring-Institution</b>	: Harbin Normal University

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## 摘要

2003年莫妮卡·阿里的处女作《砖巷》一经出版便好评如潮。小说的主人公纳兹奈恩出生于孟加拉的一个村落里。18岁的时候，她嫁给了一个年过四十且素未谋面的男人。婚后丈夫把她带到了南亚移民聚居地——伦敦东部。纳兹奈恩的移民生活从那里展开，她的内心世界也经历了巨大的变化。

本文从空间批评角度对《砖巷》进行研究。空间批评可表述为空间理论于文学批评领域的话语实践，它是由二十世纪后半叶西方经济及政治领域进程中所呈现的“空间转向”所明确出来的。在分析《砖巷》的地理空间、社会空间和心理空间的基础上，本文揭示了空间背后所存在的社会问题，例如宗教问题，东西方文化的碰撞与融合，女性所受到的压迫与束缚等等。

本文主要包括三大部分：绪论、正文和结语。绪论部分对莫妮卡·阿里的生平经历与《砖巷》的主要内容作了简要的介绍，并分析了《砖巷》的国内外研究现状。正文包括四章内容。第一章为理论基础，简述空间批评理论的起源与发展，并从地理空间、社会空间与心理空间三方面介绍了亨瑞·列斐伏尔的空间批评理论。第二章首先从地理空间展现孟加拉与英国之间存在的巨大差距，其次对《砖巷》中地理空间的转换进行了分析。地理空间的转换为纳兹奈恩的自我解放提供了一个物质条件并帮助纳兹奈恩明确了自我身份。第三章首先从社会空间介绍男性与女性的不平等，其次对《砖巷》中社会空间的转换进行了分析。社会空间的转换帮助纳兹奈恩打破了封建文化的牢笼并帮助她摆脱了男权社会的压迫。第四章首先从心理空间研究孟加拉女性的心理活动，其次对《砖巷》中心理空间的转换进行了分析。心理空间的转换指引纳兹奈恩去重建内心世界并重获自我价值。最后一部分是整篇论文的结论。概括总结全文的主要内容并讨论《砖巷》中的各层空间对塑造人物形象、推动情节发展、增强艺术感染力所起到的重要作用。

**关键词：**《砖巷》；纳兹奈恩；地理空间；社会空间；心理空间

## Abstract

Monica Ali's debut novel *Brick Lane* achieved excellent remarks when it was published in 2003. Nazneen, the novel's protagonist, was born in a Bangladeshi village. At the age of eighteen, she married a man who was more than forty and she had never met before. When they got married, her husband took her to the South Asian stronghold at the east end of London. Nazneen's immigrant life has started from there, and her inner world has also experienced tremendous changes.

This dissertation makes an analysis of *Brick Lane* from the perspective of spatial criticism. Spatial Criticism can be described as the practice in literary area of the spatial theory, which is defined by "spatial turning" that happened in economic and political area in the late 1980s. On the basis of analyzing *Brick Lane*'s geographic space, social space and psychological space, this dissertation reveals the social problems that behind space, such as religious issues, the collision and integration between eastern and western cultures, the oppression and bondage on women and so on.

This dissertation mainly includes three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction part gives a brief description about Monica Ali's life experience and the main content of *Brick Lane*, and makes an analysis about the research status of *Brick Lane* at home and abroad. The main body includes four chapters. The first chapter is the theoretical basis, which states the origin and development of spatial criticism, and introduces Henry Lefebver's spatial criticism from three aspects: geographic space, social space and psychological space. The second chapter firstly reveals the great gap between Bangladesh and Britain from geographic space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the geographic space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the geographic space provides a material condition for Nazneen's self-liberation and helps Nazneen to recognize her identity. The third chapter firstly introduces the inequality between male and female from social space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the social space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the social space helps Nazneen break the cage of the feudal culture and get rid of the



oppression from the patriarchal society. The fourth chapter firstly explores the psychological activities of Bangladeshi women from psychological space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the psychological space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the psychological space guides Nazneen to rebuild her inner world and to regain her self-value. The last part is the conclusion of the dissertation. It summarizes the main contents of the whole paper and analyses the important role of each level of space in *Brick Lane* in shaping the images of characters, promoting the development of plots and enhancing the artistic appeal of the novel.

**Key words:** *Brick Lane*; Nazneen; geographic space; social space; psychological space

## Introduction

### 0.1 A Brief Introduction to Monica Ali and *Brick Lane*

Monica Ali was born in Dhaka in 1967. Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh, while it is also known as the East Pakistan. Her father is Hatem Ali, and he earns his life by teaching. When he studied in the north of England, he met Ali's mother Joyce. They fell in love with each other, and then they decided to go back to Dhaka where they got married.

In 1971, due to the outbreak of the civil war, Ali's parents went to England to live. They settled in Bolton. It was a city located in the northwest of England. Several years later, the sentiment of anti-Asian was on the rise in Britain. There were a few southwest Asian residents in England in the early 1960s. Most of them were professionals, but intervening years had brought a new inflow of poorer immigrants. The social situation became tense, and it led to the founding of a right-wing and anti-immigration party named the national front. The Ali family also had trouble. Her father couldn't find a job. To raise the family, her parents opened a small trinket shop. Under the severe social situation, the Ali family all felt uneasy about their English relatives and strangers. In the Evening Standard, Ali told Cavendish that she experienced racism and she had to pass through people who were carrying National Front slogan. This was a hard period to Monica Ali, and she couldn't forget how insidious it was.

Ali majored in politics and economy in the Wadham College of Oxford University. She worked in a small publishing house in the marketing department. After joining a branding agency, she found a similar job in another publishing house. At the same time, she met her husband. Her husband was a management consultant called Simon Torrance. Later, she quit her work because she became a mother. When her first child Felix was born, Ali decided to join a group to write online short stories. It was her first time to write fictions. As she told the Observer's Harriet Lane that she immediately felt confused about the form of the short story. It seems that she didn't have enough room

to breathe. Though it was hard for her, she could still find interest in writing short stories. Consequently, she kept trying and she never had the thought of giving up.

When her grandfather died, Ali had her second child named Shumi. Ali's grief was tinged with guilt. In the interview with Lane, she said that she wanted to take her daughter to go to her grandfather's funeral. However, it was hard to her when she had a toddler and a baby. She couldn't find the proper opportunity to do things that she wanted to do. Anyway, her grandfather's funeral enlightened her. She thought that there was no need to put off things. As soon as the funeral finished, she and her husband went on vacation. It was then that she began to write the novel of *Brick Lane*.

*Brick Lane* was Ali's debut novel, which was published in 2003. Soon after the book came out, Ali was nominated as *Granta's* "Best Writers under 40". *Brick Lane* records the life of Nazneen, the novel's protagonist, a Bangladeshi girl who was born so sickly that the midwife initially declared to bury her. When she was eighteen, her parents arranged her to marry Chanu. As a Bengali immigrant, Chanu lived in Britain. He was more than forty years old and Nazneen had never met him before. After they got married, Nazneen moved to Tower Hamlets. It was a village that all the Bengali immigrants lived in. Tower Hamlets was a totally strange place to her. At the beginning, she was much like a prisoner in a cage. She stayed in the house all the time and she was afraid to go out. Every day she did nothing except to pray and do housework. During this period, she felt so lonely that she often looked out from the window. As time went by, she began to make friends with her neighbors. Since then, Nazneen's life has changed dramatically. Under the shifting of the geographic space, she recognized her identity. As an immigrant, Nazneen took a positive attitude to the western culture. She gradually adapted to live in London. Under the influence of Razia, she broke the cage of the feudal culture. She was eager to be a modern woman who owned freedom and equality. There was no love between Nazneen and her husband. Nazneen remembered clearly that her husband hugged her only one time because she fainted in the kitchen. He carried her into the living room and laid her on the bed. Later, Karim came into Nazneen's view, and Nazneen fell in love with him. Under the shifting of the social space, Nazneen got rid of the oppression from the patriarchal society. She pursued her love bravely. It was not for a long time that Nazneen gave birth to three kids, a son and two daughters. She felt very sad about her son's death. When her

daughters grew old, they had a deep generation gap with their father. As a mother and a wife, Nazneen had to pacify them carefully. She felt tired about their daily fights. She had to put up with the noise of her children and the nag of her husband. Chanu often talked about his wish of returning to Bangladesh if he had a large amount of money. However, Chanu quit his job and couldn't find a fixed job. In order to support her family, Nazneen found a job as a tailor. During this period, Nazneen's psychology has changed from childish to maturity. Under the shifting of the psychological space, Nazneen rebuilt her inner world and regained her self-value. At the end of the story, her husband returned to Bangladesh as a failed immigrant. Karim, Nazneen's lover, who made a promise to marry her. However, he disappeared after the riot that he initiated. While, Nazneen made up her mind to stay at London with her daughters. With the help of her friends, She found a job to raise her daughters and satisfied them with what they wanted. As an immigrant woman, Nazneen achieved freedom and happiness in London.

*Brick Lane* tells the story of Nazneen from 1988 to 2011. Nazneen married Chanu in 1988, and the event of 9/11 happened in 2001. On the morning of September 11, 2001, 19 terrorists blew up the New York World Trade Center and the Washington Pentagon with four aero buses of the American civil aviation company. There were 2998 person dead in this event. The event shocked everyone. Many people believed that this event was started by Arabs or Islamists. Consequently, almost 1200 non-American citizens were arrested by the US government, and most of them were Arabs and Islamists. As an Arab immigrant, Ali seriously described the social situation in *Brick Lane*. Bangladeshi people organized an institution named Bengal Tigers to fight back this event and the serious racial discrimination. After the event of 9/11, Bangladeshi people had to face the riots caused by racial discrimination. In the western countries, the incident has more or less provoked hostility towards Islamists. As an immigrant in Britain, Ali had a deep feeling about 9/11. She called on people to get rid of racial discrimination. Only in this way can human being live in harmony.

## 0.2 Literature Review

Monica Ali's debut novel *Brick Lane* achieved excellent remarks when it was published in 2003. Consequently, it immediately aroused the attention of critics and

scholars. Foreign scholars and critics have made a thorough analysis about *Brick Lane* from many aspects, which enhanced the popularity of *Brick Lane* in global literature. At the beginning, foreign scholars and critics pay more attention to the novel's immigrant issues. In "Making Bengali *Brick Lane*: claiming and contesting space in East London", Alexander Claire analyses the immigrants' sense of belonging. On the basis of the protest about the film "*Golden Stone Street*" in 2006 and a series of interviews with Bangladeshi immigrants in 2008, Alexander Claire points out that the immigrants lead a hard life and lose their sense of belonging. In the context of economic globalization, he calls on people to concern the immigrants' issues and eliminate the racial discrimination. In "Shaky Ground and New Territoriality in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri", Francoise Kral analyses the influences of new territoriality on immigrants' psychology in *Brick Lane* and *Namesake* from the perspective of Indian immigrants. Faced with the new environment, some people's mental go to break, while others choose silence. Only when the immigrants take a positive attitude to the shifting of the geographic environment, can they survive in foreign countries. Francoise Kral inspires the immigrants to achieve their self-value. In "To know what's what: Forms of migrant knowing in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*", Angelia Poon focuses on the experience of Bangladeshi farmers' knowledge and immigrants' life, showing Nazneen's self-reflection and the choices she made to adapt social transformation. Later, there are also scholars study the novel of *Brick Lane* from other aspects, such as post-colonialism and feminism. In "Beyond the Veil: Re-conceptualizing the Presentations of Bengali Women in Ali's *Brick Lane*", Sana Imtiaz and Saiqa Imtiaz Asif analyze the images of the female from the perspective of post-colonialism. They not only talk about the inner ambivalence of Bengali women under the attraction of the western civilization, but also pay attention to the novel's narration and gender discourse practice. Apart from that, more and more scholars begin to concern the female issue in *Brick Lane*. In *The Multicultural Bildungsroman: "Stereotypes in Monica Ali's Brick Lane"*, Michael Perfect makes a contrast between the images of Nazneen and her sister. It reveals that her sister is the opposite of Nazneen, and shows the liberation and civilization of Nazneen. Meanwhile, this paper highlights Nazneen's self-realization, and affirms the significance of Nazneen's growth in British multicultural society. Also, Elizabeth Jackson writes a

paper “Gender and Space in Postcolonial Fiction: South Asian Novelist Re-imagining Women’s Spatial Boundaries” in 2011. It refers to Ali’s *Brick Lane*. The paper makes an analysis about the changes of Nazneen’s living space, and points out that different gender have different activity space. Her study arouse the foreign scholars’ attention to the novel’s space.

Apart from that, there are scholars study *Brick Lane* from other aspects. In “Shapes and Shadows: (Un)veiling the Immigrant in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*”, Jane Hiddleston takes the reception theory to analyze the relationship between the representation of the text and the real world. It points out that the Brick Lane is Nazneen’s eyes of Brick Lane, not the Brick Lane which lies in the east of London. It makes a difference between the real world and the virtual space, and talks about the symbolic meaning of the novel. The difference between the real world and virtual space is a sign of Ali’s literary creation, which is helpful to readers to take a dialectical views towards the rigid prototypes of the Bangladeshi immigrants. Besides, in “Almost an Englishman: Black and British Identities in Three Contemporary British Novels”, William Snyder analyzes the black protagonists’ problem in building their self-identity in Britain, which also including Nazneen. William Synder points out that different gender have different problems in the process of building their self-identity.

Domestic research on *Brick Lane* has been conducted since 2007, and most of them are masters’ thesis. The researches can be divided into three aspects: characters’ pursuit of identity in the post-colonial culture, the novel’s narrative art and feminist critical studies.

Firstly, there are scholars study the characters’ pursuit of identity from the post-colonial culture. Bases on Homi K.Bhabha’s post-colonial theory, Ai Qinghua’s “The Symbol Interpretation of *Brick Lane*” utilizes the three symbols of things, characters and scenes to studies the collision between the western and eastern cultures. He emphasizes the importance of constructing the third space and finding the sense of belonging. Dong Xuejuan’s “Research on Cultural Identity in *Brick Lane*” analyzes the characters’ cultural identity from the perspective of cultural identity and the post-colonial criticism. The paper discusses the ethnic minorities’ necessity to establish their cultural identities under the multicultural conflicts. Sun Chen’s “The Construction of Hybrid Identity in British Novel *Brick Lane*” analyzes the construction process of

*Brick Lane*'s three main characters' identity. Through analysis and comparison, it reveals the reasons of the different construction processes. Although Sun Chen and Ai Qinghua use the same theory, the former focuses on the study of mixed identity, while the latter emphasizes the importance of self-construction. Lin Ling's "From mother-daughter relationship to Study the Construction of Female Identity of *Brick Lane*" analyzes Nazneen's dual identity, and explores the importance of mother-daughter relationship in the construction of women identity. Chen Houchuang's "Construction and Deconstruction of Self/Other Relationships in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali" studies the construction process of self and other among Chanu and Nazneen, Razia and her husband, Chanu and the white man and so on. He proceeds his study from the perspective of colonialism and uses the method of text analysis. Zhao Jing's "Diasporic Identity from a Post-colonial Feminist Perspective: A Study of Four Contemporary British Novels by Migrant Women Writers" uses post-colonial feminist criticism, diaspora identity studies and other related theory as support to discuss the similarities and differences of immigrants women. By careful reading and making a comparison, the paper demonstrates how the factors (racial, gender, class, language, age, generational differences, ethnic, religion) frame the identity of immigrant women. In contrast, Zhao Jing's research on the identity of the characters in *Brick Lane* is more profound and comprehensive.

Secondly, there are scholars analyze *Brick Lane* from the text's narrative perspective. Liu Fengyan's "The construction of Narrative in *Brick Lane*" studies the narrative art of *Brick Lane* from geographical space, time space and the text space, which bases on Gabriel Zoran's space narrative structure theory. The paper discusses each level of space, and analyzes its' important role in shaping the images of characters, promoting the development of plots and enhancing the artistic appeal of the novel. Jiang Hongxia and Liu Xiao (2008) mainly use the research achievements of narratology and stylistics to analyse Nazneen's self-awakening. Apart from that, the paper also analyzes the novel from the time arrangement, the way of narrative and the language style. Narratology covers a wide range. From the above studies, it can be seen that domestic scholars need to further explore *Brick Lane* from the perspective of narratology. There are also scholars study *Brick Lane* from the perspective of feminist criticism. Zheng Jiayan's "The Same Ending of *Brick Lane* and *Purple*" studies the

heroines of both novels from the perspective of comparison. By analyzing the differences and similarities of both novel's heroines, the paper analyses the self-awakening of women and their pursuit of freedom and independence. Also, it reveals the shifting of Nazneen's self-consciousness from absence to awakening, and her resistance towards the patriarchal society. Eventually, she obtains freedom and Independence. Guo Yuanyuan (2011) defines *Brick Lane* as a female bildungsroman from the feminist criticism. She points out that Nazneen is the victim of the patriarchal society. Zhao Shumin's "The Awakening of Female Self Consciousness in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*" also begins from feminist theory to analyze the image of Nazneen. The paper shows the lives of immigrant women and reveals the process of Nazneen's self construction.

In addition, some scholars also conducts relevant researches on *Brick Lane* from other perspectives. Zhang Yating's paper, "Monica Ali: A New Start in English Literature", which was published in 2010. The paper gives a brief introduction of Monica Ali and her works. It demonstrates that Ali's work is full of the western and eastern culture, but the paper pays little attention to the techniques of her novels. Zhang Huihui's "A Postcolonial Study of the Tendency of Orientalism in *Brick Lane*" adopts Edward Said's Orientalism to analyse *Brick Lane*. The paper analyzes the tendency of *Brick Lane*'s orientalism from three aspects: characters, religion and the social environment of the novel. Also, it makes a deep exploration towards the reason why the tendency of *Brick Lane*'s orientalism is so strong. Compared with other literary criticism, orientalism emphasizes more on the text's political nature and social environment, which makes a difference on writer's ideology. The perspective of this paper is very creative, which combines literature with religion and social environment, and excavates the new research value of the novel. Yan Xiaoying's "A Study of *Brick Lane* from the Perspective of Trauma Theory" analyses the trauma symptoms in *Brick Lane* and calls on people to raise social concerns on women.

To sum up, there are several characteristics about *Brick Lane*'s domestic research. Firstly, the research results are relatively few. During the 10 years from 2007 to 2019, there are only 29 papers about *Brick Lane* on CNKI. Secondly, the research results have the limitations of breadth and depth. In terms of it's breadth, there isn't a large number of research on *Brick Lane*. In terms of its depth, the study of narratology and



stylistics should be further expanded rather than just focuses on the awakening of female self-consciousness. Last, although there is no monograph on Ali in China, the research on Monica Ali has gradually formed a system.

Through the analysis of domestic and foreign research on Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, we can find that the study on *Brick Lane* has changed the single mode and step towards the mode of pluralism. Critics and scholars have made a thorough analysis about *Brick Lane* from the perspective of post-colonialism, feminism, deconstruction, orientalism and so on. However, there has been no systematic research on *Brick Lane* from the perspective of space. Therefore, this dissertation tends to interpret the novel with the theory of spatial criticism, observing the oppression and fights of Bangladeshi immigrant women, understanding the great gap between the western and eastern countries, and calling on concerns for immigrants women from all over the world.

### 0.3 Thesis Statement

In contemporary world, more and more people begin their immigrant life. During the process of their immigration, they have experienced the conflicts and integration of cultures. *Brick Lane* mainly depicts Nazneen's immigrant life, and affirms the significance of Nazneen's growth. This dissertation makes an interpretation of *Brick Lane* from the perspective of spatial criticism. It mainly includes three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction part gives a brief description about Monica Ali's life experience and the main content of *Brick Lane*, and makes an analysis about the research status of *Brick Lane* at home and abroad. The main body includes four chapters. The first chapter is the theoretical basis, which states the origin and development of spatial criticism, and introduces Henry Lefebver's spatial criticism from three aspects: geographic space, social space and psychological space. The second chapter firstly reveals the great gap between Bangladesh and Britain from geographic space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the geographic space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the geographic space provides a material condition for Nazneen's self-liberation and helps Nazneen to recognize her identity. The third chapter firstly introduces the inequality between male and female from social space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the social space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the social space helps Nazneen break the cage of the feudal culture and get

rid of the oppression from the patriarchal society. The fourth chapter firstly explores the psychological activities of women from psychological space, and then it makes an analysis about the shifting of the psychological space in *Brick Lane*. The shifting of the psychological space guides Nazneen to rebuild her inner world and to regain her self-value. The last part is the conclusion of the whole paper. It summarizes the main contents of the whole paper and analyses the important role of each level of space in *Brick Lane* in shaping the images of characters, promoting the development of plots and enhancing the artistic appeal of the novel.

The “spatial turning” has affected many aspects of cultural studies in late 1980s, and spatiality has become a hot topic in post-modern academic world. Since spatial criticism has shifted from the original and geographical research category to the social and cultural category, literature, as an important part of social culture, should also be taken seriously. Through the study of *Brick Lane* from spatial criticism, the author hopes to draw readers’ attention to the novel at this level, so as to promote the development of spatial criticism in the field of immigrant literature. One of the particularities of immigrant literature lies in the migration of space and culture. In terms of *Brick Lane*, Bangladesh and Britain are geographically far apart, but immigrants bring the culture of Bangladesh to Britain. The collision and integration of the two cultures are extremely complicated. This dissertation tries to study this cultural phenomenon from the geographic space, social space and psychological space, and to explore the influence of this cultural phenomenon from different angles of spatial turning. In addition, through the analysis of the female images in *Brick Lane* from the social space and psychological space, readers can think deeply about the attitude towards women. *Brick Lane* involves traditional Bangladeshi culture, feudal ideology and British culture. It also reflects the fate and choice of women in the collision of culture. In the context of globalization and the introduction of a large number of global cultures, what should we do to face the conflict and integration of cultures? How do the immigrant women survive and develop? These are all critical issues. It is hoped that this study will not only conform to the development of spatial criticism, but also combine literary research with practical problems on the basis of deeply excavating the meaning of the text.

## **Chapter One Theoretical Foundation**

Spatial criticism can be briefly expressed as the discourse practice of spatial theory in literary criticism, which is defined by “spatial turning” that happened in economic and political area in the late 1980s. As far as the theoretical connotation of spatial criticism is concerned, the following theoretical elements can be found: an investigation of the interactive power relations between text elements and subjects; paying attention to the structural presentation of society, culture and psychology in the text; and literature as social space to produce. As far as the overall spiritual implication of spatial criticism is concerned, we can see the philosophical implication that it identifies: the change of thinking path from time to space; the explanation of theoretical inheritance relationship from modern to post-modern. Apart from that, as far as its sociological implications are concerned, sociology leads to the intersection of space theory and sociology. To some extent, it revises the previous paradigm of sociological research. Finally, as far as literary implication is concerned, its expressions are as following: the opening of new literary criticism paradigm; the change of views on literature itself; the unique research methods and approaches.

### **1.1 The Origin and Development of Spatial Criticism**

The concept of time and space sustains the development of human history. From ancient times to today, philosophers have been exploring the relationship and the connotation between them. Taking Plato and Aristotle as examples, they believe that time dominates the development of history, and space is regarded as the place of all materials' movement and the container of things happening. Zeno, an ancient Greek mathematician, once puts forward the theory that the arrow has a temporary position in every moment of its flight, so the arrow is immobile in every moment. Zeno's discussion about the relationship between time and space and their continuity still affects the fields of philosophy, mathematics and quantum physics.

In Chinese vocabulary, the word “space” is interpreted as a basic form of the existence of matter. It is the extensiveness of material movement, which is shown by

length, width and height, i.e. having scale and occupying position. It refers to cosmic space. In English vocabulary, the meaning of space is relatively rich: “blank; gap; space; empty space; open area; outer space, space; duration of time.” In terms of the basic definition, both languages regard “space” as an independent and visible material. Space is the opposite of time and it subordinates to time.

But this is the most exterior description of space. Until the later 1980s, people began to explore the nature of space from the perspective of cross-disciplinary. The nature of space is re-explored, and the orientation of space is re-positioned, which promotes the emergence of space turning and spatial criticism. The space turning has fundamentally impacted the traditional concept of space, overthrowing the idea that space is subordinate to time, and bringing social, cultural, political and psychological elements into the spatial paradigm. As Philip E. Wegner once pointed out, “The emergence of interdisciplinary landscape places the focus on spatial, geographical and cultural geography issues.” Since then, the connotation of “space” has become more profound: space is not only a container of time, culture and society, but also a common carrier of human development. The space in the novel is also a refraction system, which contains multilevel spatial connotation and is the product of the interaction of nation and culture. Therefore, by analyzing novel’s landscape and space, we can explore the social, cultural and identity attributes of space and reveal the deep connotation behind space.

In the trend of space turning, the pioneers Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault should be mentioned firstly. Henry Lefebvre published his masterpiece *The Production of Space* in 1974. He tried to establish a space theory system based on Marx’s theory of practical production. He first affirmed the production and practice of human, believing that practice created social relations and space, that is, the space of production. At the same time, he also established a trinity of multidimensional space model: spatial practice, spatial representation and spatial symbols. The three aspects dialectically constitute the space as a whole, and achieve the unity of sociality, historicity and space. In Lefebvre’s view, space is the way of human survival and development, and human practice produces space. If we haven’t produced a suitable space, there would be no possible to change our life style and society. As a consequence, the connotation of space beyond the traditional concept of container and place, and it is extended to social

life and endowed with social attributes.

Unlike Lefebvre's systematic space theory, Michel Foucault paid more attention to the relationship between space and power. Power constructs space, which is the place and foundation of the power's operation. Under the space of power, a few people with power control the majority. In Foucault's opinion, our society is not a public society, but a supervisory society. It is a circular prison. The power monitors and manages others, and takes the initiative position towards space. Owning space means having power and being able to enjoy the domination and treatment of the upper class in society. Space is the key to the transformation of power from virtual to reality. Therefore, space has become the focus of contention. In addition to the relationship between space and power, Foucault also put forward the concept of heterogeneous space, pointing out that the space we live in pulls us out of ourselves, in which we experience the mix of our lives, times and history. The space that grasps us is heterogeneous in itself. Heterotopias is the opposite of utopia. Unlike the aestheticism and illusion of utopia, Heterotopias is based on reality and can be realized. It expresses not only the actual and real part of life, but also has the part of ideal and imagination. It embodies the heteroplasmy of social life, and emphasizes the pluralism, contradiction and tension of the real world.

Both Lefebvre and Foucault think deeply about space from the perspective of politics. The former emphasizes the social attribute of space, while the latter emphasizes the ontology and heteroplasmy of space. Both of them have caused the reconsideration of space in the fields of geography, philosophy, sociology and culture. Also, it sets off a wave of space turning, which has promoted the formation of space theory. Subsequently, Edward Sawyer, Mike Crown, David Harvey, Manuel Caster and other scholars promote the development of space turning from different perspectives.

Edward W. Soja is a famous postmodern humanistic geographer in the United States. His theory of third space includes both the material and the spiritual dimension of space, and transcends the material and spiritual space. It shows great openness and opens the door to all new thinking modes of space. *Third Space* published in 1996, Soja thinks that the first space is objective and material, the second space is subjective and spiritual. At the same time, the third space critically deconstructed and reconstructed the first and second space, which brought together all binary oppositions,

such as subject and object, spirit and body, reality and imagination. There is no specific center in the third space. It is very inclusive and can bear everything. Just like the flow of global population, different races live together with contradictions and similarities. Soja's research on the third space has obvious characteristics of post-modernism, and his theory provides a new perspective and thinking mode for the understanding of space. The third space is not only to criticize the thinking mode of the first space and the second space, but also to revitalize the means of mastering space knowledge by injecting new possibilities, which are not recognized by traditional space science.

At the same time, literature has also been influenced and has become an important part of the "spatial turning". It can be said that spatial criticism is the way of spatialization of literary research. In the past, literary criticism only focused too much on the relationship among the geographical environment of the novel, the author's personal experience and the theme of fiction. What's more, they regarded space as a kind of inanimate, natural scene or container. Spatial criticism has completely changed the previous research methods, shifting the research's focus to excavate the cultural, historical, conscious identity and power connotations behind space. Spatial criticism explores the spatial metaphor in the text, regarding space as a collection of society and culture, turning scientific research into cultural research of space. Apart from that, they emphasize the social and cultural interpretation of literary space, and pay more attention to modernity institutes. As a result, the integration of space, society and culture comes into being. The space in the text has become a referential system to express ideology such as culture, history, national identity and state power. It plays a direct role in the narration of the novel and becomes an external metaphor to show the social environment and the psychology of the characters. Since space turning and spatial criticism were the result of multi-discipline, the interdisciplinary discussion about space issues has become a hot topic. In 1998, British geography professor Mike Crown published *Cultural Geography*, which explores the space in literature and the relationship between literature and geography. Also, he adopts the theory of culturology and social geography to study the spatial meaning of "literary landscape". Crown regards the landscape space that described in literary works as another database of geography. As for the relationship between them, Crown believes that literature does not simply reflect the outside world. Literary landscape is best seen as the combination

of literature and landscape, rather than as an isolated mirror to reflect or distort the external world. As a result, literature is no longer the product of describing the world simply from its traditional concepts, but has its own structure and space. Meanwhile, it also shows how society is structured by space. That's to say, it is a part of social space. On the basis of his theory, Crown points out that the landscape space in literary embodies social beliefs. Ali's description about the landscape of Bangladesh and Britain in *Brick Lane* confirms Crown's view. She uses farmland, wells, mountains and rivers as landscape to describe the story of Bangladesh, which reflects the feudalism of society and the blockade of village. When telling stories in Britain, she uses different cultures as the background, which not only reflects the complexity of the British population, but also enables readers to feel the differences and conflicts between cultures.

The connotation of spatial criticism does not mean that space has absolute advantages and time is no longer important. David Harvey mentioned the compression of space and time in his book *The Condition of Postmodernity*. He views the relationship between time and space dialectically. He believes that the post-modern consumer society leads to the acceleration of turnaround time and the reduction of space scope. The development of modernization makes people feel that the turnaround period of time is getting shorter and shorter. Due to the development of various modes of transportation, the emergence of global village also makes the space scope smaller and smaller. Time and space are no longer the relationship between the ups and downs, but jointly support the modern social space. From the theory of Marxist, Harvey points out that every social form constructs objective concepts of space and time, conforms to the needs and purposes of material and social reproduction, and weaves material postscripts according to some concepts. As an objective concept of existence, time and space will also change themselves to adapt to the new material practice formed by social reproduction. The compression of space and time is the product of post-modern society, and it is also a kind of people's life state. When people live in this state, they will inevitably be tired, and the comfortable and gentle social life will gradually be yearned for by the whole society.

Compared with Edward W. Soja, Mike Crown and David Harvey, American cyberspace sociologist Manuel Castells is closer to modern social space. His theory is

based on modern cyberspace. In his book of *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells vividly calls the culture generated in the network era as culture of real virtuality. He believes that the Internet integrates the text, spoken language and audio-visual modes of human communication into the same system through the formation of hypertext and metalanguage. The flow and its easy access make the cultural communication more convenient. At the same time, the network integrates various cultural symbols and forms a real virtual culture. People feel the real culture through the symbols of virtual culture. It seems that the virtual network is real in essence, so the network space is also real.

On the basis of taking the network as a real space, Castells puts forward the space of flows and the space of places. The network has formed the space of flows, liberating the culture and history which were originally bounded in the regional space. The space of flows express society rather than simply reflects society, so space is society itself. Castells also acknowledges that the space of flows are in the hands of a few people, some upper elites dominate the direction of space development, and the general public follows the trend.

There is no doubt that all theory have shortcomings. In the process of development, problems will be solved constantly, and new problems will arise constantly. Spatial criticism is no exception. Although Castell's cyberspace theory follows the development trend of the information age and has contemporaneity, it also has some defects in some places, such as it does not solve the relationship between cyberspace and real social space. Castells admits that the Internet is only a supplement to real life at some times. For example, the commercial shopping, online shopping can not completely replace physical transactions, but only make up for the deficiencies of real transactions. There are still some differences between cyberspace and real social space, which Caster does not explain very well.

## 1.2 Lefebver's Triad Space Theory

Henri Lefebvre, a famous French ideologist, is one of the most important founders of contemporary space theory. His book, *The Production of Space*, published in 1974, and marked the formal formation of contemporary space theory. He believes that space is one of the ways of human existence, not just the dependence on time. In this book,



Lefebvre emphasizes the ontological status of space, and makes a detailed and systematic exposition of the ontology, heterogeneity, dynamics and richness of space. As a consequence, he makes a new interpretation about space theory in the process of spatial turning, and puts forward the concept of the production of space. In addition, Lefebvre also proposes three levels of space, namely spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. "Spatial practice, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space, and of each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance. Representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the order which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs to codes, and to frontal relations. Representational spaces, embodying complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art.(which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces)." (Henri Lefebvre, *The production of Space*, 33) The important basis for dividing the spatial level of *Brick Lane* is Lefebvre's spatial trilogy.

### 1.2.1 Geographic Space

Geographic space shows a natural and static landscape form. In terms of the geographic space, it indirectly reflects the social values. In turn, geographic space will also influences people's life. Different regions have different geographic space. The construction of geographic space contains many factors. Geographic landscapes have natural attributes and architectural entities have the characteristics of human. According to Lefebvre, space is not a static container or platform, and it is not a passive and inactive geographic environment. As a result, it becomes an effective form of space, and hides in the character's psychological and social questions. In addition to the material landscape, the immaterial landscape also participates in the construction of the geographic space of the novel. The immaterial landscape belongs to the part of geographic space. Spatial criticism holds that when excavating the connotation of texts from geographic space, more attention should be paid to the immaterial landscape. The immaterial landscape includes people's customs, religious beliefs, a series of world outlooks, views on life and values. These immaterial landscape usually form a

metaphor with the geographic landscape, and become the spatial material to reveal the theme.

Therefore, in the process of analyzing literary works, we should delve the appearance of these geographic landscape. By analyzing the geographic space of the novel, we can dig out the social, historical and cultural information behind the space.

### **1.2.2 Social Space**

Social space emphasizes the social nature of space. It includes not only the room and places of people's daily activities, but also the immaterial space where people converge because of communication and interaction, such as the behavior and results of characters. The social relations between people constitute the social space, which in turn reflects the struggle and confrontation between different social strata. Social space is the production of society. The production of space also reflects society. Therefore, social space sometimes reflects the confrontation of one kind of thought with another, or the oppression or resistance of one group to another. These are all the important parts of social space in novel. The spatial dimension of social space covers every aspect of the protagonist's life. Family, as the most basic unit in the social space, can best show the growing state of the characters. Therefore, as an element of social space, the spatial significance of family can not be ignored.

To the concept of social space, society modifies space. The existence of social space is inseparable from social relations and social culture. Space is the production of social relations, a process of restructuring social relations and building social order, and a dynamic process of contradictory and heterogeneous practice. These organizational forms of space represent various social relations, which in turn act on them.

### **1.2.3 Psychological Space**

Psychological space in the novel refers to the place with the typical characteristics of the characters and the individual psychological place. It is the space endowed with individual characteristics, and carries the characters' inner feelings and ideological insights. Each character's individual psychological space has its own characteristics, and is branded with personal characteristics. The protagonist's living environment and his inner confession are all important parts of the characters' individual psychological space. Individual psychological space is a metaphorical concept, which does not

necessarily have a specific physical form. This has been clearly demonstrated and strongly proved in fictional literary works, especially in the stream of consciousness novels. However, it does not affect the individual psychological space to reflect his inner world. At the same time, it reflects the mental state of the characters and opens the door for readers to understand characters' psychology .

Psychological space is ideographic and cognitive, carrying the characteristics and emotional desires of the characters. It is the reflection of external environment and social practice in the inner world of characters. It enriches the geospatial construction of the textual space and provides an indirect channel for the author to express his feelings. Each character in the novel has his own living space and psychological space, and the formation of his psychological space is inseparable from the cultural environment and the social space of his existence. The existence of psychological space is based on the individual subjectivity in his space.

## Chapter Two Geographic Space in *Brick Lane*

### 2.1 The Geographic Landscape

Geographic landscape reflects the cultural life of the local residents. Different regions have different geographic landscape. As Marx said, the economic base decides the superstructure. To a certain extent, geographic landscape influences the construction of people's values and world outlook. The concept of geographic landscape is not only the meaning of architectural art, but also represents the unique culture form of the city in the context of modernity. The accumulation and expansion of geographic landscape in modern life have resulted in a certain degree of freedom and decadence. Modern subjects have fallen into the cognitive mode of fragmentation, and the cognition of their living space has been reorganized. Therefore, literary discourse and artistic representation become the metaphorical means of experiencing and witnessing the change of geographic landscape. The new generation of the modernist literary language and its narrative style imply a more pluralistic cultural production space and merge with the geographic landscape. It becomes a critical way to reflect on the complexity, fluidity and inherent differences of discourse.

The origin of the concept of geographic landscape has its historical inheritance. The development of the concept of geographic landscape follows a sequence of time and space, forming a complex pattern in which many disciplines are interpreted as contexts. However, the application of this concept mostly runs through the aesthetic structure and the formal logic of architecture. As an external manifestation of human spiritual civilization, geographic architecture is not only the material carrier of historical tradition and characteristics of the time, but also the symbol that reflects and shapes the collective values of mankind. With the development of time, science and technology, geographic landscape has been liberated from the dependence on precedent and historical style. Also, under the background of modernism, geographic landscape has become the integration of aesthetics that reveals the essential characteristics of modern society. As the convergence of the complexity of urban culture and the

intricate social relations in the city, geographic landscape has become the best place to witness the plight of modernity. As an important component of human environmental form, geographic landscape not only has the attribute of geography, but also reflects the result of the overlap of human spiritual values and cultural concepts with material space. The formation of geographic landscape is neither entirely shaped by nature, nor entirely shaped by the sculpture of modern civilization. The interaction and integration of nature and civilization, material and spirit, which have become the key factors in shaping geographic landscape. In other words, the concept of geographic landscape contains a list of modern civilization and living space. It has become a symbol rooted in the relationship between material space and ideological space.

By studying the geographic landscape in the novel, we can analyze the influence of the changes of geographic environment on the characters. This plays an important role in interpreting the text of the novel, understanding the theme of the novel, and analyzing the changes of the characters' spiritual level.

### **2.1.1 Bangladeshi Landscape: Closed and Backward Space**

Geographic landscape is the material expression of social ideology. Different geographic landscape reflects different social cultures. Correspondingly, the geographic space was constructed by different landscape, which also have a certain impact on the characters' psychology. In Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, we can witness that Bangladeshi women were oppressed and constrained by the closed and backward space. There are examples that we can find from the book of *Brick Lane*.

“She looked across the fields, glittering green and gold in the brief evening light. In the distance a hawk circled and fell like a stone, came up again and flew against the sky until it shrank to nothing. There was a hut in the middle of the paddy. It looked wrong: embarrassed, sliding down at one side, trying to hide. The tornado that had flattened half the neighboring village had selected this hut to be saved, but had relocated it. In the village they were still burying their dead and looking for bodies. Dark spots moved through the far field. Men, doing whatever they could in this world.” (Ali: 5)

This was a small village in Bangladesh where Nazneen grew up. Villagers lived on agriculture, and their ancestors had lived on this land for generations. This was an isolated place, and people knew little about the outside world. Therefore, in such a

closed and backward space, women can only rely on men to live. Women dared not fight against their husbands' wishes and lived only for their husbands and families. In the eyes of men, all the things that women did for them were taken for granted. Nazneen's mother was helpless in the face of her husband's cheating. All she could do was to cry and yield to fate. Finally, she chose to commit suicide to end her tragic fate. However, Nazneen's father showed no grief towards her death. Soon after, he married another woman. From the above we talked about, we can witness the Bangladeshi women are bound and oppressed by the patriarchal society. It is obvious that there were no room for Bangladeshi women to escape and change their fate in such a society.

Landscape of environment includes not only the concrete landscape but also the abstract landscape. In the novel of *Brick Lane*, we can also experience the closed and backward space from the abstract landscape. When Nazneen was only eight years old, her mother had a serious illness. In others' opinion, her mother was haunted by a devil. The little devil refused to let her mother take a bath, which made her stink like a goat. On occasion, she did not speak for days at a time. Worst of all, at the command of the little devil, she began to attack her husband and poke him in the eye with a stick. But sometimes she returned to normal, as usual. As a devout believer, Nazneen also felt that she was possessed by a ghost. In desperation, Nazneen's father called in the fakir. There are descriptions in the novel of *Brick Lane*.

"Exorcism were a spectator sport in the village. The fakir was an impressive sight. Immediately, they arrived, his assistants commandeered the kerosene stove and set about boiling up points which, in Nazneen's view, should have frighten the jinni away by their smell alone. The fakir examined Nazneen from a distance. Nazneen's mother lay on her bedroll, spasms running obliging through her arms and legs. The fakir seemed satisfied." (Ali: 296)

During the process of exorcism, the fakir sought the help of a little servant, and the assistants used emetic ointment to smear on his head and shoulders. However, the servant did not believe in ghosts and took the opportunity to humiliate the fakir. At that time, Nazneen realized the fakir's hypocrisy. However, the audience still had no doubt about this exorcism, and thought that the fakir was full of energy and strength. Although the exorcism was fake, Nazneen's mother got rid of illness. Her days of not bathing were gone, and she was confined to attacking her husband with her sharpest

weapon tongue. Through the detailed description of the exorcism scene, we can aware that the feudal superstition of Bangladeshis. Fakir pretended to be god and tricked to get money, and people relied on fakir to seek inner peace. In the closed and backward space, people believed in fate, ghosts, and gods. Apart from that, we can also feel the ignorance and foolish of Bangladeshis in *Brick Lane*. Tamizuddin Mizra Haques was Gouripur's barber. His barbershop was the outstanding landscape of the village. "Beneath the shade of a moss-encrusted pipal tree he set his shop with three or four stools, two buckets, special soaps and oils, cutlasslike razors, and his gleaming scissors, the cleanest and brightest object for miles around." (Ali: 279) In Nazneen's memory, he was the smartest man in the village. But his prestige came from his beauty. The barbershop was a gathering place where you could hear anything you were interested in. People came to barbershop for shaving, and more importantly for talking. As a result, the barbershop has become the village's information base. Typically, when two people had a argument about the topic they were talking and couldn't reach a conclusion, they would ask the barber to make a decision. For example, one person said that Ali bought two hectares of land from others, while the other said three and a half hectares. They quarreled and swore poisonous oaths to each other. Finally, they asked the barber to solve the problem. The barber's answer was three hectares or two and a half hectares. In any case, the opposing party immediately bowed down and admitted defeat. This was the smartest man in their village. By witnessing the smartest person in their village, we can realize that the ignorance and stupidity of the peasants. The backward landscape of environment brought about the unchanging of people's ideology and values. People here were not enterprising and had a superficial cognition towards things.

The backwardness of economic foundation breeds the production and growth of the feudal culture. In turn, the feudal culture will also shape and influence the values of human. Under the influence of this landscape environment, Nazneen silently accepted her fate to marry a man with a face like a frog. To Bangladeshi women, there was no room for resistance.

### **2.1.2 Living Environment: Depressive Space**

Living Environment is the objective form of the materials' existence, which is geographically manifested as the specific place where people live and move. However,

living environment is not only a physical concept in the category of social theory but also the production of social relations, which arises from purposeful social practice. Living environment is an important factor to improve the quality of life, as well as an important support for economy, culture and social activities. The construction of living places is the basic survival activity in the history of human society. Human beings have made progress in transforming the objective world and have transformed themselves in the process of transforming the objective environment. Living environment has a direct impact on the formation of the characters' personality. Different living environment reflects different cultural space, so it will create different personalities of characters. Through the analysis of the living environment in the novel, we can understand the reasons why Nazneen always keeps silence in the face of Chanu. Nazneen's living environment was a depressive space. Under the influence of such a living space, people endure great pressure, which not only causes serious damage to their daily life but also to their psychology.

At the age of 18, Nazneen married a man who was more than forty and had a face like a frog. As the second richest man in the village, her father thought that it was a good arrangement for Nazneen. After they got married, they went to London where they began their new life.

"she closed the book and looked around the room to check it was tidy enough. Chanu's books and papers were stacked beneath the table. The rugs, which she had held out of the window earlier and beaten with a wooden spoon, needed to be put down again. There were three rugs: red and orange, green and purple, brown and blue. The carpet was yellow with a green leaf design. One hundred percent nylon and, Chanu said, very hard-wearing. The sofa and chairs were the color of dried cow dung, which was a practical color. There was a lot of furniture, more than Nazneen had seen in one room before. There was a low table with a glass top and orange plastic legs, three little wooden tables that stacked together, the big table they used for the evening meal, a bookcase, a corner cupboard, a rack for newspapers, a trolley filled with fields and folders the sofa and armchair, two footstools, six dining chairs, and a showcase. The walls were papered in yellow with brown squares and circles lining neatly up and down." (Ali: 8)

It was the first time to make a description of their living room in the novel. When



she arrived in London, she knew nothing about it. She only stayed at home day by day, as if she lived in a prison. The small room was full of various furniture. To her, the room was her everything. They accompanied each other. Every day, she cleaned up the house and worked for her husband to cut corns. As time went by, Nazneen felt puzzled about her life. She didn't know the meaning of hope. That's to say, she had no hope towards life. She relied on religion to gain relief. She lived in a depressive space. Under the influence of depressive space, Nazneen refused to talk to her husband. When Chanu asked her attitudes towards things, she hid her feelings. She only said brief words to make a response. It seemed that there were problems about Nazneen's psychology. They did not look like real couples, and they didn't have the same topics in their daily life. Chanu only cared about his job and credentials, while Nazneen cared about her hometown and her sister. Under this condition, Nazneen became delirious. Although she knew Chanu would beat her, she refused to clean up room and cut corns for him. She tried to challenge something, just like the event of her mother's illness. The depressive space makes her ill, and leads a way to darkness for Nazneen. Things should be changed. Also, we can feel the depressive space from other aspects. Later, they had three children, one son and two daughters. The son died because he had a serious illness. The two daughters were Shahana and Bibi. At the beginning, Chanu showed great hope towards his daughters. To prepare for their returning to Dhaka, daughters were taught to learn about the culture of Bangladesh when they were very young. But as the elder daughter grew older, she was tired of the culture of Bangladesh and showed great interests in the western culture. Shahana didn't want to listen to the classical Bangladeshi music. Her Bengali writing was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She put her face down when others referred Bangladesh. Shahana never had the idea to go back to Dhaka. Therefore, when Chanu educated them, Shahana was very disgusted with her father, and the relationship between father and daughter was very tense. At this time, Nazneen showed unusual worries. She was afraid that her daughter's rebellion would make Chanu angry, and Chanu would beat her daughter violently. Also, Shahana would be in a bad mood and bullied her youngest sister. As an intermediary, Nazneen carefully maintained the relationship between father and daughter every day. Such a living environment depressed her. She was eager to escape but there is no hope. She could not forget her responsibilities as a mother and a wife.

Under the influence of such a depressive space, Nazneen suffered a lot and she was hopeless. She longed for the peace between Shahana and Chanu. She did what she could do to maintain the relationship. She was so desperate that she shouted at them. In the view of Chanu and her daughters, they just thought she was ill and her psychology had a problem. They didn't understand the reason why she lost her temper. Even if you are normal, the depressive space will drive you to the insane world unless you make changes.

From what we talked above, we can make a conclusion that the depressive space has a direct influence on characters' personality. That's the reason why Nazneen wanted to escape and change. Also, it played an important role in promoting the development of the novel's plots.

## **2.2 The Shifting of the Geographic Space**

The geographic space reflects the local culture. The shifting of the geographic space represents the changes of culture, which will make a difference on characters' values. By analyzing the shifting of geographic space, we can explore the changes of characters' inner world and have a good knowledge about the novel's background. In the novel of *Brick Lane*, Nazneen experienced the collision and integration of the western and eastern culture. In the community of Tower Hamlets, there were many immigrants from Bangladesh. They moved to London with a wish to earn money. London was a modern city, and women had freedom and equality. Compared with Dhaka, London was a totally different place. Since people moved to London, their living space has changed. Faced with the changes of their living place, people began to accept and learn the western culture. Not only did their living place change, but also their values changed. Dr. Azad and Razia were the best representatives. They adopted the positive attitude to face the shifting of geographic space. As a consequence, Dr. Azad gained his reputation by his medical techniques, and Razia was able to find a job to supply her family after her husband died.

### **2.2.1 From Bangladesh to Britain: Providing a Material Condition**

Bangladesh was once the colony of Britain. Under the background of the novel, Bangladesh was one of the under developing countries in the world. The base of its economy was very weak and the nation's economy mainly depended on agriculture. In

Bangladesh, the situation of gender discrimination was very serious. It was normal and usual that people had the attitude of viewing sons as better than daughters. Feudal superstition and religion activities prevailed. People had a sense of indifference to life. When Nazneen's mother gave a birth to her, her mother just had a mistaken feeling that her stomach was indigestible. There were no special midwives in the village who were responsible for delivering babies. Only a witch who had no concrete age was responsible for delivering babies. Knowing that she was a daughter, Nazneen's father only looked at her for a few minutes. Nazneen's mother looked down and said she had nothing to do with it. At the beginning, Nazneen refused to eat anything. Faced with such a situation, as the second richest person in the village, her father was reluctant to send Nazneen to hospital. Because they believed everything was determined by fate. Fortunately, Nazneen survived. From this event, we can know that people hold an indifferent attitude towards life. In addition, in the feudal society, people could execute a person at their will. The principles of social operation were based on the moral norms that formulated by themselves. Once, a little man cheated a girl from a neighboring village into the jungle for three days. He was hanged on a tree for days. Finally, the girl's brother took two men with iron sticks and beat him to death. They showed indifferent attitude towards the death of the little man. No one had the doubt about the solving methods. Also, there were robbery events in Bangladesh, which reflected the social situation. "Two men dress with dark glasses and good shirt come for robbing the body and jump straight away on motorbike. Only few yards they got and crowd blocking the way. Hundreds people come. All is shouting and swear. Crowd get big and noise deaf the ear. After few seconds robber have vanish inside crowd. Somewhere they are on ground and many people push to middle for also applying the blows. Then motorbike petrol tank is open and they set light. Fire come too fast. Crowd must move back away. Then robbers lie there burn on ground not know if already death or live burning." (Ali: 288) From the scene of the street, we can acknowledge that there is no perfect legal system to constraint people in Bangladesh. The riots happened from time to time, and society was unstable. Apart from that, the stories about tragic women happened all the time. Hasina, Nazneen's sister, had a beautiful appearance. However, beauty was a symbol of the tragic fate in Bangladesh. Because of her beauty, her mother has been worrying about her and weeping all day. Hasina's fate was the best

evidence to prove the suffering of Bangladeshi women. She relied on men to find true love and was eager to change her fate. However, she was abandoned by men again and again. The reason why Hasina's fate was so miserable was that she was bounded and oppressed by the patriarchal society and the feudal culture. Her miserable fate was the product of patriarchal society. In Bangladesh, women were guilty when they worked with men in a factory. Women were not allowed to wear bright colors when they worked in a factory. Women needed to be careful about men, but men could do whatever they want. Women could only pray for blessings. Working in a factory was not the manifestation of women to pursue independence and freedom. Most women were forced to work in a factory. If they had other choices, it would be impossible for them to go to the factory. Besides, the problem of political corruption was very severe. In Bangladesh, there were many parties, and they did nothing for society but for themselves. The only thing they desired was to become more powerful to corrupt. What's more, people showed no respect to knowledge in Bangladesh. We can acknowledge that from the villagers' attitude towards Makku. In people's view, if a person reads a large number of books, he would become a foolish. That's very ridiculous, but this was their inner thought. Last, the environment of Bangladesh was also severe. Plastic bags were everywhere in the street. When you walked for 5 to 10 minutes, your legs and arms were covered by plastic bags. The society was in chaos. To Bangladesh, its economy, politics and culture all had serious problems. Therefore, under the condition of such a society, it's hard for Bangladesh women to change their fate.

Under the background of this novel, Britain has entered the capitalist society and the camp of developed countries. London was the capital of Britain. In London, men and women were equal and everyone had the right to pursue freedom and happiness. London has become a melting pot, welcoming people from all over the world. Tower Hamlets, where Bangladeshi people lived, was also located in London. Tower Hamlets completely reproduced the culture of Bangladesh, which was totally different from the scenery of London. In the novel, Tower Hamlets had a terrible environment, and it's a populated area. Three point five Bangladeshis to one room. In London, the outside of Tower Hamlets was very prosperous. "She looked up at a building as she passed. It was constructed almost entirely of glass, with a few thin rivets of steel holding it

together. The entrance was like a glass fan, rotating slowly, sucking people in, wafting others out. Inside on a raised dais, a woman behind a glass desk crossed and uncrossed her thin legs. She wedged s telephone receiver between her ear and shoulder and chewed on a fingernail. Nazneen craned her head back and saw that the glass above became dark as a night pond. The building was without end. Above, somewhere, it crushed the clouds. The next building and the one opposite were white stone palaces. There were steps up to the entrances and colonnades across the front. Men in dark suits trotted briskly up and down the steps, in pairs or in threes. They barked to each other and nodded somberly.”(Ali: 35) Through the description of this paragraph, we can have a clear view about the prosperity of London. Apart from that, Women also liberated themselves from clothing. They wore miniskirts and tight jeans to highlight their stature instead of wearing saris. Women walked on the street with their high-heeled shoes. They represented the women of the new era, self-reliance and self-improvement. They relaxed by smoking and drinking. They depended on their abilities to support themselves. Compared their living styles with Bangladeshi women, the women of Bangladeshi were more conservative. Also, with the development of economy, computers also appeared in people’s life. Computers connected the world. When you went out, you would see people with laptops working and drinking coffee at the same time. London was better than Dhaka. In Razia’s view, they immigrated to London in order to get a better life. London was a good place for them, so they would stay here and try their best to pursue happiness. London had the system of social welfare. If you didn’t have a job here, they would give you money. You could have a place that you needn’t to pay the rent. Your children could go to school. But it was impossible in Bangladesh. Compared with the different living conditions of Dhaka and London, it was obvious that London was a better place for living. In London, not only men but also women could realize their dreams and support families. Apart from that, people could experience advanced technology and learn to keep pace with the trend of time.

By analyzing the shifting of the geographic space, we can understand the reason why Hasina couldn’t change her fate. Under the living condition of Bangladesh, women had to rely on men, and they were the belongs of men. There was no room for them to revolt and change. Although Hasina tried several times, she failed again and

again. While, under the living condition of London, if the immigrant women took positive attitudes towards the western culture, they could achieve success and happiness. Razia and Nazneen were the typical representatives. The shifting of the geographic space provides a material condition for Nazneen to realize her self-value, and it also brings about the changes of culture. Meanwhile, advanced culture will have a positive impact on people's values and their inner world, which promotes them to achieve self-reliance and self-development.

### **2.2.2 From Virtual Space to Reality: Recognizing Self-Identity**

Virtual space is also a part of space. It is a reflection of real life, which in turn has an impact on it. By studying the virtual space in the novel and analyzing the relationship between virtual and reality, we can have a better understanding about the characters and the orbit of the story. In *Brick Lane*, we mainly interpret the virtual space from the following aspects: snowstorms, skating scenes, Nazneen's dreams and Hasina's letters. By interpreting the virtual space in *Brick Lane* and grasping the relationship between virtual and reality, we can aware the important role of space in promoting the development of plots.

Dr. Azad won his reputation by working hard, and became the members of middle class. Also he made contributions to the community with his medical skills. Nazneen heard of snowstorms when she paid the first visit to Dr. Azad. On Dr. Arad's desk, we could often saw rows of snowstorms. They were fascinating and these cities were sleeping underwater. When you shook them, they would burst into the white world. While only at this time that you could imagine the life inside. At first, Nazneen only knew that these were very beautiful things, but she failed to grasp the symbolic meaning of the snowstorms. Later, in a conversation, Dr. Azad told her the reason why he always put snowstorms on his desk. He believed that the snowstorms just like life. "Dr. Azad picked up another snowstorm and shook. If you are strong you withstand the storm. Can you see? The storm comes and everything is blurred. But all that is built on a solid foundation has only to stand fast and wait for the storm to pass. Do you see?"(Ali: 197) Dr. Azad depended on his medical skills to gain a stable position in London. He often encouraged the immigrants from Bangladesh. As long as you worked hard, you would achieve success. When Nazneen was ill, he encouraged her to get away illness just like the snowstorms. Only to fight against fate can you survive. Also,

when Tariq took drugs, he sent a snowstorm to urge him. Only you become stronger and stronger can you gain what you want. Even though it might be very difficult at the beginning. As Dr. Azad said, the only way to adapt the society was that you need to strengthen yourself. In Bangladesh, people's fate was determined by God. However, in London, your fate was up to you. It's possible for you to change fate by working hard, just like Dr. Azad. When he arrived in London not for a long time, he led a hard life. There was no enough food for him. Later, he learned the medical skills, which helped him to earn money. Now, he leads a comfortable life which many immigrants admire him. From the virtual space of snowstorm to reality, we can learn a lot. Never forget where you started, and your mission will be accomplished. The virtual space of snowstorm encouraged us in reality, which would guide us to survive in London. That's to say, the virtual space of snowstorm can help us to establish right values towards life in London. We should never pay little attention to the virtual space.

Apart from that, there are also descriptions about the virtual space, such as the scene of skating. When Nazneen first saw the skating scene on TV, she felt astonished. To her, the skating scene was a virtual space that she could only watch it on TV. She felt freedom and all the good things from the skating scene. Since then, she had great fantasies about skating. She yearned to be a woman who could skate and to experience things that she had never known. "There was a picture of a couple: ice skaters. She stood on one leg. Her body was horizontal and the other leg perpendicular. Her arms reached out and held on to his head, but she looked up and smiled directly at Nazneen. Her body was spangled, silver and blue. Her legs were as long as the Padma. She was a fairy-tale creature, a Hindu goddess. Nazneen fell, somehow, into that picture and caught hold of the man's hand. She was shocked to find she was travelling across the ice, on one foot, at terrible space. She felt the rush of wind on her cheeks, and the muscles in her thighs flexing. The ice smelled of limes. The cold air made her flush with warmth from deep down. Applause. She could not see the audience but she heard them. And the man let go of her hand but she was not afraid. She lowered her leg and she skated on." (Ali: 63) The virtual space of skating scene impelled Nazneen to accept the western culture in reality. She dreamed about being the members of contemporary women. With the promotion of such a virtual space, Nazneen realized her dream. In the end of the novel, Nazneen and her daughters walked into the ice rinks together. From

the skating event, we can make a conclusion. With the influence of virtual space, the immigrants women begin to learn and accept the western culture, which help them to get away the oppression of religion and feudal culture. At the same time, they will make progress and liberate themselves. Also, Nazneen's dream was the part of virtual space. When she lived in a narrow place in Tower Hamlets, she felt frustrated. Sometimes she dreamed that the wardrobe fell on her and crushed her on the mattress. Sometimes she dreamed that she was locked in the wardrobe. She thumped and thumped, but nobody heard her. The virtual space of Nazneen's dream reflected her suffering from the living environment. In reality, life almost drove her to insane. Her dreams represented the conflict between reality and virtual world. With the promotion of Nazneen's dream, Nazneen tried to change in reality so as to get relief in virtual space. She learned English and shared her daily life with Razia. She felt much better than before, and her nightmares were also disappeared. The virtual space reflected the reality, in turn, the changes of reality also would bring the changes of virtual space. What's more, Nazneen received encouragement from Hasina's letters. To Nazneen, Hasina was the representative of pursuing freedom and happiness bravely. We were able to feel Hasina's inner world from her letters. Hasina refused the arrangement of fate, and eloped with a man. Her father got mad with her, and wanted to kill her all the time. While Nazneen liked her sister, and showed great admiration towards her. Hasina's letters constructed a virtual space, where women pursued their love, marriage, and family bravely. Under the influence of Hasina's letters, Nazneen preferred to be an independent woman. As she told in the novel, she often imagined herself as an independent woman, and worked with her sister Hasina.

By analyzing the virtual space in *Brick Lane*, we can make a clear distinction about the relationship between reality and virtual space. Most importantly, we apprehend the important role of virtual space in promoting the development of reality. Also, as the representative of immigrant women, Nazneen recognized her identity and made great progress in reality with the promotion of virtual space.



## Chapter Three Social Space in *Brick Lane*

### 3.1 Gender Inequality Space

Social space is the core part of spatial criticism. It was first put forward by Henry Lefebvre, emphasizing the social attributes and social relations of space. However, with the development of the spatial theory, different disciplines have different definitions about social space. Social space not only refers to the places of people's activity, but also includes the immaterial space that embodied in the communication process of human beings, such as the behavior and personal relationship of mankind. Social space produces and reflects society. Therefore, sometimes social space reflects the confrontation between one thought and another, the oppression and resistance of one group to another. The social space in *Brick Lane* is the collision of two cultures and values, which reveal the influence of British mainstream culture on Bangladeshi immigrants. It reflects the struggle and confrontation between two beliefs and two kinds of thinking modes. Under the collision and confrontation of eastern and western cultures, the unique social space produces. It directly reflects the growth process of Bangladeshi women.

Gender inequality space also belongs to the part of social space. In the backward and feudal culture of Bangladesh, women were oppressed by the patriarchal society and the feudal culture. This section mainly discusses gender inequality space from two aspects: marriage and family. In terms of marriage, women could not decide their own marriage, and mostly were arranged marriage. Women usually lead a miserable life after they got married. In terms of family, women were the appendages of men. Women were always obedient to their husband, and seldom paid attention to their own living space and psychological space. The study of gender inequality in *Brick Lane* can help us have a better understanding about the oppression of women in Bangladesh. It also foreshadows the awakening of Bangladesh women that live in London. No oppression, no resistance. Only under the great oppression of gender inequality space, can women have the thought to pursue freedom and equality.

### 3.1.1 Gender Inequality in Marriage

In Bangladesh, women were oppressed and restrained by the patriarchal society and the feudal culture. They were not the determiner of their marriage, and most of them experienced arranged marriage. Under the condition of the arranged marriage, women have no power to voice. After they got married, they had no relationship with their parents. Even if a woman was abandoned by her husband, her parents would not take her in. Only men could change their fate, and the fate of women was determined by men. From Hasina's letters, we could learn about the story of Renu and Shahnaz. Renu was a widow. When she was fifteen, she married an old man. When they got married for three months, her husband died. Her father refused to provide a shelter for her. She had only two teeth, but she could eat anything. It's impossible for people like Renu to get married again. Men could marry again and again, but women couldn't. In Renu's view, her fate was over at the age of 15. She was a lonely woman, and she came to the world just waiting to suffer misery. Gender inequality in marriage causes a tragic position for women. Men can decide the fate of women, and women become objects for sale. A woman can do nothing but to resign to fate. From the gender inequality space, we can feel that women are bounded and oppressed by the patriarchal society. In Bangladesh, women needed to give dowry to men when they got married. A woman couldn't marry a man without dowry. Shahnaz's parents found seven or eight boys for her, but Shahnaz refused them all. Why women needed to give dowry to men? Women also could earn money, and they were the best dowries. In terms of dowry, we could learn that gender discrimination in Bangladesh was very severe. In feudal society, women depended on men. For men, women were just tools to carry on the family line. Gender inequality in marriage caused the tragic fate of women. Only when we achieve gender equality in marriage, can women break the cage of fate and get away the control of the patriarchal society.

Apart from that, Hasina's fate was the best evidence to prove the gender inequality in marriage. At the age of 16, she fell in love with a man, and eloped with him. In Hasina's view, love can solve everything. After she eloped with the man, her father cursed and swore to kill her all day. Hasina was too naive. Soon after, she found herself deceived by her husband. Her husband was not a honest and hard-working man, and they couldn't support themselves. Worst of all, her husband showed violence

against her. But in the eyes of others, it was better to be beaten by her husband than by a stranger. It was legal and accorded to the moral rules when a man beat his wife. A wife could reasonably be beaten for a lesser offense. In order to get rid of violence, Hasina ran away again. Hasina thought that got rid of her husband could change her destiny, but what she thought was totally wrong. Her fate has changed since she eloped with the man. It was impossible for her to return to her hometown. The only thing that she could do was to work in a city. She became a homeless person and couldn't find her sense of belonging. Gender inequality in marriage led the miserable fate of Hasina. Marriage ruined her life. However, this event caused no influence to the fate of the man. From what we talked above, we can know that Bangladeshi women are oppressed by men, marriage and the feudal society. Also, in the novel of *Brick Lane*, there are other aspects to show the gender inequality in marriage. Nazneen's aunt paid a long visit in the summer of Nazneen's tenth year. Following are the the conversation between Nazneen's mother and her aunt.

"In silence," said Amma.

"That is all that is left to us in this life," said Auntie. She had clung to Amma when she arrived and two of them wept so long and so hard that Nazneen feared that someone had died.

"We are just women. What can we do?"

"They know it. That's why they act as they do."

"God has made the world this way."

"I told him I will not go back."

That's what you said."

"If he carries on this way, that's it."

"You said it last time as well."

"What else can I do?" (Ali: 70-71)

Even if Nazneen's father was the second richest man in the village, her mother cried from time to time. Faced with husband's disloyalty to marriage, women could do nothing to resist. They could only endure and accept it in silence. They complained about life, but they couldn't change the status of life. It's common for men to cheat in outside. Terribly, their husbands were reluctant to go home, and they forgot the responsibilities as fathers and husbands. Women attribute the reason of gender

inequality in marriage to Allah. In the view of women, it was Allah that created such a world where women had no voice. If women needs to voice, Allah will turn them into men. In social space, through the study of gender inequality in marriage, we could find that women were oppressed by the patriarchal society. Also, from the conversation between Nazneen's mother and her aunt, it was obvious that women were oppressed by religion. They firmly believed in religion, which advocated women had no right to voice and they must obey the order of men. With the oppression of the patriarchal society and religion, gender inequality in marriage came into being. Consequently, there was no freedom and personal values for Bangladeshi women. We need to find the balance between men and women. That's to say, we ought to realize the gender equality in marriage and liberate women. Only by achieving gender equality in marriage can women obtain freedom and happiness.

### **3.1.2 Gender Inequality in Family**

Although family is a small unit in social space, it reflects the strong relations between characters and society. To some extent, family is a small society, where people keep relations and contacts with each other. By analyzing the gender inequality in family, we could directly feel that Bangladeshi women were oppressed and restrained by the patriarchal society and the feudal culture. As a mother and a wife, a woman bear much in family. They needed to take care of their children, and had to satisfy their husbands from many aspects. They received nothing from their husbands. There was no love and respect between wife and husband. Bangladeshi women looked much like servants rather than the members of a family. In such a social space, women had no right to resist but to accept. As time went on, they got used to their life. However, once the social space changed, the life of women would also change. Human beings adapted to society, and not society adapted to human beings. Gender inequality in family caused the oppression and constraints on women. Based on the study of gender inequality in family, we can fully understand the miserable life of Bangladeshi women.

From Shahana's letters, we knew the story of Monju. At the age of thirteen, she married an old man and had a child named Khurshed. When the baby was only seven days old, her husband wanted to sell Khurshed for money. Mengju refused to give up the child, and the man poured acid on the baby who had only seven days. Monju could only live by begging, and all the money from begging were used to arrange operations

for her son. Even though, her husband still executed oppression on her. He asked Monju for money that was used to arrange operations. Monju refused her husband without hesitation. Her husband was so angry and cruel that he poured sour on Monju. What a miserable life. From the above story, we could witness the gender inequality in family. Monju had no right to choose her husband. Also, it's unfair and illegal for a girl to get married at 13 years old. As a mother, Monju tried her best to protect his son and do her responsibilities. Without husband, she depended on society to ask for help. Although she was not an independent girl, she was exactly a good mother. However, Monju's husband was cruel and indifferent. As a father, he didn't fulfill his responsibilities. To him, his son was just a tool to earn money, and there was no blood relationship between them. As a husband, he didn't respect and love Monju. He was a criminal that damaged his son and wife seriously. When Monju's husband sold and poured sour on his son, he must be arrested in prison. However, there is no response in society. As a consequence, Monju received a second damage. Under the condition of such a society, women had no right and way to protect themselves. Society didn't provide protection for women, and it didn't fulfill its responsibilities to supervise the behaviors of human. So the problem of gender inequality in family was becoming more and more serious. Only we realize the equality between men and women, can a society achieve sustainable development. Family is the society's epitome. From the condition of family, it's easy for us to grasp the situation of our society.

Apart from that, Nazneen's family also reflected the gender inequality in family. As Nazneen's father said, her mother was a saint. With the influence of her mother, Nazneen firmly believed that woman was born to bear everything and had no right to resist. So when she married Chanu, she was totally obedient to her husband's arrangement. She respected and looked up to Chanu. When she arrived in London not for a long time, she stayed at home and not dared to go outside. She looked like a prisoner in a prison. Also, Chanu told her that it's no use to go outside and she had better stay at home. Although she felt terrible and lonely, she never had the thought of going outside at the beginning. Women couldn't go anywhere without the permission of their husbands. Everything was decided by men, and women had no freedom. Based on this part, we can know women suffered much from men. Before a woman got married, she obeyed the orders of her father. After she married, she became the

belongings of her husband. In other words, women were oppressed and restrained by the patriarchal society. It was obvious for us to witness the gender inequality in family. For example, Chanu interfered Nazneen's personal relations when she made friends in the community. He told Nazneen Mrs. Islam was a decent woman and she should keep a close relation with her. While Razia was not a reliable woman and Nazneen should get away from her. He made a wrong evaluation about the characteristics of Mrs. Islam and Razia, and Nazneen preferred to stay with Razia. Compared with Chanu, Nazneen never interfered his social contacts. For example, when Chanu invited Dr. Azad to have a dinner at home, Nazneen made no remarks on their conversation. Chanu talked about his promotion, while Dr. Azad cared about his patients. Their conversation was totally absurd. Although Nazneen had a clear recognition about the conversation, she didn't talk with her husband. In her view, it's true that Chanu's promotion had no relations with Dr. Azad. Chanu had better stop his talking about promotion with Dr. Azad. However, Chanu didn't realize this point. He still pinned his hope on Dr. Azad. Even though Nazneen was right, she still kept silent. She never had the thought to intervene Chanu's personal relations. Apart from that, Chanu restricted Nazneen in other aspects. When Nazneen proposed to learn English, Chanu refused and talked that it was useless for her to learn English. While, Nazneen never restricted Chanu to do anythings, and even what she thought was totally correct. Compared with Chanu and Nazneen, we can easily find the gender inequality in family. Men tried to exercised full control over women. There was no equality between Nazneen and Chanu.

In the novel of *Brick Lane*, there are also other descriptions to reflect the gender inequality in family. Aleya's family was the best evidence to prove this point. "Money she make she send her boys to school. Husband make problem for her but Aleya thinking of children only and not the husband. The husband say 'Why should you work? If you work it looks bad. People will say he cannot feed her.' But Aleya keep dropping wishes into the rice. Pinch of salt pinch of what she want and at the end he giving in. He buy burkha for her and every day walking with her to factory. Evening there he is wait at gate." (Ali: 106) Aleya worked in a factory to support her family, while his husband thought this kind of behavior would humiliate him. As a woman, Aleya not only supported her family but also needed to care her husband's face. Although Aleya has made great efforts for her family, she had no position in family. Husband held the

dominant power of the family. The gender inequality in family led to the oppression and constraints on women. Under such a condition, it was impossible for women to pursue harmony and happiness in family.

### 3.2 The Shifting of the Social Space

The social space of *Brick Lane* is dynamic, which includes the double dualistic opposition. One is the conflict between women and the patriarchal society, and the other is the collision between women and different cultures. In the face of these antagonistic relationships, women are vulnerable and helpless, thus presenting the image of victims. In the social space of Bangladesh, women have long been oppressed by the patriarchal society. Apart from that, women were the appendages of men, and they had no freedom and personal space.

Social space refers to the places of human activities. Different social spaces represent different social cultures, which have different impacts on people. The shifting of social space emphasizes the transformation of culture that behind the space. Social space belongs to the external factors, which can cause the changes of the internal factors. By studying the shifting of social space, we can have a better understanding about the transformation of characters' inner world and the development of the novel's plots.

#### 3.2.1 From Mrs. Islam to Razia: Breaking the Feudal Culture

Mrs. Islam was the representative of the backward and feudal culture. She was the first person to visit Nazneen when Nazneen arrived in London not for a long time. From Chanu's description, Nazneen knew that Mrs. Islam belonged to the members of decent people. Mrs. Islam has been stayed in London for nearly thirty years, and she had a deep understanding about everyone and everything in community. Mrs. Islam was a hypocritical woman. Judging from the following event, we could learn about it. There were many rumors about the woman who jumped from the seventeenth floor. At the beginning, Mrs. Islam claimed that she was reluctant to talk about others without in the face of them. However, it was she that told Nazneen and Razia the cause of the incident. As a woman, Mrs. Islam was in favor of the feudal and backward culture of Bangladesh. In terms of the event, she agreed with the behavior of the woman. In Mrs. Islam's view, a woman who has been married for twelve years without children

was guilty and could be liberated by committing suicide. A woman had no value if she couldn't give a birth to a child. While Razia had a different idea about the event. Once life was over, there was nothing left. Nazneen preferred Razia's view to that of Mrs. Islam. Mrs. Islam was just a person who absorbed the western culture from the surface, and she followed the backward and feudal culture of Bangladesh from the bottom of her heart. What was Mrs. Islam said reflected that women were oppressed by the patriarchal society and the feudal culture. What's more, Mrs. Islam always liked to force others and interfere others' life. Not long after Nazneen's son was born, she often came to disturb Nazneen and wanted to take Nazneen's child away. Out of love for her child, Nazneen firmly rejected Mrs. Islam. Here is the description about the situation when Nazneen refused Mrs. Islam. Nazneen trembled, but the warmth of Raqib's body against her chest fired her resolve. "He's staying here."

"The white people," she said, "they all do what they want. It's nobody business."

"If a child is screaming because it is being beaten, they just close the door and the windows. They might make a complaint about noise. But the child is not their business, even if it is being beaten to death."

"They do what they want. It's a private matter. Everything is a private matter. That is how the white people live." (Ali: 59-60)

Mrs. Islam described her authoritarian behavior as a concern for Raqib. Nazneen, who only wanted to protect her children, was described as the behavior of the white people. Thus, we could realize that Mrs. Islam was not a decent person. There was no oppression, there was no resistance. Faced with the oppression of Mrs. Islam, Nazneen began to express her ideas and bravely say no to things that she was reluctant to do. Later, as she formed a full cognition about Mrs. Islam, Nazneen learned that Mrs. Islam was engaged in usury. When she asked people for money, she used two strategies. One was to pretend to be sick and let people have mercy on her. When the first one didn't work, she would demand her two sons to threaten people and even to take the means of smashing. This was the other strategy. At the end of the story, with her wisdom and courage, Nazneen uncovered the true face of Mrs. Islam and got away the problem of usury. In such a social space, Mrs. Islam and Nazneen were closely related. Nazneen's resistance to Mrs. Islam reflected her resistance to the feudal and backward culture of Bangladesh, which also represented the awakening of Nazneen's



self-consciousness. It was Nazneen's first step to fulfill her values and pursue a happy life in London when she got away the oppression of Mrs. Islam.

Although Razia was an immigrant from Bangladesh, she represented the western culture and had a positive impact on Nazneen's growth. Razia injected vitality into Nazneen's life and led her out of Tower Hamlets to a journey of self-pursuit. Nazneen was surrounded by Razia, who accompanied Nazneen to learn the civilization and advancement of the western culture, and guided her when she was confused about life. Razia held a direct and correct view about things. For example, Razia made a pointed comment when Chanu talked the problem of racial discrimination. "Ask him this, then. Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?" (Ali: 47) Razia always took a positive attitude to face life. In Razia's view, there were good people and bad people in western society. Just like in their own country, there were also distinctions between good and bad people. You had your own choice. Just chose what was good for you. Razia changed Nazneen's view about things. Under the influence of Razia, Nazneen began to form her own views about things, and also took a positive attitude to learn the western culture. Razia took the initiative to learn English in order to have good communication with her children. It also aroused Nazneen's enthusiasm for learning. At the end of the novel, Nazneen was able to talk with foreigners. Razia was a female representative who bravely pursued independence and equality. Faced with her husband's parsimony, she volunteered to find a job in a factory, not caring about others' comments. From Razia, Nazneen saw the light of women to pursue independence and equality, which paved the way for Nazneen to get rid of the gossip of the community. After her husband died, Razia worked hard to support her children and maintained her family. She took off her sari and cut her hair short like a vagrant. She dressed in sports clothes and a T-shirt with the meter flag. She was proud of being a British citizen. Under the influence of Razia, Nazneen also began her sewing work. She could support her family and help her sister on her own. After 9/11, the factory closed down. However, Razia didn't give in fate. Razia took the lead in designing and processing the clothes with several sisters. Despite her son was a drug user, she was able to respond positively and realized that children's lives should not be designed by their parents but by themselves. Razia's respect for her children also inspired Nazneen's shift to the issue of returning home.

With the positive influence of Razia, Nazneen respected her children's desire to stay in London, and became an enlightened and motivated mother. In social space, Razia and Nazneen kept a close relationship. Therefore, all aspects of Nazneen's life were influenced by Razia. Razia's immigrant life symbolized the integration of eastern and western cultures. Nazneen actively absorbed and digested the Western civilization spread by Razia, which laid a solid foundation for the awakening of Nazneen's self-consciousness in the future. It was Razia's pursuit of freedom and independence that accelerated Nazneen's personal growth.

Mrs. Islam and Razia are the closest people in Nazneen's social activities. By communicating with different people, we can gain different information. Correspondingly, it will also have a certain impact on the development of our physical and mental health. As we mentioned earlier, Mrs. Islam represented the feudal and backward culture of Bangladesh, which executed oppression and constraints on women. Compared with Mrs. Islam, Razia represented the advanced western culture, which

ignorance of Bangladeshis. He worked hard to win respect, but what he did was in vain. He blamed all problems on racial discrimination. However, when he saw the black conductor on the bus, he blurted out that he was born to be a slave. As a Bangladeshi, He also had the regional discrimination. He despised the Sylhetis in particular, while Nazneen was a Sylheti. Even Dr. Azad, a highly educated and successful doctor, was not convinced. Knowing that the doctor's family had contradictions, he deliberately provoked him. Chanu firmly believed that medicine was all rote learning and had no intellectual research. The only person he looked up to was Mrs. Islam. It was this decent lady who lent money to him at high interest rates. This kind of behavior made him hardly pay off that debt. Apart from that, he had a deep prejudice against the western culture. In his view, Western culture was nothing more than TV, football, darts, and naked paintings of women. Compared with Britain, Bangladesh was the birthplace of civilization, which had a glorious and long history. Bangladesh was the paradise of nations, and he even believed that Bangladesh numbered first in the survey of the happiest countries in the world. Chanu couldn't form the right values, and that's the reason why he was not able to survive in London. To Nazneen, there was no love between them. They had no common topics and won't discuss trivial matters of life as usual couples. "No, the degree would never be finished. The promotion would never be won. The job would never be resigned. The furniture would never be restored. The house in Dhaka would never be built. The jute business would never be started. Even the mobile library, the petition for which had taken Chanu from door to door, would be forgotten." (Ali: 62) Chanu was just obsessed with his literary world. Faced with Chanu's tragic life in London, Nazneen refused to lead a life like him. Chanu was stubborn and self-contained. He was reluctant to face up to his shortcomings and attributed the key to success or failures to the external factors. The failure of Chanu's life in London caused Nazneen to think about the meaning of life. The key to success was to set your own position, and initially absorbed the advanced culture of the West. Women needed to strive to achieve success, just as Razia and Dr. Azad did.

Karim was Nazneen's lover and supplied the sewing work for her. The emergence of Karim accelerated the process of Nazneen's growth and liberation. Compared with Chanu, there was love between her and Karim. Chanu blocked Nazneen's world in London, while Karim guided Nazneen out and promoted the germination of her

self-consciousness. In Bangladesh, women had no voice. Karim, the planner of the Bengal Tigers, encouraged Nazneen to participate in their organization. During the meeting, Nazneen's vote was the key for Karim to get his leader position. This event promoted Nazneen's understanding about the rights of women. In London, women also had the right to express themselves. Karim taught Nazneen English and recommended books to her. These books included messages from all over the world. Previously, Nazneen only focused on her own construction. Through reading books, she realized her insignificance, which represented the maturity of Nazneen's inner world. Karim shared his life with Nazneen and showed his respect and attention to Nazneen, which were things that Chanu had never done. They fell in love with each other. Nazneen experienced the feeling of love, and madly love to stay with Karim. Nazneen bravely got rid of the shackles and pursued her own happiness. It was an important sign about the awakening of Nazneen's self-consciousness. When Karim told Nazneen about the miserable situation of orphans in the refugee camps in Gaza, Nazneen expressed her deep sympathy for them. She gave her saving money to Karim in the hope of helping others with her weak strength. At that time, Nazneen was no longer confined to her own small circle. With a broader vision, she put herself in the context of globalization. At first, in Nazneen's view, Karim existed like a hero. He was young and handsome. As the leader of the Bengal tigers, everyone admired him very much. Nazneen also relied on him to realize her values. With the deepening of understanding, Nazneen began to question about Bengal Tigers and Karim. Bengal Tigers existed only to fight against Lion Hearts, and had no benefit to the life of Bangladeshis in community. Nazneen affirmed their enthusiasm to strive for equality and to protect their traditional culture. However, they became unemployed vagrants, divided the sphere of region, and eventually led to the street riots. Karim also disappeared after the riot. Since then, Karim changed from a hero to a stranger in Nazneen's mind. It was undeniable that Nazneen hoped to reorganize her family with Karim at the beginning. However, compared with her husband, Karim was just a qualified lover not a qualified husband. Karim grew up in London, but was deeply influenced by Islam. In his view, what happened between him and Nazneen was seriously violated the religious rules. This was the deepest gulf between him and Nazneen that cannot be overcome. The emergence of Karim made Nazneen's life more passionate, and the withdrawal of

Karim made Nazneen have a deeper understanding about her inner world. Nazneen took the initiative to break off her relationship with Karim, not only for the sake of her children and but also for herself. In London, men could choose women, and women could reject men accordingly. So, Nazneen refused to rely on Karim. From what we talked above, we could learn about the maturity of Nazneen's inner world. Women no longer depended on men to realize their own values, and they could support family by themselves. This was an expression about the freedom and independence of women.

With the promotion of Chanu and Karim, Nazneen embarked on a journey to pursue freedom and equality. Chanu provided material conditions for Nazneen's liberation, while Karim provided spiritual conditions for Nazneen's liberation. By contacting with Chanu and Karim, Nazneen understood what she really wanted and got rid of the oppression from the patriarchal society. As a consequence, Nazneen firmly determined to stay in London with her daughters.

## Chapter Four Psychological Space in *Brick Lane*

### 4.1 Space of Silence

Silence is one of the core themes of literature. The purpose of literary texts is to show the thematic meaning through language. While expressing positively in language, it often presents discourse through silence from the opposite side. Language uses vocabulary to express itself directly, while silence is relatively implicit, revealing itself only when the expression of language is exhausted. It can be said that silence contains the content that language itself can not bear, so it is more intriguing. To the silent individuals, they lack the right to speak in their individual space, and unable to express their ideas and opinions with their mouths. In the eyes of Westerners, silence is a major feature of Bangladeshi women. They do not ask for anything on their own initiative. They are also resigned to unfortunate experiences. Silence represents the form of their existence. However, silence is not due to congenital physical disability, but to the oppression of the external social space. They are not unable to speak, and they are just deprived of the right to speak. The discourse power in eastern culture was initially monopolized by men, even including the power to name women. Men summarize the world as his language and speak to all beings, while women are only represented by symbols, images and meanings. She is neither passive and negative, nor nonexistent.

The silent space in *Brick Lane* can be seen from two aspects: subjectivity and objectivity. In terms of subjectivity, because of their weak personality, silent individuals are not strong enough to protect their own individual space. They do not know how to fight and dare not fight for the right to speak. In terms of objectivity, on the one hand, the feudal ideology and the patriarchal society control the right of social discourse and suppress the right and opportunity of women to express their opinions; on the other hand, the silence of women looks like an invisible barrier, and it becomes a kind of self-protection. To the silent individuals, the absence of discourse power and the incompleteness of their individual space were caused by the interaction of subjectivity and objectivity.

#### 4.1.1 Nazneen's Birth and Marriage

Nazneen's birth is a reflection of the silent space. When Nazneen was about to born, her mother was still preparing to entertain guests. Rupban even had a wrong feeling of indigestion as she were giving a birth to Nazneen. It was very dangerous for women to give birth to a child. However, people paid little attention to childbirth in Bangladesh. So we can make a conclusion that Bangladeshis take a silent attitude to the birth of children. Apart from that, we can also acknowledge that Bangladeshis take a silent attitude to life. As the eldest woman in the village, Banesa was responsible for delivering. When Nazneen was born not for a long time, Banesa showed a look of contempt to Nazneen. Banesa predicted the fate of Nazneen. There was nothing wrong with her, but the only thing that she lacked was that no one would pave the way for her in the future. She also acclaimed that she was glad to wash and dress her for the burial. What Banesa said showed indifference to life. Suddenly, Nazneen fell on the straw mat from Mumtaz's arms. Nazneen uttered a scream, and it occurred to Rupban that she needed to name her child. She did this just because she wanted her child had a name when she died. Rupban wanted to have a son. Nazneen's father went away disappointedly when he knew Nazneen was a girl. He didn't care about the life of her daughter. People took a silent attitude to women. As the three women pressed their faces to the child, Nazneen's arms began to wave as if she could see the horrible sight. The blue on her body began to disappear and gradually turned brown and purple. When Nazneen was serious ill, there were two ways for Rupban to save her. One was to send Nazneen to hospital for treatment. The other was to resign to fate. However, Rupban chose the latter. In her opinion, women must give in fate. No matter what happened, she could accept it. Her children couldn't waste their energy to fight against fate. By giving in fate, her children could be strong. When Nazneen ate nothing, Rupban had no idea about what she can do to save her child. She just thought that maybe her child was destined to starve to death. From what Rupban said and did, we could learn that women only chose to accept the arrangement of fate silently. During the growth process of Nazneen, she heard many stories about resignation. It was Rupban's wise decision that enabled Nazneen to survive and became such a broad-faced and cautious girl. To fight against one's own destiny would weak himself. Sometimes, or most of the time, it's fatal. Nazneen had never doubted about the logic of fatalistic stories. Under

the influence of this silent space, Nazneen's life also changed. What cannot be changed must be endured. This principle governed Nazneen's life. It was a spell, a kind of spirit and a challenge. Nazneen accepted all the arrangements of fate silently. So when she was thirty-four years old, she had three children and one of them died. She was destined to have a young and demanding lover. However, when she firstly could not wait for the future to be shown but needed to make it by herself, she was shocked by her strength. The feeling was just like a baby waving her fists and slapping her eyes. Silent space is a manifestation to show the absence of the discourse power of women. To women, they were restrained and oppressed by the patriarchal society. The silent space constructed by Nazneen's birth shows us the indifference of feudal society to life and its discrimination against women.

When we explore the space of silence, we have to mention Nazneen's marriage. In Bangladesh, marriages were arranged by parents, which was what we called arranged marriages. At the age of sixteen, Nazneen was arranged to marry a man who was more than forty years old and had a face like a frog. When his father inquired Nazneen about her views on her marriage, Nazneen kept in silence and agreed with his father's arrangement. "Soon after, when her father asked if she would like to see a photograph of the man she would marry the following month, Nazneen shook her head and replied, "Abba, it is good you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife like Amma." (Ali: 5) Even though she knew the man she would married was old and ugly, she didn't say anything to his father. She accepted her father's arrangement and move to London after they got married. In Bangladesh, a woman had no power to decide her marriage. What they could do about marriage was to keep silent and waited for the arrangement of their parents. If a woman fights against the arranged marriage, she would be abandoned by his family and society, just like Hasina's suffering. In addition, other aspects of Nazneen's marriage also reflect the silent space. When Nazneen had just arrived in London, she could only kept silent in the face of the changes of environment. Every day, in addition to doing housework and shearing Chanu's corns, all she could do was to look out the window and say nothing. When night came, she returned to her hometown in dreams. Nazneen felt helpless and depressed, but she did not tell her husband about it. She hid her feelings at the bottom of her heart. Since she was a child, Nazneen has been influenced by her mother's



resignation. She always kept silent just like her mother. In such a silent space, women had no voice. Their psychological space was oppressed. In the contact with Chanu, Nazneen still remained silent. The oppression on women came from the patriarchal society. In daily life, Chanu expressed his views on various things. Although there were only two people in the room, Nazneen did not think that Chanu was talking to her. When Chanu asked Nazneen's attitude about things, she always kept silent. Deeply influenced by the culture of Bangladesh, Nazneen felt that women had no voice. So even if she had a correct understanding about things, she would still remain silent. Because nobody cared about what a woman said and no men would pay attention to women. There was a vivid description about the silent space in Nazneen's marriage. "Nazneen began to put things away. She needed to get to the cupboard that Chanu blocked with his body. He didn't move, although she waited in front of him. Eventually she left the pans on the stove, to be put away in the morning." (Ali: 22) Nazneen preferred to put away in the morning rather than to talk with her husband. The silence of women represented the absolute obedient to men, and they bore the oppression and constraints from men. With the influence of Nazneen's mother, she also took an indifferent attitude to have a child. As a father, Chanu was not the first one to know Nazneen was pregnant. After Mrs. Islam guided Nazneen to pay a visit to Dr. Azad, Nazneen told Chanu about her pregnancy accidentally. At the beginning, she didn't say anything. In Nazneen's view, there was no need to bother her husband about her pregnancy. She did just as her mother did. Even when you gave a birth to a child, you also need to keep silent. In Bangladesh, women were just tools for having children. Women lost their voice as soon as they were born. Apart from that, women behaviors absolute obedient to men in Bangladesh. The silent space constructed by Nazneen's marriage shows us that women are oppressed by men and feudal ideology.

#### **4.1.2 The Destiny of Nazneen's Mother**

In the novel of *Brick Lane*, there were not many descriptions about Nazneen's mother. But her influences on Nazneen runs through Nazneen's life.

Nazneen's mother, a representative of the feudal and backward culture of Bangladesh, was deeply oppressed and bounded by the patriarchal society. As a mother, she silently accepted the arrival of her children. She was still doing housework when she was about to give birth to Nazneen. She mistook the feeling of

parturition as indigestion. When her child's life was in danger, she resigned to fate. As the second richest person in the village, it was obvious that her child could be sent to hospital for treatment to increase the hope of survival. However, Rupban resolutely believed that Nazneen's fate was determined by Allah. Nazneen did not eat anything, while Rupban thought that maybe she was destined to starve to death. In Rupban's opinion, it was foolish for a woman to fight against fate. Because this kind of behavior was just a way to waste energy, and there was no use to resist fate. No woman could change her destiny. Her fate has been determined by Allah since she was born. Nazneen's father held the view that Rupban was a saint and she came from a saint's family. So when Rupban urged Nazneen to be calm and demanded her to accept the grace of Allah, Nazneen's head looked back and listened carefully. Nazneen treated life with an indifferent attitude. What cannot be changed can only be endured, and women could only keep silent. This principle dominated the life of Rupban and Nazneen. Faced with life, Rupban has been waiting. "Just keep waiting and see what will happen, and that's all what we can do." Rupban has said that many times. She always talked about it and wiped away her tears. When the harvest was bad and the flood threatened, when she was sick and her husband disappeared for many days, Rupban did nothing but cried all the time. Because she needed to cry to release her emotions, and after that she accepted the status. "What a great saint." Nazneen's father often evaluated Rupban like this. Faced with the confusion and frustration of life, Rupban remained silent. She waited for time and God to give her an answer, as she could not change anything and could only accept it calmly. In the face of life, Rupban remained silent and she never thought of resisting or doing something to change the status. Although some were not what she wanted, she still calmly accepted the arrangement of fate. She firmly believed that Allah would guide them when they were in trouble. Rupban got relief from religion, while religion executed a second damage to her. Religion constrained women and deprived their rights to speak. It didn't allow women to resist, but only allowed them to accept the arrangement of fate silently. From what we talked above, we could learn that Bangladeshi women were oppressed and restrained by patriarchal society and religion.

Faced with her husband's betrayal of marriage, Rupban could only choose to

weep and accept it silently. Her husband hasn't been at home for three days. Rupban cried from morning to night. Her nose was red and her eyes were swollen. Sometimes she screamed like a scared monkey. When her daughter advised Rupban not to cry, her husband did nothing to relieve her. He would only say to her daughter that your mother was a saint, and don't forget that she came from the family of a saint. With the help of religion, men executed the oppression and constraints on women. In the view of Nazneen's father, as a saint, Rupan was able to accept his betrayal of marriage calmly. Besides, there was nothing that she could do. A saint was able to endure everything. Husband was heaven, and women could only unconditionally obey the demands of husband. Women had no right to question and inquire. When Nazneen asked Rupban where her father had gone, Rupban looked at the sky and asked for Allah to give an answer. Rupban held Nazneen tightly in her arms and said to her, "If we really need to ask questions, Allah will turn us into men." Under the double oppression of religion and men, Rupban firmly believed that women had no voice. The only thing a woman could do about what has happened or what was about to happen was to wait and accept it silently. This was the fate of Rupban. Rupban had nothing to hope for in her life. Although Nazneen's father was not the first richest man in the village, he was the second richest man. However, Rupban lead a hard life, and she washed her face with tears all day. This was how Allah created the world. As a woman, she had no choice. Rupban often persuaded others in this way, and she attributed her miserable life to Allah and fate. There was no limitation for men to execute exploitation on women. From Hasina's letters, we knew the reason of Rupban's death. Rupban had no choice but to commit suicide when she knew her husband wanted to marry another woman. Faced with life and her husband, Rupban was totally desperate. To villagers, the death of Rupban was an incident. As a saint, it was impossible for her to commit suicide. However, that's what she did. As Rupan's husband, he showed an indifference attitude to the death of Rupban. "When he lower her, legs first, the white winding sheet already spattered with mud, while the rain raced to fill the hole, he let her go too soon. Uncle held on and stopped her rolling on her back." (Ali: 96) Even if Rupban died for him, he was reluctant to give her another glance, and married another woman quickly.

As a saint, she accepted everything silently. Although she thought she could bear everything, there was something that she was unable to stand. For example, her

husband's betrayal of marriage. Faced with such a situation, she committed suicide to end her life. Suicide was not allowed in Islam. At the end of her life, she was against her belief before. Suicide was also a silent way to face fate.

## 4.2 The Shifting of the Psychological Space

Psychological space in novel refers to the the psychological activities of the main characters. It is the space endowed with individual characteristics, which carries the inner feelings and ideological insights of the characters, and is the representation with distinct characteristics of the characters. Each character's psychological space has its own characteristics. It has been branded with personal characteristics. The protagonist's living environment and his inner monologue are all important components of his psychological space. The psychological space is a metaphorical concept, which does not necessarily have a specific physical form. This has been vividly demonstrated and strongly proved in fictional literary works. The individual psychological space reflects the inner world and the mental states of the characters, and opens the door for readers to understand the characters of the novel. The shifting of the psychological space reveals the arduous process of the characters to pursue the inner growth and freedom. In the novel of *Brick Lane*, the shifting of the psychological space also shows the changes of the Nazneen's inner world and reveals the transformation process of Nazneen's spiritual growth.

Psychological space is ideographic and cognitive, carrying the personality and emotional desires of the characters, and reflecting the influence of the external environment and social practice on the inner world of the characters. It enriches the geospatial construction of the textual space and provides an indirect way for the author to express his feelings. By studying the shifting of the psychological space in *Brick Lane*, we can find that Nazneen's cognition has changed and she has entered into the mature stage of self-identity. This shifting of the psychological space is a re-orientation of self-worth and a persistent search on one's own cultural identity.

### 4.2.1 From Unconsciousness to Consciousness: Rebuilding the Inner World

As a representative of Bangladeshi women, Nazneen gained freedom and liberation in London. Under the influence of the advanced culture, she successfully got

rid of the shackles of the traditional and backward culture of Bangladesh. She followed the pace of the new era. By analyzing the shifting of Nazneen's psychological space from unconsciousness to consciousness, we can witness the changes of Nazneen's psychological space from ignorance to maturity. She obtained freedom and independence due to the changes of her psychological space. The growth of psychological space is a prerequisite for human to make progress.

When she married Chanu not for a long time, they began their immigrant life in London. At the beginning, Nazneen could not understand the reason why they came to London. She came here only to follow her husband's steps. When they invited Dr. Azad to have a dinner at home, Nazneen firstly faced with the discussion about going home. As Dr. Azad talked about the alcohol problems of young people, Chanu expressed his hope that he preferred to take his children to Dhaka before they were damaged by these harmful effects. Dr. Azad argued that Chanu's proposal was another disease called the Home Coming Syndrome. When Dr. Azad asked Nazneen about the matter, she felt only that her neck and back were hot. She thought about a few words, but she didn't say them. It was the first time that they discussed the topic about going home. At that time, Nazneen was unconscious. For her, going home or not would not have any impact on her life. Later, they had a second discussion about the topic at Dr. Azad's house. Nazneen was still unconscious. When Mrs. Azad and Chanu had a heated argument about the western culuture, Nazneen just played the role of a listener. Mrs. Azad referred that women should change themselves to adapt to social changes not the society to change for women. It seemed that Nazneen understood what Mrs. Azad said. At that time, although Nazneen had not formed her own view about going home, her psychology was experiencing changes slightly. In the rest of her life, she witnessed the great acceptance of London to the immigrant women from Bangladesh. In London, women could wear shorts instead of saris. Women wore what they wanted. There was no specific limitations about the dressing of women. Women have been liberated from clothing. At the same time, women could also work in factories to support themselves. Compared with Dhaka, women in London could led a comfortable and enjoyable life style. London acknowledged the rights of women to work in factories. It was legal, and no one would despise them. Nazneen realized that women could own freedom and equality in London, and women could also change their

destiny through their own efforts. So when Chanu asked her to leave with him, she rejected him without hesitation. This was the shifting of Nazneen's psychological space from unconsciousness to consciousness. It was this transformation that propelled Nazneen to make the right choice. With her own efforts, she and her daughters began a new life in London.

In the novel of *Brick Lane*, the shifting of Nazneen's psychological space is also manifested in other aspects. Influenced by her mother, she firmly believed that everything was decided by Allah. The fate of a woman has been arranged by Allah since she was born. Because the patriarchal society and religion executed restraints and oppression on women, Nazneen's unconscious cognition came into being. As time went on, something changed Nazneen's cognition. A monologue in her heart reflected the shifting of her psychological space from unconsciousness to consciousness. "It worried her that Hasina kicked against fate. No good could come of it. Not a single person could say so. But then, if you really looked into it, thought about it more deeply, how could you be sure Hasina was not simply following her fate? If fate can not be changed, no matter how you struggle against it, then perhaps Hasina was fated to run away with Malek. Maybe she struggled against that, and that was what she could not alter. Oh, you think it would be simple, having made the decision long, long ago, to be at the beck and call of fate, but how to know which way it is calling you? And there was each and every day to be got through." (Ali: 9) This was Nazneen's reflection on fate. She began to introspect the relationship between women and fate. Previously, she was fully convinced that the fate of women was determined by Allah. Later, she realized that what she believed before violated the reality. If the fate of a woman was determined by Allah, Hasina's elopement can be understood and forgiven. For this was the will of Allah, while in fact it was not. Her father hated her and had a strong desire to kill her by himself. Hasina could not go back to the village where she used to live. Nazneen's introspection on the relationship between women and fate reflected the shifting of Nazneen's psychological space from unconsciousness to consciousness. The destiny of women was in their own hands. Only when they faced life positively could they solve the suffering in life. Knowing this, Nazneen began to learn English and find a job. Under the promotion of her efforts, she integrated into the life in London and achieved her values. With her practical actions, she has proved that women could

change their destiny through their own efforts. Women cannot only bear and accept things silently.

The resistance to her mother's resignation also reflects the shifting of Nazneen's psychological space from unconsciousness to consciousness. Before, she listened carefully when her mother told the story about her birth. She deeply admired her mother's calmness in the face of life crisis. But when she had a child, she changed her previous cognition from unconsciousness to consciousness. To Nazneen, her child's life was more real than herself. She cherished her child very much. When Raqib was ill, she took Raqib to hospital immediately. Instead of taking the same approach that gave in fate, she chose to believe in medicine. At this time, Nazneen was very angry with her mother. As a mother, she could ignore the death of her child while Nazneen could not bear. Nazneen knew that Raqib would die if she didn't immediately take him to hospital. That's what doctors said, and it was not a lie. Nazneen was glad that she had not listened to her mother's resignation, or her children would leave her forever. Nazneen's cherishing about life and her belief in medicine not the resignation, which are the manifestations about the awakening of Nazneen's self-consciousness. Nazneen rebuilt her inner world. With the promotion of this consciousness, Nazneen had her own correct judgment on life and dealt with difficulties actively. Not just wait and see, as her mother did.

#### **4.2.2 From Dependence to Independence: Regaining Self-Value**

As an elder sister, Nazneen has always been concerned about Hasina. In the face of Hasina's elopement, Nazneen had no blame for her but only cared about her. When her sister couldn't stand the violence and fled again, Nazneen had no choice but to ask her husband for help. She hoped that her husband could go to Dhaka and take her sister to London to live with them. However, she was rejected by her husband. Nazneen was forced to accept her husband's decision. At that time, she had no way to help Hasina. She could only rely on Chanu to help her sister out of the predicament. It was the first time that Nazneen had proposed the idea that got her sister to stay with them. Also, this was the first time that Nazneen hoped Chanu could do things for her. However, Chanu refused Nazneen without hesitation. Nazneen's heart was broken. Later, Hasina's living condition was getting worse and worse day by day. Out of the concern about her sister, Nazneen once again offered the idea. She wanted to get her sister to

London. Undoubtedly, it was still rejected by her husband. When her husband refused her for the first time, Nazneen did not say anything. But this time Nazneen implored Chanu to help Hasina again. Because she had only one sister, and Hasina's life was very miserable. Faced with Nazneen's requirement, Chanu still insisted his decision. Nazneen placed her hopes on Chanu twice, hoping that Chanu could help her sister out of trouble. But she failed twice. Nazneen realized that she could not just pin her hopes on Chanu. She decided to help her sister by her own efforts. Nazneen began her sewing work. She relied more on herself rather than on Chanu. The shifting of Nazneen's psychological space from dependence to independence was a symbol of the independence and autonomy of women, which revealed the inner growth of Nazneen. She began to hide her private money in all parts of the room. She clearly remembered where each sum of money was stored and carefully calculated her hourly wages. When she saved a certain amount, she hid the money and remitted it to Hasina. Nazneen relied on her own efforts to help Hasina, and she gained a strong sense of satisfaction. She was surprised at her strength. A women also could achieve her self-values in reality. This was the feeling of independence that she had never felt before. Finally, she could stop worrying about Hasina, and she hoped that one day she would have enough money to get Hasina to London. This time she relied on herself. She was confident and full of strength. Getting rid of dependence on men was an important step for women to grow up. Women were no longer the appendages of men, and their fate could be changed without the dependence on men. The independence and freedom of economy are the material conditions for women to get rid of the controls of men. The transformation of Nazneen's psychological space guided her to achieve independence and maturity.

Usury was prohibited in Islam. As a believer of Islam, Mrs. Islam was engaged in usury business. To buy the Sewing machine and a computer, Chanu borrowed money from Mrs. Islam. In Nazneen's view, Mrs. Islam was hypocritical and cunning. Mrs. Islam always said that her body was frail, and she carried all kinds of medicine in her bag. However, she was not weak at all. In the past ten years, Nazneen remembered that she had never heard Mrs. Islam cough. In the face of Mrs. Islam's first debt collection, Nazneen only felt hot behind her back, because she knew nothing about it. Mrs. Islam, acting as a victim, asked Nazneen for money. Nazneen wanted to rely on her husband



to solve the problem, but he just ignored and kept silent. When Nazneen asked Chanu how much money they needed to give Mrs. Islam, Chanu explained that it was a secret and Mrs. Islam was helping them. Nazneen just thought Chanu's idea was ridiculous. Nazneen carefully recorded the number of accounts demanded by Mrs. Islam each time. The interest of Mrs. Islam's usury was frightening, almost 100 pounds a week. Faced with the threat of Mrs. Islam and her sons, Chanu agreed to pay 50 pounds a month. However Nazneen was reluctant to suffer such oppression. Since she made a decision to stay in London, she has determined to rely on herself to solve the problem of usury. She wanted to pay a visit to Mrs. Islam on her own initiative, while Mrs. Islam came to see her first. Mrs. Islam was going to ask for another sum of money before Nazneen left. It was impossible for Nazneen to give any interest. As for the principal part, Nazneen has already paid it back. But Mrs. Islam denied that she did not ask for interest, but was only dedicated to helping friends in need. Under such a circumstance, Nazneen and Mrs. Islam had a acute argument. Nazneen said, "Swear on the Qur'an. I'll give you another two hundred pounds." (Ali: 332) Surrounded by the feeling of guilt, Mrs. Islam refused to do so and left angrily. When Mrs. Islam's two sons destroyed Nazneen's room at their own will, it occurred to Nazneen that she could rely on herself to get rid of them rather than depended on Chanu. This was a powerful expression of Nazneen's inner strength, daring to face the hardships of life alone. With her wisdom and courage, Nazneen got rid of Mrs. Islam's usury. The shifting of the psychological space from dependence to independence is the symbol of the mightiness and mature of women. This kind of shifting gives women a strong sense of satisfaction and self-confidence, and provides a solid foundation for them to seek personal growth and to get rid of the oppression from the patriarchal society. With the help of this kind of shifting, women take the first step to pursue self-worth and happiness.

## Conclusion

Monica Ali is a contemporary British female writer, and *Brick Lane* is one of her representative works. With her immigrant background, Ali vividly depicts the familiar and neglected Brick Lane in her novel, which shows the arduous process of the immigrant women to pursue freedom and independence. What's more, she explores the two generations of immigrants' pursuing of the sense of belonging and self identity. Apart from that, Monica Ali gives a brief description about the deterioration of the environment and the political corruption, highlighting the great gap between the excellent motherland of Bangladeshi immigrants and the reality of Bangladesh.

From the perspective of spatial criticism, this dissertation fully excavate the social, cultural, and historical significance that behind space. In turn, it opens the door for readers to understand the writer's ideological intention, characters' psychological state and social values at that time. The geographic space shows the great gap between Bangladesh and Britain, and the shifting of the geographic space helps Nazneen find her identity. Social space reflects the inequality between men and women. Apart from that, it also reveals Nazneen's attitude in the face of the collision and integration of eastern and western cultures. The shifting of the social space provides a prerequisite for Nazneen to achieve self-liberation. Psychological space is an important manifestation of Nazneen's inner growth and maturity. Only with the psychological maturity can she get away from bondage and oppression. Overall, *Brick Lane* reveals the growing process of the immigrant women in a multicultural context. As an representative of the immigrant women, Nazneen successfully got rid of the bondage and oppression from the patriarchal society and the feudal culture.

Finally, through the analysis of the female images in *Brick Lane* from the social space and personal psychological space, readers can ponder deeply over the attitude towards women. *Brick Lane* involves the traditional Bangladeshi culture, feudal ideology and British culture. It also reflects the fate and choice of women in this cultural collision. Under the background of globalization, what should we do to face the collision and integration of different cultures? How do the immigrant women

survive and develop? These are all important issues. At the same time, we should reflect on ourselves, learn to respect the differences of cultures and improve the cross-cultural awareness in international communication.

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2. 试析电影《不忠》的悲剧成因. 青年文学家. 2018（158）.

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