



Contemporary Marxist Literary Geography and Digital Spatial Criticism

—A Study Centered on New Transformation in a Mountain Village

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Abstract. The materiality of geographical environments that constitute *space*, and *literary space* as both a product and a mode of material production, profoundly influence social formations and historical evolution. In the era of globalization, conducting an integrative historical critique of literary geography and digital space, and exploring the convergence of space, its representation, and the world system, is of particular importance. As fundamental modes of human existence and vehicles for narrative, time and space continually shape social structures and cultural imaginaries. All literature is rooted in specific socio-historical conditions and traditions. Taking Chinese XunGen Literature as its field, this paper focuses on the *New Transformation in a Mountain Village* in the age of AI. It conducts a historicized analysis through three dimensions: *transformation of geographical space*, *reconstruction of place consciousness*, and *dissolution of boundary narratives*. By adopting a material turn, the study re-examines contemporary nostalgia, revealing the critical spatiotemporal imagination enacted through bodily practice and media narratives. Through an exploration of technological subjectivity that connects narrative time, ethics/politics, and digital utopia, it proposes new theoretical pathways for rebuilding a sense of place and addressing the predicaments of modernity.

Keywords: spatial criticism; literary geography; new materialism; cultural creativity; *new sensibility* aesthetics

1 Introduction

Time and space, as the material modes of human existence, first differentiated into history and geography. The tradition of focusing on native-soil literature initiated narrative precedents [1]2, drawing from Enlightenment ideas such as Montesquieu's view of geographical influence [2]48 and Taine's concept of the imprint of settlement [3]212. The emergence of literary geography through figures like Madame de Staël facilitated the spatial turn in the humanities.

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Contemporary American and French literary geography manifest this turn. Westphal focuses on spatiotemporalité, transgressivité, and référentialité; Tally advances concepts such as place, topophilia, and literary cartography [4]5, exploring spatial elements through textual aesthetics. Yi-Fu Tuan's topophilia—attachment to place (homeland) [5]235—roots such emotion in lived experience, identity, and self-narrative. In the digital age, new values emerge. Through approaches akin to Pritchey's updated writing of multiple authorship [6]244, the thing-narrative [7]268 of meaningless locations transcends digital media, enabling multi-mediated interpretation and constructing a confluence of linguistic sign axes and the temporal consciousness of thought signs. This fosters the narrative meaning and metaphorical imagination of a posthuman subject, aiming to realize species empathy and cultural variation [8]252, and creating a dual digital communicative situational space that integrates landscape and function [9]254. It confronts the rootlessness behind the New Transformation in Mountain and Countryside—the unreturnable countryside and perpetual, unsettled nostalgia.

Drawing on Ingold's meshwork and Marcuse's new sensibility, this approach maps cultural topographies and connects human and non-human relations. It seeks to reconstruct creative experiences in the digital era, imagining impossible worlds and exploring future possibilities.

2 Dynamic Geography in the Global Era: Historicized Reconstruction of Spatial Criticism

Current spatial theory suffers from inadequate integration, lacking material and historical dimensions, with digital space research remaining fragmented. Studies often merely juxtapose the *historical periodization* of Lefebvre, Foucault, and Jameson; the *human geography* of Deleuze, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Soja; and the *object-oriented narrative worlds* of Brown, Tang Weisheng, and Fu Xiuyan, lacking intrinsic dialogue [14]19. While Deleuze's *striated and smooth space* [10]542 and Foucault's *disciplinary space* share a lineage, their distinct emphases—desire, discourse, production versus power, knowledge, spatial arrangement—are often effaced in application.

Taking the *New Transformation in a Mountain Village* as a focal point, this study integrates the *object turn*—including Latour's *actor-network*, Bennett and Ballard's *thing-human entanglement*, and Harman's *object-oriented reality* [11]35—and extends Morton's *ecological entanglement* [12]98 into a transmedial *narrative mesh* [13]271 for the Anthropocene. This framework connects Harvey and Neculai's *spatial production*, Tally's *representational space*, and Rogério's *experiential space*. Deleuze's *fold* serves as a connective mechanism, viewing striated/smooth space, heterotopias, and the third space [14] as different folded states of the same reality, thereby introducing historical time. David Harvey's logic of capitalist *time-space compression* and *spatial fix*, alongside Manuel Castells' network society *space of flows*, constitute the macro-dynamics for understanding the contemporary rural spatial restructuring through cooperativization, marketization, and digitalization. Dynamically, extending Bourdieu's *habitus* into *spatial habitus* and combining it with Lefebvre's fluid space and Rogério/Harvey's views on spatiotemporal rhythms explores the dialectical unity of space and literary

narrative. This responds to technological philosophy's dissolution of subjectivity, explaining how human *poetic, experiential, rational* capacities and non-human *embedding, copiloting, agentic* agencies achieve *combined symbiosis* [15]78. It also re-examines the spatial emancipatory implications of Marx's theory of alienation through the shift from *laborer* to *director*.

A theoretical lacuna exists in the material dimension. An overreliance on spatial representation analysis neglects the materiality of literary production emphasized by Neculai [10]—namely, the cultural strategy and aesthetic-practical intervention in literary spatial relations [16]. Research on XunGen Literature should extend beyond textual spatial description to examine material practices like publishing mechanisms, dissemination channels, and reading environments. In the current context of technological emergence, spatial articulation often manifests as *idiosyncratic* spaces transcending national forms, seen as an inversion of Foucault's *heterotopia* and linked to Yi-Fu Tuan's *mysterious space*, the latter referring to ambiguous, unreliable narrative realms in human experience [4]234. Gregory argues that *idiosyncrasy* reconstructs identity through self-empowerment, circumventing national subjugation to any collective interest [15]234.

Nostalgia in XunGen studies is often essentialized, overlooking its historical genesis and cross-media manifestation of semiotic *new sensibility*. It requires integrating Proust's *involuntary memory*, Merleau-Ponty's consciousness theory of *bodily response*, and Ling Yu's path of identity construction through the semiotization of sensory perception and emotion to multi-dimensionally reshape the *géographie cordiale*, transforming phenomena into literary landscapes symbolizing inner life [17]48. This endows landscape with the practical governance of *memory extension, intergenerational transmission, and epochal transformation*. Blanchot's thought on the movement and openness of space adds a philosophical dimension: the stability of a sense of place stems from a topophilic attachment, formed through accumulated memory and affective experience within long-term collective sensory and material interaction. Nostalgia can be further theorized: drawing on Williams' *structure of feeling* as an embodiment of shared identity; following Althusser's ideology theory as a distinctive ideology of author and text; or, from Rogério's bodily perspective, treating nostalgia as bodily practice that reveals how spatial narrative propels subjective action through discourse, gesture, and scene [14]9.

2.1 The *Folding and Conversion* of Multimodal Bodily Narrative Time-Space

Text and cultural narrative are turning toward a multilingual space of body, technology, and materiality, while sign logic expands cultural concepts into an *isomorphic chain space*. Their interaction generates history and fragmentation, internally marking the underlying rules of dialogic contexts and externally transforming events through deconstruction, forming a continuum of echoing coexistence. In narrative discourse, *bodily gesture, as a paralinguistic gestural language accompanying speech, serves important functions* [17]288. As McNeill notes, gestures and symbolic signs can operate beyond immediate context, enabling instantaneous communication. Through creative use of language and gesture, they transit and superimpose across multiple coordinative

systems. Leveraging this capacity to accommodate difference and hybridity, local mountain-and-countryside features can be utilized to support the construction of new narrative worlds based on the deep cognitive parameters—experientiality, narrativity, and signification—proposed by Shen Dan [18]. This process involves projecting space into place through deictic points and bodily gestures, thereby saturating space with lived experience. Bodily gestures can be categorized as representational—expressing propositions by imitating the narrated object—and non-representational, including rhythmic movements or indexical pointing that indicate direction, location, or objects. The spatial layering of gestures corresponds to different mechanisms of embedding life situations into space, i.e., the construction of narrative place. Integrating digital potential with folk culture can fission holistic human experience, using multimodal narrative structures to present the multidimensionality of story worlds. This approach helps explain emerging phenomena such as digital nostalgia and online sense of place, bridging historical suspension and flow, emotional ideology, and bodily practice.

2.2 Crisis and Challenge: The Transdisciplinary Expansion of Imagination's Modernity

Both literary geographical space and digital space contain specific languages, emotional structures, and ideologies. The turn toward digital space fundamentally involves the enhancement of metonymic and metaphorical large language models—represented by contextual understanding, dialogic iteration, style adjustment, and creative rewriting—along with AI-assisted interactive creative algorithms (AIPE). It also encompasses the multi-directional, active, and free labor exerted by subjects in constructing new spatial maps. Although the language of digital space exhibits characteristics of openness and democratization, it remains constrained by the logic of instrumental rationality alienation and the manipulation of *codes* within what Baudrillard termed *consumer society* [19]172. Critical discourse and political-economic analysis are needed to emphasize the potential of the humanities in countering flattening, de-contextualization, and alienating effects.

At the level of literary narrative, Alvaro points to the act of *giving life through the thoughts, language, and actions of composite souls, beings, and landscapes*, whereby self-reflective behavioral iteration internally embeds and allows new events to emerge [4]. Prince's *embedded narrative* uses the spatial storification of the narrator as a marker of distinction; Jameson's *political unconscious* emphasizes the ideological significance of formal framing; while classical Chinese *dream narrative* employs mystically charged *objects* as mediating devices for differentiation. Correspondingly, the concept of *spatial humanities* is committed to constructing deep, temporal spatial maps. Through transmedial, multi-layered development and in-depth dialogue, it reveals new pathways, data, and ethics. For example, Franco Moretti's concept of *relative inert space*, presented through digital literary mapping, reveals a constrained spatiality that illustrates the process of disciplinary engagement moving from superficial to deep. This provides theoretical support for practical issues in the *New Transformation in a Mountain Village*, such as the integration of spatial networks with modern industries and

cross-media communication. It also aids in continuously reconstructing paradigms of agential capacity and returning to humanistic value orientations.

3 From *Place Image* to *Utopian Geography*: The Politicized Expansion of Imagination

Place is not merely a carrier of emotional value as Yi-Fu Tuan describes. Integrating Ernst Bloch's *principle of hope* and Fredric Jameson's *political unconscious* extends its analysis into the realms of utopian imagination and critical future-building. [21]66 Place is both a sedimentation of the past and a projective space for future possibilities. Imaginings of place in literature, art, and community action often carry critiques of the existing order and longings for a more just community. There is a need to deepen the critique of spatiotemporal vitality. Foucault analogized literary space to heterotopia, contemplating the interpenetrating relationship between life and literature [4]249. The core proposition involves a shift from focusing on spatial representations of *discourse production* and *knowledge and order* [4]115 toward the collective public realm of *spaces within space*—that is, *multiple spaces* [20]53 that accommodate the distinctive traits of characters. Drawing on Deleuze's theories of becoming, the rhizome, and nomadic thought, as well as Rogério's theory of spatial generation, one can propose the view of the text as a space-folding device. By employing Proust's *involuntary memory* as a mechanism for folding time and heterotopia as a form for folding space, literature brings the past, present, and future into synchronic coexistence.

3.1 The *Impossible Thought* of Utopia in the Post-National Era

Jameson notes that Utopia does not mean finding alternatives to the state or future conditions, but requires clarifying the very limits within which imagining future alternatives becomes possible [10]66. For him, utopia is not a social blueprint but a reflection on and rebellion against the impossible; its discourse constitutes a crucial feature of theoretical critique. This method of revealing new ways of imagining the world by thinking the impossible is substantiated in Robert Tally's research on utopian spatial representation and world-systems in the age of globalization. Although the globalization era is set against postmodern and post-national backgrounds, the resurgence of utopia in literary studies and critical social theory is vital. Modernity contains a utopian essence, while postmodernity exhibits a deconstructive, post-utopian character. Wilde believed that a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at; Žižek and Eagleton similarly point out that it is now easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Transnational capitalism, the end of the Cold War, and cultural globalization present new challenges to radical politics and critical theory. The influence of the Frankfurt School in the 20th century remains profound; the utopian imagination in their works, though subjected to ideological critique, reveals the paradox of value's end and the thinking of the impossible, foreshadowing post-structuralist thought. Jameson extends this to address post-structuralism, postmodernism, and the challenges of globalization, advancing toward an archeology of the future.

3.2 The Systematic Spatial-Humanistic Representation of Globalization

The mutual transformation of time and space manifests as a trajectory interweaving past and present. Studying utopian forms requires a psychological principle that transcends the individual, extending to the history, memory, and collective desires behind its discourse. Theorists like Jameson emphasize that *although utopian projects may be speculative, their mechanisms of imagination are linked to collective envisioning, inspiring people to imagine alternatives to the present, identify temporary weaknesses, and courageously contest them* [22]40. The representational crisis of utopia is rooted in modernity and unfolds through formal innovation; its discursive forms and political encounters mark the seemingly insurmountable limits within the existing world. By combining meticulous craft with philosophical inquiry into ascending tension, literature can achieve the unconcealed clarity of past, present, and future existing synchronously, alleviating subjective repression and sublimating it into other possibilities, thereby opening a space for meaning production that exceeds verbal expression. The phenomenal experience of utopia accumulates precisely at the moment its impossibility is confirmed. The combination of rational critique and utopian will echoes Gramsci's observation that *it is easier to imagine the end of the world*. Therefore, symptoms exist within the transformation of the world system, urgently requiring the imagination to conceive and map symbiotic alternatives. The current deficiency stems primarily from a poverty of imagination, not from any unchanging postmodern condition itself. This marks a crucial development in cognition, spatiotemporality, mapping, and aesthetics; it also concerns the nature of authenticity, guiding the subject toward a life free from anxiety and understanding the flows of transnational power under post-national institutions.

3.3 The Material Turn and Cartographic Reconstruction of Nostalgic Space

Nostalgia can be conceptualized as a critical spatiotemporal practice, linking it to the bodily cartographic practice of reading. The latter integrates Tally's cartography and Rogério's bodily becoming theory, viewing reading as a spatiotemporal reconstruction process where the reader interacts with the text through bodily memory—elements like dialect, rhythm, and sensory description. Simultaneously, nostalgic practice can draw on Agamben's notion of *contemporariness*—maintaining a distance from one's time, examining the multiple distances of language, time, space, and reference, and accessing meaning within the tension of intermediality and intersubjectivity. Critiquing the *untimeliness of nostalgia and modernity* is grounded in the dissolution of civilizational boundaries and social acceleration in the present. Nostalgic narrative creates theoretical distance for examining modernity, providing psychological and material foundations for spatial studies.

Moretti distinguishes between narrative space and metaphorical space [4]128, mapping the relationship between text and image, distilling textual space and graphic space, and ultimately synthesizing outer (social/geographical) and inner (psychological/memorial) space. Constructing a three-dimensional model responds to the convergence of literary geography and the spatial turn. The narrator's geographical consciousness is not merely about information acquisition; it presents the imagery, background, ideas, and

inspiration carried by space. It is both an intersection of emotional aesthetics and geographical traits, and a sublimation of social history and humanistic spirit. Here, Yi-Fu Tuan's *topophilia*, which reveals emotional projection, and its opposite, *landscapes of fear*, are analyzed alongside Robert Tally's *literary cartography* theory, which emphasizes purpose and ideological perspective. First, the act of mapping itself is a metaphor; its *textual surveying* always implies specific power relations and utopian impulses, echoing Foucault's revelation of the knowledge-power symbiosis and Harvey's critique of capital's spatialization. Second, in specific literary texts, such as the *romantic adventure* of voyage mapping in *Moby-Dick*, it actually becomes a *narrative of hatred* and a symbolic conquest of unknown space, while also unexpectedly presenting an open relational network within the narrative. This reveals that map reconstruction is a field where emotion, power, and imagination intertwine.

Space can not only enhance a work's creativity and emotional resonance but also, on a material-economic foundation, integrate the passion and contemplation of both Chinese and Western traditions, achieving an optimal mode of individualized existence. Therefore, it is crucial to strive to lift the veil—woven from power manipulation, ideological traction, commodification, and data colonialism—that obscures real and virtual objects, endowing each lived experience with deeper new meaning and new direction. Develop cultural-social understanding and interaction that progresses from perception to cognition and fractal reasoning, establishing a cross-dimensional, multi-subject narrative aesthetic value and ethical order based on historical context and inherent values. This will assist the posthuman [8]23 in acquiring emotion and rights, meaningful activity, and realizing communication and transcendence between psychological and worldly values.

4 Generating Value, Critiquing Practice: The Representation of Literary Geographic Space

To address these theoretical challenges, this study is committed to constructing a critical spatial poetics. Its core lies in inter-theoretical integration: building on Lefebvre's triadic dialectic of the production of space and his proposition of the reproduction of social relations, and combining it with Deleuze's desire-production and Foucault's power-knowledge-disciplinary spatial theory. This framework is used to analyze the politically mediated production of rural space in processes such as cooperativization and digitalization—a production that in turn shapes new social relations and subjectivities. This analytical tool will be applied to the construction of multiple spatial layers in contemporary literary transformations such as the *New Transformation in a Mountain Village*.

Simultaneously, advancing the *material turn*, this study employs Neculai's materialist analysis as its core methodological framework. Situating the inquiry within the value chain of literary production, it examines land reform, the transformations wrought by modernity, and shifts in ideational and affective formations. In doing so, it responds to Mike Crang's assertion regarding literature's active role in constructing social spatial

meaning and a sense of *home*. Furthermore, by tracing the pathways of transmedia narrative dissemination, the study engages directly with the geographical-spatial practice of Xungen Literature.

4.1 Dialectical Reality and Materialist Narrative: Polyphonic Spaces in Transmedial Serial Continuity

Digital storytelling from a transmedial perspective involves constructing impossible worlds through unnatural narrative, confronting the anti-realist and anti-mimetic features of non-real elements. This process entails macro-level considerations of temporality, spatialization, and contextual anchoring, alongside micro-level attention to states, time and action, sequences of action representation, scripted stories, participant roles, and relationships. It engages the semantic functions of possible worlds, implements conversion strategies across different thematic media, and locates narrative themes such as growth and national-identity construction. By embracing trauma narratives and polyphonic approaches through the lenses of class identity and liberal-humanist perspectives, it opens pathways to self-redemption amid human crises, advances social critique, fosters the recovery and development of conscious memory, and explores possible collisions between spatial worlds.

Regarding the historical mapping of nostalgia and spatial cartography, employing Foucault's genealogical method allows for a historical examination of the constitution of *nostalgia* as an affective structure, analyzing the variations and continuities in rural imagination across periods. Centered on concepts such as Tally's *topophrenia* (sense of place) [10]33, literary cartography, and geocriticism, this approach systematically investigates the spatial places outlined in literary texts and the theoretical frameworks surrounding place-based narrative and imagination. This trajectory moves from spatial-theoretical critique toward the conceptualization of spatial representation and imagination. It focuses on the sense of place, emotional geography, and the development of subjective consciousness they provoke. Within the pluralistic context of cultural studies, it further discusses utopian liminal spaces as intermediate states, responding to the challenges that a fluid world-system poses to local narratives.

4.2 Spatial Community, *Other* Identification, and the Ethics of Social Order

Based on Margalit's assertion that *The foundation of shared memory is the division of labor. This division is both synchronic (among contemporaries) and diachronic (between generations), the latter enabling the intergenerational transmission of memory, thereby allowing members of a mnemonic community to trace back, through analogical reasoning, to the generation that first remembered the event* [23]226, a genealogy of nostalgia is constructed from The Great Transformation in the Mountain Village to China in Liangzhuang. With memory and recollection at its core, an interpretive horizon for mutual understanding is established across three dimensions—collective, traumatic, and cultural memory—moving toward cultural construction that transcends human limitations, witnessing the bridging of emotional needs, expressing the demand for narration, participating in the call to listen, and thereby accessing artistic truth, moral-

ethical values, and responsibility. On one hand, drawing on theories from Calvino and Beckett allows for the analysis of concepts such as digital nostalgia and online communities as virtual senses of place, along with their dual nature as influenced by digital technology in *The New Transformation in the Mountain and Countryside*. On the other hand, the ethical dimension should proceed from Edward Soja's Thirdspace and Levinas's ethics of the Other to develop spatial justice, safeguarding the rights to spatial heterogeneity and its latent potential. The practical methodology manifests as a multi-mapping approach, simultaneously charting maps of material, representational, and lived space to examine their overlaps, fissures, and contradictions.

Through spatiotemporal genealogical tracing and phenomenological analysis of the body, participating in the critical reconstruction of modernization experience can reveal the power relations and bodily practices involved in the generation of a sense of place, fostering a form of spatiotemporal vital humanism. Responding to the postcolonial concepts of *deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* proposed by Westphal—following Deleuze's uncoded, dynamic, nomadic *smooth space*—their emancipatory implication of transgressive scrutiny corresponds precisely to the boundless frontiers of the digital age [11]100. Constructing layered narrative dimensions within the upper and lower folds of a *Möbius strip* form of temporally stratified asynchronicity, and adopting a vision that is humanistically inward, algorithmically forward, and cosmologically outward, moves beyond boundary anxiety and the limitations of a singular interface [25]18. This rebuilds the aesthetic and ethical foundations of space for our era, offers a transcendence of space, provides an active response to contemporary existential predicaments, and works to dissolve anxiety.

4.3 Interdisciplinary Considerations of Regional Chronotope Differences

Shen Dan proposes that *neuro-narratology* encompasses the elevation of the human mind, the interface with contemporary reality and cutting-edge developments, and the adoption of macro-research perspectives that leverage adjacent disciplines in the natural sciences, thereby deepening authorial narrative cognition, as well as the cross-media application of rhetorical resources. Establishing dialectical thinking within the interplay of historical and synchronic shifts recognizes that any synchronic spatial structure is a folding and coexistence of multiple historical temporalities—such as traditional, modern, and digital time. This offers possibilities for individual-collective negotiation and the realization of heterotopia, thereby enabling a grasp of the complexity of spatial narratives in XunGen Literature and facilitating its extension and development.

Depth Reconstruction of Historical Continuity: The Historical *Temporal Strata* of Spatial Production The core lies in the reproduction of social relations within space. Engaging with postmodern concepts like Foucault's *heterotopia* and Deleuze's *smooth/striated space* reveals how capitalism extracts surplus value through disciplinary and nomadic spatial strategies. This mapping takes Deleuze's *smooth space* and Yi-Fu Tuan's *topophilia* as its theoretical core, embodying the immediacy of bodily practice, the organic nature of local knowledge, and experiences of cyclical time, serving as the foundational substrate for all spatial restructuring.

The Collectivization Stratum: The Striation of State Power The cooperativization movement, through land redistribution, work-point systems, and collective labor, directly inscribed state power onto rural geography and social fabric, creating pronounced stratification. The Marketization Stratum: The Incursion of Capital Logic Taking David Harvey's *time-space compression* and the spatial production of capital as its theoretical core, post-reform market relations and labor markets became new forces restructuring space, leading to rural hollowing-out and functional transformation—a spatial reorganization driven by capital logic, distinct from political striation. The Digitalization Stratum: The Superimposition of Virtual Space Theorized through Soja's *Thirdspace* and Beckett's absurd spatiotemporality, the internet and digital technologies create virtual layers superimposed upon physical space. Within historical, cultural, and contextual frames, shared knowledge and cognitive structures arising from close textual reading enable an authorial turn and reader empathy—that is, a rhetorical-narrative reconstruction of the sense of place. This process yields a cognitive-psychological mechanism for understanding the storyworld of mountain and countryside, one that accommodates quantitative and qualitative, heterogeneous and symbiotic, explicit and implicit changes. It aligns with the dynamics and adaptability of algorithmic design, filtering, and constraints, while also confronting the inevitable deep spatial fragmentation and the resurgence of memories marked by the disappearance of local attachment.

4.4 Metaphor and Symbolism of Spatial Movement: The Interaction of Social Relations

A map inherently reflects space, distance, and scale, yet in contemporary discourse it is often metaphorically extended to encompass deeper narrative and critical functions. As Jameson notes, the cognitive aesthetics and orienting behavior implied by mapping emphasize its instrumental role as a tool for cognitive mapping, helping subjects position themselves within complex social and historical realities while concretizing invisible power relations, accumulated temporal layers, and cultural conflicts into legible spatial texts[24]95. In contrast, spatial narrative exhibits transmedial continuity and polyphonic qualities. When applying the *stratigraphic reading method* to analyze *The Great Transformation in the Mountain Village* or any XunGen Literature text, one should not treat the depicted space as homogeneous. Instead, it is crucial to discern the multiple historical strata that coexist and exert pressure upon one another. *The Qingxi Township* in Zhou Libo's writing is precisely a site where pre-modern and collectivization strata collide intensely; the characters' pain and uncertainty reflect an *affective dislocation* experienced as their bodies navigate different spatial layers. Furthermore, a nuanced analysis of synchronic structures—the coexistence of multiple *spatial moments*—is required. At any historical cross-section, diverse spatiotemporal moments of qualitatively distinct natures coexist, and one must avoid allowing a single theoretical lens to obscure the full complexity of this synchronic picture. Re-examining 1980s XunGen Literature through Carl Sauer's insight that *the natural area provides the medium, and the local way of life—the culture—provides the agent of the cultural landscape, focusing attention on how cultural differences constitute the human*

world[25]17, we can identify at least four interwoven dimensions within its synchronic space.

As Hones posits, *the sense of the world is built through interactions among place, space, and embodied practice, involving space, place, landscape, and environment* [25]4. Comparative analysis and proposition of diverse thematic forms can, from a cultural-narrative perspective, alleviate the public's cognitive burden of understanding. First, the residual space is a metaphor for memory and emotion. Theoretically centered on Yi-Fu Tuan's *topophilia* and Rogério's *bodily becoming*, it embodies the persistence and remnants of a pre-modern sense of place—manifest in dialect, folk customs, bodily memory, and the rituals and ballads found in transitional-period literature. Second, the dominant space manifests as a metaphorical blueprint of modernizing forces. Theoretically anchored in David Harvey's *time-space compression* and Deleuze's creation of *striated space*, it reflects the transformation of urban and rural areas through processes of modernization and commodification. Third, the emerging space points toward metaphors of possibility and transitional states. Theoretically centered on Tally's literary cartography and the *real and possible* from Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, it captures nascent spatial experiences and relationships, such as new urban-rural perceptions brought by early population mobility. Its literary representation lies in the rootless wandering of educated youth between city and countryside, searching for a new spiritual *place*. Fourth, the repressed space, rediscovered in retrospect, serves as a metaphor for resistant or heterogenous existence. Theoretically grounded in Foucault's *heterotopia* and Agamben's *potentiality*, it embodies marginal, heterogenous spaces and alternative ways of life that cannot be accommodated by dominant narratives. This includes bodily and living spaces deemed *abnormal*, pointing toward a future trend of fusion between physical and digital worlds, directly confronting the mental illusions and realities arising from cognitive alienation, and seeking situational resolutions to historical identity and value conflicts.

By discerning these four metaphorical spatial dimensions, it becomes evident that spatial narrative in XunGen Literature is far from a simple nostalgia. It essentially constitutes a complex mapping of the competition, negotiation, and coexistence among multiple metaphorical systems of an era. Within this framework, the evolving connotations of *nostalgia* itself can also be seen as a diachronic shift in core affective metaphors: from longing for the pre-modern metaphor of *smooth space*, to recollecting the collectivized metaphor of *community*, and further to the disorientation in the digital age toward a new metaphor of a highly mediated *symbolic homeland*. Byung-Chul Han's critique of the *violence of transparency* and *data fetishism* precisely reveals how new digital metaphorical systems devour the richness and mystery of traditional metaphors, creating new cognitive dilemmas. Criticism, therefore, must not only sensitively capture the oppression of the *dominant space*, the possibilities of the *emerging space*, and the silence of the *repressed space*. Through the compound and dynamic application of metaphor, critique itself should become a more insightful act of cognitive remapping. This also entails engaging in creative writing that *produces new knowledge about place and human relations to place*[25]76. Yi-Fu Tuan's *topophilia* emphasizes a stable, phenomenological attachment between emotion and place, possessing immediacy and synchronic significance. Introducing Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity allows us

to understand *sense of place* as an identity practice continually narrated and reshaped across time and space. Place is not merely an object of emotional projection but a field of meaning constantly reinterpreted by individuals and communities through stories, memories, and rituals. It is through such multiple mappings between text and world that deeper understanding is reached. The synchronic interweaving of these dimensions constitutes the complex, contradictory, and tense overall spatiality of the Chinese countryside as remembered across generations. To deepen the core inquiry, charting the changing trajectories of nostalgia through its diachronic qualitative shifts reveals that its connotations and object undergo fundamental transformations across the four historical strata. During the collectivization period, nostalgia longed for the pre-modern smooth space that had been *striated*. In the marketization period, nostalgia yearned for the romanticized *rural community* of the collectivized era that had been *hollowed out*. In the digital age, nostalgia points toward a highly mediated, symbolic *homeland*, increasingly detached from real physical space. Thus, a scientific, cognitive-geographic genealogical analysis of *nostalgia* is called for, rather than treating it as an eternal, unchanging emotional category.

Civilization provides the substance, contemporaneity the application. Byung-Chul Han points out that the *violence of transparency* illustrates how digital narrative is devouring the suspense, thought, and curiosity of storytelling, rendering everything exhaustively visible while stripping away human biopsychological, cognitive, and aesthetic perceptual needs. This dissolves the sense of place, manufactures digital nostalgia, and leads to confusion in subjective perception. Furthermore, addressing the uneven, fragmented development of online and offline *localization* in anti-colonial struggles requires recognizing data as a new factor of production. The shift from *commodity fetishism* to *data fetishism*[26], with data's *dematerialized* nature, intensifies the abstraction and concealment inherent in reifying logic, and the addition (acceleration) of society makes narration ever more transparent [27]343. When applying historical-strata analysis in spatial theory, attention must be paid to the diachronic limits and applicable boundaries of theoretical tools. Deleuze's striation analysis offers penetrating insight into the collectivization movement, but examining the digital countryside requires combining it with Soja's Thirdspace or Beckett's *absurd spatiotemporality*. Tally's literary cartography should be integrated with Hayles's *materiality analysis* to avoid over-symbolizing the text and replicating the unequal *reading spaces* constructed by commodified reality. Through literary geography and digital spatial narrative, in a process of diachronic penetration and unnatural deconstruction of self-seeking, theories should be employed dynamically and compositely while constantly reflecting on their limits—finding convergence where experience, contact, and influence effectively overlap.

5 Conclusion: Narrative Takes Gen in Spatiotemporal Flow: The Mountain-Village Community and Poetic Reconstruction in the Digital Era

Through narrative, humans construct the self in time and confront existential uncertainties. Upholding ethical responsibility and poetic justice constitutes a fundamental practice for resisting technological alienation in the digital age. Genuine spatial critique must integrate historical perspective with humanistic concern—perceiving historical sedimentation within synchrony, and discerning trajectories of change across diachrony. It coordinates connections across boundaries and scales, establishing emotional and rational foundations for community. Resorting to multi-layered mapping through virtual reality, transmedia, and spatial data can integrate knowledge and humanity into the *narrative mesh* of things, realizing the construction of new, ecologically diverse spaces in the digital era. This locates the creative transformation of spiritual belonging in the *here and now*, moving toward practices and interpretations that transcend the dichotomy of proximity and distance. Simultaneously, employing the *spatial stratum* analytical method allows for the identification of layered historical times and mnemonic tensions within static structures, while diachronic analysis discerns the artistic representation of place-writing. Narrative, furthermore, creates and reconstructs experiential perspectives of *space, place, landscape* and the ordered relationships of *nation, land, kinship*. Amidst chaotic reality, through Ricoeur's temporal *emplotment* and the spatial positioning of literary cartography, it inscribes a meaningful space that orders and assigns significance to *things*—a map that is both cognitively intelligible and a domain of inhabitable value, forever in a dynamic process of contestation and redefinition. When tracing trajectories of spatial transformation, it differentiates the synchronic coexistence and struggle among residual, dominant, emerging, overlooked, and suppressed spaces within specific historical *moments*.

Ultimately, research on XunGen should strive to compose a *civilizational spatial genealogy* encompassing the countryside—a history of transformations in spatial form, and an account of how different spatial logics intersect, overlay, and overwrite one another across historical periods, alongside the resurrection of the human spirit. This transcends the limitations of static, planar views, truly accessing the historical depth of nostalgic sentiment in the digital age and the truth of authors' multi-mediated turns amid modernization's changes. It practices the construction of new spaces characterized by ecological diversity and robust, continuously fractal-reconfiguring *vitality*, responding to the quantitative and qualitative transformations across different facets of the digital era's *new transformation in the mountain and countryside* with rational reflection and emotional sublimation. Whether materializing Bloch's *hope* or Jameson's *political unconscious*, utopia resides in the creative transformation and narrative reconstruction of this very mountain and countryside here.

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