

A New Interpretation of *Blossoms* from the Perspective of Thirdspace Theory: On the Reception and Dissemination of Jin Yucheng's *Blossoms*

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Abstract

With the television series *Blossoms* directed by Wong Kar-wai sparking a widespread cultural phenomenon, the spatial narrative strategies of Jin Yucheng's original novel and its effects in cultural dissemination have garnered significant attention in academic circles. Grounded in the "Thirdspace" theoretical framework from cultural geography, this study integrates textual analysis with empirical research to examine the strategies of spatial construction in the novel *Blossoms* and its pathways of dissemination. At the textual level, the author employs non-traditional narrative techniques through illustrations to construct a spatial landscape characterized by synchronicity and diachronicity, thereby establishing an intertextual relationship between literary fiction and urban geography. At the level of dissemination, the spatial landscape of *Blossoms* functions as a cultural medium: audiences, through accessible landscape symbols in real physical spaces, activate nostalgic imaginations of Shanghai, thereby constituting the city as a vast site of nostalgia. By analyzing the internal mechanisms through which literary space is transformed into a space of cultural memory, this article seeks to provide a reasoned explanation for this cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural dissemination phenomenon.

Keywords

urban culture, *Blossoms*, Shanghai, Thirdspace, nostalgic narrative, hypertext

1. Introduction

Shanghai serves as a primary site for the inscription of Haipai literature. Since the 1990s, a persistent wave of nostalgia has characterized Shanghai writing, a trend that continues unabated to the present day. Jin Yucheng's *Blossoms* undoubtedly stands out as a particularly salient exemplar within this literary current. In contrast to many texts in which Shanghai functions merely as a broad, underlying framework for a fictional world, the author exhibits a pronounced documentary impulse in depicting the city's urban landscape. Beyond textual narration, Jin Yucheng even personally drew illustrations to underscore this intent. As a result, the novel's fictional text and the real historical city become integrated through non-traditional narrative devices, giving rise to an intertextual relationship that opens up a fresh interpretive perspective—namely, that of space.

Since the “discovery” of space by Benjamin and others, literary criticism in the mid-to-late twentieth century underwent a profound reorientation. Within this theoretical shift, Edward Soja recognized the simultaneity, complexity, and mutual interdependence of the social, the historical, and the spatial. Drawing on Lefebvre’s triadic dialectic of space and Foucault’s heterotopology, Soja developed his highly original theory of Thirdspace. In comparison with Firstspace epistemology, which emphasizes objectivity and materiality in an effort to establish a formal science of space, and Secondspace epistemology, which focuses on conceived space [1], Soja’s Thirdspace expands the signifier of the concept, seeking to encompass both the material space and the imagined space, traditionally held in binary opposition, within a broader lived space. In this view, urban space as a whole is regarded as a dynamic field of meaning production. In sum, the core of Thirdspace lies in its dynamic, integrative perspective. Soja invokes Borges’s Aleph, the point in space that contains all other points, as an analogy in order to highlight that the signifying subject of a readable space is constituted by the intersecting heterogeneity of diverse experiences.

Literary scholars have advanced their own interpretations of Thirdspace: “The relationship between literature and spatial theory is no longer one in which the former merely represents the latter; literature cannot stand outside space to survey it from afar. On the contrary, the text necessarily immerses itself in space, becoming an organic component of a plural and open spatial experience.”[2] In other words, the city is constructed within the fictional world of the novel, and the very texture of literature reveals how it is structured by space.

2. Shanghai as a Site of Nostalgia

Building on previous scholarship, Jin Yucheng’s *Blossoms* takes the transformation of Shanghai’s urban space during the 1960s and 1990s as its underlying thread. Through non-traditional narrative techniques such as textual description and illustrations, the novel presents, from the perspective of folk history, the historical architectural landmarks in areas such as Luwan District (now incorporated into Huangpu District) and the evolving social dynamics within local communities. In the process of textual production, Nanjing East Road serves as a representative example: in the 1960s, it featured the buying and selling of commodities such as radios and televisions; in the 1970s, the political atmosphere dominated, transforming the street into a “Cultural Revolution scene” where figures like Lanlan and her younger sister engaged in ambiguous flirtations while strolling; and by the 1990s, with economic liberalization and vigorous commercial activity, the same street became a venue for lively banquets and social interactions.

By adopting a single street as the vantage point to depict the flowing historical continuum spanning the 1960s to the 1990s, the entire novel *Blossoms* positions itself upon the vast productive domain of old Shanghai. The faces, light and shadow, and memories of distinctive, stylish Shanghai men and women are enfolded into the most familiar spaces of everyday life, such as buildings, streets, and old objects. This comprehensive, integrative perspective constitutes the Thirdspace constructed by *Blossoms*. For readers in the new century, the act of reading the novel generates recollections and contemplative psychological experiences regarding the city’s architecture and humanistic public spaces. Through such engagement, they achieve a traversal of past history within real urban spaces. This imaginative psychological experience represents one of the most distinctive effects engendered by Thirdspace.

2.1 The Public Nostalgic Psychology as Revealed by Social Practice Surveys

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, the pervasive expansion of technical rationality and the diminishing prominence of humanistic values have become salient features. Modern individuals commonly confront spiritual dilemmas arising from the erosion of self-identity. To counteract the impacts of technological alienation and the fragmentation of daily life, people are consciously or unconsciously reconstructing their identity through the re-examination of historical traditions and cultural memories. This collective introspection into history functions both as a psychological adjustment mechanism for contemporary contradictions and as an emotional buffer against future uncertainties. Consequently, “nostalgia” has progressively evolved into a crucial psychological strategy for modern individuals to establish identity, with nostalgic spaces emerging as symbolic arenas where people seek spiritual solace and emotional support amidst rapid societal transformation.

2.1.1 Popular User Reviews of Jin Yucheng’s *Blossoms* on the Douban App

This nostalgic sentiment often manifests on online platforms with a pronounced quality of loneliness. Taking user discussions of Jin Yucheng’s *Blossoms* on the Douban app as an example (as shown in Table 1), high-upvote comments frequently center on the keyword “loneliness.” This loneliness is not merely that of the characters in the book; it is also a loneliness that readers outside the text can keenly feel. Contemporary Shanghai increasingly exhibits a homogenized “urbanization” that aligns it with other international metropolises, such that many of the streets and alleys depicted in *Blossoms* have faded from people’s everyday awareness. Activities from the 1960s—such as buying stamps, receiving letters from Hong Kong, or queuing for movie tickets—as well as the social interactions among characters like Husheng, A Bao, and Maomao, no longer exist in the present. For native Shanghai residents, *Blossoms* represents a nostalgia for a “nearby” world that has vanished, evoking a deep resonance in both heart and memory. For readers from southern China, and even some from the north, the specific locations may not hold primary importance; what matters most is the longing for that past way of life. The author infuses this broadly shared nostalgic emotion into the urban fabric of Shanghai, thereby transforming the city into a vast nostalgic field. In an era defined primarily by the rise of technical rationality and the eclipse of humanistic spirit, the public yearns to return to Shanghai’s golden age, seeking through nostalgia to soothe the frustrations arising from real-world conflicts and to alleviate anxieties about the present and the future.

Table 1: Top User Reviews on Jin Yucheng’s *Blossoms* in the Douban App [3]

Username (Pinyin)	Short Review Content	Likes
Tank Driver Bejita (Tankè shǒu Bèijítǎ)	Jin Yucheng is simply the Xu Genbao of the literary world. <i>Blossoms</i> = <i>Shanghai Bund</i> + <i>Yearning</i> + internet literature storytelling style + ethnographic gazetteer of local customs + artisan narrative + indigenous avant-garde spirit. Extremely enjoyable. The scene where Xiao Mao reunites with A Bao and Husheng was deeply moving. The entire book can be summarized by Shuhua’s letter: “The older one gets, the more one feels loneliness is normal—born alone, dying alone.” People cannot truly connect; the good and evil, affections and disaffections of the world are no longer worth a smile. Life is a desolate journey.”	2073
Subconscious (Qián yì shí)	After finishing the last page, it feels as though one has lived an entire lifetime.	1322
Joyful Split (Huānlè fēnliè)	Even after finishing, I remain immersed in a daze. An utterly unique linguistic context in Chinese literature: blending the vulgar and the elegant, where unspoken sorrow overflows from silent places. The entire narrative resembles an omniscient tracking shot sweeping across a gallery of characters—rhythmic voices, plain depictions of scenery, psychological activities—all hidden in the interstices, with white space left everywhere, unfolding countless longtang (alley) stories. It forms a panoramic long scroll. Vertically, it traces over 40 years since the founding of the nation, full of unpredictable vicissitudes; the blossoms are quiet, the leaves silent, colors and sounds empty. The female characters are vivid in both motion and stillness, roles that continue to grow; worldly vapors ultimately dissolve into emptiness. Traces of many masters abound (beyond the strong <i>Dream of the Red Chamber</i> influence, images from <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> are everywhere—e.g., Beidi swimming as a goldfish parallels Remedios ascending to heaven; the conjoined twin in Miss Wang’s belly parallels the seventh-generation child born with a pig’s tail). Most moving moments: sitting in Canglang Pavilion watching dawn break, Beidi turning into a goldfish, Shuhua reciting poetry, Li Li’s past and her becoming a nun, Xiao Mao and Yinfeng. Several long-take descriptions nearly brought tears—meeting is not as good as not meeting, affection resembles indifference. The epigraph reads, “God is silent, as if everything is up to me” (the inevitability of all trajectories). This is what it means: what is held in the mind without cease will surely echo back.	731
In the Clouds (Yún zhōng)	Spring sickness and spring sorrow—why do they come year after year? Half for the person by the pillow, half for the wine among the flowers.	378
malingcat	<i>Blossoms</i> dazzle the eye, yet ultimately void. Praise.	190
Xin Weimu (Xīn Wéimù)	The strong Shanghai flavor is commendable, especially the maps and street names, which create a powerful sense of space. However, the writing is overly trivial and chaotic, making it hard to follow the plot. Moreover, the author is fixated on men and	169

	women cheating and having affairs, and depicts it in a very sordid manner—for reasons unknown.	
Xiyi Zi (Xīyí zǐ)	A classical Chinese novel of the 21st century. It has both the carnal and the pure, but in truth it is tragic.	163
Xi Bei Foraging (Xī Běi zài mì shí)	Teacher Jin has written the novel that every Shanghai writer of this era has dreamed of.	146
Aunt Xiong (Xióng āyí)	Grand narrative embedded in four-character phrases—the more one reads, the more satisfying it becomes. Former splendor, trivial odds and ends, the dampness in the grid rooms, ultimately reduced to a single line about a mandarin duck and butterfly dream.	102

2.1.2 The Dissemination Extent of *Blossoms* and Willingness to Engage in Site-Seeing

Beyond the emotion of “loneliness” among modern urban dwellers as reflected in the comment texts, we distributed a questionnaire titled “The Dissemination Extent of *Blossoms* and Willingness to Engage in Site-Seeing.” A total of 80 valid responses were collected. The questionnaire included items designed to capture the demographic characteristics of the respondents, specifically their age and home province. The key questions and corresponding statistical results are presented in Tables 2 and 3 as follows:

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Survey Participants

Category	Subcategory	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Age	Under 18 years	4	5
	18–30 years	57	71.25
	31–45 years	7	8.75
	46–60 years	9	11.25
	Over 60 years	3	3.75
Province (city/region)	Shanghai	4	5
	Guangdong Province	5	6.25
	Jiangsu Province	10	12.5
	Anhui Province	4	5
	Fujian Province	3	3.75
	Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	10	12.5
	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region	2	2.5
	Jiangxi Province	2	2.5
	Hunan Province	2	2.5
	Shanxi Province	2	2.5
	Beijing Municipality	1	1.25
	Shandong Province	1	1.25
	Henan Province	1	1.25
Hebei Province	7	8.75	

Table 3: Cultural Reception and Tourism Interest Survey of *Blossoms* Among Participants

Question: How well do you think *Blossoms* portrays Shanghai and its regional characteristics?

Response Option	Percentage (%)
Extremely well; fully demonstrates regional characteristics	46.34
Quite well; demonstrates to a certain extent	48.78
Average; portrayal is not comprehensive enough	4.88
Poor; fails to demonstrate regional characteristics	0

Question: After reading or watching *Blossoms*, have you developed an interest in visiting related sites?

Response Option	Percentage (%)
Very interested	34.15
Somewhat interested	51.22
Neutral / Average	14.63
Not interested	0

Question: After reading or watching *Blossoms*, which of the following Shanghai characteristics interest you? (Multiple selections allowed)

Shanghai Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Historical architecture (e.g., concession-era buildings on Nanchang Road, Maoming Road, etc.)	78.75

Culinary culture (e.g., old-established restaurants on Huanghe Road, niche eateries on Jinxian Road)	66.25
Modern historical sites (e.g., Caoyang New Village, Cadre Apartments)	47.5
Commercial and cultural landmarks (e.g., Shanghai Garden Hotel, Cathay Theater)	65
Literary and leisure venues (e.g., coffee shops on Sinan Road, early-coffee-late-alcohol bars)	50

The geographical distribution of the respondents is relatively broad. 32.5% originate from southern cultural regions such as Shanghai and Jiangsu; 32.5% come from southwestern cultural regions such as Guizhou and Chongqing; 15% are from northern cultural regions such as Hebei and Beijing; 15% hail from northwestern cultural regions such as Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia; and the remaining 5% are from central cultural regions such as Jiangxi and Hunan. In terms of age, the respondents are predominantly concentrated in the younger demographic groups.

Based on the above data, individuals residing in southern cultural regions as well as in non-southern cultural regions, including the southwestern, northern, and northwestern areas, have developed an interest in reading Jin Yucheng's *Blossoms* or watching its television adaptation. This attraction generates a strong desire for tourism, with the aim of restoring a sense of "on-site presence." Data from Question 3 further indicate that respondents exhibit a particularly high level of willingness to visit the historical buildings, sites, and various cultural landmarks mentioned in *Blossoms*. This interest even surpasses that shown toward commercial and leisure venues, which most directly embody the contemporary urban context of Shanghai.

Consequently, combining the results of the questionnaire with the content of user comments on the Douban app, the following inferences can be drawn: the phenomenal level of attention elicited by *Blossoms* constitutes a cross-regional cultural phenomenon rather than an insular appreciation confined to southern cultural audiences. In doing so, it introduces new esthetic possibilities into the urban esthetic mainstream long dominated by northern cultural perspectives. With regard to the modes of dissemination, the pathways of reception among viewers also exhibit distinct characteristics. The transmission of cultural memory in *Blossoms* is anchored in landmarks embedded within lived space—namely, buildings and streets—that function as tangible, mediable cultural media. These architectural symbols, condensed within everyday life, essentially serve as fluid domains available for narrative production and the habitation of nostalgic sentiments. Through these anchors, viewers traverse back to the childhood spaces of the protagonists in early post-1949 Shanghai, or imaginatively relive the struggles of the city's golden era. In essence, these landmarks operate as mobile Thirdspaces, actively constructing Shanghai as a vast site of nostalgia.

3. Non-Traditional Narrative: Metaphor and Fluidity of Space

Blossoms exhibits a distinctive appeal in its approach to spatial narrative. On the one hand, the novel employs hand-drawn illustrations as a non-traditional narrative device. For instance, illustrations depicting the changes in landmark buildings at the intersection of Ruijin Road and Changle Road over nearly 40 years, including successive renamings of middle schools and transformations in surrounding architecture, vividly illustrate both the synchronicity and diachronicity of space. On the other hand, the construction of characters' living environments and public spaces in the novel reflects the hybridity of Shanghai's urban space in the early post-1949 period. This hybridity manifests in multiple dimensions: from the distribution and odors of factories, to differences in residential conditions, and to the contrasting public entertainment venues such as the Cathay Theater and the Shanghai Theater. These elements collectively reveal sharp class boundaries. Together, these aspects of spatial narration contribute to the rich and multifaceted urban space constructed in *Blossoms*.

3.1 Landmark Changes at the Intersection of Ruijin Road and Changle Road in Luwan District, Shanghai, over 40 Years

A close examination of the novel's narrative threads reveals a division into two main temporal layers: The Cultural Revolution memories of the 1960s and the modern life of the 1990s. Both periods allow glimpses into the author's meticulous depiction of Shanghai's urban life and landscape. The folk customs painting of Shanghai presented in the text forms the foundational cornerstone of the novel's sense of space. The "Shanghai in literature" manifested in *Blossoms* fuses Jin Yucheng's personal experiences and subjective perceptions: "The shifts and connections of space actually revive not only the smoke-filled, leisurely everyday life of ordinary citizens," but also carry "a strong documentary impulse toward geographical space, resurrecting the

authentic scenes and states of citizens' existence.”[4] Jin Yucheng's emotional memories and cultural experiences of Shanghai's material environment are transformed into subconscious localized knowledge. This, together with the metaphors of urban identity and citizen culture in Shanghai, constitutes the underlying creative foundation. Through the writing of Shanghai's place-based experiences from the perspective of ordinary citizens, the literary landscape of Shanghai constructed in *Blossoms* actually transcends the materiality of geographical space and becomes a subjectively imagined place. Accompanied by a pronounced documentary intention, Jin Yucheng develops a fluid, integrative perspective to handle the symbiotic relationship between the city and its characters.

The hand-drawn illustrations in the book serve as a non-traditional narrative device that highlights the narrator's fluid spatial consciousness. “Of the 20 illustrations in *Blossoms*, Jin Yucheng deliberately drew 8 architectural illustrations, 6 object illustrations, and 4 cityscape illustrations, all with the sole purpose of providing ‘visual evidence’ for the non-fictional dimension. In other words, the visible images reaffirm to the reader that the spatial environment in which the stories of *Blossoms* unfold—cities, streets, buildings, places, as well as objects related to the plot and characters—are all grounded in real history.”[5] In the illustration accompanying Chapter 11 of *Blossoms*, the author takes the street corner at the intersection of Ruijin Road and Changle Road in Luwan District as the fixed anchor point and records the changes in landmark buildings from the early post-1949 period to the beginning of the new century, spanning nearly 40 years. The drawings are presented in three temporal slices: 1963, 1967, and 2000. The middle school depicted in the illustrations undergoes name changes—“Jianchun Girls' Middle School → Changle Middle School → Xiangming Middle School Branch”—yet its fundamental educational function remains constant and relatively stable. In contrast, the adjacent buildings undergo dramatic transformations: from a Catholic church in 1963 to a statue of Chairman Mao in 1967, and finally to the new Jinjiang Hotel in 2000. The accompanying caption reads: “First draft of a historical city; the brush replaces the great camera lens to record the dramatic changes at this street corner over forty years.”

The illustrations and the novel's plot exist in mutual intertextuality and co-generation. At that time, the Cultural Revolution had already begun in Shanghai. A Bao was moving from the bourgeois-flavored “upper corner” to Caoyang New Village for self-criticism and rectification. Through A Bao's voice, the author evokes the history of the concessions: “In Shanghai, every few blocks there is a church; Shanghai is Huaihai Road and Fuxing Road.” This is then juxtaposed with the politically charged Mao statue that appeared overnight, rendering individual destinies unrecognizable from one day to the next. The narrator then shifts focus to the contemporary urban landscape familiar to readers—“the hotel,” the architectural form most emblematic of China's economic development after reform and opening-up. In this way, the synchronicity and diachronicity of a single unified space unfold before the viewer's eyes: the modern building triggers imaginative reconstruction of the same location in the past.

3.2 The Hybridity of Shanghai's Public Urban Space in the 1960s

The construction of characters' living environments and public spaces vividly embodies the hybridity of Shanghai's urban space in the early post-1949 period. “*Blossoms* repeatedly and tirelessly enumerates numerous specific road names and streets in Shanghai, implicitly embedding the author's class-based analytical framework for the ecology of Shanghai citizens.”[6] A Bao's childhood residence is located in the “upper corner” of Luwan District, where daily life unfolds in the vicinity of Gaolan Road and Sinan Road. This residential space offers superior views and a relatively superior environment. In stark contrast, Xiao Mao's residence is situated near the Big Self-Ringing Bell (Dazimingzhong) and Xikang Road, forming a significant opposition to Sinan Road and Xiangshan Road. The Big Self-Ringing Bell area is a workers' district, commonly referred to as the “lower corner.”

From the fake third floor, climbing onto the roof, the tiles warm underfoot, the view encompasses half of Luwan District: Xiangshan Road ahead, Fuxing Park to the east, a glimpse of Grandfather's standalone Western-style house slightly northeast, and to the west and rear, the Nikolai Eastern Orthodox Church on Gaolan Road—established by Russian émigrés in the 1930s, reportedly in memory of Tsar Nicholas II executed by the Soviets. During thunderstorms, it appears gloomy and fearsome; under sunlight, it is comparatively pleasing to the eye.

A Mao looks out the window: in the surrounding area, chimneys belch smoke, factories densely packed—cotton spinning mills, cigarette factories, chemical plants, brush factories, several handkerchief factories, woolen mills, silk spinning mills, machinery plants, steelworks—all operating day and night. To the west lies the toothpaste factory; when the west wind blows, the scent of “Doublemint” drifts over. When the northwest wind comes, the rotten straw odor from the paper mill at Sanguantang Bridge arrives—fetid with alkaline fumes, a throat-irritating acidic smell that forces every household to shut their windows.[7]

The variations in residential environments clearly demonstrate that urban space is oriented toward class divisions. In addition to this aspect, the novel’s illustrations of citizens’ public entertainment spaces also convey subtle class implications. For instance, the illustration in Chapter 3 juxtaposes the magnificent exterior of the Cathay Theater with the modest furnishings of the Shanghai Theater. This visual pairing is accompanied by the caption: “The ticket queue at the Cathay Theater extends along the arcade of the Jinjiang Hotel, which has now been converted into storefronts. In 1961, only a few first-run cinemas had air conditioning; the ‘Shanghai Theater’ was a third-run cinema, where patrons used paper fans to stay cool.”

In these public entertainment spaces for citizens, different lifestyles are directly presented in the form of material commodities. Even though Husheng, A Bao, and Xiao Mao become acquainted precisely because they all queue for tickets at the Cathay Theater, which allows the act of queuing to temporarily dissolve class barriers, the differentiation between theaters still implicitly indicates variations in users’ social identities and levels of wealth. The everyday activity of queuing brings together characters from diverse backgrounds in a single location, yet the details within this scene subtly point to the ongoing existence of class differences. This pattern suggests that Shanghai citizens’ identities and residential spaces remained relatively stable during the early post-1949 era, although public entertainment spaces introduced a measure of fluidity.

4. Mechanisms of Space Generation: Hypertext Encoding and the Nostalgic Sentiment in Writing

Since the turn of the new century, innovations in internet technology have propelled the dissemination of hypertext to emerge as a significant media landscape. Jin Yucheng initiated the creation of *Blossoms* by drawing on the Longtang website, which centers on Shanghai’s historical and humanistic elements while fostering rich exchanges in the Shanghainese dialect and a pervasive nostalgic atmosphere. Through interactions between the author and readers, the work has developed into a distinctive spatial experience and a domain of nostalgia. Concurrently, the rapid development of modern metropolises has induced the phenomenon known as “the disappearance of the nearby,” thereby giving rise to novel manifestations in urban literary composition. *Blossoms* constructs Shanghai’s urban space via a mode of writing that emphasizes personal introspection. This method serves as the writer’s subconscious reflection on how homogenized urban development undermines the city’s unique identity, while it also constitutes an effort to dismantle clichéd perceptions of modernized Shanghai and to reclaim its localized essence and charm.

4.1 The Hypertext Encoding Logic in the Creation of *Blossoms*

“Hypertext dissemination, reliant on the internet, has evolved into a significant media landscape within the everyday lives of the general public. As a mode of information organization and presentation based on nonlinear network structures, hypertext breaks through traditional linear and closed models of information production and transmission, thereby advancing text production into an activity capable of providing interconnections across multiple media carriers.”[8] Taking Jin Yucheng’s participation in the Shanghai Longtang website as a pivotal starting point, the creative process of *Blossoms* can be regarded as a quintessential example of the hypertext phenomenon. The Longtang website functions as an online space dedicated to discussions on Shanghai’s history, urbanity, and humanistic elements, where users are predominantly Shanghainese, and their language usage is richly infused with Shanghainese dialectal hues. From the transformations of landmark buildings to the differences in public environments, the community exhibits a pronounced inclination toward reminiscence and attachment to Shanghai’s past.

Jin Yucheng began his writing under the pseudonym “Dushang Gelou” (Ascending the Pavilion Alone). Within the Longtang website, which is grounded in the Shanghainese dialect, the relationship between author

and readers is characterized by relative freedom: “I recall during the initial draft phase of *Blossoms* on the Web, there was a character, the Shaoxing old lady, who was supposed to die earlier; she returns from the countryside, goes out to buy vegetables in the morning, and suddenly dies. At the time, a netizen’s follow-up comment said, ‘This old lady is quite interesting—why kill her off so early?’”[9], Subsequently, in the formal text, this Shaoxing old lady, serving as Beidi’s nanny, does not “suddenly die” after “buying vegetables”; instead, Jin Yucheng designs her fate such that during the Cultural Revolution, she transforms into a goldfish alongside Beidi and disappears.

From this perspective, the serialized format brings the author and readers into close proximity. In comparison to traditional creative activities, readers can directly comment and participate in the process, rendering this a writable text. The involvement of readers signifies that Jin Yucheng and the community assembled around Shanghai culture share similar psychological orientations in constructing nostalgic imaginative spaces. This radial relational structure, centered on textual exchange, facilitates the incorporation of key information focused on “Shanghai” into the text, thereby encoding it into more enriched spatial experiences and nostalgic domains. A symbiotic relationship characterized by de-authorization emerges between the author and the work, which enables *Blossoms* to be adapted under Wong Kar-wai’s direction into a visual arena of sound, light, and electricity. Although the novel and the television series appear superficially aligned yet fundamentally divergent, merely comparing their differences based on textual content fails to articulate the deeper significance of *Blossoms*. Viewed from an urban perspective, both expressive forms represent a re-shaping of Shanghai’s urban space, grounded in the vast real city and thereby constituting a Thirdspace.

4.2 Urban Esthetic Characteristics Manifested in the Hypertext Creation Path

The encoding logic of hypertext has shaped the practical forms of *Blossoms*, from textual composition to film and television media. When situating this creative practice within the historical context of Chinese urban literature, one finds that *Blossoms* inherits the writing gene of urban literature that anchors the local. Classic works in Chinese urban literature, such as Mao Dun’s *Midnight*, depict the class struggles in Shanghai during the 1930s, while Eileen Chang’s series of novels, including *Red Rose and White Rose*, portray the petty bourgeois ambiance of Shanghai. Writers typically engage directly with the political and economic production conditions of urban domains, thereby representing the local urban prosperity as well as the existential states of city inhabitants. This feature of urban esthetic writing constitutes one of the key paradigms in contemporary Chinese urban literature.

In contrast, *Blossoms* offers an alternative writing perspective, one that accomplishes the traversal and imaginative reconstruction of Shanghai’s past through a mode characterized by personal introspection. This creative psychology maintains a close connection to the phenomenon of “the disappearance of the nearby,”[10] which emerges in metropolises with highly advanced levels of urbanization. In simple terms, modern urban life is marked by atomization and abstraction. Within everyday routines, individuals depend on abstract concepts and principles to form their perceptions of the world rather than deriving understanding from direct awareness of their immediate surroundings. As modernization and urbanization accelerate rapidly, the living domains of urban residents increasingly converge toward homogenization. Similar urban landscapes arise, dialects fade away, and complexes of anxiety among modern people intensify. Within this converging production domain, contemporary Chinese urban literature displays a novel dimension, specifically the construction of a city space that aligns with personal value conceptions through introspective writing. By transcending temporal and spatial boundaries, such literature evades the context of modernization. This sensation of local wandering, combined with the narrative psychology of the isolated individual, represents a prominent characteristic of urban writing in contemporary China.

Amid the surges of the market economy and globalization, Shanghai as a city becomes saturated with imaginaries of modernity. Comparable to Western metropolises such as Paris and New York, Shanghai functions as an international metropolis and emerges as a uniform international archetype within literary perspectives. In comparison to the present-day internationalized and commercialized Shanghai, Jin Yucheng places greater emphasis on delineating the city’s local charm. Elements ranging from stamps and bottle openers to upscale apartments and new-style longtang residences, and extending to the Suzhou River, the “Zhizhen Yuan” on Huanghe Road, Shanghai’s urban landscapes, dialects, maps, cultural allusions, local artifacts, and

the attire of Shanghainese people all contribute to Jin Yucheng's portrayal. Through these, he molds "distinctive, stylish Shanghainese" individuals and constructs regional spaces infused with civic flavor. Each of these aspects is rendered from the viewpoint of local culture. The spiritual essence of Shanghai inherently resides within those winding narrow roads, which embody a semi-veiled elegance, a vitality that blends the illusory with the tangible, a captivating poise upon reflection, and a lush, dynamic allure reminiscent of the subtle beauty in verdant growth and fading blooms. Nevertheless, upon observing Shanghai's urban design in the present, one notes that the once-layered configuration of the No. 6 bus stop in front of the Hengshan Hotel has long since disappeared. This situation resembles a woman deprived of her curves and lace adornments, clad in attire that offers no concealment and thus lacking any semblance of charm.

The dismantling of vernacular dwellings and tiled alleys abundant in regional distinctiveness, followed by the implementation of unified, expansive, and luminous urban planning and construction, generates homogenized formations that impact the production of urban literature. This anxiety surrounding "the disappearance of the nearby" implicitly encompasses the narrator's affirmation of local value systems. Contemporary Shanghai progressively aligns with globalization and modernization. Within this homogenized production domain, the narrator struggles to identify value orientations and psychological alignments that resonate with their own. From this standpoint, the spatial construction in *Blossoms* corresponds to the psychological imaginings of the "isolated individual" and functions as a reflection on modern cities embedded within modernized production domains. The narrator maneuvers between two discursive frameworks, thereby implying a "lonely" narrative psychology that encapsulates a sense of local wandering. This dynamic mirrors the anxiety-laden emotions experienced by observers in modern urban existence, representing a spiritual void arising from self-erasure within homogenized production domains. Furthermore, this serves as one of the impetuses for constructing Thirdspace, specifically the nostalgic imaginings elicited by complexes of modernization anxiety.

5. Conclusion

This study, grounded in the theory of Thirdspace, employs a methodology that combines textual analysis with empirical investigation to explore the spatial construction strategies and cross-cultural dissemination effects of Jin Yucheng's *Blossoms*. The novel utilizes non-traditional narrative techniques, including textual description and illustrations, to integrate the synchronicity and diachronicity of space, thereby shaping Shanghai as a nostalgic domain that bears collective memory. Furthermore, the hypertext creation mode interacts with the nostalgic psychology of audiences, enabling the successful transformation of literary space into a space of cultural memory and thereby propelling the work toward extensive dissemination across regions and media.

The significance of this study lies in its revelation, from the perspective of cultural geography, of the intrinsic connections between literary works and the dissemination of urban culture. This approach provides a new theoretical pathway for interpreting cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural dissemination phenomena, while also offering a literary reference for the inheritance and revitalization of urban cultural heritage.

At the same time, the paper acknowledges certain limitations: the survey sample size is relatively small, and the proportion of younger demographics is disproportionately high, which may affect the generalizability of the conclusions. In the future, expanding the sample size and optimizing its structure could facilitate further exploration of the dissemination differences in the spatial narratives of *Blossoms* across various media forms

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Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the science project.

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