

The Spatial Narrative of Beijing City from the Perspective of Literary Geography: A Study on Wang Shuo's *Wild Beast*

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Abstract. This paper explores the spatial narrative of Beijing depicted in Wang Shuo's *Wild Beast* from the perspective of literary geography. Combining close textual reading, spatial event annotation, event group coding and literary mapping based on QGIS, this study analyzes how the novel constructs the urban landscape of Beijing through character movements, named locations and spatial containers. A spatial container in this research refers to a repeatedly mentioned region consisting of multiple internal nodes in the narrative. The research identifies 209 spatial events, 34 event groups, 34 points of named locations, 6 routes of event groups and 2 major spatial containers. The results reveal that movement ranks as the most frequent type of spatial event. Most named locations do not serve as narrative centers, but function as route markers or reference points throughout the story. Narrative intensity is concentrated in two core spatial containers: the protagonist's residential compound and the area in front of the school gate near Milan's residence. Together, these two areas cover 23 out of the 34 event groups. It can be concluded that Beijing in *Wild Beast* is not presented as a static geographical image. Instead, it forms a layered narrative space shaped by the interplay of geographical points, travel routes, spatial containers and fragmented memories.

Keywords: *Wild Beast*, spatial narrative, literary geography, literary mapping, Beijing city.

1. Introduction

Wang Shuo is a highly distinctive writer in contemporary Chinese literature from the 1980s to the 1990s. His works emerged amid the rise of new-era literature, urban culture and popular culture. He is widely recognized for colloquial narration, ironic tones and subversion of solemn narrative styles. Beijing repeatedly appears across his novels, yet the Beijing depicted in his writings is neither a mere collection of local customs nor a nostalgic backdrop for reminiscence. Rather, it is an urban world shaped by social institutions, personal desires, youth culture and daily mobility. *Wild Beast* stands out prominently in this regard. Set in Beijing in the late Cultural Revolution period, the novel adopts a teenage perspective and interweaves growth experiences with urban spatial perceptions. In this sense, Beijing acts not only as the setting for the story, but also a force that shapes memories, perceptions and personal identities.

In *Wild Beast*, Beijing is never a pure object of nostalgia or a static background. The characters' walking, chasing, staying and observing continuously reconstruct it into a capital city space, a space of youthful memories and a space of urban perception. Taking the urban spatial presentation of Beijing in *Wild Beast* as the research subject, this paper adopts Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production and the perspective of literary geography, and combines qualitative and quantitative research methods including close textual reading, manual annotation, spatial event analysis and literary mapping. By tracing place names, travel routes, recurring spatial nodes and characters' movement patterns, this paper intends to illustrate how characters' trajectories construct urban space and define identity boundaries, and further explore the new implications of Wang Shuo's depiction of Beijing in the literary context of the 1990s.

2. Literature review

Recent studies have moved beyond regarding Wang Shuo merely as a cultural phenomenon, and started to pay more attention to the spatial dimension in his portrayal of Beijing. Yang (2021) argues that Wang Shuo's novels maintain an intimate connection with Beijing, and the urban spaces in his works can be divided into two categories: ordinary urban spaces and military compounds. Characters exhibit different behaviors and mental states in different spaces, and spaces gain meanings through characters' activities and perceptions [1]. Hong (2025) also points out that Wang Shuo presents a unique portrayal of Beijing. Different from writings focusing on old city traditions and folk nostalgia, his depiction of Beijing maintains a strong political connection with urban spaces and cultural transformations from the late 1980s to the early 1990s [2].

Against this research background, the academic value of *Wild Beast* has been gradually recognized. Chen (2020) states that this novel marks a shift in Wang Shuo's writing style from pure satire to growth narratives with generational memories and historical depth [3]. More relevant to this study, Xu (2009) analyzes the movements of the protagonist Ma Xiaojun across the political heart of Beijing, and holds that such movements reflect the tensions between the sacred image of the national capital and the mundane urban life [4]. Zheng (2013) further notes that the military compounds in Wang Shuo's novels represent spaces embedded with hierarchy, discipline and symbolic power, rather than simple story settings [5]. These studies have proven that the Beijing in *Wild Beast* is not a homogeneous urban backdrop, but a complex urban field intertwined with daily spaces, compound spaces, political symbols and youthful experiences. Nevertheless, most existing researches stay at the level of thematic interpretation, and fail to fully explain how characters' movements, recurring spatial nodes and boundary-crossing behaviors form the internal narrative mechanism of the text.

The theoretical achievements of the spatial turn provide effective support for further research. Lefebvre (1991) redefines space as a product of social production, and proposes that space takes shape through the interaction of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces [6]. This theory enables us to interpret the Beijing in *Wild Beast* as a socially and symbolically constructed space, instead of a passive setting. Harvey's (1990) theory of time-space compression reveals the historical dynamics of urban space under modernity [7]. Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope theory clarifies that time and space are inseparable in narratives [8]. Genette's (1980) distinction between story time and narrative discourse also helps classify event groups, especially when narratives involve time shifts, time compression, plot interruptions and retrospective revisions [9]. In domestic academic circles, Fang (2016, 2018) points out that research on spatial narrative has shifted from viewing space as a passive scene to exploring the interactions among physical, psychological and social spaces. In her follow-up studies, she connects cognitive maps with literary mapping, and interprets spatial narrative as a narrative structure organized by spatial order [10][11].

From the perspective of literary geography, relevant theories also provide solid methodological guidance. Mei (2015) regards the spatial turn as an important research transformation, and advocates reconstructing literary spaces through maps, scenes and implied meanings [12]. Tally (2013) systematically elaborates the relationships among literary mapping, literary geography and geocriticism. He believes that literature not only represents spaces, but also helps readers perceive and understand the integrated world of reality and imagination [13]. These viewpoints lay a methodological foundation for this study to trace travel routes, identify recurring spatial nodes and visualize textual spaces.

To sum up, existing studies have identified multiple spatial contradictions in *Wild Beast*, including ordinary urban spaces versus compound spaces, the sacred capital versus the mundane city, and enclosed sites versus mobile routes. Further research is still needed to explore how these spatial differences are organized at the narrative mechanism level. Specifically, how do travel routes, recurring nodes, stays, boundary crossings, time transitions and retrospective revisions construct Beijing into a complete spatial narrative, and influence character growth and plot development? Combining close textual reading, route tracking, node annotation, event group coding and literary

mapping, this study aims to explore Wild Beast as a spatial narrative that shapes the image of Beijing through mobility, boundaries, memories and spatial imagination.

3. Methods

3.1. Textual Coding: Spatial Events and Event Groups

This study takes Wang Shuo's Wild Beast as the sole research text to explore how urban spaces of Beijing organize the narrative. The research methods are formulated based on the aforementioned theoretical framework. Guided by Lefebvre's (1991) theory of space production, this research treats Beijing as a social space constructed by spatial practice, representations of space and personal life experiences, rather than a neutral setting. Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope theory supports the adoption of spatial events as the basic analytical unit, because narrative spaces gain real meanings only when locations, time, actions and narrative perspectives integrate into complete narrative fragments. Therefore, this research starts with spatial behaviors rather than isolated place names.

A spatial event refers to the smallest narrative unit formed when characters enter, exit, traverse, stay in, observe or relocate within a certain space. Only concrete spatial actions or positional descriptions in the text are extracted as spatial events. Hypothetical, habitual or purely descriptive mentions of spaces are retained as contextual information, but will not be coded as spatial events without actual actions. If a single sentence contains multiple consecutive actions that change characters' spatial states, it will be divided into multiple independent spatial events. Observation or surveillance conducted from specific positions with prominent narrative significance is also coded as a spatial event. Boundary-crossing behaviors are recorded through the coding of "entry" and "exit", with additional notes added to mark boundary crossings when necessary.

Each spatial event is classified into one of six categories to describe its spatial form, while its narrative function is coded separately. These classifications translate Lefebvre's concept of spatial practice into recordable actions, including characters' movements, stays, boundary crossings and observations.

Table 1. Event Type Categories and Definitions for Spatial Event Coding

Event Type	Definition
movement	Bodily displacement through space, such as walking, riding, following, or crossing.
entry	Crossing into a bounded or delimited space, such as a room, courtyard, building, station, restaurant, cinema, or pool area.
exit	Crossing out of a bounded or delimited space.
stop	Remaining, waiting, standing, sitting, lying, hiding, or staying in position without significant relocation.
observation	Seeing, watching, noticing, or monitoring from a spatial position when looking is narratively foregrounded.
transition	A real spatial shift narrated in compressed form without the movement process being unfolded in scene-time.

After the first round of annotation, a total of 209 spatial events are extracted in chronological order throughout the text. Among them, 192 events are categorized into the six types mentioned above, and the remaining 17 are recorded as contextual spatial descriptions. Detailed coding may split continuous narrative fragments, so the full text is reviewed again to divide all contents into 34 event groups.

An event group refers to a relatively continuous narrative fragment composed of multiple spatial events that serve the same action sequence, encounter, conflict, chase, observation scene, memory segment or retrospective revision. Event groups are divided according to narrative continuity, unified action goals, time continuity, consistent spatial containers or travel routes, narrative focus and narrative level changes.

This division embodies Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope theory at a macro level, which restores the integrity of time and space based on individual spatial actions. Genette's (1980) distinction between

story time and narrative discourse also guides the division of event groups. A new event group starts once the narrative changes the time frame, compresses action sequences, interrupts past storylines, switches core spatial containers or introduces retrospective revisions. The final numbered event groups (G001–G034) connect spatial events, mapping elements and narrative fragments in the research results.

3.2. Narrative Reliability, Place Normalization, and Data Cleaning

In accordance with Tally’s (2013) theory of literary mapping, a literary map is not a pure cartographic restoration, but an interpretive practice. The maps produced in this study illustrate how the novel organizes the urban space of Beijing through named locations, travel routes, recurring nodes and spatial containers.

The Beijing Urban Traffic Map (1976) is adopted as the main historical base map [14]. This map is obtained from WardMaps LLC, titled Beijing, China 1976 (Side A). Classified as a city map in the collection, it measures 19.5 inches in width and 28.5 inches in height, with the serial number 2024112614A. The original publisher is not indicated in the online catalog.

Georeferencing and vector annotation are completed in QGIS 4.0.1-Norrköping [15]. The coordinate reference system of the project is EPSG:3857 (WGS 84 / Pseudo-Mercator), with meters as the map unit. This coordinate system is suitable for alignment and visualization with online maps, rather than high-precision measurement of distances and areas. The 1976 raster map is georeferenced using the first-order polynomial transformation. Twelve out of eighteen candidate ground control points are selected for georeferencing. These control points are chosen from stable large-scale urban landmarks and road intersections, including Tiananmen Square, Beijing Railway Station, Dongdan, Xidan, Chang’an Avenue and Chaoyangmen. Small hutongs, bus stops and ambiguous building entrances are excluded. The average georeferencing error is 75.408 pixels. Since the data is marked as average pixel error instead of root mean square error (RMSE), this research defines it as average georeferencing error rather than survey-level RMSE.

OpenStreetMap is only used as an auxiliary modern reference layer to identify existing streets, hutongs and major urban landmarks. It is not used to restore the road layout of the 1970s, nor displayed as the base map of Figure 1. In compliance with the regulations of OpenStreetMap, all relevant data is noted to be sourced from OpenStreetMap under the Open Database License.

All vector data is stored in a GeoPackage file and divided into three core layers: `wb_named_places` for point elements, `wb_routes` for line elements, and `wb_spatial_containers` for polygon elements. Point elements represent named or roughly locatable places; line elements represent routes of event groups instead of exact walking paths; polygon elements represent spatial containers, mainly the protagonist’s residential compound and the area in front of the school gate near Milan’s residence.

The named locations in the point layer are further divided into two functional categories for separate analysis, independent of the polygon spatial containers.

Table 2. Functional Classification of Named-place Points

Point function	Definition	Examples
route/reference point	A named or inferred point that mainly marks a route node, direction, transfer, temporary stop, or urban reference.	Beijing Station; Trade Union Building stop; Children’s Cinema; Red Sun Snack Shop
episode focal point	A named point where a distinct local episode is staged more fully, often through confinement, confrontation, gathering, or a scene-based event.	Dongfeng Market police station; Xinqiao Hotel; Moscow Restaurant; Workers’ Stadium pool

Note. This binary classification applies only to the point layer named places. Polygonal spaces such as the protagonist’s compound and the school-front / Milan residential block are coded separately as major spatial container in the spatial containers layer.

This table 2 distinction was necessary because geographical visibility and narrative centrality are not identical. A named place may be easy to plot on the map but function mainly as a route or

reference point, while a spatial container may be difficult to delimit precisely but contain a high concentration of event groups. Polygonal spaces such as the protagonist's compound and the school-front / Milan residential block were therefore coded separately as major spatial container in the wb spatial containers layer.

Each mapped object was assigned a Geo Status, such as exact, approximate, inferred site, inferred segment, OSM assisted, or relational container, to avoid over-claiming locational precision. The boundaries of spatial containers are interpretive rather than cadastral. They were estimated from repeated textual references to internal nodes, entrances, circulation paths, adjacent streets, and recurrent movement sequences. The polygons therefore indicate approximate narrative extents rather than survey-level boundaries. The internal structures of C001 and C002 were visualized through schematic insets rather than through precise geographic coordinates. These insets represent topological and narrative relations among internal nodes, not reconstructed architectural layouts. Node positions were arranged according to textual sequence and narrative function: boundary nodes such as gates and entrances are placed at the margins; circulation nodes such as corridors or verandas are placed between exterior and interior spaces; and focal nodes such as the rockery, pavilion, Milan's room, and photograph are placed inside the containers.

During QGIS annotation, only object IDs such as place id, route id, or container id were entered manually. Python scripts run in the QGIS Python Console then synchronized labels, point functions, geographic status, event-group IDs, evidence, and notes from controlled CSV tables. The resulting map should therefore be read as a literary-geographical visualization of the spatial organization of Wild Beast, not as a complete historical GIS reconstruction. In sum, the method moves from spatial event extraction to event-group coding, from place normalization to map-layer classification, and from QGIS visualization back to textual interpretation. This procedure shows not only where Beijing appears in Wild Beast, but how Beijing is organized as a narrative space through movement, routes, recurrent nodes, spatial containers, and unstable memory.

4. Results

This section presents the spatial patterns reflected by 209 spatial events, 34 event groups and QGIS visual maps, including 34 points of named locations, 6 routes of event groups and 2 major spatial containers. The results are analyzed from four aspects: movement as the dominant spatial practice, the route and reference function of most named locations, the constrained axis-turn pattern of travel routes, and the concentration of event groups in two major spatial containers.

4.1. Mobility as the Dominant Spatial Practice

Among the 209 extracted spatial events, 192 are categorized into the six predefined types. Movement occurs 96 times, accounting for 50.0% of all classified events and ranking as the most common type. It is followed by entry (24 times, 12.5%), exit (21 times, 10.9%) and stop (20 times, 10.4%). Transition and observation appear less frequently, with 16 times and 15 times respectively.

Table 3. Distribution of Event Type in the spatial event table

Event Type	Count	Share (%)
movement	96	50.0
entry	24	12.5
exit	21	10.9
stop	20	10.4
transition	16	8.3
observation	15	7.8
Total typed events	192	100.0

This table 3 distribution shows that spatial practice in Wild Beast is organized primarily through movement rather than static location. The movement category includes both city-crossing travel and

local passages. The narrator’s daily commute is described as travelling “across the whole city from East City to West City by bus” (Wang, 2012, p. 70)^[16], while other sequences involve shorter street-level movements through Beixiaojie and Nangongjiangying Hutong. The statistical dominance of movement therefore provides the basis for treating routes as a central spatial form in the map.

4.2. Named-place Visibility and Route/Reference Function

The point layer contains 34 points of named locations, covering major urban landmarks, commercial nodes, institutional sites, traffic points and several roughly confirmed historical locations. These points are divided into two functional categories: route / reference points and core scene points. As shown in Table 4, route / reference points take the dominant position, with 29 points accounting for 85.3% of the total. The remaining 5 points are classified as core scene points, occupying 14.7%.

Table 4. Functional Classification of Named-place Points

Point function	Count	Share (%)
route/reference point	29	85.3
episode focal point	5	14.7
Total	34	100.0



Figure 1. Named-place points, event-group routes, and major spatial containers in Wild Beast on a georeferenced 1976 Beijing city traffic map.

Base map: Beijingshiqu jiaotong tu [Beijing City Traffic Map], accessed through WardMaps LLC as “Beijing, China 1976 (Side A).” The map was georeferenced in QGIS 4.0.1-Norrköping using EPSG:3857. Green points represent route/reference points; red star-shaped points represent episode focal points; purple lines represent event-group routes; red polygons represent major spatial containers as the dual narrative core. Polygon boundaries indicate estimated narrative zones rather than survey-level boundaries.

This result reveals that most named locations gain geographical visibility due to clear names and fixed positions, yet they mainly serve as route markers, transfer stops, temporary rest spots and urban references in the narrative. Typical examples include Beijing Railway Station, Trade Union Building Bus Stop, Children’s Cinema, Red Sun Snack Bar (the former Xideshun Restaurant) and multiple street and hutong nodes.

The difference between Children’s Cinema and Dongfeng Market Police Station clearly illustrates this classification. In the plot of detention in Wangfujing, Children’s Cinema is only a

temporary stop during escort. By contrast, Dongfeng Market Police Station becomes the main site for confinement and staged plots. Therefore, Children's Cinema is defined as a route / reference point, while Dongfeng Market Police Station is categorized as a core scene point.

The five core scene points are Wangfujing, Dongfeng Market Police Station, Xinqiao Hotel, Moscow Restaurant and Workers' Stadium (including the stadium swimming pool). These locations carry complete local plots but do not repeatedly act as major spatial containers. Figure 1 visually presents this difference: most green dots are distributed along travel routes, and only a small number of red dots form local plot centers.

4.3. Constrained Axial-and-Turning Routes

The line layer includes 6 routes of event groups, which represent narrative routes rather than exact walking paths. Table 5 displays how named locations are connected into continuous movement sequences in the text.

Table 5. Event-group Routes

Route ID	Route Label	Route Type	Event Group
R001	Parade route: school-central square-return	parade route	G007
R002	West-city school-Wangfujing South Entrance-Children's Cinema-Dongfeng Market police station route	episode route	G012
R003	Chaonei Beixiaojie-Shaojiu Hutong mouth-Nangongjiangying-old school route	composite walk route	G010
R004	Liutiao East conflict pursuit route	conflict pursuit route	G013
R005	Liutiao East-Beijing Station-Chang'an Avenue-Trade Union Building-Milan's residential block tracking route	tracking route	G033
R006	Chang'an Avenue urban axis segment	main road axis	G033

Figure 1 shows that these routes form a constrained axis-turn layout. One main axis extends from nodes in eastern Beijing, via Beijing Railway Station, Chang'an Avenue and Trade Union Building, towards the area in front of the school gate near Milan's residence. Another set of routes turns into local streets and hutongs around Wangfujing, Beixiaojie and Nangongjiangying Hutong as well as Liutiao East Entrance.

The description of "L-shape" is only a simplified visual summary of the route distribution on the map, without inherent geometric meaning. This layout is shaped by mapping methods, the east-west distribution between the protagonist's home and school, the location of Milan's residence and the author's choice of narrative routes. More accurately, it is an interconnected field formed by limited main axes and turning routes, rather than an abstract geometric figure.

R005 is the longest route with the densest nodes, connecting Liutiao East Entrance, Beijing Railway Station, Chang'an Avenue, Trade Union Building and the area near Milan's residence. R002 links the school area in western Beijing, South Wangfujing Road, Children's Cinema and Dongfeng Market Police Station. R003 presents local walking sequences around Beixiaojie, Shaojiu Hutong Entrance and Nangongjiangying Hutong.

Taking the current Third Ring Road of Beijing as a reference, almost all recorded routes in the story are located within this scope. The westernmost destination that repeatedly appears is the area in front of the school gate near Milan's residence, and Moscow Restaurant serves as a secondary node in the northwest. Thus, the mapped routes do not represent unrestricted urban wandering, but constrained mobility regulated by social relations and narrative settings.

4.4. Dual Spatial Containers and Event-group Concentration

The polygon layer consists of two major spatial containers: C001 refers to the protagonist's residential compound, and C002 refers to the area in front of the school gate near Milan's residence. Table 6 summarizes the distribution of event groups in different spatial containers.

Table 6. Distribution of Event Groups by Spatial-container Category

Spatial-container category	Event groups	Count
C001 Protagonist's compound	G008, G009, G010, G011, G013, G018, G019, G020, G021, G022, G023, G025, G028, G031, G032	15
C002 School-front / Milan residential block	G005, G006, G014, G015, G016, G017, G024, G033	8
Other spaces	G001, G002, G003, G004, G007, G012, G026, G027, G029, G030, G034	11

The protagonist's residential compound is associated with 15 event groups, and the area near Milan's residence corresponds to 8 event groups. In total, the two spatial containers cover 23 out of the 34 event groups. The remaining 11 event groups are distributed in the present narrative framework, memory-triggering scenes, urban travel routes and several independent enclosed spaces.

These two areas are defined as polygons instead of isolated points because both contain multiple internal nodes. The residential compound includes the protagonist's home, Gao Jin's home, compound gate, corridors and verandas, internal passages, rockeries and pavilions. The area near Milan's residence covers the school gate, open spaces between buildings, building entrances, corridors and stairwells, Milan's room, photos and waiting spots.

From the perspective of the whole city, the two spatial containers occupy a small area on the map compared with widely distributed named locations and routes. However, they gather the largest number of event groups and form the core of the narrative. Figure 2 further supplements the internal narrative structures of the two containers.

4.5. Internal Nodes and Boundary Positions within the Two Containers

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram showing the internal narrative relationships of the two major spatial containers, rather than a restoration of architectural layouts.

In C001, the diagram highlights the cyclic movements among the protagonist's home, Gao Jin's home, compound gate, corridors and verandas, internal passages, rockeries and pavilions. Repeated movements among these nodes turn the residential compound from a simple living place into a core container that continuously drives the narrative.

In C002, the diagram presents a complete sequence of approaching, entering, waiting and observing. The routes extend from the school gate and open spaces between buildings to building entrances, corridors and stairwells, and finally reach Milan's room, photos and waiting spots. These nodes show that C002 is defined by threshold crossing and visual fixation.

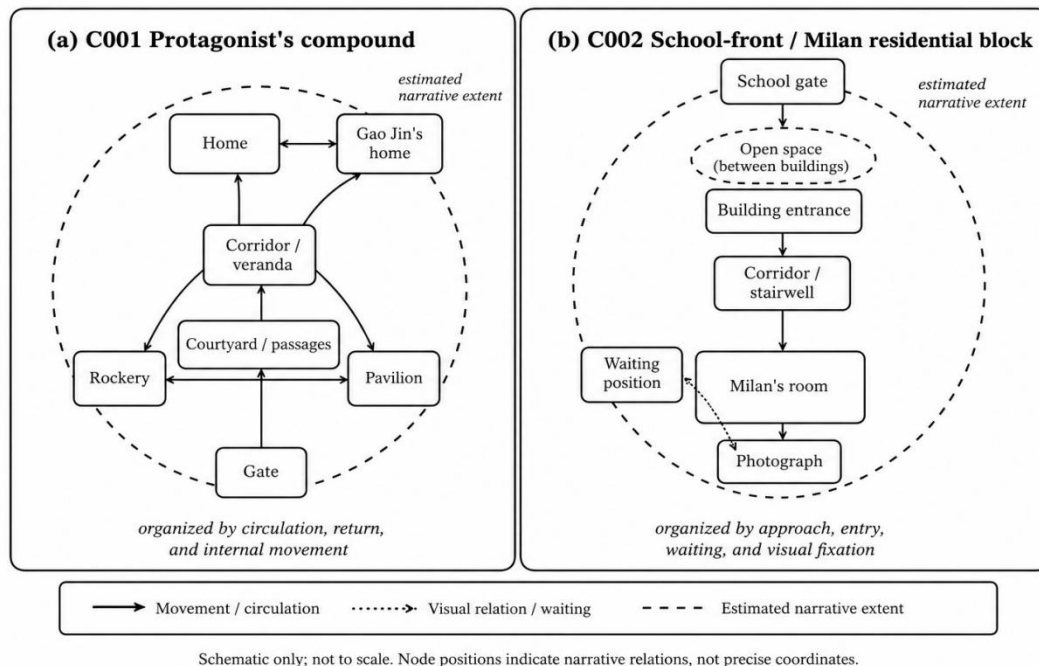


Figure 2. Schematic structure of the two major spatial containers in Wild Beast.

The figure visualizes the internal narrative structure of C001, the protagonist's compound, and C002, the school-front / Milan residential block. It is a topological schematic rather than a reconstructed floor plan. Node positions indicate narrative relations, not precise coordinates. Solid arrows indicate movement or circulation; dotted arrows indicate visual relations or waiting; dashed outlines indicate estimated narrative extents.

The internal node structures lay a foundation for the discussion of identity boundaries in the next section. C001 contains nodes related to family life, peer gatherings, family supervision and returning home. C002 consists of nodes connected with skipping school, entering others' living spaces, waiting, observing and personal desires. It can be seen that the point-route-container model not only describes spatial organization, but also explains how spatial locations define social and individual boundaries.

5. Discussion

The above research results prove that the urban space of Beijing in *Wild Beast* is not a uniform urban field. Its spatial narrative forms a hierarchical system composed of points, routes and containers. Most named locations only act as route and reference points; travel routes present a constrained axis-turn layout; and the densest narrative contents concentrate in two major spatial containers. These findings answer the core research question: Wang Shuo constructs Beijing into a complete spatial narrative through characters' movements, boundary crossings, repeated returns and fragmented memories.

More importantly, these spatial patterns reveal how characters' identity boundaries take shape in the novel. The protagonist's identity does not develop naturally in a neutral urban environment. It is gradually formed during his repeated travels among home, residential compound, school, public authority spaces and Milan's living area. Therefore, space in *Wild Beast* is far more than a narrative backdrop; it acts as a social mechanism that shapes family discipline, male peer relationships, youthful desires and self-perception in retrospective narration.

5.1. Dual Spatial Containers and the Production of Social Space

The most important finding is the concentration of event groups in two spatial containers: C001 (the protagonist's residential compound) and C002 (the area near Milan's residence). Though occupying a small area on the map, the two containers cover 23 out of 34 event groups. The sharp contrast between limited geographical scope and intensive narrative events indicates that narrative density is not determined by geographical area.

The reason lies in the different social operation mechanisms embodied by the two containers, rather than their frequent appearances. Lefebvre's (1991) theory of space production provides effective interpretation here. This theory regards space as the materialization of social relations, which means C001 and C002 are not mere venues. They are produced by repeated spatial practices including returning, entering, waiting, gathering, hiding, observing and crossing thresholds.

As a carrier of discipline, hierarchy and male peer relationships, C001 (the residential compound) is activated repeatedly through cyclic movements among internal nodes such as homes, compound gates, corridors, passages, rockeries and pavilions. The residential compound is not only the protagonist's living place. It is an intersection of family authority, adult supervision, military compound disciplines and teenage group solidarity. The compound gate marks the boundary between the compound and the outer city; individual homes represent family discipline; Gao Jin's home, rockeries and pavilions become gathering places for peers and stages for teenage performances. In this way, the residential compound materializes a specific social order, and endows hierarchy, belonging and discipline with spatial forms.

C002 (the area near Milan's residence) follows a completely different social logic. Its internal sequence extends from the school gate and open spaces between buildings to building entrances, corridors, stairwells, Milan's room, photos and waiting spots. This space centers on approaching, entering, waiting and observing. Institutionally, the residential area belongs to ordinary government

staff quarters adjacent to the school. However, in the protagonist's perception, this ordinary residential space is transformed into a space filled with desires. Milan's room and photos turn the residential area into an object of fantasy, intrusion and visual possession.

The dual-core spatial structure cannot be simply summarized as the opposition between "home" and "outer city". More precisely, the whole novel is organized by the tensions between two social spaces with distinct attributes. One is built on compound disciplines and male peer relationships, and the other is dominated by desires, secrets and teenage fantasies. C001 shapes the protagonist's identities as a son, an insider of the compound and a member of the male peer group. C002 constructs his identities as a school truant, an intruder, an observer and a subject with youthful desires. The core narrative of the novel develops exactly from the protagonist's travels between the two social spaces.

This conclusion supports Zheng's (2013) viewpoint that military compounds in Wang Shuo's novels carry unique cultural and social structures. Meanwhile, this study revises the existing research results: the residential compound is only one pole of the whole spatial system. The area near Milan's residence also occupies a core narrative position, even though it has weaker institutional attributes. This second pole introduces a new spatial logic featured by desires, waiting, visual observation and boundary crossings. Therefore, the Beijing in *Wild Beast* is not merely the "compound-style Beijing". It is a conflicting field formed by the tensions between compound orders and desire-oriented living spaces.

This research also enriches Chen's (2020) discussion on *Wild Beast* as a growth narrative. This study does not deny the framework of growth narration, but further explores its internal spatial mechanism. The protagonist's growth is not an abstract psychological development. It is arranged through his repeated travels between C001 and C002. The teenage identity of the protagonist is shaped at various spatial thresholds: between a child and a peer group member, between a student and a truant, between a compound insider and a wandering urban dweller, between an observer and an intruder, and between a teenage actor and a retrospective adult narrator.

5.2. Constrained Routes and the Social Logic of Mobility

The second key finding focuses on the structural characteristics of travel routes. The mapped routes do not form an open network for free urban wandering. They connect limited areas including eastern Beijing nodes, Wangfujing and urban central areas, Beijing Railway Station, Chang'an Avenue, Trade Union Building and Milan's residential area. This research defines such a structure as a constrained axis-turn layout. The previously mentioned "L-shape" is only a visual description and has no essential connection with the textual content.

This layout is shaped by both geographical conditions and social relations. The protagonist's movements are driven by commuting to school, skipping classes, returning to the compound, participating in peer activities, tracking Milan and facing public power. His travels are never free urban strolls, but activities constrained by daily conventions, prohibitions, personal desires and disciplinary pressures. In Lefebvre's terms, these routes are typical spatial practices, which reproduce social relations through repeated urban movements.

This finding supplements Xu's (2009) research on urban wanderers in the late Cultural Revolution period. Xu emphasizes that the protagonist's travels across the political heart of Beijing reflect the tensions between the sacred national capital and mundane urban life. The mapping results of this study confirm the importance of mobility, and further prove that such travels are not evenly distributed across the city. The protagonist is never a completely free urban wanderer. His routes follow fixed patterns and constraints, and he is constantly drawn back to the residential compound and Milan's residential area.

The longest tracking route for Milan is a typical example. It is not a neutral east-west cross-city journey, but a desire-driven chase. Although the route runs across Beijing, its final destination is Milan's residence. Similarly, the routes around Wangfujing do not stay in open commercial or youth activity spaces, but end with detention and the emergence of public power. The routes around Beixiaojie and Nangongjiangying Hutong pass through local streets and hutongs, and finally lead

back to the former school and the residential compound. Different routes correspond to different social identities: student, truant, chaser, peer partner, detainee and returnee to the compound.

Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope theory explains the connotation of this route structure. Travel routes in the novel form unique time-space frameworks for plots, rather than simple physical paths. A route gains narrative significance only when it integrates movements, time, social relations and narrative pressures. The Wangfujing route is linked with skipping school and subsequent detention; the Beixiaojie-Nangongjiangying route is associated with returning home and a sense of familiarity with local areas; the tracking route for Milan is combined with desires and chases. Each route undertakes different chronotope functions.

5.3. Retrospective Correction and the Distortion of Mapped Space

The third discussion focuses on memory. The maps produced in this study do not restore the protagonist's real movements in the past. They present spaces reconstructed by narrative discourse. In *Wild Beast*, all spatial descriptions are filtered by the adult narrator's retrospective consciousness. Genette's (1980) distinction between story time and narrative discourse plays a key role here. The teenage protagonist's actions belong to the past story time, while the adult narrator selects, compresses, interrupts and revisits these actions in the narrative process.

The narrator frankly admits that he is "fabricating stories" and that it is technically impossible to restore the truth. This statement changes the nature of spatial narration. It means that routes, encounters and locations are reorganized by memories, desires, shame and subsequent self-explanations. Thus, the maps contain temporal folds. Some spaces are magnified because the adult narrator repeatedly recalls them; some routes are compressed into simple connecting descriptions; some plots are revised or even deleted; some areas become narratively dense not because of their large geographical size, but because memories continuously activate them.

These temporal folds also explain why C001 and C002 dominate the overall spatial structure. Their importance lies not only in the large number of associated event groups, but also in the strong emotional investment of the adult narrator in retrospection. C001 is constantly revisited as a space carrying origins, disciplines, male friendships and compound life. C002 is also repeatedly recalled as the source of initial visual shock, youthful desires, waiting and narrative uncertainties. The adult narrator's memories form a clear spatial hierarchy. The maps not only record where the teenage protagonist has been, but also reflect which spaces the adult narrator remembers, revises and endows with emotional weight.

In this sense, the spatial distortion on the maps is not a methodological defect, but an inherent part of the research object. Literary maps must retain the differences between historical geographical coordinates and narrative importance. A purely geometric map will erase such differences. The event group method is designed to solve this problem. It reorganizes movements according to narrative continuity, plot interruptions and retrospective revisions. The final maps are chronotope-oriented rather than purely cartographic, which fully show how narrative time reshapes urban spaces.

5.4. Named Places and the Problem of Toponymic Visibility

The fourth research finding concerns named locations. Among the 34 points of named locations, 29 are classified as route / reference points and only 5 as core scene points. This distribution proves that most locations with clear names gain geographical visibility, but do not carry intensive narrative contents.

This conclusion has important implications for literary mapping research. If literary maps are produced merely based on named locations, Beijing Railway Station, Wangfujing, Chang'an Avenue and Children's Cinema will be overly highlighted. However, this study verifies that most recognizable locations only serve as route nodes, transfer stops and temporary reference points. On the contrary, the most important narrative spaces are two polygon containers with vague boundaries and complex internal structures. These spaces are difficult to map accurately, yet they occupy the core position of the narrative.

This result expands Tally's (2013) viewpoint that literary mapping is an interpretive practice. The task of literary mapping is not only to mark named locations on maps, but also to judge the narrative functions of different spatial forms. Therefore, this study distinguishes the geographical visibility and narrative centrality of named locations, which is summarized as the problem of geographical visibility: locations with fixed names are easier to map, but they are not necessarily the most important narrative spaces.

The binary classification of named locations also explains the functions of local enclosed spaces. Wangfujing, Dongfeng Market Police Station, Xinqiao Hotel, Moscow Restaurant and Workers' Stadium (including the swimming pool) are all defined as core scene points. They carry complete local plots but never evolve into major recurring spatial containers. This distinction separates partial plot intensity from structural narrative centrality.

5.5. From Spatial Structure to Identity Boundaries

The above spatial analysis also answers the question of identity boundaries raised in the introduction. In *Wild Beast*, identities are formed through spatial travels. The protagonist's movements between C001 and C002 mark his shifts among different social roles. Inside the residential compound, he acts as a child, a member of the male peer group and a subject supervised by adult disciplines. Around Milan's residential area, he turns into a school truant, an intruder, an observer and a teenager with inner desires. In public spaces such as Wangfujing and Dongfeng Market Police Station, he is exposed to urban public power and reduced to a regulated individual temporarily.

Identity boundaries are first reflected in spatial forms, and then present psychological characteristics. Gates, windows, corridors, school exits, building doorways and police station rooms are all symbols of social role transformation. For this reason, the point-route-container model is not only a mapping tool, but also a theoretical model for analyzing the formation of individual subjects. Points represent geographical visibility, routes represent role transitions, and containers represent fixed social and emotional positions that appear repeatedly.

This is the core conclusion of this study. The Beijing depicted in *Wild Beast* is a space for shaping teenage identities, rather than a simple objective representation. The city does not merely accommodate the protagonist's growth; it constructs the basic conditions for narrating the growth experience. Therefore, the spatial narrative is not an accessory to the growth story, but the essential form that supports the development of the growth narrative.

6. Conclusions

This study explores how Wang Shuo's *Wild Beast* constructs Beijing into a complete spatial narrative. Combining close textual reading, spatial event annotation, event group coding and QGIS-based literary mapping, the research proves that the novel does not present Beijing as a uniform urban field. Instead, its spatial structure is built on the hierarchical relationships among named location points, event group routes and major spatial containers. Therefore, literary maps not only record the locations of story plots, but also reveal how movements, memories, desires and repeated spatial activities shape Beijing into a unique literary space.

The core research finding is that the spatial narrative of *Wild Beast* follows the point-route-container model. Named locations form the most visible layer of the urban space, while most of them only serve as route and reference points instead of lasting narrative centers. Travel routes connect these points into constrained movement sequences, rather than forming unrestricted urban roaming paths. The densest narrative contents gather in two major spatial containers: the protagonist's residential compound and the area in front of the school gate near Milan's residence. Though covering a limited geographical area on the map, the two containers jointly include 23 out of 34 event groups.

The dual spatial container structure revises existing research on Wang Shuo's depiction of Beijing. The novel is neither organized purely around the residential compound, nor based on the simple opposition between the compound and the outer city. Its narrative core derives from the tensions

between two socially functional containers. The protagonist's residential compound integrates family disciplines, peer life, internal cyclic movements and repeated returns. The area near Milan's residence gathers elements including desires, space intrusion, observation, waiting and uncertain retrospective memories. The protagonist's travels between these spaces represent not only spatial shifts, but also changes of identity boundaries: between a child and a peer group member, between a student and a truant, between a compound insider and a wandering urban dweller, and between an observer and an intruder.

Methodologically, this study reveals the limitations of literary mapping that only relies on named locations. If maps are produced merely based on recognizable place names, Wangfujing, Beijing Railway Station, Chang'an Avenue and Children's Cinema will be excessively prominent. However, the analysis shows that these locations are mostly route markers and temporary reference points. The spaces with the richest narrative meanings usually have vague boundaries and complex internal structures, and are constantly reshaped by memories. Therefore, literary mapping research should focus not only on discrete spatial points, but also on the narrative relationships among routes, spatial containers and internal nodes.

Admittedly, this research has certain methodological limitations. The polygon boundaries of spatial containers are interpretive and cannot be regarded as cadastral boundaries. The georeferenced 1976 historical map is only used to identify the general spatial pattern, not for high-precision distance and area measurement. Figure 2 only presents the topological relations of internal structures in the two containers as schematic diagrams, without restoring the actual architectural layouts. The event group coding is completed by a single researcher based on textual reading. This method is feasible for single-text research, while supplementary detailed coding manuals and cross-coding verification can be added in the appendix to improve the repeatability of research results.

Beyond the research on *Wild Beast* itself, the point-route-container model can be applied to analyze other growth narratives and urban novels created in the post-socialist era. Many literary works do not describe urban experiences through a complete city map. They organize narratives around a small number of emotionally and socially significant spatial containers connected by repeated travel routes. In this sense, the contributions of this study lie not only in mapping the image of Beijing in Wang Shuo's works, but also in proposing a new method for reading modern urban narratives: analyzing how literature transforms physical spaces into structures carrying movements, memories, desires and identity formation.

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