

# A Study on the Novel Writing of "New Northeast Writers" in the Perspective of Space Theory

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses the difference between Chinese regional literature and regional literature, and analyses the characteristics of regional literature, especially taking the New Northeast Writers' Group as an example. Firstly, the article distinguishes the difference between local and regional literature, and points out that the "New Northeast Writers' Group" is more in line with the definition of regional literature. Then, by analysing the works of writers such as the Three Musketeers of Tiexi district, the article explores the spatial construction in the works of the New Northeast Writers' Group from the three dimensions of physical space, daily living space and spiritual space. The article argues that these works show the changes of the industrial civilisation of the Northeast, the plight and spiritual state of the workers, and the uniqueness of the Northeast culture. Finally, the article points out that the rise of the "New Northeast Writers Group" is of great significance to contemporary realist literature, helping to enhance the dissemination of Northeast culture and its reputation, as well as inspiring a new generation of Northeasterners to build up the Northeast.*

**Keywords:** Space Theory, Realism, New Northeast Writers Group, Multiple Spatial Systems.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, a group of new writers has appeared in the literary world, represented by Shuang Xuetao, Ban Yu and Zheng Di, who are young writers with a "distinctive realist style" and a novel technique to write the common painful memories of several generations in the Northeast region. Their works have broken the paradigm of nostalgia writing in the traditional literature of the region, penned the contradictions of regional growth and people's development under the development of the times, and recorded the sorrows and joys of the working class group from the micro level with cold strokes and desolate emotions. In unsentimental language, the sorrows and joys of the north-eastern working class community are documented on a micro level.

## 2. The Background to the Concept of the "New Northeast Writers Group".

Regional literature refers to the concept of literature with common geo-cultural characteristics and common cultural traditions based on them. In the 1980s, the vigorous development of the study of literary geography in China and the rise of the creation and study of root literature promoted the study of regional literature. Although regional literature is a literary concept based on the political system of "administrative divisions", the similarity of literary works and purposes within a region should be studied not only from the point of view of the commonality of literary works in terms of customs or culture, but also from the point of view of the economic situation of the region or the collective memories formed by the people under the change of production relations and social structure. The collective memory of the people.

Taking the active writers' groups in the northeast as an example, the "Northeast Writers' Group" represented by Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun during the anti-Japanese war period is more in line with the object of research within the framework of regional literature, while the "New Northeast Writers' Group" that has emerged in recent years is more capable of becoming a "regional literary field". The "New Northeast

Writers' Group" that has emerged in recent years is more likely to become the "subject of regional literature".

In other words, under the dual role of regional culture and national character, the characteristics of the "New Northeast Writers' Group" have been formed, and the themes often concern the survival and development of people in a particular era and under a particular social system, and the literary works of these writers focus on the development of man, the formation of the social and urban system, the transformation of the social structure and the reconstruction of the social structure. Therefore, regional literature refers to modern times, and the regional character of regional literature is also reflected in the social system.

The Three Musketeers of Tiexi District refers to three writers born in Shenyang: " Shuang Xuetao, Ban Yu and Zheng Zhi, the three writers are typical post-80s writers, but they came to prominence in the literary world relatively late, basically after 2015, and their works are long on depicting civilian life in the northeast region, especially in Tiexi District of Shenyang, during the specific period of reform of state-owned enterprises, intergenerational conflicts, collective memory and mental trauma. The works of these three writers have certain similarities, but the juxtaposition of these three writers called "Three Musketeers of the Tiexi District" was studied at a seminar hosted by the Liaoning Provincial Writers' Association in 2019. Since then, this concept has become popular and has been recognised by critics and readers. Later, a number of writers born in Northeast China were included in this discussion, and the group was called the "New Northeast Writers' Group". The concept of the "New Northeast Writers' Group" first appeared in an article entitled "Outline of the New Northeast Writers' Group" by Huang Ping, a professor at the Chinese Department of East China Normal University, published in the Journal of Social Sciences of Jilin University. Professor Huang Ping believes that this group includes the "Three Musketeers of Tiexi District", Shuang Xuetao, Ban Yu and Zheng Zhi, as well as writers of northeastern origin such as Jia Xingjia and Zhao Song. These writers are included in the "New Northeast Writers Group" not only because of their origins, but also because of similar themes, "northeastern"

language characteristics, "industrial city" narratives and the coldness of the writers' works.

### 3. Analysis of the Triple Space of the Novels Created by the "New Northeastern Writers".

#### 3.1 Physical Space and Spatial Practice

##### 3.1.1 The Factory - a cold and dilapidated industrial ruin

In the writings of the "New Northeast Writers", factories are often used as the setting of the story and as the "city centre", which is not only a geographical centre but also a centre built by the people. The factory in the novel is not only outside the centre of the novel's descriptive space, but also often serves as the place where the story begins and ends, or appears in the protagonist's narrative and memories. For example, in Shuang Xuetao's novel *Moses on the Plain*, Zhuang Dezheng, the father of the protagonist Zhuang Shu, "had worked as a section chief in the supply and marketing department of the city's cigarette factory", and in Ban Yu's novel *Trapezoidal Sunset*, the narrator "I" worked in a transformer factory after graduating from a technical school, while in *Panjin Leopard* my father, aunt and uncle all worked in different factories. In *Panjin Leopard*, my father, aunt and uncle all work in different factories, and in novels such as *The North Comes to Nothing*, *Out of the Grad* and *Seesaw*, factories appear either intentionally or unintentionally in the dialogue between the protagonist and others or in the author's narrative. The factory space depicted in these novels is not static, but is constantly undergoing dynamic reconstruction. In these novels, these factories generally go through a process from prosperity to decline, until they degenerate from the coordinates and spiritual symbols of the city into cold and dilapidated industrial ruins; or, at the beginning of the novel, they appear as sleeping industrial giants, and this degradation does not happen from within the space that represents the epitome of industrial civilisation, but from the outside to the inside, due to changes in the mode of production, the adjustment of labour relations and the implementation of macro-policies. This degradation does not take place from the inside of this space, which is the epitome of industrial civilisation, but from the outside to the inside, and the reason for this is the change in the mode of production, the adjustment of production relations and the implementation of macro-policies. It is the shaping of physical space by social relations. On the other hand, the factory space is not isolated, but is the intersection and centre of space in the novel, and on its periphery there are often all kinds of related institutions and public spaces, such as the primary school attached to the factory, the nursery in the factory, and the hospital attached to the factory, and the social functions of these spaces and the social functions of the factory are complementary, interconnected and closely related to the lives of the workers, and the physical distance of these spaces is relatively close or even overlapping, which together form a relatively closed and complex living space. These spaces are physically close to each other and even overlap, together forming a relatively closed and complex living space. As the factory flourishes and declines, these ancillary spaces also flourish and shrink. If the factory space is closed, then the railway line is an image that breaks this relatively closed space. The meandering railway, with the factory as its centre, reaches out in all directions and at the same time transports the

products produced by the factory to different places. The extension of the railway gives the relatively closed factory space a chance to dialogue with the outside world, and also breaks down the barrier between the workers in the factory space and the outside world. Creating a state of communication with the outside world.

##### 3.1.2 Workers - the generation of aphasia

Workers, as workers in the factory space, producers of material and performers of labour activities, their fate is also closely linked to the changes in the factories. When the factories were flourishing, these workers lived, died and grew old in the factories, married and had children and raised their families in the factories and their attached spaces, and enjoyed the glory that industrial civilisation had imposed on the workers, and felt spiritually satisfied and proud of their status as workers, because they realised the value of their labour and the meaning of their lives in the factories. They enjoy the glory that industrial civilisation has imposed on the workers, and are proud of the fact that they have realised the value of their labour and the meaning of their lives in the factories.

However, as the factory gradually declined until it was abandoned, the fate of these workers also took a sharp turn for the worse, the social benefits they had once taken for granted disappeared, and they were not even able to satisfy their hunger and need for food, The change was so rapid and drastic that many of the workers had not yet awakened from the bubble of a happy life and so felt a huge void and spiritual disorientation. This change is so rapid and drastic that many of the workers have not yet awakened from the bubble of their former happy lives, and thus feel a huge void and spiritual disorientation. Year-round mechanical work has robbed workers of the ability to seek change in the face of adversity and the courage to go out to earn a living, and these workers, after the drastic change, have become the "lost language generation", who on the one hand keep recalling their former lives, and on the other hand are in the throes of transformation. On the one hand they remember their former life, on the other hand they struggle to survive in the pain of transformation.

#### 3.2 The Space of Everyday Life

According to Lefebvre, there is a space with representativeness and strong vitality, which can clearly show the places and trajectories of people's activities and imply people's emotional orientation, and this representational space can also be called the living space where people live in their daily lives. The "Pink Road" in Shuang Xuetao's novels and the "Workers' Village" in Ban Yu's novels are two spaces of workers' daily life, even though they are the so-called representational living spaces.

##### 3.2.1 "Yan Fen Street" - a "home" which does not provide protection

"Yan Fen Street" is a landmark in Shuang Xuetao's novels. In *Out of Gele*, Shuang Xuetao describes Pink Street as follows: "To be precise, it is not a street, but a piece of the old abandoned city," "like a swamp that hides dirt and spits it out. It's like a swamp that holds dirt but never stops spitting it out".

In Shuang Xuetao's novel, Yan Fen Street has a miasmic environment, dim and ambiguous lights, chaotic law and order, and belligerent and wild residents, but before the factories they worked for went bankrupt, they were all workers who were once motivated to build a new era with their own hard-working hands and with the development of the times, These workers have either moved away from Yan Fen Street, or they continue to cling to their status as workers in order to make a hard living on Yan Fen Street, while some of these workers have quietly become mentally unbalanced and turned into idle vagabonds, morally bankrupt prostitutes, and even murderers. Yan Fen Street can only provide the most basic living conditions for its residents, but it cannot provide a spiritual refuge for the people who live there. By depicting the withered and decaying state of Yan Fen Street and the lives of the people living in this public space, Shuang Xuetao shows the readers the spiritual state and the plight of the lower class people in Northeast China in the specific era.

### 3.2.2 The Workers' Village - an inescapable predicament

The "Workers' Village" in Banyu's novel is a space for workers in Northeast China to survive after facing the crisis of redundancy, and the living conditions of workers in the Workers' Village are not static, but deteriorate with the flow of time, the development of society, and changes in the mode of production. As in the novel *Workers' Village*, Ban Yu describes the history of Workers' Village as "a flourishing scene. *Russian foreign guests come here to visit and learn, and each family competes to show their spirit, entertain the green-eyed old Maoists, and do their best to promote their own excellent way of life*". Later, as the city changed, the Workers' Village changed from a thriving workers' colony with this excellent way of life to a place of "rows of foreign buildings", many of which were the backdrop to the city's development. "Many of the dismissed workers left the Workers' Village, and some of the remaining people had nothing to do and were ready to sink, paralysing themselves with vulgar amusements, while some wanted to fight against the "unjust fate", but they were trapped in the decaying environment and lack of knowledge, and they could never get out of the Workers' Village and could only live in silence in the Workers' Village. Instead of the former residents of the Workers' Village who were contentedly self-enclosed in a self-sufficient "industrial utopia", these people who are now self-enclosed in the Workers' Village have a feeling of escaping from reality and immersing themselves in the glory of the past, and are unable to get out of it.

Others, in order to make a living, they leave the workers' village during the day to go to other areas of the city to make a living, and while maintaining their livelihoods, they also observe the prosperity and indifference of the city with their eyes, and then return to the workers' village at night to ask for a guarantee of survival in the familiar living space, and this dichotomy of prosperity and despondency, of closure and openness, makes the residents of the workers' village struggle in the contradiction of the dualistic life, and the pressure of life and suppressed desires make them unable to take into account the moral code of the society, and thus take risks to do illegal things. The pressure of life and repressed desires make them unable to take into account the moral code of the society, and thus desperate to do illegal things.

In the two macroscopic living spaces of the Workers' Village and Yan Fen Street, there are also some microscopic group spaces, personal spaces or facilities, such as "Underwater" in *Winter Swimming*, Sun Xuting's house in *Panjin Leopard*, dance halls, chess and card rooms and other entertainment venues, which are also in keeping with the atmosphere of the workers' living space, all of which are cramped, decadent and gloomy.

There are also some heterogeneous spaces in the Workers' Village and Yan Fen Street, such as the church at the end of Yan Fen Street and the school that has appeared in many of the works. The existence of the former is both out of place and absurd, but it illustrates that there is a hint of solace in such a depressing environment, while the latter is a way out of Yan Fen Street and a symbol of hope that can only be realised through the efforts of the next generation. This bright future can only be realised through the efforts of the next generation.

### 3.3 Spiritual Space

New Northeastern writers use parody, collage, and distortion to transplant fables and allusions from Western culture into Northeastern narratives, confusing the boundaries between the real and the false by constantly changing narrative perspectives and using blurred and unfamiliar language to create a dreamlike atmosphere of magical realism. It creates the third layer of space - spiritual space - in which the text is presented.

#### 3.3.1 Moses in the Northeast - A Parody of a Classic

Shuang Xuetao's *Moses in the Plain* takes its title from the biblical saint Moses, but cleverly transposes Moses to the region of the Northeast. In Western culture, Moses has always been regarded as a prophet, a hero with a spirit of sacrifice who dares to challenge fate and a spirit of defiance, leading the Israelites out of their plight, out of slavery and into a new homeland. Shuang Xuetao also quotes the Bible many times in the novel, the "Moses" on the plain is Zhuang Shu, or Li Fei, or just a generation, a group, or a symbolic non-specific image of Moses, on the speculation of Moses, but in the final climax of the novel, Li Fei and Zhuang Shu, a pair of long-gone However, in the climax of the novel, Li Fei and Zhuang Shu, a pair of long-lost childhood playmates, meet fatefully on the lake, and Zhuang Shu's behaviour and identity as a representative of justice, as well as Zhuang Shu's sincerity in being in the same boat with Li Fei, not only redeem Li Fei, but also draw a conclusion to his own teenage years filled with traumatic memories. In fact, Moses on the Plain also reflects the author's hope for the possibility of a life-changing future for his children's generation and his thoughts on the similarity of human destiny.

#### 3.3.2 Mountains and Waters in Dreams - Blurring the Real and the Unreal

Dreams in novels are often the New Northeastern Writers' attempt to blur the real and the unreal. In *Nightingale Lake* and *Pitch*, the mountains and water in real life are transformed in dreams, depicting the ideals that cannot be realised in real life and the traumatic memories that linger on, and in *Pitch*,

Shuang Xuetao uses constantly changing quotations, the wild dialogue between "I" and my partners to create a dreamy atmosphere, and the frequent use of short sentences. In *Pitch*, Shuang Xuetao uses ever-changing quotations, the wild dialogue between "I" and my partners to create a dreamlike atmosphere, and the frequent use of short sentences, switching back and forth between the realistic perspective and the dream world. He often uses short phrases to switch back and forth between the realistic perspective and the dream world, so that Mt. Penjia is shifted and deformed, and the ordinary scenery is given a dreamy meaning, so that the bifurcation of time, which is impossible in reality, becomes possible, so that reality and the dream world become one, and so that the dream world becomes a dream. The combination of reality and dreams is a metaphor for the power of strong faith to transform dreams into reality.

In Ban Yu's *The Nightingale Lake*, the swimming pool once drowned the protagonist's childhood friend and traumatised him. After that, whenever the protagonist encounters an incident, the swimming pool turns into all kinds of strange and wonderful images in the protagonist's dreams, and the drowned childhood friend also turns into a water ghost in his dreams. Whether in reality or in the dream, the dilemma in the dream seems to be the dilemma of life, and the trauma in the memory of life cannot be healed by being under such intense mental pressure.

#### 4. Conclusion

The novels of the "New Northeast Writers" share the theme of "Northeastern industrial civilisation", "painful memories" and "Northeastern culture". The emergence of the Northeast Writers' Group is not only a transformation of "Northeast literature" but also a transformation of literature from the Northeast. It is an organic attempt at contemporary realist literature, and further deepening the study of the "New Northeast Writers' Group" will help the academic community to focus on the flourishing Northeast writers and their creations, promote the dissemination of the cultural strength and reputation of the Northeast, and also help arouse the feelings of the young generation of Northeast China and strengthen the will of a new generation of people to build the Northeast. It is also conducive to awakening the love of thought in the young generation of Northeast China and strengthening the will of the new generation of Northeast China to build Northeast China.

#### Project Titles:

2022年辽宁对外经贸学院科研项目“空间理论视域下新东北作家小说创作研究”(2022XJLXYB21)阶段性成果.

2022 Liaoning University of International Business and Economics research project "space theory in the field of new northeastern writers novel creation research" (2022XJLXYB21) stage results.

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