

Mapping Imaginary Spaces in Li Yongping's *Jiling Chunqiu* 吉陵春秋 (Jiling Chronicles)*

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Mapovanie imaginárnych miest v Li Yongpingovom diele Jiling Chunqiu (Kroniky Jiling)

Resumé Článok skúma prínosy a ťažkosti s analýzou modernistického románu, akým sú Li Yongpingove *Kroniky Jiling*, zobrazujúce neexistujúce miesto a imaginárnu 'spoločnosť', metodológiou spojenou s priestorovým 'obratom'. Hermeneutická hodnota pojmov ako 'mapovanie' alebo 'bentu' sa posudzuje vo vzťahu k koncepciám fikcionality a literárnej estetiky.

Abstract This article probes into benefits and difficulties of analyzing a modernist novel like Li Yongping's *Jiling Chronicles* depicting a non-real place and an imaginary 'society' with methodologies linked to spatial turn-thinking. The hermeneutical value of terms like 'mapping' or 'bentu' is negotiated vis-à-vis concepts of fictionality and literary aesthetics.

Key words China, Taiwan, Literature (20th c.) · Li Yongping (1947–2017), *Jiling Chunqiu* (1986) · spatial turn-theory · mapping · *bentu* · fictionality · narrative coherence

In memoriam Raoul David Findeisen (1958–2017)

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In his chapter entitled »Imaginary Nostalgia: Shen Congwen, Song Zelai, Mo Yan, and Li Yongping«,¹ David Wang analyses Li Yongping's 李永平 *Jiling Chronicles* under the framework of native soil fiction and a real or imagined nostalgia towards a homeland. This framework fits well for Wang's other examples, namely Shen Congwen 沈從文, Song Zelai 松子來, and Mo Yan 莫言, but it raises a range of difficulties in the case of Li Yongping. Wang himself seems to be somewhat unsatisfied and emphasizes the ways in which Li does not match the pattern of native soil and nostalgia established in his chapter so far: the referentiality to real places and to a (seemingly) specific past, the »sense of crisis about the passage of time«,² or the »power of moral urgency«. ³ Wang acknowledges the difficulties that arise out of the lack of all these ingredients by stating that »Li Yongping questions the very soil of native soil fiction.«⁴ A cause for these difficulties is first of all the invented status of *Jiling*, its empty ontology, which also challenges Wang's use of the term 'nostalgia'. Finally, Wang suggests reading the novel as an important native soil novel [...] because it represents a literary tour de force, showing what a writer can do once he has mastered the rules of game.⁵ Wang leaves it open how and by which texts or endeavours Li has proofed to have »mastered the rules of game«, which can only be understood as genre rules of native soil fiction and/or the literary production of a sense of nostalgia. *Jiling Chronicles* is only Li's second novel after *A La-tzu Woman*.⁶

1 David Der-wei Wang, »Imaginary Nostalgia: Shen Congwen, Song Zelai, Mo Yan, and Li Yongping«, in *From May Fourth to June Fourth. Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. by Ellen Widmer and David Wang (*Harvard Contemporary China Series* 9) (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 107–132.

2 Wang, »Imaginary Nostalgia«, 129.

3 Ibid, 130.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 131.

6 *Lazi fu* 拉子婦 [A Lazi Woman] (Taipei: Huaxin chubanshe 1976). Partly translated by James Fu in *An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Literature*. 2 vols, ed. by Chi Pang-yuan, et al. (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1975), vol. 2, 459–470.

Nonetheless, Wang's somewhat distorted evaluation of »native soil« highlights an important aspect: Li's novel predominantly deals with a place that is home to the depicted characters, even though it is an imaginary place. Additionally, Jiling and its surrounding area covers a space limited to a few days walking distance and seems otherwise unconnected to any notion of outside world; Jiling is a snow globe shaken by Li Yongping, a small phantom world inhabited by a selected society whose limited number of characters are arranged in a set of sequences like a round dance. The very limitation of this phantom world marks it as a local world. This calls for a spatial analysis on the one hand and for testing the adoptability of the term *bentu* 本土 (native soil) on the other. Wang suggests that »with its kaleidoscopic symbolism and labyrinthine structure, *Jiling Chronicles* represents a potential playground for literature professors who would enjoy trying out different methodologies«.7 Despite Wang's slightly sarcastic tone, I would like to alter this notion into a partly different task. At stake is not the playground *Jiling Chronicles*, but the theoretical framework and the assumptions linked to the spatial turn or to the concept of spatiality. What has the concept to offer in a case like Jiling, a place that is fully fictional and bears no references to any real place? And what is the consequence for comprehending the term *bentu*? It is therefore appropriate to start by pondering on decisive aspects of the spatial turn and their impact for literary studies.

Spatial Turn and Literature

The spatial turn—as most of the mushrooming so called turns, e.g. linguistic, performative, historic, postcolonial, translational, or iconic (to name but a few)—is strongly linked to postmodernism and its rejection of the notion of truth (as claimed in academic knowledge, religious and political convictions etc.). Instead, a plural term 'truths' is favored which is understood relative to place, time, and power executed by social groups. Further important are notions of hybridity, fragmentation, bricolage, self-reflexivity, and inter- or transcultural practices as well as a fundamental critique of linear progressive concepts of time, in that sense a critique of the modernization project. At least two major approaches of the

7 Wang, »Imaginary Nostalgia«, 128.

spatial turn-thinking can be separated, merely for the sake of analysis. They are by no means to be understood as structured schools or overly coherent, not least because they are in many ways interconnected and overlapping. Rather ironically, they might be differed along spatial lines as Anglo-American and European continental; both allocations are not meant mutually exclusive. The Anglo-American approach was in its beginnings quite strongly connected to political, sociological, and geographical methodologies and arose as a critique of mostly urban structures. This critique advocated by the Chicago School, namely Robert E. Park or Ernest Burgess from the mid-1920s on, centred around the aspect of power. In the following, further issues have been added to the body of spatial turn-thinking like globalization, especially global and mega cities including their transition zones, »bubbles« and their capitalistic creation of value (David W. Harvey, Manuel Castells, David Clarke, James D. Hunter & Joshua Yates), further a postmodern re-structuring of cities through processes of branding (Stuart Hall), consumption spaces and the rise of culture industries (Sharon Zukin, Jacquie Jones), de-industrializing and recentralization together with practices of hyper-reality and simulacra (Edward Soja, Mike Davis), as well as issues of cyber-cities (William Gibson, M. Castell). At stake is not only the city as opposed to rural areas, but first of all aspects of economic, political, social, or cultural power and their spatial manifestations. In focus are therefore real places and real societies. However, on a symbolic level 'space' refers to places only insofar as they are symbolizing the manifestation and/or execution of power. In this sense, spatial thinking is strongly linked to political, most notably postcolonial perspectives of space.⁸ A metaphorical use of spatial language unconnected to notions of power occurs relatively seldom within texts advocating spatial turn-thinking. Therefore, it is not surprising that this approach employs a notion of realistic literature when analyzing literary descriptions of space. Consequently, it has its difficulties with descriptions of non-real, fully fictitious, phantom-like places like the one in *Jiling Chronicles*. Non-real places are usually understood as abstracted or somewhat generalized images which may not refer to any real place but which in some or the

8 Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2007), 285.

other way reflect typical, maybe stereotyped structures, problems, or other issues of 'real' places in which a »real« society is living, as a kind of anonymized mirror image. In this way, imagined places like Thomas Moore's *Utopia* can be meaningfully dealt with since it refers to coeval English spatial regimes and its society from which it critically differs.

Power is of course a decisive dimension in the European continental approach as well, visible in approaches like Foucault's »heterotopia« including liminal places of crisis, deviation or imagination, Bourdieu's concept of a production of space through habitual practices, or Massey's feminist »power-geometries of space«.⁹ The European continental approach, in my opinion, puts more emphasis on a post-modernist critique of modern notions of time and constructs the sense of spatial structures as a kind of resistance against a (to some extent: overemphasized) dominance of temporal structures which are aligned with modernity. Modernity's focus on linearity, evolution, development, progress, cause and effect, as well as the concluding hierarchies, as they are constitutive e.g. for colonialism, is challenged through notions of synchronous and non-causal forms of understanding the world. Spatial turn-thinking therefore aims at transgressing borders and blurring boundaries, emphasizing resistance and subjectivity as well as notions of concomitance or synchrony.¹⁰ In both approaches, the proper way to enact this kind of thinking is a strategy of mapping, which first of all means to 'construct' maps. These should reveal underlying power structures in physical-territorial structures, but should additionally practice 'mapping' in a metaphorical sense, as a strategy that allows to visualize existing boundaries, new relations, and alternatives. I will argue later in the text that especially this metaphorical use of 'mapping' is by no means a new strategy to represent connections, dependencies, or relations, neither in the West nor in the Chinese realm. The European continental approach seems to be (in my very personal opinion) better equipped to inform literary studies, first of all because it does not focus that strongly on urban space, but deals from the very beginning with a broader variety of spaces and places (cities, landscapes, prisons, asylums, schools etc.). Although relations, effects, and impacts of power are also at its heart, it takes notice of other intentional, motivational, and habitual dimensions of

⁹ Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 292.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 284–328.

human behavior in their own respect, which seems to »open up spaces« (sic!) for the story-worlds of literary imagination.

Creating Space in Fiction

Both versions of spatial turn thinking are emphasizing a realist notion of literature, although to a different extent. There are a range of studies that systematically explore the techniques of how references to the real world are established in literary works (Nünning, Herman, Foley, etc).¹¹ However, as far as I can see at the moment, there seems to be a lack in negotiations to which kind of spatial reality reference is usually made. The lack of references to real geography in *Jiling Chronicles* turns this into an important question. In novels, direct reference to real geography or to cartography is possibly the easiest way to establish a spatial setting, by which I mean names of countries, regions, cities and towns, mountains or rivers, down to streets and landmarks of any kind. These parts of public spaces are generally easily accessible for the audience by personal experience or through images in books or—nowadays—the internet. The audience can positively identify the respective street views, architecture, natural environments and so forth, and thus imagine the story's characters acting in the respective environment. This accessibility serves as a prime category to label spatial settings in literature or film under categories like true, real, or reliable information.

In the case of Li Yongping's novel, this is impossible. Instead, the reader may evaluate Li's descriptions of private or public spaces under the category of plausibility. Both categories imply different approaches: legitimated by its

11 See for example Ansgar Nünning, »Formen und Funktionen literarischer Raumdarstellung: Grundlagen, Ansätze, narratologische Kategorien und neue Perspektiven«, in *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*, ed. by Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 33–52; David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Barbara Foley, *Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986).

inherent truth-claim, direct references to real places ask readers to empirically check facts and their positive knowledge. Creating plausibility, on the other hand, asks for constructing coherence that readers might find convincing based on their general knowledge or on their structured experiences. The notion of plausibility itself is obviously problematic. The reader is generally not able to verify descriptions of private inner chambers as being reliable. Whether the bedroom of a character like Qin Zhang Baokui 秦張葆葵 resembles any real bedroom (or not), or whether the courtyard of Xiao Yue 小藥 is a real place cannot be determined by readers. Reference here is rather characterized by, in Jameson's words, »structural« notions of reality. »This "structure" is an absent cause, since it is nowhere empirically present as an element, it is not part of the whole or of one of the levels, but rather the entire system of *relationships* among those levels«. ¹² Jameson is a leftist thinker and his notion of structure seems influenced by the Marxist term of superstructure or by what Lukács in his *Realism in the Balance* termed totality ¹³ inasmuch as is it hints towards an underlying pattern of the world, that generally structures worldly phenomena, but which nonetheless is not necessarily visible fully in every single phenomenon. In an oddly ironic sense, it might be rendered the materialistic turn of Hegel's idealistic *Weltgeist*. Jameson, however, understands 'structure' not merely as a system of references between real and textual spatial elements, but—here following thoughts of the linguistic turn—in an interconnected way as a narrative structure which is interested in correlations and interrelations of spatial elements in the real world, in the text, and between reality, text and narrative composition. In a similar way aiming at a relation between reality and narrative structure, Foley has used the concept of an

12 Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1983), 36. Quoted from Nünning, *Formen und Funktionen*, 42–43.

13 He says: »If literature is a particular form by means of which objective reality is reflected, then it becomes of crucial importance for it to grasp that reality as it truly is, and not merely to confine itself to reproducing whatever manifests itself immediately and on the surface. [...] If a writer strives to represent reality as it truly is, i.e. if he is an authentic realist, then the question of totality plays a decisive role«. György Lukács, »Es geht um den Realismus«, originally in German in the magazine *Wort. Literarische Monatszeitschrift* (Moscow, 1938, no.6, June), 112–138. Here quoted from György Lukács, »Realism in the Balance«, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2001), 1033–1058, here 1037.

»analogous configuration« that »projects propositions about the text's referent by establishing relations among separate elements in the text«. ¹⁴ Both, structure as well as analogous configuration, address not only a textual web of relations but also a notion of general cultural knowledge of readers, in whose minds the author's selections and descriptions of a spatial setting address or create a sense of plausibility. At the centre of the specific subfield of spatial plausibility are items like furniture, household utensils and equipment, working tools, or other man-made or natural material things, which, according to general knowledge and experience, do occur regularly in specific spatial settings and thus typically belong to these settings: i.e. a picture on the wall in a private chamber, a pot in a kitchen, a rake in a garden, pieces of chalk in a classroom, an Yixing pot in a tea house, an incense burner in a temple courtyard, a rock in the mountains and so forth. Additionally, spatial plausibility includes the effects that the living of characters has on the places they inhabit. Governing this issue are (stereo-) typical assumptions regarding psychological and motivational causes that result in plausible equipment; e.g. while a baseball is no regular item in an average living room, it is plausible that a baseball fan does place one in his living room; likewise, any item that is described as a personal keepsake, becomes a plausible part of any corresponding place and turns it into a place of individual life and memory. There are at least two further effects of typical behavior linked to places, (i) behavior matching the function of certain spaces, e.g. sleeping in bedrooms, writing at a desk, cooking in a kitchen, stitching under a lamp, swimming in a lake, or climbing a tree and (ii) behavior matching the psychological status of characters, e.g. complaining about the heat in the shadow under the eaves, or hiding in corners from violence. I propose to understand these as indirect references since they do not refer to any really existing place but to the whole of readers' knowledge and memories. The notion of plausibility is different in cases of direct and indirect references. In the first case, coherence of the text is created out of specific knowledge and memories and tends towards 'accuracy' of spatial information. This accuracy of provable, factual information on places opens an imaginative space and causes readers to also believe the fictional story told. In the case of indirect

14 Foley, *Telling the Truth*, 67.

references, coherence is rather created out of pattern of general knowledge, standard or formulaic images of the world and it tends towards a mere »possibility« of spatial settings. This possibility allows the reader to render the story told as likewise possible. While both versions create a sense of plausibility, they differ in their significance for a theory of fictionality since these two notions imply different renderings of the link between the real and the fictive; the first case hints towards a notion of ‘as-if-real’, while the second operates on a basis of a narrative draft being convincing or likely. The first primarily asks for checking facts, the second for conceiving narrative arrangements.

The amalgam of these kinds of different notions of reality is, of course, at the heart of literary art and creation. It should not be forgotten, however, that settings of novels are not merely spatial; they are also temporal. In terms of temporal, direct or indirect references, realism refers to history as temporal reality. From a point of literary history and aesthetics, one might, quite disturbingly, object that those literary works which are appreciated by very diverse groups as well as generations of readers have this status not because of but rather despite of direct references, no matter whether these are temporal or spatial settings. It is, for instance, not mandatory to know the exact dates of the reign of emperors Zhezong 哲宗 (reigned 1086–1101) and Huizong 徽宗 (reigned 1101–1125) to make sense of the *Shuibu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin). It is fully sufficient to recognize their status as emperors. Nor does it particularly help to know the city of Leipzig and the tavern Auerbach’s Keller to conceive the meaning of Goethe’s *Faust*. It is rather the arrangements of characters and their fundamental desires and motivations, the handling of behavioral pattern (in today’s terminology: psychological pattern), which provide for the long-lasting appreciation of these works.

In some sense, one might argue that *Jiling Chronicles* shows similar pattern. Yvonne Chang has noted that the novel »is self-referential rather than referential«¹⁵ and thus relinquishes to establish a realist geographical and historical setting. This creative mode reminds of some approaches in traditional literary creation rather than of politically inspired post-modern claims for direct mimetic references that are typical for spatial turn-approaches. In traditional Chinese

15 Sung-cheng Yvonne Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 87.

literature, concepts for literary creation without reference to the real world are framed as »creating something out of nothing« (*wu zhong sheng you* 無中生有),¹⁶ or as creating—metaphorically—out of thin air (*pingkong zaochu* 憑空造出, *pingkong zhuanchu* 憑空撰出, *pingkong jiezhuān* 憑空結撰, or *pingkong zaohuang* 憑空造謊). »Pure fabrication out of the blue« (*pingkong niezao* 劈空捏造) might, in fact, hint to the knitting of meaning in a fictional narrative structure which relies on indirect references to general (or maybe stereotyped) knowledge or experience in order to produce plausibility.¹⁷ For many critics, plausibility was, indeed, a criterium to evaluate literature. The basis for this kind of evaluation is an accordance of fictional descriptions with a general logic of things as in *renqing shili* 人情事理 or *renqing wuli* 人情物理.¹⁸ This would also allow rendering references in *Jiling Chronicles* in terms of their (internal and/or structural) plausibility rather than in terms of their realistic equivalent in the outside world.

This notion of plausibility would denote that »rather, the mutual interactions of different textual features—characters, events, social conditions, philosophical debates [and also places and history, C.S.]—determine the text’s reference to the world of the reader.«¹⁹ Thus, a notion of ‘plausibility’ is achieved through aesthetic narrative devices. Chang praises »Li’s superlative skill in creating tension and

16 The phrase occurs, for instance, in Mao Lun’s 毛綸 (17th century; father of Mao Zonggang 毛宗崗, 1632–1709) comment on the *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 regarding non-plausible passages: »It [this refers to a forged letter, C.S.] is created out of nothing. Originally, we cannot pretend that it really exists. But if we then take what is false for being real, why not for a moment consider it to be real?« (*Wuzhong sheng you, yuan bude zhi zhi wei you, ranze yi jia dang zhen, he fang quan zhi yi wei zhen zai.* 無中生有，原不得執之為有，然則以假當真，何妨權之以為真哉！), quoted from Hou Baipeng 侯百朋, *Pipa ji ziliao huibian* 《琵琶记》资料汇编 [Collected Materials on the Pipa ji] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), 379. Here, implausibility and the violation of readers’ expectations are turning into signifiers of being fictional.

17 Ming Dong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction: A Non-Western Narrative System* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 48, 187–188.

18 David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 174–175.

19 Foley, *Telling the Truth*, 67.

immediacy, [thus] building a compelling *illusion* of the real.«²⁰ Clearly, the story functions via the interplay of human desires and their consequences, first of all notions of sin, namely a »fatalist folk belief in *yüan* (fated interpersonal relationships) and *nieh* (cyclical retribution).«²¹ Li Yongping said that »“Jiling” is a symbol, “Chronicle” is a metaphor [or: fable].« 「吉陵」是個象徵，「春秋」是一則寓言。²² One option to make sense of this double labelling, symbol and metaphor, is to assume that Li as an author with an intense interest in language simply did not want to use the same word twice. In that case, however, he might well have used only one label, saying that »Jiling Chunqiu is either a symbol or a metaphor.«²³ Taking his split serious indicates two different forms of referentiality. Although both labels cannot be separated in a clear-cut way, ‘symbol’ hints towards representation, whereas ‘metaphor’ (or ‘fable’) rather hints towards an allegorical reference.

Yet, what does ‘Jiling’ symbolize? Li does not use the standard word for ‘symbol’, that is *fubao* 符號. It might make sense to take the notion of *xiangzheng* 象徵 more literal as ‘imitating a phenomenon’ and thus as a mimetic process in a wide sense. The *Jiling Chronicles* have been read as attempts to recall childhood²⁴

20 Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance*, 83, italics added, C.S.

21 Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance*, 85 (italics in original).

22 Li, Yongping 李永平, *Qitou. Li Yongping zixuan ji* 1968–2002 《迢迢》:李永平自選集 1968–2002 [Roaming. Li Yongping Self Collection 1968–2002] (Taipei: Mutian, 2003), 35.

23 In dealing with Li’s notion, critics rather advocate a combined reading. While quoting the passage, in their argument they label both »Jiling« and »chunqiu« as *yuyan* 寓言, that is as fable or metaphor; see for example Ding Yimeng 丁怡萌, »“Jiling Chunqiu” zhong de shijian xunhuan xushi zhi fenxi 《吉陵春秋》中的时间循环叙事之分析« [On the cyclical narration in Jiling Chunqiu], *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao* 河北师范大学学报 33,3 (2010), 100–105, here 100; Zhu Chongke 朱崇科, »Lüxing bentu: youyi de “e” tuobang. Yi Li Yongping “Jiling Chunqiu” wei zhongxin 旅行本土: 游移的“恶”托邦. 以李永平《吉陵春秋》为中心« [Travelling Nativeness: Lingering Dystopia in Li Yongping’s Jiling Chunqiu], *Huaqiao daxue xuebao* 华侨大学学报 3,3 (2007), 99–106, here 101; Pei-yin Lin, »Redemption from Trauma and Desire: Literature by Overseas Students as Self-Portraiture Exemplified by Guo Songfen and Li Yongping«, *Taiwan wenxue yanjiu xuebao* 台湾文学研究学报 15 (2012), 77–115, here 102.

24 Joseph S. M. Lau, »The Tropics Mythopoetized: The Extraterritorial Writing of Li Yung-P’ing in the Context of the Hsiang-t’u Movement«, *Tamkang Review* 12,1 (1981), 1–26, here 7.

or as a search for a Chinese mother culture²⁵ and thus as referring to specific places, namely Sarawak or China (as the point of reference within national allegory). Instead of reading Jiling as denoting a real place symbolizing a sense of China, we might understand it as a fictitious place symbolizing a phenomenon (instead of a place); a phenomenon indicated through the literal meaning of Jiling 吉陵, that is: an auspicious or lucky tomb or hill. Since the town Jiling is not a hill itself, but surrounded by various hilly regions and given its non-connectedness with any outside world beyond the provincial town 60 miles away, the town itself rather lies »buried« between the surrounding hills. »Auspicious tomb« is obviously a paradoxical notion. It combines, however, the elements of *yuan* 缘 and *nie* 孽 and sets them into a tension with human hopes for a lucky life. It might also denote the shift of the auspicious and lucky Guanyin Festival into the nightmare of rape and revenge that impinges upon the whole society in Jiling. Given the effects of the narrow spatial closure of the small society with its specific form of social decorum and control including standardized spaces of escape like the festival (affirmative to order) and prostitution (deviant), Jiling offers universal notions of understanding mankind.²⁶ If Jiling is a symbol, it symbolizes the sense of imprisonment in fate, the fatal interplay of decorum and desire. Consequently, it is doubtful that an alignment of Jiling with specific places really benefits the interpretation. Jameson has proposed that »third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: »the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.«²⁷ Jameson exemplifies his notion by hinting to Lu Xun's novelette *Diary of a Madman* (狂人日記, 1918). However, in its

25 Lin, »Redemption from Trauma and Desire«, 101, 102.

26 A universal reading is also advocated in Wang, Meng 王萌, »Xugou de zui'e zhi xiang. Li yongping de "Jiling Chunqiu" 虚构的罪恶之乡。李永平的《吉陵春秋》« [The Imaginary Sin Village. Li Yongping's "Jiling Chunqiu"], *Shanghai wenhua* 上海文化 9 (2013), 40-46, here 42. Also listed as one option in Zhu, »Lüxing bentu«, 101.

27 Frederic Jameson, »Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism«, *Social Text* 15 (1986), 65-88, here 69, italics in original.

generality Jameson's notion is not overly significant. Firstly, it is questionable whether or not the Taiwan in which Li wrote meaningfully falls under the category of »third-world«. Even if so, Jiling should then symbolize Taiwan but not a vague image of a cultural Chinese mother-land. Secondly, Lu Xun's story was intentionally written as a national allegory, an evaluation that is not equally legitimate in the case of *Jiling Chunqiu*. Thirdly, Jameson's division of literary production might itself be evaluated as a rather neo-colonial act. It denies third-world literature the capacity to negotiate human conditions in a universal setting. Although it has to be acknowledged that criticism and research in literature indeed tends to read non-Western works per se as culture specific and as allegorical there is no reason why it should not have the same wider range in meaning and validity in representation as (some) Western works. We would not refrain from crediting works like James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) or Edgar Allen Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964) as valid and effective beyond their Irish or English cultural realm and as denoting fundamental notions of mankind. The mere fact, that Li Yongping mentions festivals and rituals in the specific Chinese cultured version of Guanyin Festival or prostitution as red-light areas is therefore no reason to delimit the scope of Li's novel to an imprecise image of China. Especially if Jiling is less a representative place that symbolizes more or less directly 'China', but rather the space of a phenomenon symbolizing the tensions that social control, deviance, *yuan*, and *nie* impinge upon a small society in a snowball, a more universal reading has more to offer.

What, then, does *chunqiu* mean if it is a metaphor or a fable? *Chunqiu* obviously alludes to the Chinese classic historiography of the state of Lu which arranges history in annalistic form. The term seems dramatically inapplicable for Li's novel since the arrangement of events is far from being chronological. Instead, the reader is presented with a rather fragmented narration of different time levels, leaping back and forth, and of subjective memorial spaces.²⁸ Here, we might assume that Li deliberately shifts traditional notions of reliable truth and knowledge towards postmodern notions emphasizing an uncertainty and fragmentariness of signs and forms, and thus blurs narrative borders between

28 Ding Yimeng attempts to dissolve the fragmented order of time by aligning the different plot elements and chapters in terms of narrative time and in a linear time scale. Ding, »Jiling Chunqiu«, 101, 102.

history and story in the fashion of propositions made by Hayden White. This would meet the discourse of the time in which *Jiling Chronicles* was written; a discourse of which Li Yongping, who studied comparative literature in the US from 1976 till 1982, was probably aware of.²⁹ If the *Chunqiu* is basically regarded as an attempt to create a sense of order by the example of the state of Lu, *Jiling Chronicles* could be an attempt to search for understanding the interplay of fate, deviance, and disappointed hope in a life governed by sin and retribution. In this sense, the *Chronicles* present a failed version of the attempt to install order through narration; and it would be a satirical and devastating version of *chunqiu*.

On the other hand, *chunqiu* like its translation »chronicles« could be regarded simply as a term denoting the account of events in terms of their causes and effects. In that case, it would be a metaphor for a fated world ruled by an inescapable chain of causes and effects, which nonetheless have no deeper or divine meaning that would help to endure hardships.³⁰ Nothing in *Jiling Chronicles* hints towards salvation, not even after death. The characters are living in a worldly hell with no chance to escape the cycle of sin and retribution. The Buddhist notion—so prominently addressed in the work through the vocabulary of *yuan*, *nie*, or *baoying* 報應 (retribution)—is severely modernized, maybe even post-modernized by cutting the salvationist aspect. From this post-modern fragmented Buddhism only the worst part remains. It is then a metaphor for or a fable about a lost condition of the world, no matter whether this condition was ever real or merely imagined.

The whole title is, of course, already a metaphor simply by the novel's virtue of being a fictional account of the world. This relation between the real, the fictive and the fictional is, however, surely not at the heart of any realist concept of literature in the sense of post-turn approaches, neither of any *bentu*-concept,

29 Li received his MA at SUNY Albany in 1978 and his PhD at Washington University St. Louis in 1982.

30 The loss of a divine meaning of fate becomes clear in the character of the fortune-teller who repeatedly occurs throughout the novel but is not involved in the making of sense of the chain of cause and effect.

which seemingly provides another playground in which to place a novel dealing with an isolated locality.

Jiling and bentu 本土

The *bentu*-discourse evolved roughly in the late 1970s and during the 1980s and aspired to frame a Taiwanese identity in opposition to the KMT's policies of sinicizing Taiwan and to effects of globalization. It is much influenced by post-colonial approaches aiming at defining a national and local identity and a sense of community vis-à-vis mainland China, inner-Asia and the world. I will not try to sum up the different developments and ups and downs of the discourse around Lee Tenghui's rather ethnic *fulao*-centred (副佬) concept and the concluding (partly harsh) criticism and alternative notions of the term. Suffice it here to say, that *bentu* and *bentubua* are eminently political terms, in many ways not merely a discourse, but a concept and even a strategy aiming at achieving political results, even though there are different conceptualizations by different groups. It is also noteworthy, that in the late 1990s and the 2000s, the term's coverage was enlarged and comprises additional, yet also identity-related aspects, e.g. gender and queer issues or aboriginal issues.³¹ In this sense, *bentu* is in danger to become a theoretical meta-term that strategically promises access to discourses and rights of voicing, but loses its epistemological strength.

In the field of culture, it is linked to marginalization issues and thus to predominantly political notions of (endangered versions of) home, nation, histories, identities, and rights inasmuch as they are represented, expressed, displayed, reproduced, or mapped in the media, party programs, academic writing, or (in the framework of this paper) in literature or art. The concept of *bentu* is thus impacted by its political or even ideological foundations and consequently likewise dominated by realist notions. At stake in literature is *bentu* as a message (often

31 There are countless descriptions of the history, development and content of the *bentu*-discourse, for example Ya-chung Chuang, »Studying Taiwan: the Academic Politics of *Bentu* in Post-Authoritarian Taiwan«, in *Sociology and Anthropology in Twentieth-Century China: Between Universalism and Indigenism*, ed. by Arif Dirlik (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012), 283–306.

enough as a promise) in relation to the real world and the voicing of those who can claim a *bentu*-identity: *bentu* thus often occurs as a (political or social) *bentu*-program that nonetheless is weakly defined. It is thus not surprising that *bentu* is a matter of realist fiction, especially in the genre of nativist literature (*xiangtu wenxue*).

However, what does or can *bentu* denote in a completely fictional text that lacks any concrete references in space or time like Li's *Jiling Chronicles*? The latter part, that is *tu* 土 (soil), becomes blurred and unspecific in this case and it also remains unclear what exactly is *ben* 本 (original or native) and why. Li's biography can serve as one approach to the 'home' that *Jiling* might be; however, the cultural setting is rather problematical. Li Yongping was born on Borneo, Malaysia, in 1947.³² He was living and working in Taiwan and spent formative years of his life in the US. Li wrote the initial chapters »In Great Blessings Lane« (Wanfu xiang li 萬福巷里) and »Sun Showers« (Ritou yu 日頭雨) while doing his MA at State University of New York and published them in 1978. He wrote further chapters during his PhD studies at Washington University at St. Louis and after returning to Taiwan while teaching at National Zhongshan Daxue, Gaoxiong, and published the whole novel in 1986.³³ In terms of Taiwan history, these are crucial years from the formation of an opposition movement in the wake of the founding of the journal *Meilidao* 美麗島雜誌 in 1979 to the end of martial law in 1987. Most of these years Li spent in the US, but was closely linked with Taiwan since he published his works regularly in Taiwan in *United Daily News Literary Supplement* 《聯合報》副刊. Li has repeatedly envisioned himself as a wanderer (*Jangzi* 浪子). Because of this background, many readers would instantly focus on the ethnic dimension and thus tend to read *Jiling* as a town in a Chinese cultural environment. For evidence, they can refer to Chinese names, the Guanyin festival, a tea house etc. However, this remains very vague and can hint to a sort of Greater Chineseness just anywhere and when. On the other hand, a range of Christian buildings are also part of *Jiling* which hints at cultural contact zones, as they might be typical for Taiwan—given its history of contacts and colonialism, which

32 Li Yongping passed away in September 22, 2017 due to cancer.

33 Li, *Qitou*, 36.

however, is neither a fully compelling assumption. It can as well be any place in which cultures have merged or just a phantom that brings together biographical experience of Li, translated into an imagined timelessly pre-modern, yet nonetheless somewhat globalized world.

It has been argued by Joseph Lau that Li, »driven by homesickness, [...] tries to recall his childhood in Sarawak through the medium of fiction.«³⁴ Lin Pei-yin likewise argues that Li is on a »constant pursuit of a (Chinese) cultural origin and the recognition of the inevitable loss of the Chinese mother culture«, or similarly »*The Jiling Chronicles* can be seen as a story about searching for an origin, or a nurturing mother(land).«³⁵ The vision of a home or mother that is visible in *Jiling* is, however, disastrous. If at all, this makes sense only as a lament about losses or about a kind of mental exile, which psychologically alludes to trauma or crisis. In the novel, there is no place for any kind of internal positive outlook, no redemption is achieved for any of the characters. If this loss is to be overcome, it will be a task for the reader. Lau and Lin read this loss differently, Lau as individual mental formation of Li, Lin as a national allegory. I tend to favor the mental reading, which means that we are speaking, in a metaphorical sense, about spaces of memory, either individually or collectively. One could try to juxtapose temporal elements of the story in two ways: a chronological approach in order to 'restore' a history of *Jiling*, and, second, a narrative sequence which would lay out an inner referential structure and allusions from one strip of memory and/or event to the next.

If, due to the lack of any compelling and meaningful reference, it is not the aspect of land, that *tu* denotes here, it might still be the aspect of home that Li addresses; for instance, a notion of home expressed through the circle of people interacting in *Jiling*; this, however, would rather be a *benqun* 本群 than a *bentu*. Home might alternatively be expressed as a cultural code of decorum and its violations (a *benzhi* 本制 or *benzheng* 本政), through a sense of memory and experience (a *benji* 本記) and thus through history (a *benshi* 本史), through a notion of fate (a *benming* 本命), that is repeatedly mentioned in terms of *baoying* 報應 (retribution), or, given the desolate atmosphere of a decadent wasteland, through a vision of a home of chaos (a *benluan* 本亂), or even a dystopian home of evil (a

34 Lau, »The Tropics Mythopoetized«, 7.

35 Lin, »Redemption from Trauma and Desire«, 101, 102.

ben'e 本惡).³⁶ Most of these combinations appear strikingly strange and metaphorically 'out of place.' Nonetheless, they indicate different ways to constitute a structure and/or a nucleus of what *ben* might refer to.

In practice, *bentu* operates as an umbrella term subsuming a range of issues related to the field of home, soil, identity, authenticity, collective order and so forth. However, it does more than merely subsuming these issues; it spatializes them. In its function as a generic term it provides the standard matrix by which to conceive the subsumed issues and also the adequate metaphorical field to build allegories. The subsumed issues are to be thought in relation to space, as being transcended by notions of space and maybe even as generated through space. Thus, referring to the options mentioned above, *bentu* as an umbrella term indicates that, conceptually, society is a function of place, but not the other way around. However, the mere unreality of *Jiling* dismantles the hierarchies and might allow to negotiate notions like order, history, fate, or even chaos to some extent unrelated to space.

Mapping Jiling

In terms of approaching *Jiling Chronicles* via spatial turn methodology, attempting to map the town is most obvious. Li Yongping did not deliver a map of the phantom town himself, which at first sight might mean that the realistic effect a map provides for the reading process is not intended by the author. However, many novels describing a fully fictional town or landscape do deliver maps. Obviously, science fiction as well as utopian or fantasy novels are predestined candidates for containing imagined maps. But even novels which are set in a 'real' place, often deliver maps e.g. in order to visualize the characters' »pathways« or

36 On the dystopian dimension of *Jiling Chunqiu* see also Zhu Chongke, *Lüxing bentu* and Song, Xiujuan 宋秀娟, »Lun 'Jiling Chunqiu' de 'e'tuobang' shuxie 论《吉陵春秋》的“恶托邦”书写« [On Dystopian Narration in 'Jiling Chunqiu'], *Changzhou Gongxueyuan Xuebao* 常州工学院学报 34,5 (2016), 19–22.

»surroundings«, or in order to mark historical developments and changes that might not be known to the general audience, especially in historical novels.³⁷ On the one hand, the lack of a map of Jiling means a further shift towards the imaginary, to mental aspects or narrative structure, a shift that shall not be restricted by visual information for the reader. On the other hand, however, this does not mean that Li did not pay attention to the construction of the city and its hinterland. The novel in each chapter gives plenty of information about the arrangement of streets, lanes, single houses, distances and the like. Li's attention to this very basic form of spatial consciousness becomes clearly manifest when trying to map down Jiling. The most important finding is that the image of Jiling is largely coherent and consistent as can be seen in my own attempt to map Jiling and its hinterland.

37 Examples are Zhang Xiguo's *The City Trilogy* (張系國: 「城」三部曲) or Zhu Tianxin's *The Old Capital* (朱天心: 古都). An example for the extended possibilities to include maps of all kinds in fiction is Reif Larsen's *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet*.

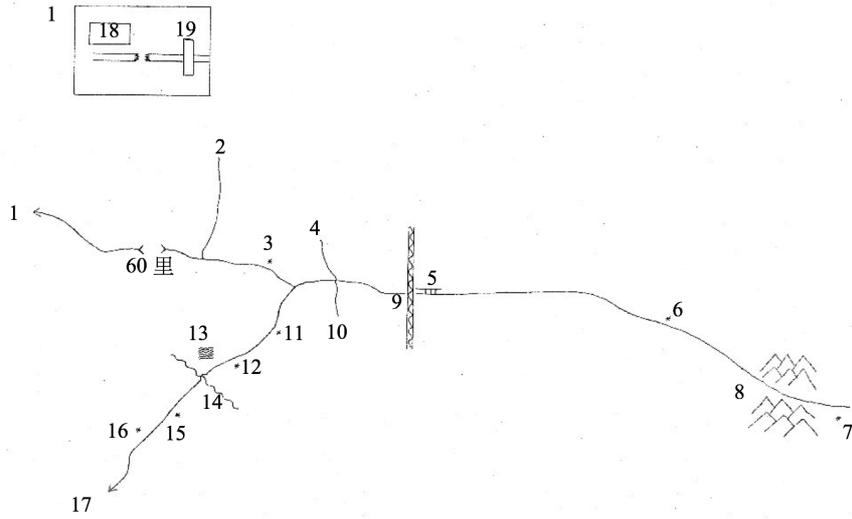


Plate 1
The Area of Jiling

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Provincial City 省城 | 11 | Green Willow Village 綠柳庄子 |
| 2 | Guo Village 郭家村 | 12 | Pavilion with well 井亭子 |
| 3 | Bamboo Grove 竹林 | 13 | Paddy Field 水田 |
| 3 | Earth God Temple 土地祠 | 14 | Bridge & creek 溪上那一座小木橋 |
| 4 | West River Village 河西村 | 15 | Roadside Farmhouse 路旁有個小小農家 |
| 5 | Jiling town 吉陵鎮 | 16 | Reed Pond Village 蘆塘村 |
| 6 | Fish Nest 魚窩頭 | 17 | Villages / locations from 16: |
| 6 | Stone Buddha Temple 石佛寺 | | Stumbling Horse Shop 跌馬店 |
| 7 | The Valley 坳子里 | | Falling Gate Grove 落門眾 |
| 8 | Ruined Pass 墟口 | | Ocean Lotus Temple 海蓮寺 |
| 9 | Ferry Landing at Broken River Bay 斷河灣渡口 | | Green Bamboo Pond 綠竹塘 |
| 10 | Laojia Village 老家庄 | | |

Chess Board Village 棋盤庄	18	College of Foreign Languages
Stone Pile Village 疊石村		外專
Yellow Stone Town 黃石鎮	19	East Gate

The first map shows the setting of Jiling in a larger perspective. The information in the novel regarding the surrounding of Jiling is at once rather limited and abundant. The reader gets lots of information concerning single villages, i.e. about Reed Pond Village 芦塘村 in chapter 3.2. Additionally, we can locate country roads and villages in terms of being east or west of the river and the successive arrangement of villages or buildings on single roads. West River Village 河西村, for instance, is located on a side road and not on the main road leading towards the provincial city. The sequence of villages along the country roads is also quite clear. We can positively state that Green Willow Village 綠柳庄子 is nearer to Jiling than the Pavilion with well 井亭子, although we cannot determine exact distances. West of the town is mountain area, east of it a hilly region. In the end, a lot of the information concerning the surrounding of Jiling is very vague. A place called Stone Dragon Ditch 石龍渠, for instance, where Kesan's elder sister is married, is mentioned three times,³⁸ yet with no further information. Its location remains unclear. Vagueness, however, cannot be shown properly on a geographical map. When drawing a map, villages and houses need to be located relatively exactly. Consequently, much of this map is necessarily highly subjective. In some instances, the information given needed to be interpreted. Kesan's father, for instance, was sent to school in the provincial capital. Years later, Kesan himself attends a College of Foreign Languages in a city some sixty miles away from Jiling. It remains unclear whether these two cities are indeed identical. I have chosen this option because, given the overall information about the remoteness of Jiling, it seems unlikely that there are several cities offering higher education near Jiling. Furthermore, it might make sense for Kesan's father to send his son to the same city for education where he himself went as well.

38 Ch. 3.1, Li, 157 / 131; ch. 3.3, Li, 214 / 174, 233 / 190. All references to the *Jiling Chunqiu* give the chapter first to enable readers to work with other editions. Then I refer to the Chinese version in italics: Li, Yongping 李永平. *Jiling Chunqiu* 吉陵春秋. (Taipei: Hongfan shudian 洪範書店, 1986). At last, I refer to the translation: Li, Yung-p'ing. *Retribution. The Jiling Chronicles*. Transl. by Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-chun Lin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

The information about Jiling itself is richer. I was not able to clearly identify the exact locations of all buildings mentioned within a street or lane. Some houses, for instance, can just be linked to a street or lane, but the more exact position on the respective lane remains unclear. In the case of Purple Wardrobe Lane 紫衣巷 even the position within the network of streets in Jiling is not specified. Additionally, there are some general problematical issues. The novel says twice that Jiling is a town of roughly 5000 households or families 五千多戶人家.³⁹ In chapter 3.3 the narrator says with regard to South Market Street 南菜市街 alone: »Some two hundred shops crowded both sides of the street, as far as the eye could see 大街兩旁一戶緊挨著一戶，放眼望去，兩百戶的店家.«⁴⁰

39 See ch 2.3 & 3.3; Li, 149 & 228 / 124 & 186.

40 Ch. 3.3, Li, 232 / 189.

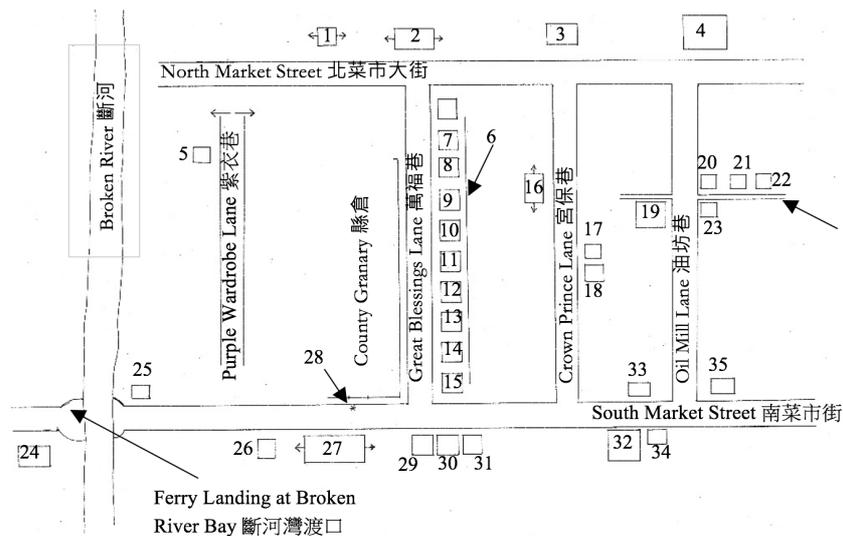


Plate 2
Jiling Town

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Wang Tofu Shop 王豆腐店 | 16 Nunnery 庵堂 |
| 2 Township Office / Precinct station 鎮公所 | 17 Candle Shop 香燭 (店) |
| 3 Mercy Chapel 慈恩堂 / 耶穌教堂 | 18 Old Zhao Straw Mat Shop 賣蘆席老趙 |
| 4 Guanyin Temple 觀音廟 | 19 Cao Oil Mill 曹家油坊 |
| 5 Wen Brothel 溫家 | 20 Wu house 吳家屋 |
| 6 Back Alley 后街 | 21 Qin house 秦家屋 |
| 7 Spot of Red 一點紅 | 22 Dong house 董家屋 |
| 8 Liu Coffin Shop 劉棺材店 | 23 Hu Four Oil Shop 胡四油舖 |
| 9 Fragrant Court 滿庭芳 | 24 Inn 野店 / 客店 |
| 10 Green Silk Garden 青羅院 | 25 Riverside Bakery 河堤一家糕餅舖 |
| 11 Three Beauties 老三好 | 26 Heavenly Gate Pharmacy 順天堂藥局 |
| 12 Sleeping Fragrant Court 宿香館 | 27 Missionary Hospital 教會醫院 +Mission School & church 教會學堂 |
| 13 Four Happiness Hall 四喜堂 | |
| 14 Penglai Pavilion 蓬萊閣 | |
| 15 Spring Comfort Garden 怡春園 | |

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 28 Chinaberry Tree 棟樹 | 33 Lu Embroidery Shop 魯記絨線舖 |
| 29 Wen Pottery 溫家缸瓦店 | 34 Zhu Furniture Shop 褚家木店 / 木器店 |
| 30 Zhu Teahouse 祝家茶店 | 35 Empty lot 野地 |
| 31 Sun Silk 孫家綢布庄 | |
| 32 War God Temple 關帝廟 | |

The shops described in more detail in the novel are family run shops in which the owners' families are also living. Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether the sentence also means that there are 200 households on South Market Street. The notion »one next to the other 一戶緊挨著一戶« indicates that there are no or only a small number of households in between which do not function as a shop. If roughly 200 households are the number of household on South Market Street, which is one of the two major streets in Jiling, we can account for roughly another 200 on North Market Street. The mentioned lanes between both streets, however, do not make up for the remaining 4600 households. The narrator obviously does not mention all lanes and streets of the imagined Jiling. We get a selection of plot related places, that is: an imaginary selection of fictional places within the overall phantom town. One might also argue that the number of far more than 200 shops—if we add shops on North Market Street and an unknown number in the lanes⁴¹—seems relatively high for a city set somewhere between pre-modern and modern times. The households described in more detail are rather smaller households consisting of no more than four to five persons. This hints towards modern rather than pre-modern family structures. The plausibility of the ratio needs to be clarified within the field of historical geography. On the other hand, Li describes the characters who are living in the city primarily as working in the sex business or as shop owners. The latter ones are craftsmen, artisans, or merchants. There are hardly shops offering services; the Zhu teahouse 祝家茶店 or Kesan's father, the husband of Qin, who due to his education works in the town hall, are exceptions in Jiling's economic field. Additionally, descriptions hinting towards masters and workers or journeymen are missing. Liu

41 Examples are the Candle Shop 香燭店 and the Old Zhao Straw Mat Shop 賣蘆席老趙 in Crown Prince Lane 宮保巷.

Laoshi, for instance, seems to work alone. The relative small size of the service sector and the smallness of craftsmen shops seems rather to indicate a relatively remote premodern setting.

Another problem regards the arrangement of both sides of the central lane, that is Great Blessings Lane 萬福巷, which formerly was called Frog Alley 田鷄弄. The text says that »back when the county granary was newly built, the muddy lane running along the eastern wall was called Frog Alley.«⁴² Therefore, from west to east, we have the county granary, then on its east side the lane, next the number of houses including Liu's coffin shop and the row of brothels. Regarding these, we get the information, that Fragrant Court 滿庭芳 is located »to the left of the coffin shop«⁴³ and that Spot of Red 一點紅 is located to its right side.⁴⁴ Additionally, chapter 3.3 lists all brothels in Great Blessings Lane starting from South Market Street up to Fragrant Court.⁴⁵ Consequently, on a south to north axis, we can conclude that Liu's coffin shop is north of Fragrant Court and Spot of Red north of the coffin shop. This overall arrangement makes sense only if we read the information about what is left and right to the coffin shop as an inside view or residents' information. The resident has his house in his back, looks towards the street and then locates the neighbors as 'to my right side' or 'to my left side.' This differs from the view of a visitor who stands on the street, looks towards the houses and locates the neighbors 'to its right (or left)'. The arrangement of houses in both cases is revers. In the case of the description given for Great Blessings Lane only the first option makes sense.

However, most importantly, the overall information about streets and houses in Jiling enables the reader to mentally construct a largely coherent image of Jiling and shows that Li did put some emphasis on the fictional construction of the town's spatiality. Recurring places and paths are emerging in this novel as crossing points or areas in which different persons are aiming at different actions at different times. These places and paths do form intersections of narration that spatially knit together otherwise heterogenous plot elements. The most prominent examples are the part of Great Blessings Lane in front of Fragrant

42 縣倉才蓋起來時，東邊牆下那一條泥巷還叫田鷄弄，ch. 1.1, Li, 3 / 3.

43 棺材店左鄰，滿庭芳，ch. 1.1, Li, 6 / 6.

44 棺材店右鄰，一點紅，ch. 1.1, Li, 22 / 19.

45 Ch. 3.4, Li, 237 / 194.

Court, the intersection of Great Blessings Lane and South Market Street, the Chinaberry tree, or the ferry landing at Broken River Bay 斷河灣渡口。

This arrangement provides a suture of narration that is not temporally organized (as being con-current action) but spatial (as being ‘con-topical’ action). Li Yongping creates a shift away from the usual chronologic order of narration. Indeed, the temporal setting and arrangement in *Jiling Chronicles* is not only relatively complex, it also quite ambivalent. While it is precise in describing specific moments (i.e. the sunrise, an evening, the Guanyin-festival) and thus provides ample description of the link between a specific ‘when’ with a specific ‘what’ and ‘where,’ it is on the other hand rather imprecise in providing the reader with a coherent time frame. Instead, as a second matrix of story-logic, Li Yongping uses spatial settings in the sense of a topologic order of narration.⁴⁶ The relative coherence of space, which allows the practice of mapping, contributes to the plausibility of the overall story. Recurring places and paths are seemingly producing a sense of familiarity that the reader can feel or acknowledge for the story-world.

On the other hand, there are places and paths partly described in detail that cannot be added meaningfully to the map. The railroad is one example to which I shall come back later. The courtyard of Xiao Yue, described in chapter 1.2, is a more striking example. Xiao Yue is one of the four criminals following Sun Sifang 孫四房 when he raped Changsheng 長笙. Xiao Yue is thus one of the prime characters directly attached to the central action around which the novel is arranged. Nonetheless, he and his family are relatively scarcely dealt with compared to the background provided for the families of the other three culprits, namely Hu Shiyi 胡十一, Xiao Dasan 蕭達三, and Yanniang’s 燕娘 husband Lu Baolin 魯保林. However, we get a sound description of the courtyard in which Xiao Yue lives together with his mother, his brother Xiao Shun and Xiao Shun’s wife. Xiao Yue comes back home and leaves home, but in his case Li Yongping does not deliver a description of the ways that lead to Great Blessings Lane, the

46 Here the term topological is meant in distinction from chronological and comprises all sorts of spatial information. Herman for instance uses the same term in a narrower sense as referring to inherent locations differing from projective locations. Herman, *Story Logic*, 271, 280–282.

chinaberry tree or other places at which Xiao Yue acts. Xiao Yue is described in terms of places but not in terms of pathways. Consequently, the Xiao-courtyard cannot be meaningfully placed on the map of Jiling. Another case is the railway mentioned in the beginning. We read that »the railroad came through town, on which carloads of goods from the south were shipped up north 鐵路通了，正趕著南貨大批北銷.«⁴⁷ However, the railroad is strikingly absent in the remainder of the story. None of the characters leaving or returning to town are using the railroad, not even Xiao Kesan 蕭克三 when he comes back from schooling in the provincial town, some 60 miles (*li* 里) away. Usually, it might be safe to assume that a railroad connects the periphery with the centre. In the case of Jiling, Jiling itself would be the periphery while the provincial town might count as (regional) centre. However, both places seem not be connected by the railway that runs through Jiling. Additionally, none of the shop owners ever mentions that the goods they sell are delivered by train, nor does a railway station occur in the complete story. Consequently, it is impossible to add the railroad line in a meaningful way to a map of Jiling. Opposite to the familiarizing effect of coherent spatiality, this kind of place-less space operates rather as a de-familiarizing device.

The second important, in fact, striking finding is that Great Blessings Lane is located at the centre in a double sense. The rape of Liu Laoshi's wife Changsheng by town rascal Sun Sifang in Great Blessings Lane during the Guanyin Festival, her suicide, and Liu Laoshi's killing of Red Spring, Sun's favorite prostitute, and Sun's wife is the central plot element that knits together the remaining chapters and plot lines relatively directly. Great Blessings Lane and the rape incident are therefore the centre of the narrative structure. However, Great Blessings Lane is also at the spatial centre of Jiling. In the text, the chinaberry tree in front of the entrance to the county granary at the intersection of South Market Street to Great Blessings Lane is marked at the centre of town,⁴⁸ however, the arrangement of streets and lanes as shown in the map shows Great Blessings Lane itself in the central position. Most astonishing in this respect is the function of the lane within

47 Ch. 1.1, Li, 4 / 4.

48 鎮心那一株苦楝子, ch. 1.2, Li, 62 / 53; similarly: 鎮心孤伶伶一棵老樹, ch. 3.3, Li, 228 / 186. Zhu's teahouse is located on the opposite side of the street, near the chinaberry tree. Consequently, when the fortune-teller comes along this section of South Market Street in front of the teahouse, this is also marked as centre of town. See ch. 1.3, Li, 69 / 58-59.

the town's cultural, moral, and economic space. Great Blessings Lane is the lane of brothels and prostitutes which consequently marks the sex business as central within Jiling, or more accurately: lust and sin are the prime motivational and behavioral triggers in Jiling which also explains the importance of the concept of retribution within the novel. In this case, the strategy of mapping, in a quite literal sense, elucidates the degree to which “centering” as a narrative device functions on a multitude of different levels.

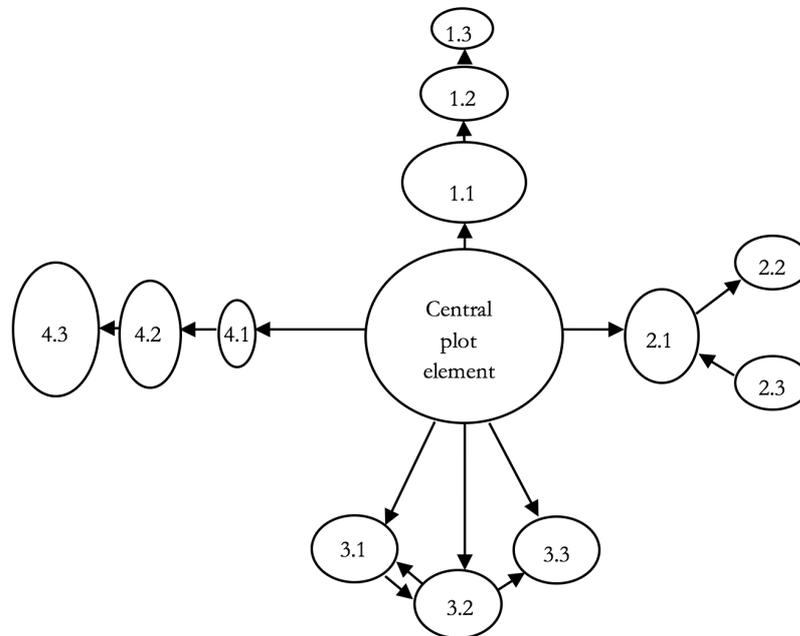


Plate 3
Chapter—Event—Map.

However, mapping as a strategy to cope with texts in the sense of spatial turn-thinking extends far beyond geographical aspects. Regarding literature, it includes

the ‘mapping’ of narrative structures and relations of characters, plot-lines, places etc. In a very rough first attempt, I have tried to map the relation of chapters to the novel’s centre in terms of event, plot, time, and space. We have four larger plot lines centering around the family’s and neighbors’ background of one of the co-perpetrators of Sun Sifang. Each section has three chapters which are arranged differently by Li in their relation to the centre.

The central plot element around which the four sections are arranged is the rape of Changsheng by Sun Sifang during the Guanyin-festival on Great Blessings Lane, her suicide, and Liu Laoshi’s consequent murder of Red Spring and Sun’s wife. The four sections are linked through a range of additional characters like Fourth Mama Luo 羅四媽媽 or Autumn Begonia 秋棠; however, their interrelatedness beyond the central plot element is relatively little. Larger circles symbolize a closer connection to the central plot element than smaller circles; e.g. in section one the narration moves away from the central plot element in its three consecutive chapters. In section two, the first chapter is nearest to the central plot element and then links to the second chapter, whereas the third chapter refers back to the first one.

Of course, more elaborate versions are possible. However, and I’m turning back to the critique of spatial turn-thought and methodology regarding literature, the explanatory impact is little. Without intimately knowing the novel, the “map” does make no sense for the reader. If the reader has intimate knowledge of the novel, he would in most cases not need it. This is, as far as I see it, not merely a result of the hasty way in which I produced this map of the chapter-plot relation. It is a general problem; meaningful maps that add additional insight or knowledge are extremely difficult to draw and they are much more seldom than the fashionable practice of mapping seems to indicate. To be useful within academic texts inspired by spatial turn-thinking, many maps need extensive textual explanations. One reason for this is that a map (merely) shows the positions of chosen (more or less abstracted) items relative to each other. However, it does not by itself explain the nature of these items or their relations to each other. An arrow is not a precise explanation.

However, taking my attempt of the chapter relation towards the novel’s narrative centre as an example for quite a part of the current fashion of mapping,⁴⁹

49 See, for instance, two maps/diagrams attempting to explain the narrative relation in terms of

one might object that this practice is not ‘mapping’ in the sense of spatializing more or less complex structures. It is of course a form of visualizing mutual relations and it shares with mapping the basic strategy to do a two-dimensional drawing and thus it is per se spatial in a fundamentally literal understanding. However, it does not denote any spatial meaning. Instead, I propose to frame these kinds of visualizing not within spatial turn-thinking at all. In fact, visualizing is an old and common strategy of explaining contexts and interrelations, which is part of Western as well as Chinese culture.⁵⁰ Within the Chinese cultural realm, I refer to diagrams *tu* 圖, which have a particularly rich history during the Song-dynasty. Probably, most readers will instantly recall Zhou Dunyi’s 周敦頤 (1017–1073) *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji tu 太極圖)*. In the Chinese tradition, doing diagrams usually combines two aspects of iconic representation; they are simultaneously images and diagrams.⁵¹ They have been an explanatory tool common during long parts of Chinese cultural history and comprise of a wide range of different applications, like Buddhist *kewen* 科文 (exegetical texts), genealogical maps,⁵² or as a tool for memory and meditation. In some sense, it can be argued that the *Book of Changes (Yijing 易經)* and its exegesis provide the space

correlations and oppositions in the features of characters (Changsheng—Yanniang; Sun Sifang—Liu Laoshi) in Ding, ‘*Jiling Chunqiu*’, 103 & 104.

- 50 For Western traditions see for example James Franklin, »Diagrammatic Reasoning and Modelling in the Imagination: The Secret Weapons of the Scientific Revolution«, in 1543 *and All That: Image and Word, Change and Continuity in the Proto-Scientific Revolution*, ed. by Guy Freeland and Anthony Coronos (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 52–116. See further Bruce Eastwood, *Ordering the Heavens: Roman Astronomy and Cosmology in the Carolingian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), and Faith Wallis, »What a Medieval Diagram Shows: A Case Study of Computus«, *Studies in Iconography* 36 (2015), 1–40.
- 51 Michael Lackner, »Diagrams as an Architecture by Means of Words: The Yanjitu«, in *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China. The Warp and the Weft*, ed. by Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann and Georges Métaillé (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 341–377.
- 52 Especially genealogical maps are used in novels as well, mostly to illustrate family relations of the characters.

par excellence for *tu*-practices.⁵³ Already in these early examples of visualization, the non-linear arrangement of single aspects was a basic element. »“Diagram” is a wider term than “map” or “plan”, in that what a diagram represents need not be spatial. A diagram is a picture, in which one is intended to perform inference about the thing pictured, by mentally following the parts of the diagram.«⁵⁴ Doing a diagram and thus doing a spatial representation does not necessarily imply to convert information into spatial meanings. Instead, it may also convert it into other layers of meanings related e.g. to the logical or temporal structure, the characters, or plot-related elements—if we ignore the mere fact that the drawing of both, a map as well as a diagram, is done in a two-dimensional manner and therefore it is per se spatial, albeit in a banal sense. However, the representation of chapter-event relations for *Jiling Chronicles* is in fact a *tu*-diagram, a *Jiling Chunqui zhangshi tu* 吉陵春秋章事圖.

There is a range of other possibilities to map aspects of *Jiling Chunqui*, or maybe rather to visualize aspects in diagrams, e.g. aspects of home or loss of home, gender issues, family or character relations and many more. Among these, issues of gender provide good chances to ‘map’ power-spaces in the sense of the spatial-turn thinking.

A common practice in gender studies is to link public places to male dominance and private places to female subordination or invisibility. On the surface, *Jiling Chronicles* seems to fit into this pattern since we primarily find men out on the streets, especially around Great Blessing Lane while women are rather in or near their houses. Their ways through public space in and outside of town is described mostly as a movement from one domestic place to another. However, if adding more variables, the evaluation becomes blurred. Established assumptions are: public places = male spaces = spaces of action characterized through notions of rationality, reliability which serve as a standard; and vice versa: private places = female spaces = spaces of communication and services, characterized by notions of the irrational up to madness, unreliability, thus the abnormal.

Men and women are located in their own houses, both in *Jiling* and in their country villages, where they meet as family. Both are also walking the streets and visit the temples, yet usually not together. Apart from this, men are going to Great

53 Lackner, »Diagrams as an Architecture by Means of Words: The Yanjitu«.

54 Franklin, »Diagrammatic Reasoning and Modelling in the Imagination«, 55.

Blessings Lane for prostitution, women are visiting other shops for chatting. Intersexual meetings outside their own houses are depicted as potentially dangerous. Thus, many of the women are characterized as victims of male violence; this especially regards Changsheng who is caught outside her house and raped inside and Qin Zhang Baokui who is accused of adultery, hides in her house, but is caught there and taken away. However, in a half-premodern setting the social functioning of decorum, violence, and public control is not specific for Jiling; this could be a description of everywhere. It is not even specifically Chinese, quite contrary to claims that Li Yongping aimed at searching a Chinese homeland. In this reading Jiling is rendered as a typical space in terms of patriarchic power.

However, Li Yongping's arrangement of gendered spaces is rather unconventional on another level. He aligns public, male and action oriented spaces, yet now they are characterized as irrational and unreliable. Madness is a feature of male characters, notably of Liu Laoshi, and the son of Red Spring, called Black Idiot 黑痴. Others are clearly outside of social order due to criminality and brutality, like Sun the Fourth, and the other notorious street rascals. Consequently, we find the alignment of private, female spaces of communication with the characteristic of acting rationally, reliably, in some sense also: predictably. Those who are in line with what might count as common sense are women.

Additionally, the narrator takes intensive measures to intimately explain and justify female behavior, especially if it violates the rules of decorum as in the cases of Qin Zhang Baokui or Autumn Begonia 秋棠. Through shifting the attention from one chapter to the next and thus circumventing the central plot element from different angles and perspectives, the narrator shows how the verdicts on these women came into being and developed in public opinion. He thus deconstructs both the reasons of behavior and the public reactions driven by prejudices. In comparison, the description of male characters covers much less narrative space and the pains the narrator takes in making male actions understandable are much less intensive. This narrative handling of the women is, however, in contrast to the fates, they endure in the course of the novel. Jiling's gendered spaces appear somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, they are meeting typical patriarchal structures of power, on the other hand, Li rearranges

archetypal alignments. While these considerations ponder on female spaces in *Jiling Chunqiu*, I do not see a meaningful way to engage in the practice of mapping that would really elucidate relevant structures in form of a map or a diagram.

Mapping Time in Jiling Chunqiu

When the story *In Great Blessings Lane* (*Wanfu xiangli* 萬福巷裏) was firstly published in *Lianhe bao* 聯合報 (*United Daily*) in two installments on July 27 and 28 in 1978,⁵⁵ there were hints to the immediate post war time. We read of Japanese who had departed and about the Korean War that is the early 1950s.⁵⁶ However, these references were eliminated in the later print version. To have an intermediate version at hand is usually regarded as an advantage for the literary scholar. In this case, it is in fact rather a burden. It is a tempting assumption for a researcher to read »earlier« as hinting to 'originally', »originally« as meaning 'authentically' and the latter to address notions of trueness. However, I tend to take Li's decision to omit all these direct historical references very serious as a deliberate decision which the author took to avoid or to blur a temporal setting. Nonetheless, there have been several attempts to define the temporal setting in terms of real history. Yu Guangzhong for instance, relying on single references to a railroad and a warlord has proposed to place the novel roughly in the 1920s, thus deliberately reading warlord as hinting to the Chinese Republican type, which, however, cannot be taken for granted.⁵⁷ As mentioned above, the railway and

55 Available on the *Lianhe bao* archive side, in Germany via Cross Asia services at Staatsbibliothek Berlin, <<http://erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/han/udndata/udndata.com/ndapp/Index>>, (last retrieval March 23, 2015).

56 Li, *Wanfu xiangli*, paragraph 1, Lau, *The Tropics Mythopoetized*, 13.

57 Li uses the term *junfa* 軍閥, which occurs three times in the text (twice in ch. 1.1, Li, 4 / 4, ch. 4.2, Li, 266 / 214; in the latter example the term *junfa* is just used as a descriptive comparison to characterize the appearance of a person, but not as an indicator of historical time). *Junfa* in the modern meaning of warlord was introduced from the Japanese by Liang Qichao 梁啟超. However, *junfa* as a term merely denoting a member of military rank was used since the Tang dynasty. I would follow Yu here that Li refers to the modern term rather than to the old one, although his language in *Jiling Chronicles* is much influenced by pre-modern fiction.

corresponding infrastructure like tracks or a station are strikingly absent in the remainder of the novel. In any case, a railroad signals modernity in an iconic way. On the other hand, there are no hints to any kind of electricity in Jiling, another cliché-like icon of modernity. The character *dian* 電 occurs only four times, always as lightning and in connection to a change of weather.⁵⁸ However, »railroad« does not merely indicate modernity, it also indicates far distances and at least regional forms of human movement or migration. None of this has its place in Li's narrative. Quite contrarily, vast spatial dimensions would contradict the spatial closure of the narration. The railroad is thus a paradox narrative detail; a detail with no further plot related impact. Given the lack of any form of electricity it rather obscures any attempt to reasonably define precise time frames and it prevents the reader from assuming an altogether pre-modern setting. Jiling is thus settled neither in pre-modern nor in modern times and also not in a time of transition but rather in a no-time. In this sense, Jiling is not only a non-place, it is in fact as much an ou-chronos as it is an ou-topos.

I wrote above that within spatial turn thinking the emphasis (or in some respect, the enthusiasm, obsession, or mission) to resist the dominance of temporal in favor of spatial structures is to some extent overemphasized. Pleading to »re-strengthen« the awareness towards spatial structures, above all indicates that spatial thinking as such is not new.⁵⁹ In fact, one might rather say, that the dominance of temporal thinking conceived of as evolution and progress—formative as it was for (high-) modernity—is rather the historical exception than the historical rule. Additionally, key terms of (spatial) turn thought like process and political and/or social change are fundamentally temporal categories. The opposition of synchronic vs. diachronic, or spatial vs. temporal parameters is thus not as strong as sometimes advocated by spatial turn thinkers. Gillian Rose with her concept of 'time-geography'⁶⁰ and Doreen Massey with her notion of 'space-

58 *Dian* occurs as *dianguang* 電光, ch. 1.2, Li, 61 & 62 / 53 (twice); ch. 3.3, Li, 219 / 178, or *shandian* 閃電, ch. 1.2, Li, 62 / 53. In both frameworks (chs. 1.2 & 3.3) it is a sign of the change of weather (*bian tian le* 變天了, ch. 1.2, Li, 62 / 53; ch. 3.3, Li, 219 / 178) and does not hint towards electricity.

59 Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 286.

60 Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

time⁶¹ have convincingly argued that both parameters are interwoven and cannot be thought completely separately, thus following fundamental knowledge derived from Einstein's theory of relativity. Apart from complex physical research, the categorical dominance of time is to be questioned on the field of etymology. Etymology as the history of words and their (actual, current, original, hidden, sublime, or overwritten) meanings is crucial for the emphasis on modes of representation that is formative for many »turns« as well as for the methodology in literary studies. It can be stated for many—I dare say: most—languages that 'spatial' words and metaphors are much more abundant than genuinely temporal ones. Even the most fundamental terms for temporal structure, like linear or circular, make use of spatial images: a line or axis, a circle. The language of modernity is usually using spatial metaphors to describe 'movement' in time, i.e. the original meaning of progress in English, progrès in French, or progresso in Italian is: going forward, or advancing. The same is true for the German *Fortschritt*, or (almost accurately translated) the Chinese *jinbu* 進步 and the Japanese *shinbo* 進歩 (しんぽ). Likewise, 'development' as well as the German *Entwicklung*, or the Chinese *fazhan* 發展 and the Japanese *batten* 発展 (はってん) metaphorically denote 'to unroll' or 'to unfold' something. Personally, although this observation has of course no evidentiary value, I would say that it seems easy to think of spatial metaphors visualizing temporal meanings, but it seems much harder vice versa.

This linguistic 'dominance' of spatial terms as a metaphorical field (sic!) might be a result of very fundamental forms of human experience and intelligibility. We encounter 'space' as a three-dimensional realm which we can perceive directly with our senses (predominantly through seeing, hearing, and touching) and in which we can move relatively free of will into all directions. Time, on the other hand is a one-dimensional realm, mono-directed (we cannot move back in time, only in memory) and, despite attempts in neurosciences to identify brain cell clusters enabling us to perceive time, we do not have a direct sense for time. In a strictly metaphorical sense, space seems to allude to notions of (a relative) freedom, whereas time alludes to notions of fate. In this sense, modernity's program of disenchantment is characterized by reframing time with a range of spatial metaphors thus attempting to free time from its fatalistic underpinning.

61 E.g. in her lecture: Doreen Massey, *Power-geometries and the politics of space-time. Hettner-Lecture 1998* (Heidelberg: University of Heidelberg, 1999).

Seemingly, time itself turned into an assumed option for human agency and socio-forming. The language of developmental hierarchies aimed at turning 'time' into an object open to human power of disposition. At the core of modernity's time concept is thus not time as such, but time as an object of optionality. Spatial turn thought turns out to be following this basic formation in two ways: firstly, by criticizing the consequences of time's objective and fateful status, and secondly, by further increasing the importance of spatial metaphors. The spatial arrangement of complex systems like time, power, or narration has, however, consequences. It transfers (or feigns to transfer) options of movement and the power of disposition typical for the realm of space onto these other systems. This type of spatial turn thinking is in an emblematic way obvious e.g. when Edward Soja aims in *Thirdspace* at creating a space of radical openness, a space of resistance and struggle, a space of most manifold representations.⁶² However, in practice, the seemingly openness and hybrid indeterminateness are challenged at the very moment when one tries to enact the prime methodological tool of the spatial turn, that is: mapping. No matter, whether these are conceived of as physical, geographical or as mental maps, the very moment of physically drawing or intellectually conceiving a map goes along with determination. Mapping is not about creating options or ambivalences; it is about fixing a position in spatial terms. Even when attempting to symbolize a multitude of relations in a kind of web-structure (often enough showing a rather confusing number of arrows), the icon that represents one of the (abstract) items in the web-structure needs to be determined spatially within the drawing.

The aim of reasoning rather excessively on the problematical and to some extent strategic use of the concept of space within spatial turn thinking is to advocate a more even-level conceptualization of space and time as intertwined aspects of human existence. This is not merely a l'art pour l'art contemplation but leads back to Li Yongping. The complex connection of space and time is embodied in *Jiling Chronicles* on several levels. As mentioned above, the title itself

62 »Was entsteht, ist ein Raum totaler Offenheit, ein Raum des Widerstandes und des Kampfes, ein Raum der vielfältigsten Repräsentationen.« —Edward William Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 286.

obviously addresses both issues. Jiling is both a place and a space in various aspects, given the different notions of *ben*, as mentioned above. At the same time, *chunqiu* 春秋 addresses a fundamental aspect of time, namely the arrangement of time as history. However, the arrangement of chapters is rather a fragmented narration of different time levels, leaping back and forth, and of subjective memorial spaces. The attempt to verify a realistic timeframe, as Yu Guangzhong has done in proposing that the plot of *Jiling Chronicles* is roughly situated in the 1920s in a vague Chinese environment characterized by modernization (railway, Christian missionary) and warlords, provides no real advantage in coping with the story.⁶³ More important seems to me, that the temporal frame is similarly limited and focused as is the spatial frame. Jiling seems to be as much as out of place and free from references to real geography as it is out of time and free from most reliable or authoritative references to real history, »deliberately situated in a temporal and spatial void.«⁶⁴ Instead, Li has created an encapsulated bubble, a closed area and era in which the characters appear to be imprisoned in their little claustrophobic world that includes Jiling and its surroundings (the provincial city located at the largest distance of 60 *li*) and no more than the lifetime of three to four generations. The history that these people create through their actions turns into a destiny that cannot be evaded. Jiling is likewise enclosed in terms of its moral space, a hell of retribution. There is no escape out of this self-created and self-imposed “unjust existential hell”⁶⁵ of human desire, revenge, and gossip. The evil character of gossip as a kind of word-waste that is thrown from the under the eaves onto the street and thus into public has its allegorical parallel in »flinging the basinful of dirty water into the street—*bua-la-la*« which occurs repeatedly including the onomatopoeic supplement.⁶⁶

63 Yu Guangzhong 余光中, »Shier ban de Guanyin lian—wo du “Jilin chunqiu” 十二瓣的觀音蓮—我讀《吉陵春秋》« [Twelve petals of the Guanyin lotus—My reading of *Jiling Chronicles*], in Li, Yongping 李永平, *Jiling Chunqiu* 吉陵春秋 [Jiling Chronicles] (Taipei: Hongfan shudian, 1986), 1–9, here 1.

64 Chang, *Modernism*, 87.

65 Chang, *Modernism*, 82.

66 The phrase occurs six times, for instance as »手裏一盆渾水嘩喇喇的潑到了鎮心大街上.« Chapter 1.3, Li, 66 / 56. Further examples occur in chapters 1.1 (twice), 1.3 (thrice). The onomatopoeic quality of the text would be another topic worth exploring. The phrase *bua-la-la*

It is in fact the petty and minor talk on the street, *xiaoshuo* in its literal sense, through which Jiling's history is narrated and constructed, in this case the *xiaoshuo* of women, at least primarily, the most prominent exception being part 3 which is narrated through Kesan in varying narrative perspectives. The inhabitants are thrown into a world that is focused on one centre in a fourfold manner, spatially on Great Blessings Lane, temporally on the festival of Guanyin's birthday, in terms of plot on the rape of Changsheng, and psychologically on the existentialist fear of retribution. Understanding this fourfold structural setting is, indeed, what can be drawn from applying spatial turn thinking, although it is doubtful whether the specific spatial turn methodology is really inevitable to achieve this finding. Jiling is a world with only very little periphery around this centre, neither spatially, temporally, plot-related, nor psychologically, with borders and boundaries impossible to overcome, in that sense even more detached from the "real" world than the average utopia, which is accessible for exclusive persons at least once, like Tao Yuanming's *Peach Blossom Spring* (桃花源記), Thomas Morus' *Utopia*, Tommaso Campanella's *La città des Sole*, Voltaire's El Dorado (in *Candide*), Johann Gottfried Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg*, or—to add a dystopia—Lao She's *Cat Country* (貓城記). The inhabitants of Jiling are rather prisoners with no chance either to leave Jiling geographically or to just develop out of it.

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嘩喇喇, for instance, occurs in a slightly different form as *bua-la-la* 嘩啦啦, also in connection to sounds of water; quite similarly as splashing water off a basket (ch. 3.2, Li, 207 / 169; ch. 3.3, Li 217 / 176 [twice; although once as *bua-bua-la-la* 嘩嘩啦啦]), as falling water during rain (ch. 3.2, Li, 204 / 167; ch. 3.3, Li, 220 / 179) running water in a river (ch. 4.1, Li, 251 & 257 / 204 & 209). It does however also occur in connection to squabbling women, (ch. 2.3, Li, 133 / 111) and to sound of wind (ch. 3.3, Li, 234 / 191).