

## Article

# Salvation in Motion: Translocal Narrative and Liminality, Compassion, Embodied Perception in *Cold Mountain*

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**Abstract:** Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* takes the main line of Inman crossing the front line of the Civil War and rushing to his hometown to reunite with Ada. It describes the protagonist's complete journey of embarking on the road of return with obsession and completing self-spiritual reshaping in wandering all the way. The existing relevant research mostly relies on the static habitat theory to interpret the home narrative, and few of them explore its intrinsic essence from the perspective of translocal narrative. This article takes the perspective of translocal narrative as the starting point to carry out text analysis, and carries out text analysis along the level of "liminal situation – compassion – embodied perception": the Civil War broke the stable survival pattern, and Inman was forced to rush to the front-line battlefield and became a mobile individual who continued to shuttle in various places. All kinds of temporary transition fields on the long way back to his hometown gradually dissolved the identity barriers of Inman, allowing him to have a deep intersection with all kinds of strange passers-by and constantly nourish the ethics of compassion in his heart. And the physical pain, natural coldness and warmth brought by the trek all the way, and other concrete embodied feelings infiltrated his heart layer by layer, gradually soothing the mental trauma left by the war. Inman's long-cherished wish to go to *Cold Mountain* and reunite with Ada runs through the whole text, and his inner spiritual transformation does not come from the reunion at the end, but from the cognitive reshaping created by liminal situations, compassionate ethics, and embodied experience. Frazier intertwines the narrative of returning home, travel opportunities and physical feelings, revealing that the fluid transition space is an important medium for characters to complete their spiritual growth. The multi-dimensional analysis based on this textual characteristic has also supplemented a new analytical perspective for the translocal narrative interpretation of war-themed novels.

**Keywords:** Charles Frazier; *Cold Mountain*; Translocal Narrative; Liminality Theory; Compassion Ethics; Embodied Perception

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## 1. Introduction

In the tradition of American literature centered on historical upheaval, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* traces a protagonist's return journey to his homeland, using Inman's arduous passage toward *Cold Mountain* to reunite with Ada as a narrative framework for exploring individual spiritual renewal amid profound disruption. It stands as a representative work in the literary treatment of migratory return. The novel reconstructs dynamic interrelations among people, places, and ethical sensibilities through its distinctive journey-based narration. Departing from conventional narratives focused on centralized conflict zones, it situates character development within shifting spatial contexts, interpersonal encounters, and ongoing embodied engagement [1, 2]. Core concepts—including mobile subjectivity, transitional space, and evolving identity—advanced by translocal narrative theory align closely with the novel's structural and thematic texture, offering a productive lens for interpreting spatial configurations and relational dynamics, and thereby illuminating the intertwined processes of physical and spiritual reformation.

Translocal narrative theory moves beyond interpretive paradigms anchored in stable settlement, proposing instead that identity and affective bonds emerge dynamically through sustained cross-regional movement. Within this framework, the migratory path itself possesses intrinsic formative significance—not merely serving as a conduit to a fixed destination. Domestic scholarship has systematically traced the evolution of this theoretical approach, affirming its suitability for close reading of texts centered on migration and travel [3, 4]. Current academic discourse on *Cold Mountain* reflects diverse interpretive orientations: many studies adopt static dwelling theory to examine themes of growth and domestic imagery, while others engage ecological aesthetics, gendered mutual support, or communal ethics. Yet several analytical limitations persist: predominant reliance on fixed spatial frameworks treats *Cold Mountain* solely as a terminal spiritual locus, overlooking holistic, fluid readings grounded in translocal experience; ethical analysis often remains confined to intra-community relations, neglecting the empathic connections forged between strangers within transitional spaces; and accounts of spiritual transformation frequently disconnect environmental interaction from bodily experience, failing to trace the sequential interplay among liminal conditions, empathic responsiveness, and embodied perception—thus falling short of a unified, process-oriented textual interpretation.

Addressing these interpretive gaps, this article adopts a translocal narrative perspective and integrates three complementary theoretical strands—liminality theory, compassion-centered ethics, and embodied perception—to conduct a layered reading of the text. It examines the experiential trajectory of the mobile subject Inman as he navigates transitional spaces following the dissolution of established social order, analyzing how successive encounters—marked by physical hardship, shifting natural environments, and human vulnerability—contribute cumulatively to emotional restoration and moral reorientation. The aim is to foreground the narrative function of migratory flow, clarify the distinct role of the journey itself in facilitating spiritual renewal, and offer an interdisciplinary interpretive model for *Cold Mountain*. This approach also seeks to advance methodological frameworks for analyzing literary works rooted in displacement and return under conditions of large-scale societal transformation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Multi-Dimensional Interpretation Theory of Translocal Flow Narrative

Translocal narrative takes the reflection of the traditional static local view as the starting point of thought, and the relevant research presents a clear progressive development vein. Early humanistic geography formed a set of local interpretation paths with stable settlement as the core. This set of analytical ideas anchored people's identity and emotional belonging to long-term rooted fixed residences. The academic community referred to it as the dwelling-oriented local interpretation paradigm [5]. A classic geography work distinguishes between the two core concepts of space and place, proposing that place is formed through sustained residence and emotional accumulation, serving as an individual's primary locus of belonging. Later scholarship continued this static analytical approach, further emphasizing the significance of settled existence, while treating movement and temporary residence as transitional phases rather than autonomous sites of meaning-making. These foundational contributions established key parameters for static local theory; however, their explanatory scope proves limited when applied to literary texts depicting large-scale population mobility under conditions of social upheaval and displacement.

At the beginning of the 21st century, a collection of papers titled *Translocal Geographies* advanced the theoretical paradigm by shifting focus from singular settlements to the dynamic flow processes connecting multiple locations. It posits that identity and affective ties are generated across regions, and that movement pathways themselves carry independent interpretive significance—not merely functioning as preparatory stages toward a fixed home. A domestic scholar systematically traced the

evolution of mobility and translocal narrative theory, clarifying its historical emergence and conceptual core [3]. Furthermore, the scholar demonstrated its textual application through comparative analysis of migration literature from diverse cultural contexts, highlighting its particular efficacy in interpreting journey- and displacement-centered narratives, thereby offering a robust analytical framework for literature centered on large-scale human mobility.

Relying solely on translocal narratives to construct a comprehensive flow framework proves insufficient to fully unpack the multilayered, interwoven trajectories of character development—spanning spatial, interpersonal, bodily, and psychological dimensions—in *Cold Mountain*. To address this interpretive gap, this paper integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives to broaden the analytical scope. The liminality framework, originally developed in anthropological studies, enables spatial deconstruction by foregrounding transitional fields that emerge when established orders undergo transformation. Sites such as abandoned dwellings and shared encampments along travel routes loosen rigid social categorizations and foster conditions conducive to equitable interaction among individuals from varied backgrounds. Building upon this spatial reconfiguration, compassion ethics research extends the interpretive lens inward to interpersonal dynamics. Closed residential communities often reinforce boundaries and preconceptions; by contrast, encounters occurring outside fixed living environments tend to cultivate empathetic responsiveness across social distinctions. Finally, the embodied perception perspective, grounded in phenomenological inquiry, anchors abstract spiritual shifts to concrete physical experience: characters' evolving inner states—including trauma processing and mutual understanding—are shaped incrementally through sustained engagement with terrain—walking across varied landscapes, enduring climatic extremes, and responding sensorially to environmental stimuli [6]. These three perspectives operate sequentially—from external spatial context, to relational affect, to somatic cognition—forming a coherent, layered explanatory system.

Within the narrative setting of *Cold Mountain*, this layered analytical framework effectively maps the internal trajectory of character transformation [7]. Large-scale societal disruption fundamentally altered longstanding agrarian settlement patterns in the southern region, prompting widespread relocation and prolonged mobility. As characters lose stable environmental and social anchors, they move repeatedly through transitional spaces and engage with individuals from diverse circumstances. In these fluid settings, previously fixed identity markers gradually soften through sustained cross-group interaction. The departure from insular communal structures creates openings for mutual recognition and shared vulnerability. Concurrently, the continuous, embodied engagement with natural surroundings exerts a sustained influence on inner life, helping to alleviate distress stemming from prior adversity. Thus, the full process of personal renewal unfolds across the continuum of lived mobility—encompassing spatial passage, interpersonal encounter, and sensory experience.

## 2.2. Review of Existing Studies Related to *Cold Mountain*

Since the publication of *Cold Mountain* in 1997, academic circles at home and abroad have produced rich research on themes such as homeland, return, and collective historical experience, and the overall text analysis is mostly carried out from the perspective of static dwelling [8]. Overseas research often combines literary prototypes, dwelling geography, and historical materials to complete interpretation. One study relied on the prototype of Homer's epic homecoming to carry out a cross-text comparison, interpreting the protagonist's journey as a narrative pathway toward reunion. Based on the theoretical framework of static habitation, another study focuses on the narrative of personal growth within a rural setting, drawing upon inhabitation thought. Beyond spatial theory, some studies integrate historical materials from the mid-nineteenth century to reconstruct the context of large-scale population movement.

The domestic academic community has interpreted the work from multiple dimensions such as community, ecological aesthetics, and gender perspectives, with

various studies grounded in normative literary frameworks. From the perspective of community research, scholars use community theory to categorize forms of social grouping in the novel and emphasize the egalitarian nature of transient, mobile collectives. In terms of ecological space, another study combines ecological aesthetics and dwelling philosophy to define agrarian life as an ideal mode of existence. A further analysis centers on mutual support between key female characters, exploring the emergence of autonomous agency amid societal transition, thereby enriching interpretive scope through complementary gendered insights. In addition, some achievements interpret the text from the perspectives of new cultural geography and existential philosophy.

A comprehensive review of the above research reveals several shared limitations in current interpretations [8]. Existing studies generally adhere to the static dwelling analysis paradigm, treating *Cold Mountain* as the sole spiritual destination for characters and lacking theoretical frameworks capable of accommodating narratives of mobility and displacement. Ethical analysis tends to focus on internal relational dynamics within stable communities, overlooking empathetic connections formed among individuals during shared journeys. Discussions of character transformation often neglect the interplay between bodily experience and environmental engagement, failing to integrate spatial movement, interpersonal encounters, and sensory perception into a unified analytical model. In response, this article adopts a multi-dimensional translocal flow narrative framework, integrating liminality theory, compassion ethics, and embodied perception to address the underrepresentation of mobility in prior scholarship, trace the logic of spiritual renewal emerging from large-scale population movement, and propose a renewed interpretive pathway for *Cold Mountain*.

### 3. Liminal Space: Identity Dissolution in the Gaps of the Journey

Van Gennep describes rites of passage as a three-stage process, identifying the intermediate phase—between departure from a prior social configuration and entry into a new stable condition—as liminality [9]. Building on this, a prominent theorist advanced two interrelated concepts: anti-structure and communitas. It has been observed that transitional spaces can temporarily suspend conventional distinctions such as status, affiliation, and role, thereby enabling interpersonal connections unmediated by socially assigned categories. A complementary spatial concept characterizes certain environments—such as roads, derelict dwellings, and provisional encampments—as lacking enduring communal ties; instead, they serve only transient passage. Within such settings, socially ascribed labels tend to recede naturally. These two theoretical perspectives converge to form an analytical framework for interpreting the journey space in *Cold Mountain*: large-scale societal disruption fundamentally altered long-standing patterns of rural settlement, and the protagonist's return route unfolded across a sequence of sites exhibiting both liminal and non-place qualities. These indeterminate zones—situated between sites of intense collective activity and settled domestic life—functioned through anti-structural dynamics to loosen fixed identity markers, while also providing fertile ground for the emergence of empathetic awareness through shared experience.

Widespread societal disruption eroded previously entrenched boundaries within local communities. Abandoned forest dwellings—compact, impermanent, and functionally neutral—were among the first settings to ease interpersonal tensions rooted in regional affiliations. A foundational observation holds that places defined by relevance, historical continuity, and identity resonance contrast with spaces lacking these qualities. Such temporary, unowned, and unregulated environments exist outside conventional systems of valuation, allowing individuals to step away from roles prescribed by social expectation. These dwellings became shared shelters accessible to all itinerants: "The walls of the wooden house are rotten and there is no owner to guard. Whether it is deserters, displaced people or fugitive women, they can push the door to rest without showing their identity or considering their position". In contrast, established settlements—including villages, towns, and farms—maintain clear functional distinctions among residents, and interaction remains shaped by socially embedded expectations. The anti-structural quality

of the dwelling suspended hierarchical conventions. Here, the protagonist shares firewood and provisions with a woman fleeing hardship; their exchange occurs solely on the basis of shared vulnerability, and rigid attitudes formed through prolonged institutional immersion gradually softened amid cooperative coexistence, initiating the formation of egalitarian relational bonds.

A narrow mountain canyon trail functions as a linear, fluid environment that further supports cognitive realignment and deepened recognition of shared human experience. According to spatial theory, locations serving exclusively as conduits for movement become detached from stable networks of social relationship, placing individuals in a suspended state where conventional social positioning recedes. This path lies between cliff face and riverbank, belonging to no administrative jurisdiction or recognized settlement, and falling outside routine oversight: "The cliff path is so narrow that only one person can pass. There are rocks on both sides, and there is only a ray of sunlight above the head. Walking between them, people seem to be floating outside the civilized order". While traversing it, the protagonist's identity shifts from that of a formally designated participant in organized activity to that of a solitary traveler focused on basic continuity [10]. Along the way, he encounters individuals escaping coercive conditions and others managing familial responsibilities after personal loss. Each shift in setting contributed incrementally to a loosening of categorical perception. He ceased evaluating others through externally imposed classifications and instead engaged with the universal challenges faced by those navigating uncertainty, allowing the anti-structural environment to gradually dissolve rigid dichotomous frameworks.

A highland encampment formed by individuals seeking temporary refuge constitutes a collective liminal setting that fully manifests the principle of *communitas* and dissolves conventional status distinctions. It has been proposed that temporary aggregation in open terrain suspends differences arising from material circumstance, background, or social standing, enabling mutual support grounded solely in shared circumstance. A complementary perspective emphasizes that space is never a passive backdrop; rather, established environments actively reinforce stratification, whereas spontaneously organized arrangements in undeveloped areas possess inherent capacity to unsettle entrenched relational patterns. The highland site hosts rudimentary shelters constructed by its inhabitants. No hierarchical organization derived from land-based production or formal architecture prevails: "More than a dozen families are crowded in the highland tents, and squires, tenant farmers and fugitive slaves do not distinguish between each other. They pick up firewood and eat wild fruits together, and no one cares about their past origin". Environments anchored in land tenure and private possession perpetuate layered social structures, but this provisional arrangement eliminated all such barriers. Prolonged cohabitation with individuals from varied socioeconomic backgrounds allowed the protagonist to observe reciprocal assistance across traditional lines. Preconceived notions rooted in inherited social positioning steadily diminished, establishing essential spatial conditions for the later development of ethical responsiveness grounded in compassion.

A riverside crossing point serves as a boundary liminal space, concluding this segment's spatial narrative and completing the logical arc of identity attenuation. Positioned at the interface between settled terrain and undeveloped landscape, and between zones of structured activity and those of relative autonomy, it inherently suspends conventional social ordering: "The river separates the two sides, the ferry has no guards and irrelevant cards, and the people coming and going are vague, and no one can define the camp and identity of others here". Here, the protagonist crossed with another individual who had likewise withdrawn from organized participation. Former distinctions rooted in regional alignment lost all operational significance. Sheltering together from wind and snow, they attended to one another's needs solely as fellow travelers navigating uncertainty. As a threshold between divergent systems of organization, this site further confirms the distinctive capacity of liminal environments to soften socially constructed divisions [11].

The narrative sequentially presents four distinct liminal configurations: abandoned dwellings, mountain pathways, highland encampments, and riverside crossings. These spatial forms progressively attenuate the force of socially imposed identity frameworks: modest non-places initiate the easing of regional tensions; linear transit routes sustain cognitive flexibility regarding categorical assumptions; provisional groupings eliminate distinctions tied to socioeconomic position; and boundary crossings dissolve residual affiliative markers. Collectively, these transitional environments constitute an autonomous zone situated apart from both origin and destination, stripping away identity designations conferred by institutional frameworks. This enables the protagonist to move beyond singular, rigid interpretive lenses and begin reconstructing understanding within dynamic, interstitial contexts—establishing the essential spatial groundwork for the subsequent exploration of compassion-centered ethics.

#### **4. Ethics of Compassion: The Awakening of Sympathy Born from Fluid Encounters**

The liminal space of the journey dissolves rigid social distinctions and fosters conditions for equitable interpersonal engagement. The emergence of compassion ethics arises from Inman's itinerant experience of observing the hardships endured by others along his path. A central theoretical perspective holds that compassion comprises three interrelated elements: perceiving another's hardship, acknowledging its contingent nature, and cultivating a selfless motivation to assist. Stable communal settings often reinforce cognitive boundaries through identity-based categorization, which may long impede the capacity for empathic responsiveness. In contrast, transient encounters during travel suspend conventional social markers, allowing Inman to engage with individuals' circumstances solely as shared human experiences. Another perspective emphasizes that moral empathy requires stepping beyond fixed positional identities to adopt a reflective, impartial stance toward others' conditions. A further conceptual framework distinguishes levels of empathic response: momentary emotional reaction reflects surface-level affect, whereas sustained, intentional sharing of hardship signifies mature and grounded compassionate disposition. These perspectives collectively trace Inman's evolving empathic awareness: habitual detachment shaped by institutional discipline gradually yields to itinerant experience, and persistent human hardship challenges entrenched assumptions. Through four progressive developments—emotional resonance, purposeful assistance, shared ethical orientation, and reconciliation across differing affiliations—a coherent ethical structure centered on compassion is ultimately realized.

Extended immersion in highly regulated environments dulled Inman's natural empathic responsiveness. Binary frameworks of affiliation and distinction fostered detachment toward those outside dominant social groupings, suppressing compassionate response over time. It has been observed that prolonged participation in adversarial institutional systems can weaken innate empathic tendencies, leading individuals to interpret hardship experienced by others as an unavoidable consequence of systemic conditions. After sustaining serious injury while leaving such an environment, Inman received care from an elderly shepherd residing in a remote mountain area: "The old man slaughtered his own lamb to nourish him, picked wild herbs to treat the wound, completely ignoring that sheltering someone who had left the system would bring consequences from local authorities". Previously accustomed to evaluating others through hierarchical categories, Inman had never before encountered unconditional kindness from unfamiliar individuals. The secluded mountain dwelling, removed from formal social roles, enabled him to recognize mutual goodwill among ordinary people amid challenging circumstances. Consistent with this perspective, only when freed from prescribed social positions can individuals fully perceive both hardship and virtue in others, initiating the development of compassionate awareness. Yet this interaction evoked only temporary emotional responsiveness rather than enduring moral commitment, representing merely the initial phase of empathic growth.

As Inman traversed mountainous terrain, encounters with communities affected by environmental disruptions transformed passive emotional responsiveness into deliberate,

supportive action and expanded awareness beyond self-focused concerns. One framework distinguishes between observational concern, which remains external and transient, and voluntary investment of personal resources to alleviate hardship, signifying the maturation of empathy into principled judgment. Sudden hydrological events disrupted agricultural infrastructure, immobilizing livestock and obstructing water channels, leaving local residents unable to restore functionality. Earlier, Inman prioritized personal preservation and avoided expending effort on unfamiliar individuals. Released from formal institutional expectations in this secluded setting, he willingly assisted in clearing waterways and donated his handsaw to reduce physical strain for local residents. Environmental disruptions and widespread health challenges had severely strained household resilience. This reciprocal support demonstrates how compassion evolved from fleeting sentiment into tangible ethical conduct, extending empathic concern to all individuals facing acute livelihood pressures.

Groups of displaced individuals assembled in repurposed rural structures at forest margins, where individual empathic responses coalesced into stable ethical orientation, marking the transition from personal feeling to shared moral understanding. Individuals from varied backgrounds—including landholders, tenant cultivators, formerly enslaved persons, and those discharged from service—coexisted within these spaces, with prior social positioning and affiliations temporarily set aside: "The barns spread hay for people to rest, and the exiles share the food, take turns to take care of the injured and sick children, and no one cares about the past identity". Within this shared context of hardship, Inman came to recognize that vulnerability is universal, and systemic pressures place all individuals at risk—aligning closely with foundational propositions concerning compassion ethics. He regularly gathered wild provisions and fuel for elders and those less able, and assumed responsibility for supporting those in need. His compassionate orientation moved beyond situational emotional reactions to become consistent, habitual practice, displacing dualistic thinking previously reinforced by institutional conditioning.

A meeting with a young person recovering from physical and psychological strain at a riverside location completed Inman's compassionate ethical development, enabling empathic connection to transcend previous divisions between opposing institutional affiliations. The open, unmonitored riverbank dissolved mechanisms of identification and conventional boundary markers: "The river bank is open and unguarded, and pedestrians do not need to verify their identities. Under systemic pressure, everyone is a drifting sufferer". Inman met a young person conscripted into service who withdrew after prolonged exposure to demanding conditions, carrying deep distress and longing for familial reunion. Previously, Inman held generalized assumptions about individuals affiliated with opposing institutions. Through shared residence and dialogue, he gained insight into the involuntary circumstances faced by individuals across different affiliations, ultimately recognizing that hardship transcends geographic or organizational lines, with grassroots participants universally bearing the consequences of decisions made by leadership. It has been emphasized that authentic empathic understanding requires setting aside group-based assumptions to grasp the lived realities of those perceived as different. The two supported one another across the shallow waters and distributed provisions equitably, fully relinquishing prior animosities. At this stage, Inman's compassion ethics operated without restriction based on origin, status, or affiliation, forming a comprehensive empathic orientation encompassing all individuals experiencing hardship within the broader context.

Four distinct itinerant settings—the shepherd's cottage, mountain valleys, repurposed rural structures, and riverside locations—collectively chart the developmental trajectory of Inman's compassion ethics. Care received in the cottage initiated nascent empathic awareness, valley-based assistance embodied practical empathic engagement, communal life in the structures consolidated ethical orientation, and the riverside encounter with the young person finalized the maturation of the ethical framework. Itinerant experience strips away socially assigned identifiers, compelling Inman to confront authentic human hardship across diverse social contexts. Foundational

perspectives on compassion, empathic responsiveness, and affective development mutually reinforce one another, illustrating how transitional, liminal spaces create conditions for equitable exchange, where witnessing hardship fosters gradual internal moral development. The consolidation of compassion ethics enables Inman to move beyond institutionally conditioned patterns of perception, replacing reductive judgments rooted in status or affiliation with nuanced, human-centered understanding, thereby establishing a robust ethical foundation for the perceptual and spiritual renewal examined in the following section.

### **5. Embodied Perception: Cognitive Sublimation of Trauma Healing**

Embodied cognition holds that spiritual transformation is a dynamic process of continuous interaction between the body and the environment. The liminal space discussed above dispels the shackles of identity, and wandering encounters give rise to compassion, which has built a key external foundation for Inman's moral reshaping. The physical phenomenology points out that the body is the fundamental medium for people to connect with the world. Inner sympathy and spiritual redemption cannot stay at the level of abstract thinking, and must rely on concrete embodied experience to take effect. Physical feelings such as pain, coldness and warmth will subtly reshape the inner mind, and abstract cognition cannot exist independently of embodied perception. The enactive cognitive theory shows that continuous sensory stimulation from extended travel can dissolve rigid, dichotomous patterns of thought formed under prolonged stress. The somatic marker theory explains that physical feelings form stable emotional imprints, which continue to support psychological resolution and ethical internalization. These theoretical perspectives form a coherent interpretive chain: physiological distress and mental constriction are gradually alleviated through pluralistic sensory engagement with natural landscapes, and progressive embodied experience ultimately enables comprehensive cognitive reorientation.

Extended exposure to high-intensity environments completely altered Inman's sensory responsiveness, and persistent physiological discomfort established enduring perceptual habits that narrowed his cognitive scope. Continuing to reside in demanding conditions and repeatedly experiencing physical strain gradually diminishes sensitivity to gentleness and tranquility. In the early days of his journey, Inman's back suffered recurrent skin breakdown, and coarse fabric continuously abraded healing tissue. The mountain air, cool and penetrating, affected exposed areas day and night: "The wound repeatedly oozed blood, and the cold at night pierced the bones. It was difficult to toss and turn all night, and could not get a moment of relaxation". Smoke, ambient sounds, and vocal expressions of distress constitute his dominant sensory memories, and sustained discomfort has become his habitual baseline state. The body constrained by persistent discomfort adheres to a singular, trauma-anchored perceptual mode. At this stage, nascent inner compassion remains obscured by acute physical distress, marking only the initial phase of psychological adjustment.

The rich tactile variety encountered in mountainous and forested terrain gradually loosens entrenched perceptual patterns and expands the character's experiential horizon [2, 12]. Natural experiences involving temperature variation, texture contrast, and atmospheric shifts effectively counterbalance residual sensory rigidity. When crossing dense woodland, rough bark, soft leaf litter, midday sunlight, and cool evening breezes alternately engaged Inman's senses. Unlike the uniform and overwhelming stimuli of prior demanding settings, the natural environment offers novel and multifaceted sensory input. The continuous reciprocal interaction between bodily sensation and mental processing updates internal cognitive frameworks. Gentle environmental engagement slowly mitigates deep-seated psychological tension. Inman moves beyond exclusively distress-oriented perception, and long-standing emotional constriction begins to ease.

Shared living arrangements among displaced individuals transform abstract compassion into grounded, relational empathy, enabling durable ethical integration. Food sharing and mutual physical assistance serve as primary conduits for empathetic

connection across social divides. Individuals gathered around shared warmth, gently massaging chilled extremities, tasting seasonal fruits and roasted tubers: "Warm touch with sweet wild fruits, dispelling the fatigue accumulated along the way and the natural reserve brought by unfamiliar surroundings". Previously, Inman's empathetic response remained at the level of transient psychological recognition; sustained physical interaction—support, shared sustenance, and collaborative care—anchors concern into stable moral orientation [13, 14]. Moral empathy gains durability only when anchored in embodied sensation, and habitual emotional reserve gradually yields to openness.

The calming sensory environment near *Cold Mountain* facilitates holistic physiological and psychological integration, resolving long-standing tension. Sustained soothing sensory input gradually supplants earlier physiological imprints associated with prolonged exertion [15]. Moist mountain air and yielding soil alleviate skin irritation caused by extended movement. When the body maintains prolonged, harmonious interaction with supportive surroundings, a fully integrated understanding of interdependence emerges. Atmospheric conditions and thermal cues along the journey progressively reconstruct Inman's perceptual system. He relinquishes rigid, defensive perceptual habits and achieves profound reconciliation of bodily awareness and reflective consciousness.

In summary, Inman's psychological development follows the progressive sequence of "physical recalibration — emotional opening — cognitive integration". Physiological strain initially constrains mental flexibility; natural environments loosen rigid perceptual habits; communal coexistence fosters enduring ethical orientation; and the landscape near *Cold Mountain* completes holistic restoration. These theoretical perspectives mutually reinforce one another, demonstrating that Inman's transformation arises not from sudden insight, but from layered embodied engagements—including locomotor fatigue, thermal awareness, and interpersonal physical contact [16]. Frazier interweaves precise embodied narration with spatial and ethical dimensions, affirming the central tenet of embodied cognition: psychological recovery and moral maturation are grounded in authentic, sensorially accessible experience—offering a nuanced and innovative interpretive framework for narratives centered on displacement and personal renewal.

## 6. Conclusion

This article takes translocal narrative as the core framework, integrating liminality theory, compassion ethics, and embodied cognition to examine the intrinsic relationship between fluid space, interpersonal encounters, and embodied experience. Various journey-based liminal fields disrupt rigid identity constructs, fostering compassion ethics throughout the wandering journey, while multidimensional embodied experiences gained from wilderness trekking gradually alleviate psychological distress associated with past adversity. These three dimensions intertwine and interact, supporting the protagonist's comprehensive spiritual transformation. The narrative dissolves binary distinctions—such as those between origin and movement, or cognition and corporeality—through an integrated portrayal of spatial passage, ethical engagement, and sensory perception in the return journey. It demonstrates that psychological recovery and moral development are deeply embedded in holistic migratory experience. This analysis offers supplementary interpretive pathways for *Cold Mountain*, and contributes new perspectives for translocal and mind-body integrated approaches to literature centered on displacement and resilience.

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