ISSN 2469-4576 (Print)
E-ISSN 2469-4584 (Online)
Volume 8, Number 1, 2023

Comparative Literature & World Literature

www.cwliterature.org

Comparative Literature & World Literature

Journal Description

In the form of print as well as online with open-access, *Comparative Literature & World Literature* (*CLWL*) is a peer-reviewed, full-text, quarterly academic journal in the field of comparative literature and world literature, whose purpose is to make available in a timely fashion the multi-faceted aspects of the discipline. It publishes articles and book reviews, featuring those that explore disciplinary theories, comparative poetics, world literature and translation studies with particular emphasis on the dialogues of poetics and literatures in the context of globalization.

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Comparative Literature & World Literature

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Articles

To Rest Content in the Amnion of Deliverance: Comparative Literature and the Antinatalist (Anti-)Novel[1]

Robbert Zandbergen

(Independent Scholar)

"If ever we evade the wonted round,

The stagnant vortex of the eddying years,

The child must take the father by the beard,

And say, 'What did you in begetting me?'"

John Davidson, *A Woman and Her Son* (89)

Abstract

In the work below, I employ a comparative approach to the eventual writing of the antinatalist novel (or anti-novel). Antinatalism refers to the philosophical position that human existence is unbearable by default and that, as a consequence, human beings should stop reproducing in order to bring about human extinction. The outcome of this will be the lessening of suffering in the short run and the complete prevention of suffering in the future. As a rising philosophical position, antinatalism will inspire forms of expression outside formal philosophical discourse. It is my contention here that the traditional parameters of literature will be offset with the creation of (future) antinatalist literature. Part and parcel of this sea change will be the opening up of

1 This article builds on topics first discussed in my doctoral dissertation "Between Iron Skies and Copper Earth: A Post-comparative Attempt at Measuring the Diaphysis of the Human Predicament as the Conscious Condition." The exploration of comparative literature, however, is new.

new ways of expression inspired by new ways of understanding the link between the human and nonhuman in the twenty-first century. I argue that the incorporation of classical Chinese Daoist literature will be especially important in this regard.

Keywords: antinatalism, literature, morality, procreation, pessimism, Daoism

Introduction

In the Chinese classic *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Poetry), there is a short poem that introduces the gist of the present work. In the "Tiao zhi hua" 苕之華 division of the Xiaoya 小雅 (Minor Odes), we read,[2]

> 苕之華、其葉青青。知我如此、不如無生。
>
> The flowers of the bignonia [are gone], [There are only] its leaves all-green. If I had known it would be thus with me, I had better not have been born.

Although there is some scholarly disagreement about the ultimate meaning of this excerpt,[3] the atmosphere revealed by these fifteen characters is tainted by a

2 The translation and interpolation are James Legge's. Unless otherwise noted, the Chinese source texts in the present work have been taken from the Chinese Text Project 中國哲學書電子化計劃, accessible online.

3 For Chen Zhenzhen 陈珍珍 (Chen 49), it refers to a lady in the prime of her life (盛年女子) who laments the fact that she was unable to find her own marriage partner (找不到对象和自己结婚). This saddened her all year round (一年四季心里忧苦) and ultimately drove her to bewail that she was ever born (后悔自己降生到这个世界上所致). The poem, thus, speaks of the trials and tribulations of a yearning heart. The utterance that it would have been better not to have been born (不如無生) can, therefore, be interpreted as incidental and "merely" rhetorical. Yang Guorong 杨国荣, on the other hand, affirms the emotional nature of the *Shijing* as a whole: he argues that this particular poem plays the pessimistic bass notes of the early Chinese metaphysics as a whole (Yang 43). For Yang, it shows that while the natural world (*ziran jie* 自然界) is full of life (生意盎然), the life of the poet himself (作者自身), by contrast (相比之下), is marked only by suffering (苦難). This sharp distinction (强烈比照) between the world and the human brings out the overall meaninglessness of human life (人生無意義感). For the poet-narrator, the realization of this warrants the belief that it would have been better not to have come into this world at all (不如不來到這個世界). Consequently, the lament in the *Shijing* that it would have been better not to have been born (不如無生) reveals a deep metaphysical rift at the heart of existence and does not simply emerge from the pangs of heartache.

gloom usually far removed from common sense. Regardless of the literal meaning that may be excavated here, it is the power of expression that manifests an original and increasingly apposite sensitivity to the everyday affairs of humankind. The desire expressed in the last sentence — that it would have been better not to have been born (不如無生) — is symptomatic of a strange, new type of philosophy that, while splenetic, hints at issues of the utmost moral importance. This is antinatalism, which refers to the philosophical position that human existence is unbearable by default and that, as a consequence, human beings should stop reproducing in order to bring about human extinction. The outcome of this will be the lessening of suffering in the short run and the complete prevention of suffering in the future.

While these are trying thoughts, these are also trying times. As radical as this all may sound, I believe that the phenomenon of antinatalism will leave an especially deep and wide imprint in the fabric of twenty-first-century philosophy and beyond. Not only does it appear that antinatalism flows quite naturally from the progression of ideas over the past centuries (Zandbergen "Between Iron Skies"), but also it is made all the more pertinent by the large-scale destruction that we see all around us at any given time. An almost exponentially increased human destructiveness is braided together with the full force of Mother Nature fighting back. This is the twin-headed monster that encapsulates the antinatalist diagnosis that it would have been better if humankind had never been.

In the present work, I take a comparative approach to the eventual writing of the antinatalist novel, or anti-novel. As a rising philosophical position, antinatalism will inspire forms of expression outside formal philosophical discourse. It is my contention here that the traditional parameters of literature will be offset by the creation of (future) antinatalist literature.

Part and parcel of this sea change will be the opening up of new ways of expression inspired by new ways of understanding the link between the human and nonhuman in the twenty-first century. I argue that the incorporation of classical Chinese Daoist literature will be especially important in this regard.

Section One

For antinatalist philosopher David Benatar, reproduction presents a serious moral dilemma because "we can never obtain the consent of those whom we bring into existence before we create them" (50). The world that we plunge people into by giving birth to them is, Benatar maintains, outright terrible. It is laden with senseless suffering. Because of this, he continues: "coming into existence can never be a benefit to the person who comes into existence" (Benatar 88). This automatically

means that it is greatly immoral to consciously subject anyone to human existence. But, life is not just particularly bad right here and right now. It is bad by definition: "[a]lthough it would have been better had none of the more than 106 billion come into existence, these people (among whom you and I are included) can no longer be prevented" (Benatar 168). In other words, our very existence is a great tragedy. While we can lament over this aspect of reality, we cannot undo it. What we can do, however, is to formulate drastic solutions to the drastic problems that emerge from the continued existence of humankind.

As David E. Cooper writes on antinatalism: "[b]etter that human beings had never been, but given that they are, the next best thing is to ensure, by ceasing to procreate, that they will not be around in the future" (4–5). Conscious human existence is understood to be so pernicious that it warrants a (permanent) halt in reproduction as a means to combat the rampant suffering that all human beings are subject to. The ultimate outcome of antinatalism, then, is extinction, no matter how innocently it is framed. Although Benatar tries as best he can to keep his moral radicalism within the boundaries of rational, analytical philosophy, the solutions that he offers to the human predicament are admittedly vague.

For Nicholas Smyth, contemporary procreative ethics, of which antinatalism is the black sheep, is unnecessarily abstract and has increasingly little bearing on the choices that ordinary people make. It is the reverie of people like Benatar, whom he consequently labels the "*enfant terrible* of procreative ethics" (Smyth 74). Smyth attempts to break this reverie with so-called existential grounding, which might bring concerns about procreation back into the orbit of everyday life. He writes that "[i]t is entirely unclear why impartially delivered facts about overall global suffering must outweigh other practical considerations for any rational agent, or how we are supposed to relate these facts to the actual decision-making processes of situated human beings" (Smyth 75).

Rather than muse endlessly over the ultimate (un)desirability of procreation, Smyth argues that we can gain practical insight from *actual* works on procreation. While he clearly recognizes, per Martha Nussbaum, the potential that literature has in the formation of moral conviction (Smyth 81), he opts for nonfiction (in particular autobiography) as a riposte to some of Benatar's more striking antinatalist allegations. Ultimately, for prospective parents themselves, a mother's account of her own child(ren) is likely more useful than any philosopher's account of children in general, even if the former might seem brazenly inconsequential compared to the latter. On this view, something like procreation might be "existentially grounding" for an individual even if it is uninformed by (abstract) philosophizing about the ultimate (un)

desirability of procreation at large.

But, we should not expect such insight to be easily generalizable. This brings us to the (potential) moral momentum of literature, which, in many cases, is equally un-generalizable.[4] One might interpret literature in a way that differs markedly from others. Yet, people like Benatar are not tolerant of such a multiplicity of views on prime ethical topics like procreation. For him, it is evident that procreation is problematic per se, and not just in a certain place and at a certain time. This inflexibility (or even absolutism) is easily overcome when we heed the transformative power of literary vignettes.

Martha Nussbaum studied the relationship between morality and literature and investigated why "the novel is itself a moral achievement, and the well-lived life is a work of literary art" (Nussbaum 148). More than a mere source of aesthetic satisfaction, the written word can be a positive influence on people's moral behavior and choices. The reason for this might be that "[a] novel, just because it is not our life, places us in a moral position that is favorable for perception and it shows us what it would be like to take up that position in life" (162). While she is not at all dismissive of the power of philosophy in this regard, it is easy to see that the ordinary person might find literary vignettes more useful and rewarding than needlessly abstract and dense philosophical treatises. Importantly, she argues that philosophy must be "willing to assume a posture of sufficient humility" (161). Literature, on the other hand, does not have this problem.

In the context of the present work, how are we to imagine what it must be like to be an antinatalist or to hold antinatalist views? How can we sympathize with the view that human reproduction should stop, either permanently or temporarily? Moreover, how can such views be convincing outside of the domain of (academic) philosophy? When we look at the possibility of antinatalist literature, what will such literature have to look like if it is to assume a relative position of power vis-à-vis

4 We might, for that matter, include cinema as well. The first thing that comes to mind is the TV series *True Detective*. One of the protagonists is a gloomy detective named Rustin 'Rust' Cohle. Cohle espouses views that can all too easily be construed as antinatalist. He rails against procreation with the highfalutin philosophical sensitivities of a punk rocker. His shtick is that all life is all suffering and that we do not have the moral right to subject a newborn baby to this terrible tragedy. In the series, we learn that his daughter died years ago and his marriage was stranded because of this. Around this twin-headed tragedy, he crafts a personal pessimistic philosophy. While Cohle argues that his views on reproduction are fueled by an antinatalist philosophy, it is more likely that his adherence to the latter comes from personal loss and tragedy, not from some penetrating insight into the very nature of being. This is an important thing to keep in mind, as it merely reveals a tenuous link with what we now refer to as antinatalist philosophy. For more on the various "shades" of antinatalism, see Zandbergen "Wailing."

contemporary antinatalist philosophy? As we will see shortly, the traditional novel is seriously disadvantaged when it comes to expressing some of the core tenets of philosophical antinatalism. As a consequence, we have to take a much more expansive view on what literature is and what it can be. This leads us away from localized literature and brings us to comparative (intercultural and intergenerational) literature.

Aaron Matz notes that the traditional novel, much like traditional philosophy, takes life and life-giving for granted in a way that the prospective antinatalist novel does not. Framed as such, the traditional novel is a necessary product of traditional society. Daniel Just describes how the novel, at the doorstep of industrialized modernity, effectively responded to, and prescribed novel ways of making sense of the new wave of individualism that swept over society. Even revolutionary literary movements, such as the ones that popped up in postwar Europe still paid lip service to these earlier modes of expression. Just writes that "[t]he majority of postwar novelistic experiments perpetuated their genre primarily because they remained under the auspices of the operative notion of the individual" (Just 388).

In other words, both traditional literature and philosophy are implicitly pronatalist in that they view reproduction as, not only unproblematic but as good and even natural. Since antinatalism is a comparatively new philosophical movement, it is no surprise that there has, as of yet, not been any standard definition of antinatalist literature. What is certain is that such literature cannot rely on the same literary tropes and expectations as traditional (pro-natalist) literature if it is to incorporate new types of philosophy like antinatalism. Although antinatalism elicits all sorts of responses from people, it is not controversial to view it as tragic. Any theory that vouches for the extinction of the human species cannot reasonably be expected to be seen as un-tragic. When thinking about prospective antinatalist literature, it is important to separate it from existing tragic fiction. As Matz rightfully notes, "[i]t is not a prerequisite of tragedy to refuse the repeopling of the world" (13). This reveals an important asymmetry between antinatalism and tragedy. Although it is difficult to imagine an antinatalist novel that is not also tragic, a tragic work of fiction need not be, and generally is not, antinatalist.

But, Matz rightly asks, "[h]ow can literature dramatize a cessation of becoming? With respect to procreation in particular, the question is how a novel, for instance, can represent the negativity of antinatalism" (19). It is unrealistic to demand of literature that it provides an endoscopic view from behind the jaws of existence. For that would require nonexistent authors, too. It can, nonetheless, gesture in the general direction of nonexistence. The praxis that this inspires need not necessarily be the total reversion of all human existence but may correspond to the informed

decision to, at least, limit one's progeny to a reasonable number, whatever this may mean. Accordingly, antinatalist literature can be understood as "the moral-aesthetic proxy for contraception" (Matz 27). Prospective antinatalist literature, then, must be able to inspire a praxis of restraint that we cannot feel inspired to by, say, the traditional Victorian novel that inadvertently relies on the promise of life-giving and constant repeopling of the (literary) world.

Given the above, when we reconsider Nussbaum's emphasis on the link between literature and morality, we are led to expand the horizon of the written word and, as will be done here, to incorporate texts from different modes of thinking (and epochs) as well. In this context, it is important to look at the realm of Chinese thought, and at Daoism in particular. It is my contention here that Daoist texts will be extremely important in the creation of prospective antinatalist literature. It should be clear that this is not so because there are Daoist texts that say exactly the same thing that modern, philosophical antinatalist treatises and essays do. Daoism is not antinatalist and antinatalism is not Daoist. What these movements share, however, is the observation that human life really is not all that it is often made out to be. Human existence is seen as inherently destructive to the nonhuman (whether one describes this as Dao 道, the environment, the animal kingdom or even Gaia). Both movements consequently prescribe a praxis (of sorts) that aims to rectify this asymmetric relationship between human and nonhuman. As such, it is argued that (parts of) these Daoist texts can illuminate the underlying problems that modern antinatalism responds to as well and can inspire a moral praxis of restraint that would be agreeable from the perspective of antinatalist philosophy.[5] As we will see below,

5 It can be argued that there is a material basis for this as well. Liu Hongtao 刘洪涛 and Xie Jiangnan 谢江南 note that the place that Chinese writing has traditionally occupied in the realm of so-called World Literature has been far from prominent. But, the mechanisms that gave rise to this poor standing have recently been openly challenged by the important work of people like Chen Sihe 陈思和. Liu and Xie write that the situation has changed markedly in the twenty-first century "against the backdrop of China's increasing international influence and the Chinese nation's increased self-confidence." (它是在中国的国际影响力日益上升、民族越来越自信的背景下产生的) (Liu and Xie 58). As a consequence of this, we can argue that "Chinese literature has been given equal rank with the literature of other countries." (中国文学被放到与其他国家文学平等的地位上) (Liu and Xie 58). In dynamic terms, this also means that Chinese literature has passed through the successive stations of "taking" (拿) from other cultures, "having" (有) a rudimentary conception of an autochthonous literary tradition, to now finally "giving" (给) some of its own in the sphere of international literary exchange (Liu and Xie 59). Wang Ning also argues that given China's economic advances over the last decades, its literature cannot but gain in prominence. He is realistic about the future of Chinese literature on the world stage, however, and argues that the intensified study of English as the lingua franca of international literary exchange would greatly benefit Chinese writers in their quest for global recognition (Wang 90).

it is the shared emphasis on anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism in both Daoism and antinatalism that is important here.

When we understand morality as a dry set of algorithms that can be *used* or consulted to make certain ethical choices in daily life it is difficult to apply Nussbaum's insights to Daoism. But, when we view morality as a more flexible catalog of possibilities and expectations, then Daoism "in fact involves substantive proposals concerning how to act, how to live, and what kind of person to be" (Lee 511). These proposals can satisfactorily be subsumed under the rubric of morality. Accordingly, the texts in which we find them may inspire readers to behave in a certain (moral) way. As we will see shortly, this inspiration is rooted in the very "way" of the universe laid out in these texts.

What unites texts from the loose constellation of Daoist writing is the emphasis on Dao and the adoption of what Jung H. Lee calls the "Daocentric perspective" (529). It is the centrality of Dao in the cosmos at large that (ideally) inspires human beings to behave in a certain way here on Earth. This creates "an *ethics of metanoia*: a call for the radical revaluation and reordering of one's fundamental orientations to coincide with the underlying structure and pattern of ultimate reality (i.e., the Dao)" (Lee 511–2). In other words, people are enjoined to synchronize themselves with the patterns of the (cosmic) Dao that infuses all that is. Since there is a normative emphasis on such synchronization throughout the texts studied here, this quest can be said to take on the shape of a moral project. When we thus heed the moral potential of Daoist texts, and trace this back to the metaphysical core principles on which it is based, we can come to a fuller understanding of the practical relevance of the incorporation of such non-Western texts in the drafting of prospective antinatalist literature that will, likely, be an important preoccupation in the decades to come.

Section Two

Although we cannot get a first-hand account of Dao 道, the sources at our disposal give circumstantial evidence that reveals some of "its" general propensities and characteristics. The noun that aptly encompasses these is "silence." Although not referring to Daoism (or literature), French-Israeli philosopher André Neher argues that "[t]he Bible goes…even so far as to suggest that silence is the metaphysical form of the cosmos" (9). For Neher, this is an attempt at solving the problem of theodicy in relation to the Holocaust. While this is clearly a noble endeavor, of special importance in the current work is the understanding of silence as the "metaphysical form of the cosmos." This is also one of the foundational views espoused in the texts studied here. We find an example of this in the "Dao yuan" 道原 (Original

Dao) chapter in the *Wenzi* 文子 where we read that

> 有形則有聲，無形則無聲。
> The formed has a voice, while the formless is silent.[6]

The "formed" (有形) refers to the phenomena that inhabit the world, chief among these being human beings. What distinguishes humans from other 'objects' in the world is their ability to not just emit sound but to articulate a *voice*, which is a conscious deviation from the natural silence and quietude that mark the "formless" (無形) Dao. While the ultimate efficacy of this human deviation from the cosmic path of Dao can be questioned, we certainly get the impression that ordinary, conscious human existence represents an affront to the otherwise spontaneous, fluid, and silent Dao. Framed as such, reproduction becomes a natural vehicle that leads to more and more disruption in the overall cosmic traffic of Dao. For if human clamor piques the otherwise silent Dao, reproduction only ever deepens the disruption.

While procreative sex is not, as a consequence of this, forbidden by Daoist texts, its cosmic implications are brought to the fore. This stands in marked contrast with the traditional celebration of procreative sex associated with Confucianism. While sex was discussed in classical Chinese sources, wanton sexual behavior was not tolerated, as it was seen as a grave danger to societal harmony. The sublimation of the basest of human desires was one of the main recommendations of Confucian moral practice as a means of establishing and maintaining social harmony. While moderation was advised in all matters pertaining to the expression of desire, Paul Goldin writes that "lust is simply taken to be the cardinal example" (64). As such, lust attracted special scrutiny, and a framework of sexuality was constructed around this. It was imperative to bridle spontaneous sexual outbursts in order to allow for society to function harmoniously and to protect Confucian morality at its center.

As Goldin continues, "the difficulty of this view is that it does not conceive of any form of morally acceptable sexual activity other than for the express purpose of producing offspring. All nonprocreative sex is corrupting and enervating" (64). On the orthodox Confucian view, then, sex was chartered for the production of male heirs that would strengthen the family tree. Gender roles were written in stone. Sex was politicized, and its recreational component was painted over with official colors. Goldin elaborates on the metaphors of sexuality in ancient Chinese poetry and

6 The allusion that Dao is formless and silent should not lead one to think that it does not exist. Rather, the formlessness and silence of Dao are, as in Neher's case mentioned above, meaningful in their own unique way.

reveals how early on a link was established between coital and political hierarchy. The relationship between ruler and minister was likened to (or equated with) that between a man and "his" woman. Accordingly, "[e]very sexual act is thus in some sense a political act, just as every political act is in some sense a sexual act" (Goldin 43). Although this poetic license was revoked by subsequent administrations, the images dreamt of and communicated in this early poetry, where verdant poetical images confounded the audience's views of romance and might alike, all but dried up.

The concept of *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) fueled the need for reproduction and the extension of the family line.[7] We can evoke many instances from the classics that attest to the importance of this. A good example is the famous Confucian vignette in which a son is exhorted to stay loyal to his father, even in the case of the latter's wrongdoing. While the Duke of She 葉公 boasts that in his realm honest sons would not be able to hide their father's crimes, Confucius responds,

> 吾黨之直者異於是。父為子隱，子為父隱，直在其中矣。
>
> In our district the honest people are different from that. A father covers up for his son; a son covers up or his father. There's honesty in that, too. (Watson 91)

This passage reveals that *zhi* 直 (uprightness) is not found in the letter of the law but in loyalty to the family unit, and in particular to one's own father. As one is not to betray one's father, one can also expect to not be betrayed by one's own offspring. This does not mean that filial piety entails blind obedience to one's father. An interesting analysis of the problem is given by Huang Yong who claims that "non-disclosure of one's parents' wrongdoing itself is not upright in and of itself, but uprightness lies within it because this is what makes uprightness possible" (33). For Huang, the filial son should not disclose his father's crime so that he can remonstrate with him in private, rather than subject him to (public) punishment by the government. In other words, filial piety manifests itself not in blind obedience to one's father, but

7 As Buddhism spread across Asia, so did its promotion of sexual abstinence in the monasteries. This is not to say that celibacy was unequivocally welcomed by all. Unsurprisingly, there were many obstacles in the way of its universal adoption among Buddhists around Asia. In fact, John Krieschnick writes that among the many challenges and opportunities brought about by the penetration of Buddhism into the Chinese religious landscape, "perhaps no idea was so strange or faced so many obstacles to success as the notion of celibacy" (226). While Chinese monks eventually embraced celibacy as well, it was this particular aspect of Buddhism that attracted the most ire and ridicule from Confucians, who viewed it as unpatriotic and, literally, self-defeating.

in recognizing and harnessing the possibilities of remedying his behavior where and when this might be necessary. In the story above, the son's filial piety is conditional on his further actions. If the father keeps stealing sheep, and the son keeps refusing to disclose this to authorities, then it is evident that the conditions for rectifying his father's behavior have not been met, and the son will not be truly upright 直.

A successful society should be built around this core notion of filial piety. This is what sets humans apart from beasts and brutes. In the "Feixiang" 非相 (Contra Physiognomy) chapter in the *Xunzi* 荀子, we read,

> 夫禽獸有父子，而無父子之親，有牝牡而無男女之別。
>
> Even though wild animals have parents and offspring, there is no natural affection between them as between father and son, and though there are male and female of the species, there is no proper separation of the sexes. (Knoblock 206)

Nonhuman animal society cannot be based on the same foundational values of filial piety and gendered segregation that are key components in the Confucian civilizational project. This differs markedly from Daoism. Given its general refusal to write any notion of social hierarchy into stone, Daoist society would likely be closer to the animal kingdom than to the realm of Confucian ethics.[8] It would be exactly the lack of such a Confucian pecking order that would mark a Daoist society.

Although there are some parallels, the Daoist theory of sex is overall very different from its Confucian counterpart. Although Daoists frequently discussed sex and sexual rites, they too castigated lechery. Furthermore, sex was also regimented in their own (religious) communities. Yet, sex was not politicized, and it was not blindly valued as a vehicle to produce male heirs to keep the family tree firm and nourished. Rather, sex had a spiritual component as it allowed Daoists of both sexes to reach higher states of inner cultivation. Elaborate sexual rites were enacted that were meant to prevent impregnation. Procreation was only ever an undesired result of intercourse. As Livia Kohn points out, sexual energy

> has to be harnessed and properly refined, so that the ultimate goal of Daoist cultivation can be reached: immortality, an extended lifespan, and mystical vision on earth followed by a continued spirit existence in the heavens after this body has fallen away. (Kohn 241)

8 Because of this, Xunzi argued that the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 was unnecessarily abstract and detached from the ordinary concerns of Confucians (Knoblock 102).

While intercourse was separated from its otherwise procreative promise, it nonetheless played a part in the spiritual logistics of Daoist theory and practice. Furthermore, the conviction that the proper channeling of sexual powers may yield spiritual offspring (as opposed to actual children) became one of the characteristics of the first religious Daoist sects. Among these, "sexual rites were of central importance. All members of the community were initiated into a religious life that comprised a strict moral code and various psychophysiological practices" (Kohn 250).

People engaged in these rites not for pleasure but in order to validate their cosmological and philosophical worldview centered on Dao. These sexual rites were merely a springboard from which practitioners could follow the trajectory of transcendence and synchronize themselves with the clockwork of the cosmos. This relates to a leading motif in Daoist theory. Hans-Georg Moeller writes that since

> Daoism does not look at the world from an anthropocentric perspective … this is also true for its views on sexuality. Human beings are sexual beings, but their sexuality is only part of a larger sexuality that encompasses all of nature. (*The Philosophy* 26)

In the Daoist view, sex is not simply an act between two humans potentially resulting in offspring. It is a *cosmic* process whereby Daoist practitioners can escape the confines of typical human existence. Wanton sexual behavior runs counter to this. Since Dao precedes the cosmic separation into heaven and Earth, and the eventual branching off of humankind, Daoists should mirror this, too. There is, then, a retrogressive movement away from sexual differentiation towards the undifferentiated aura of the Dao. This under-emphasis on the ordinary contours of sexuality and reproduction coupled with the overemphasis on Dao reveals a fundamental devaluation of the human being vis-à-vis its cosmic background. There are many vignettes that testify to this blooming anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism so justifiably associated with Daoism.

Section Three

One of the more famous stories in the "Inner Chapters" 內篇 of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 tells the story of the death of the mythical Emperor Hundun (渾沌).[9] The guileless emperor is accidentally killed by two of his well-meaning guests, Hu忽 and Shu 倏, who "meet each other in Hundun's realm from time to time" (時相與遇於

9 My understanding of this story was shaped to a large degree by Girardot.

渾沌之地). As they are always “received very kindly” (待之甚善), his guests “wish to reciprocate Hundun’s kindness” (謀報渾沌之德) once and for all. They note that “all humans have seven openings” (人皆有七竅) used to “see, hear, eat and breathe” (視聽食息), which only this one lacks (此獨無有). Strangely motivated by this observation, Hu and Shu decide to drill (鑿) a series of holes into Hundun’s natural, untouched, and holeless face. After they “drill a hole a day” (日鑿一竅), the emperor dies after seven days (七日而渾沌死).

Although this short story can be interpreted along various lines, from the religious to the sociopolitical, these ultimately all lead back to the fundamental distinction made here between the original, holeless condition of Emperor Hundun and his later “drilled” state, which also results in his death. Where the former is seen as natural and innocent, the latter is artificial and “humanized.” We read that Hundun initially did not have a face or any other human characteristics, thereby symbolizing Dao in all “its” purity, silence, and spontaneity. This state is then greatly disrupted by the, nonetheless well-intentioned, “gift” of human marks of distinction, namely the eyes, nostrils, ears, and mouth. In their attempt to make a “human” out of the “nonhuman,” Hu and Shu end up killing Hundun, or Dao. This reveals an innate resistance to the humanizing attempt of the emperor’s guests, which thereby symbolizes the incursion of the “human” into the “nonhuman” more generally. The story, therefore, revolves around the tension between the simple ways of the world and the noisy, serpentine ways of humankind. The more humans attempt to reify all that is around them, the more disastrous the consequences will be. Importantly, however, as tragic as this may all sound, this is not the end of the story.

For Hans-Georg Moeller, the story of Hundun’s death should be seen as a kind of parody that does not merely have a rhetorical purpose in the text itself but also important extra-textual efficacy. The accidental killing of the emperor by his two guests Hu and Shu may impact the reader as well. Moeller writes that “[p]erhaps the sudden demise of the story’s protagonist is meant to signal paradoxically to the reader that he or she, too, has, unwittingly, now come to an end and reached a stage of no return” (“Hundun’s Mistake” 783.) In other words, having traversed the many stories and illustrations of the *Zhuangzi*, the reader might now have crossed the event horizon of merely passive readership and absorption. As such, the story of the emperor’s death can have a transformative effect that, paradoxically, gives birth to a new type of *reader*.

Consequently, this prime Daoist vignette should not be read as a tragedy. Rather, Moeller argues, it should be seen as a kind of Daoist comedy. The death of Emperor Hundun should be celebrated so that readers themselves may not fall victim to

the same hubris that killed him. This reveals Daoism's encompassing concentration on the cosmos at large rather than on the finite doings of humankind. As such, the brief myth of the death of Hundun as described in the *Zhuangzi* critiques a human-centered understanding of the world and problematizes the continued privilege of the human species over and against the nonhuman (whether this refers to nature, the environment, Gaia, the animal kingdom or Dao). As such, Moeller writes that the death of Emperor Hundun "could not illustrate anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism more directly" ("Hundun's Mistake" 788).

Although not referring to Chinese texts, Patricia MacCormack welcomes the anti-anthropocentric and anti-anthropomorphic potential of writing in general and argues that this potential must be tapped into even more fervently in the twenty-first century. She writes that "we are in a time of need for different modes of expression that use art and alternative syntax than that of the anthropocene's dominant logocentrism" (MacCormack 102). As we have seen with Emperor Hundun's well-meaning guests Hu and Shu, in spite of undoubtedly sound intentions, humans inadvertently but unsurprisingly subscribe to a human-centered understanding of the world: they continually seek to turn the nonhuman into something recognizably and undeniably human. What MacCormack is after, then, is an emancipation from such (unconscious) forms of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. The various meta-problems faced in the twenty-first century crown a timeless sequence of human domination over the nonhuman and necessitate an overhaul of humankind's innate anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. This need is also reflected in the call for new modes of expression that align themselves better with new ways of understanding the relationship between the human and nonhuman, chief among these the modern philosophical movement of antinatalism:

> What if we configure death as an inevitable ecstasy that constitutes how we live, rather than a cessation of that life? What if we were born again for the Earth? Perceived this way the death of the human comes after the death of the anthropocene, as humans live as carers for this Earth. In this sense what is known as antinatalism has its unfortunate insinuation of misanthropy and privation removed, and the cessation of this species is reminded that care for who remains is still an overwhelming creative task of nurturing. (MacCormack 109)

Although the antinatalist prognosis is dire indeed, MacCormack wants to isolate its redeeming qualities centered on the eventual dissolution of humanity's deeply

rooted anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. It is argued here that abstract, and at times vague, philosophical discourse like antinatalism is seriously disadvantaged when it is propagated through traditional, philosophical means. It makes sense, therefore, to turn to literature and literary vignettes. As we have seen, traditional (Western) literature, with its implicit message of life-giving and 'repeopling the world', is not a very powerful medium for this. Rather more helpful are some of the key passages from the Daoist corpus, such as the myth of Emperor Hundun discussed above.[10] As we have seen, Hundun's death is not merely tragically recounted. There is, in this short story, a call to action as well. For the shattering of human entitlement in the face of a vacuous or faceless cosmos inspires a praxis of restraint that, step by step, allows a return to some of the *world's* former glory. Moeller writes on this that,

> [r]ather than having any privileged natural role or function, humankind is embedded in encompassing natural contexts that determine the conditions of its survival. Accordingly, rather than imposing themselves on the natural world, humans ought to integrate themselves into their non-human environment. ("Hundun's Mistake" 788)

This is a sea change from the typical, unconscious subscription to ordinary, logocentric modes of understanding the relationship between human and nonhuman as well as modes of expression that pay lip service to these. This might well seem strange from the typical human point of view but need not be so strange when set against the expansive horizon of Dao.

Section Four

In the "Da yue" 大樂 (Great Music) chapter in the expansive *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (The Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lü), we read that

> 亡國戮民，非無樂也，其樂不樂。溺者非不笑也，罪人非不歌也，狂者非不武也，亂世之樂，有似於此。君臣失位，父子失處，夫婦失宜，民人呻吟，其以為樂也，若之何哉？

10 A case can also be made for nonacademic, popular nonfiction such as Alan Weisman's thought experiment *The World Without Us*. Weisman writes that "[t]he intelligent solution would require the courage and the wisdom to put our knowledge to the test. It would be poignant and distressing in ways, but not fatal. It would henceforth limit every human female on Earth capable of bearing children to one" (Weisman 349).

> It is not that doomed states and disgraced peoples lack music, but rather that their music does not convey joy. It is not that "a drowning man does not laugh," "a condemned man does not sing," or "a crazy man does not dance." The music of a disordered age is like these. When ruler and minister fail to keep their proper places, father and son fail in their proper duties, and husband and wife fail to maintain their proper relationship, the people groan and sigh; but can this be considered to be music? (Knoblock and Riegel 137–8)[11]

As it builds upon notions from divergent intellectual traditions, the *Lüshi chunqiu* is not an easy work to characterize. But, in spite of its overt syncretism, parts of the text can be particularly useful in illuminating some of the core Daoist notions discussed here.[12] From the traditional Confucian point of view, music was held to be a reflection of deep inner harmony. Only a well-ordered (Confucian) state could produce harmonious and beautiful music. Although "vanquished nations and oppressed people" could produce music of their own, this music could only ever reflect their inner state of turmoil. As a consequence, this music could never be harmonious or beautiful. There is, therefore, a solid connection between inner harmony and outer expression. Only adherence to the key tenets of Confucian ethics will properly conduct this relationship.

In the example of the drowning person (溺者) in the passage above, while this person might desperately laugh in the face of a terrible death, this laughter, like the music of a vanquished nation or oppressed people, cannot truly be joyous (樂). Although it is certainly strange for a person to laugh while drowning, Confucians argue that it is equally strange to expect a state in turmoil to produce harmonious or beautiful music. In both cases, there is a dangerous incongruence between inner state and outer expression. These simply do not align, and this results in disaster, or even death. Harmony can only flow from a well-ordered state or a person who properly adheres to the tenets of Confucianism. This is the Confucian notion of *zhengming* 正名 (rectification of names).

11 Scott Cook explains that with these metaphors, the authors may have taken their cue from the pages of the pre-Qin *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (Cook 327n).

12 Scott Cook writes on this that "[i]t may be too much to assert that a single set of tenets prevails throughout the entire *Lüshi chunqiu*, given the diversity of its authors and the unlikelihood of complete uniformity, not to mention allowances built in for unresolved contradictions described above. Yet a careful reading of the work shows that throughout much of it, a certain preference seems to be given, in ways both subtle and overt, to the thought of Lao Zi, or that of the emerging 'Huang-Lao' 黄老 tradition" (Cook 318).

From the Daoist perspective, this obsession with aligning or rectifying the inner and outer is not only counterproductive — it is dangerous. For not only does it impact humans, it also tarnishes Dao because it runs counter to "its" natural fluidity, silence, and spontaneity. Although resistance to this core Confucian notion of *zhengming* is found throughout the Daoist corpus, it is especially expounded on in the *Zhuangzi*. As Moeller et al. write, "the *Zhuangzi* views the demand for congruent names as a recipe for creating sociopolitical oppression, deceit, and/or hypocrisy as well as personal depression, pride, and/or arrogance" (309). The rectification of names, in other words, is but another vehicle for the continued reliance on anthropocentric and anthropomorphic bias. This is why texts like the *Zhuangzi* rather cherish the *in*congruence of names.

Returning now to the passage from the *Lüshi chunqiu*, we can argue that a drowning person might as well laugh in the face of one of the most terrifying deaths imaginable. This is not to say, however, that drowning people *should* laugh because it somehow accords better with some inner sense of acceptance or resignation to fate. Rather, there is no moral manual or blueprint for action, which is exactly what the Confucians are implicitly accused of promoting. There is no one way to behave correctly, not even in the face of death. Exemplary people, sages, behave naturally and spontaneously and take things as they come. In this, they mirror Dao "itself" by taking on its qualities and predilections. This might well include laughter at grossly inappropriate times (or at least, such behavior is not seen as outright 'wrong'). In the same vein, we can argue that the criminal (罪人) might as well sing (歌) or the madman dance (舞).[13] These seemingly strange types of behavior reveal the incongruence of names implicit in the worldview of texts like the *Zhuangzi*.

This worldview is based on implicit notions of anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism. With an overemphasis on Dao and a simultaneous under-emphasis on strictly human affairs, a "Daocentric perspective" is enacted that counters the inadvertent bias towards the human and, at the same time, against the nonhuman. While this is not to say that human affairs are completely irrelevant, they have to be understood in the context of the nonhuman, or Dao. This inspires a praxis of restraint that is agreeable from the perspective of contemporary antinatalist philosophy as well, which equally fervently critiques the bias towards the human. Daoist stories like the ones discussed above could not, in the words of Moeller, "illustrate anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism more directly" ("Hundun's Mistake" 788). As such, these can be helpful tools in elucidating some key aspects of

13 Along with Knoblock and Riegel in their translation, it is noted that *wu* 武here should be read as *wu* 舞.

radical, contemporary philosophies like antinatalism that will, in all likelihood, gain prominence in the decades to come.

Conclusion

This article started with a short passage from the *Shijing* that expressed the lament that it would have been better not to have been born (不如無生). This utterance aptly introduced the contemporary philosophical phenomenon of antinatalism, or the view that life is so inherently disruptive that people should stop reproducing in order to contribute (eventually) to human extinction. As a novel philosophical and intellectual movement, we cannot yet speak of antinatalist literature or fiction. In order to draft prospective antinatalist literature, we cannot take our cue from the traditional modes of literary expression such as the novel, which (still) mirrors a very specific set of socioeconomic circumstances. Accordingly, the typical novel is implicitly concerned with life-giving and "repeopling of the world," which run counter to the core tenets of antinatalism that are inherently anti-anthropocentric and anti-anthropomorphic.

In order to overcome the shortcomings of traditional literature and philosophy in the face of the looming threat of antinatalism and similar, radical ways of understanding the link between the human and nonhuman, it makes sense to gather materials from different intellectual traditions and times, sometimes far removed from our own. In the work above, I made a strong case for the incorporation of Daoist material in the drafting of prospective antinatalism. This is not to say that Daoism is somehow inherently antinatalist (or that antinatalism is inherently Daoist). But Daoism builds on foundational notions of anti-anthropocentrism and anti-anthropomorphism that importantly underline contemporary antinatalist philosophy as well. More than a mere openness to variegated views and perspectives for its own sake, we are led to unconventional ways of beholding the relationship between the human and nonhuman that do not blindly privilege the former to the detriment of the latter.

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The Construction of the Images of Hu Shi in the Era of 1910–1949[1]

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Abstract

This paper broadens the scope of the research domain of imagology to describe and contrast the images of Hu Shi in the English-speaking world, mainly in the United States, and in China during the years between 1910 to 1949, focusing on the interaction and the variation in the process of image-building of Hu Shi. This paper mainly explores the following issues of that period: What are the respective images of Hu Shi inside and outside China? How are these images constructed? What is the variation in the process? Emphasis is placed on the producers of the images as well as the juxtaposition and interaction of the self-image of Hu Shi with the impressions of his contemporaries towards him.

Keywords: Hu Shi, imagology, English-speaking world, the variation

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The research of imagology has developed with the great efforts of the French comparatists of several generations. Recent studies in this field have shifted from the examination of the accuracy of images to the scrutiny of creators as well as the process of the formation of images. Scholars continue to elaborate on the theoretical models of imagology in order to probe into the more and more dynamic communication between different cultures. Birgit Neumann proposed a framework of cultural and historical imagology to study the construction of images of national character and national identity via the dialogue between literary and media studies, history, and social psychology (275). Shunqing Cao proposed the Variation Theory of comparative literature to suggest that in the process of cultural communication, it

1 This work was supported by a grant from Beijing Social Science Fund: A Study on the Images of Chinese Intellectuals of Republican Era in the English World from a Cross Cultural Perspective (18WXB008).

is an inevitable phenomenon that images would undergo loss and deformation from the beginning to the end of the circulation under the influence of aesthetic, psychological and other uncertain factors (51). This paper pays attention to the gazer and the producer of images to maintain that images are not merely the representation but the production of the mixture of objective environment and subjective emotions and thoughts. Besides collective images of a nation or images of fictional characters in a heterogeneous culture, this paper argues for the expansion of the domain of imagology to focus on the specific individuals whose images are also the narration of different discourses in the diversified cultural exchanges.

With the above stance, this paper focuses on a historical figure, Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), a Chinese philosopher, essayist, and leading liberal intellectual in the May Fourth Movement. During the period from 1910 to 1949, Hu Shi spent accumulatively half of it in the English-speaking world (September 1910–June 1917, July 1926–April 1927, June 1933–October 1933, July 1936–November 1936, September 1937–June 1946, April–December 1949) and approximately half of it in China. Hu Shi's intercultural experience itself enabled him to be a perfect choice to be illustrated from the perspective of imagology. This paper summarizes the images of Hu Shi in the eyes of Americans and in Chinese as the basis for the following discussion on the construction of these images.

Hu Shi has always been one of the most important intellectuals in the Chinese academy since 1917. From the 1980s onward, there has appeared a revival of the studies on him, and "re-evaluation" of Hu Shi has become an important issue in China. "In the past thirty years the complete works of Hu Shi have come off the press, many conferences have been held and more than two thousand articles and more than one hundred monographs about him have been published in China." (Geng, "The Opening Speech" 5) Because of his studies and work in the United States, Hu Shi has also been the focus of some English-speaking researchers in America. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the emergence of many studies on him in the format of English journal articles, theses, dissertations, and monographs. After that, monographic studies were rarely conducted, and the study of Hu Shi was put into a larger framework such as the modernization of Confucianism and modern Chinese poetics since the 1980s. However, there has been so far no systematic research in either Chinese or English about the images of Hu Shi.

There are many names, both Chinese and English ones, used by Hu Shi throughout his life, such as the following ones:

Hu Shi's nickname is Simei (嗣穈) and his formal name is Hongxing (洪骍). He changed his name to Hu Shi (胡适) with a style name Shizhi (适之) when he attend-

ed the Boxer Indemnity scholarship examinations. He has many pen names, such as Qizishengsheng (期自胜生), Xijiang (希疆), Tie'er (铁儿), Die'er (蝶儿), Xing (骍), Dongxin (冬心), Shian (适庵), Shiguang (适广), Canghui (藏晖), Tianfeng (天风), and some English pen names such as Q, QV, H.S.C., etc. (Chen 3)

His English name could be spelled as Suh Hu, Hu Shi as well as Hu Shi. As numerous as his different names, the images of Hu Shi change continuously with his personal experience in different cultures.

The Image of Hu Shi in the English-speaking World

Notably, in September 1910, Hu Shi arrived in the United States as one of the seventy Chinese students known as "indemnity students." This term referred to their participation in the Boxer scholarship program, which was supported by funds transmitted to the Chinese government from the United States as part of the Boxer Indemnity of 1901.Hu Shi embarked on a seven-year academic journey in American universities, during which he demonstrated exceptional diligence and active participation in various extracurricular activities. His remarkable achievements not only surpassed those of his Chinese peers but also gained recognition among his American counterparts, establishing him as a distinguished student within the Ivy League campus.

The first major Hu Shi studied was agriculture. It was Hu Shi's personal choice after careful consideration of his career planas well as a common choice for indemnity students of that time. "Among all the Boxer Indemnity students, those who chose majors of science related to industry and agriculture accounted for seventy to eighty percent"(Tang Y. 2). Later, Hu Shi recorded in his diary that studying agriculture was a folly decision and a waste of his time, for it was far away from his interests. So at the beginning of 1912, he transferred to the College of Arts to major in philosophy with politics, economy, and literature as his minors. The change of his major marked the beginning of Hu Shi's excellent academic achievements and unique standing among other overseas Chinese students. Yelong Han in his doctoral dissertation conducted a survey which shows that only 128 Chinese students over a hundred-year period [1854–1953] chose philosophy as their major, which accounts for 0.62%, far behind sciences majors (20.7%) and engineering majors (16%) in the distribution of academic fields (80). From these statistics, we can tell Hu Shi's choice was uncommon from that of the majority of Chinese overseas students at that time.

Another specialty about Hu Shi is the following fact: different from other Chinese students who suffered from inadequacy of their English, Hu Shi excelled

academically because of his excellent command of English. In 1913, Hu Shi was elected as a member of the honorary student association Phi Beta Kappa. In 1914, Hu Shi won a philosophy scholarship at Cornell University. In the same year, Hu Shi won the first prize in a writing competition at Cornell. In 1916, Hu Shi's essay "Is There a Substitute for Force in International Relations?" was awarded the first prize by the American Association for International Conciliation.

Hu Shi's outstanding university achievements won him the recognition from his American classmates and friends. "Louis P. Lochner, who had helped to found the International Club at Wisconsin in 1903 and later served as secretary of the Central Committee of the F.I.d.E. and editor of *The Cosmopolitan Student*, counted himself a good enough friend to advise Hu to give up his 'furious smoking [for] you are a rare genius [and] I think it is your duty to society to preserve your intellectual powers to their fullest extent'" (Grieder 55). From this message, we can tell what an outstanding student Hu Shi was in the eyes of his American peers.

When Hu Shi was awarded The Award of the Hiram Corson Browning Prize, he also began to win the recognition from the American Press in 1914 who . Since he was the first Chinese to win this competition, he "attracted the attention of a number of papers in upper New York State, and as far afield as New York city" (Grieder 40). There was a picture of Hu Shi in *Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*: "It is a handsome and sober face that looks out at us, the eyes wide-set behind rimless glasses, the mouth straight and unsmiling, the necktie carefully knotted. It strikes one as the face of a young man who takes the world, and himself, very seriously" (Grieder 40). As a young man with considerable academic distinction, Hu Shi became known to the local people and became a a student at Cornell University and Columbia University.

"In China's traditional education, since no campus or student dormitory existed along with schools, there was no such a thing as an extracurricular activity that took place within an institutional environment" (Han 92). Therefore, the newly arrived Chinese students often did not know how to look for opportunities, which resulted in feelings of isolation and helplessness. Hu Shi seemed to be an exception to this kind of distress. On February 4, 1915, he wrote in his diary: "there are numerous student groups, the so-called *Wenxuehui* (Literary Societies) … *Caogaohui* (The Manuscript Club)… I just mentioned several of them to give a glimpse of my campus life" (Songping Hu 192). From this entry, the self-portrait of an active participant in campus life was given to show how vigorously Hu Shi plunged himself into the extracurricular activities at the university. Besides his academic excellence, Hu Shi was also noticeable for his distinction from other Chinese students.

Because of different norms of behaviors and poor proficiency in English, Chinese students found it not so easy to communicate with their American classmates and complained that they made few American friends. However, Hu Shi's circle of friends was very extensive. Yunzhi Geng, a famous Chinese expert in the study of Hu Shi's works, once summarized what kinds of friends Hu Shi made in the English-speaking world in the following way: "He also won a large number of foreign friends of different social strata, from students to professors, from the clerks to billionaires, from nurses to USA president"(Geng *Works* 560). The reason for this is that "He [Hu Shi] was by nature too gregarious, possessed of too quick a curiosity and too lively an aptitude for friendship, to trapped into austere academic seclusion"(Grieder 40).

During the period when Hu Shi was studying in the USA, "many Chinese students tended to absorb everything provided to them without maintaining a critical mind" (Han 91). Though on some issues, he was unavoidably influenced by the American views, but Hu Shi still managed to keep his own judgment, adhere to his independent views, and frankly exchange ideas with the local people, even if sometimes it meant challenging the American tradition and authority and receiving their opposition and criticism.

Some examples can demonstrate Hu Shi's insistence on his own standing. On February 28, 1915, Hu Shi was invited to his friend Edith Clifford Williams's home. With Edith's mother, Hu Shi had a debate over a Christian issue. Williams's mother was too shocked to accept his "extreme" comments (Jiang 499–500). In June 1915, the first session of the Conference on International Relations was held in Ithaca, New York. The meeting was held by pacifists, but some non-pacifists were also invited, including Sir Hudson Maxim (1853–1927), aiming to train the students so as to prepare them for becoming the future leader of the peace movement. Hu Shi recalled that the speech given by Maxim had no argument but stories, jokes, or groundless statements. This perfunctory attitude angered the students. It was Hu Shi who stood up to call the meeting to a halt. Though his calling was not granted after the discussion and he was forced to apologize to Maxine, Hu Shi's courage to protest against the authority was clearly shown.

Hu Shi received high praise and evaluation from his American friends and the press because of the honors he won in his studies and activities. Besides his teachers and classmates, the praise towards Hu Shi also came from some American Christian families who provided accommodation for Chinese students. Tang Degang唐德刚(1920-2009), the interviewer of Hu Shi, in *The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu* Shi, added a note about his personal experience with these Christian families in the 1950s:

"These kind people are not missionaries. They just help us through the difficulties out of their sympathy. Generally speaking, they have numerous virtues such as being mild, warm-hearted, honest with self-respect, open-minded, and liberal. At that time, we regarded them as a bunch of 'saints'" (41–42). In Tang's judgment, they were very interested in the history and culture of China and were concerned about the Chinese situation. Chinese indemnity students were the first group of Chinese youth offering an opportunity for them to carry out close observation and judgment. And they were not only landlords of Chinese students but also teachers and friends to them.

The role played by Hu Shi in the New Culture Movement also brought the attention of foreigners staying in China. In 1922, the Swiss scholar Philipe de Vargas delivered a speech titled "The Chinese Renaissance," which was among the earliest descriptions referring to the literary revolution in China as "Renaissance." Vargas was also among the earliest critics to tie Hu Shi with the "Chinese Renaissance." From 1923 on, Hu Shi noticed this new trend and started to write and publish introductions to the literary movement in China under the title of the "Chinese Renaissance" too. He also attended the conferences, delivered academic lectures, and even published a monograph under this title. Gradually, he became addressed as the "father of Chinese Renaissance" by other foreign researchers such as Paul Hutchinson (1890–1956), the missionary who came to China and published newspapers in China. So the title was first used by foreigners in China at that time and was stabilized by Hu Shi himself with conscious efforts.

Since then, this term has been adopted by American and British media too. In 1926, when Hu Shi went to London to attend a meeting of the British Boxer Scholarship Committee, he was invited to give about ten speeches in English. In the ads for one of these speeches, Hu Shi was introduced as the "father of the Chinese Renaissance" (Ouyang 28). After the visit, Hu Shi stopped by the USA on his way home. On January 20, 1927, the American magazine *Nation* reported his return to the country "after his departure in 1917. The article went on to introduce Hu Shi's performance in the vernacular movement in China and held that Hu Shi's contribution could be comparable with that of Dante and Petrarch of Italy" (Hu Shi, *Diary* 423).

In addition, some English-language researchers also started to use the "father of Chinese Renaissance" to introduce Hu Shi and evaluate his achievements. For example, in 1930 Arthur W. Hummel (1884–1975) in his introduction to "The New-Culture Movement in China" pointed out the important role played by Hu Shi in the 1920s to 1930s in the Chinese Renaissance (55). In 1936, when Richard Henry

Tawney wrote his review of Hu Shi's English book *The Chinese Renaissance* (1934), he also thought highly of Hu Shi as the only qualified Chinese to explain China to the West. Therefore, the "father of Chinese Renaissance" is the title adopted by the researchers to express their recognition of Hu Shi's contribution to the Chinese New Cultural Movement out of the interaction of Hu Shi and his counterparts in the English-speaking world.

In September 1938, Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石(1887-1975) named Hu Shi a replacement for C.T. Wang as the Chinese Ambassador to USA. Since then, the image of a scholar-ambassador appeared frequently in American media. After the appointment, there were a large number of reports of Hu Shi in *The New York Times.* Among the reports, Hu Shi's roles such as a modern educator, a courageous editor, and an advocate of cultural democracy were highlighted together with his experience of American education. Hu Shi was considered by the American press to be an integrated philosopher instead of a fanatic politician like other diplomats whose attention and focus were put on the American government and Congress. Hu Shi chose to deliver public speeches in which he helped American people understand the history and culture of China to win their attention, sympathy, and support towards Chinese people against the Japanese. His speeches attracted widespread attention in the USA.

Among his activities with wide media coverage, Hu Shi's attendance at many commencement ceremonies of the American universities was especially of great significance. Hu Shi exchanged his understanding of the trends of the world situation before World War II and outlined a series of fundamental laws to dominate the fusion of different cultures with the American youth. In this way, the Chinese ambassador won the opportunity to share his ideas with the young American graduates. For example, on June 11, 1940, the ambassador spoke at Union University and called for the graduates to be ready for the upcoming destruction brought by the World War II to the American government and civilization. Attending commencement ceremonies proved to be a very smart way for Hu Shi to make use of his access to *The New York Times* and other mainstream media to convey the courage and confidence of Chinese people in the war against Japan.

The Image of Hu Shi in China

With labels of a star student and a Chinese independent thinker, Hu Shi returned to China in 1917 and started his career as a professor at National Peking University. In 1916, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培(1868-1940) became the president of the National Peking University and employed Chen Duxiu 陈独秀(1879-1942), the edi-

tor of *The New Youth*, "China's leading journal of radical opinion" (Grieder 75), to take charge of College of Arts. Chen soon recommended Hu Shi to Cai, who agreed to hire Hu Shi as a professor. Cai had heard about Hu Shi's talent even before Hu's arrival at Peking University. After the first meeting with Hu Shi, he was deeply impressed by Hu Shi's talent and capacity: Hu Shi "had a complete command of the traditional Chinese learning and a thorough understanding towards Western knowledge" (Geng *Studies* 195).

Hu Shi's acceptance by the students at Peking University was not as easy as that of its president. One of the courses Hu Shi taught at Peking University was the History of Chinese Philosophy. Unlike other teachers, he followed the American way of teaching and distributed the outline of his lectures in the form of handouts before his class, and he began to teach from *Books of Songs,* for he thought those poets were great philosophers according to his own research. These changes in the format and the content of the course dumbfounded all the students and aroused a big sensation. Two famous Chinese historians Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚(1893-1980) and Fu Sinian 傅斯年(1896-1950), who were both students at the university back at that time, were invited to attend Hu Shi's class. Their praise of Hu Shi's lectures stopped other students' challenge towards Hu Shi. It was after this episode that Hu Shi became a popular and respected professor on the campus of Peking University.

When Hu Shi started to teach at Peking University, he was only twenty-six years old with a graceful bearing. Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰(1896-1981) (also known by his pen name Mao Dun 矛盾), a famous Chinese writer, once recalled his impression of Hu Shi when they first met: "I think the style of the professor's clothes is strange. He is wearing a silk traditional Chinese gown, trousers of Western style, black silk stockings and yellow leather shoes" (Tang J. 467). This description revealed one of the prominent characteristics of Hu Shi in his work and life: the perfect combination of China and the West together. This could be proved to be true in his many photos taken at that time. In one of them, in a room full of thread-bound books Hu Shi was wearing a pair of glasses and writing with a brush pen.

After Hu Shi returned to China to start and participate in New Culture Movement, he became the most popular and the most influential scholar as well as a controversial figure. There appeared a series of debates between Hu Shi and his contemporaries: the debate about the literary revolution, the debate about "transvaluation of all values" and "individualism" as the core of the ideological and moral revolution, the debate about "problem and doctrine", debates about free verses in vernacular Chinese collected in *Chang shi ji* 尝试集 (Collections of Experiments), to name just a few. Geng Yunzhi presented a very accurate picture of Hu Shi's involvement

in these debates:

> As a liberal intellectual with a systematic American education, Hu Shi almost got himself involved in every major debate of his time. Sometimes his thoughts conflicted with the traditional forces; sometimes in politics he directly confronted the ruling authorities; sometimes his liberalism was incompatible with the revolutionary forces; sometimes it was because of the partiality of different schools. (*Collections of Hu Shi's Debates* 1)

An examination of the years when Hu Shi became a professor of celebrity at Peking University leads us to another interesting image of him — Dr. Hu Shi. In May 1917, Hu Shi finished the oral defense of his doctoral dissertation, which meant his studies at Columbia University came to an end so he returned to China in June. When Hu Shi worked at Peking University, he was addressed by his colleagues and students there as "Dr. Hu." This title was also stamped on the cover of the first edition of his Chinese monograph *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (1919), which was the modification and Chinese version of his doctoral dissertation. Moreover, "Dr. Hu" was also used in a variety of reports about him in newspapers and magazines (Yi 90). In 1921, the magazine *Journal of Peking University* published the pictures and a brief introduction to some professors in the university in its column "Celebrity on Campus." There were altogether seven famous professors and deans including Hu Shi. Different from other directors who were addressed as Mr., Hu Shi was uniquely introduced as Dr. Hu Shi (19).

In fact, Hu Shi did not receive his doctorate until 1927. However, we could not say that Hu Shi lied and pretended to be a doctor before he actually got the degree. His fault lay in when he was addressed as Dr. Hu Shi — he did not deny it. An old acquaintance of Hu Shi fell out and became hostile towards him and leaked the secret. Then, rumors went that Hu Shi posed as a doctor without a degree. The rumors spread quickly to one of Hu Shi's friends, Zhu Jingnong 朱经农(1887-1951), who was still studying in America. Zhu wrote two letters to Hu Shi to warn him about that and suggested Hu Shi publish his doctoral dissertation to earn his degree. However, the publication of it did not bring Hu Shi the doctor's degree as predicted. On December 26, 1926, Hu Shi sent a telegram to his publisher to ask for a hundred copies of his book to be sent to Columbia University. Hu Shi remained a doctoral candidate until March 21, 1927, when he was eventually granted the degree.

Focusing on the mystery of the real or the fake doctor, many Chinese researchers in Taiwan and America joined in the discussion and debated about it in the

1950s and 1960s (Geng, *Debates* 209). In the 1980s, with the revival of the study on Hu Shi in mainland China, there were also many discussions around Hu Shi's degree. Some scholars conducted research to locate the exact time when Hu Shi earned his PhD, while others explored Hu Shi's psychological motivation to hide the truth. But attention was paid to the analysis of the causes of the delay. Some researchers argued that it was because of Hu Shi's failure in the oral defense, while some maintained that a timely submission of his dissertations to Columbia University would have avoided the delay of ten years. These discussions have continued to the present, and Jiang Yongzhen put forward a new interpretation: Hu Shi's doctoral dissertation was not the application of the methodology of his supervisor, American philosopher John Dewey. In fact, there were many arguments in contradiction with Dewey's views out of Hu Shi's misunderstanding of Dewey's works. Therefore, Dewey did not grant a pass of Hu Shi's oral defense. Jiang proposed that the only reason that Hu Shi was granted the degree was because Dewey witnessed Hu Shi's popularity in his motherland when Dewey was invited to give lectures in China and offered his help to Hu Shi to get the degree (342–3).

In spite of the effort Hu Shi made in order to get his PhD, titles such as "Dr." (Li 18), and "Academic Authority" (Sun 42), and "Leading Thinker" (*Lao Shao Nian* 4) had always accompanied Hu Shi. In addition, because of the great contribution of Hu Shi to the New Culture Movement and his excellent work as a Chinese ambassador during World War II, many first-class universities in the world, including Harvard University and Oxford University, awarded Hu Shi honorary doctorates. Hu Shi received a total of thirty-five honorary doctorates, which means his prolific achievements have been widely recognized. Because of his enormous contribution and profound impact, whether Hu Shi had the doctorate will not detract him from his status as a great scholar recogonized by his contemporaries.

The Construction of the Image of Hu Shi

An excellent student at Ivy League universities, a unique overseas Chinese student, the father of the Chinese Renaissance, a cultural ambassador, a professor of controversy at National Peking University, and "Dr. Hu Shi" are the most important images of Hu Shi during the period of the Republic of China. How do these images come into existence? Actually, these images are the results of Hu Shi's own construction, the coverage of news reports as well as the narration of his contemporaries.

Autobiographies and other biographical materials were the most important media in the construction of the image of Hu Shi. Hu Shi's personal records included

his many autobiographies in Chinese and in English. In June 1930, Hu Shi began to write the first article about his memories of his mother, “The Engagement of My Mother.” Later, he added several other articles that covered his life till his middle age and collected them together in the autobiographical writing *A Self-Account at Forty* (四十自述), which was published in 1933. At the same time, Hu Shi wrote a short English autobiography collected in *Living Philosophies* in 1931 by New York’s Simon & Schuster Publishing House. In April 1939, Hu Shi’s diaries of his study and life in America, *Notes of Cang Hui Shi,* were published in China, and later the title was changed to *Hu Shi’s Diary While Studying Abroad* in 1947. Hu Shi was also invited to take part in the project of Oral History of Columbia University in the 1950s, and he narrated his life experience, which was written down in English by Dang Degang as his interviewer and assistant.

In China, as early as the 1920s and 1930s, there started to appear some sporadic reports about the life of Hu Shi, but it was not until the publication of Hu Shi’s own autobiography that biographical articles and monographs written by his contemporaries about him began to boom. Both English and Chinese biographies shared a common characteristic— that is, frequent quotations from Hu Shi’s own narration and writings, including his diaries, various articles, and books. For example, Hu Shi wrote in *A Self-Account at Forty*: “I was weak when I was a child, so I could not follow the strong children to play wildly. Moreover, my mother didn’t allow me to waste my time playing. So my manner was gentle, different from those of other children of my age. So the elders thought I was like a gentleman and called me ‘Sir Mei’”(26). This nickname appeared in almost all the biographies Chinese or English. Besides this, Hu Shi’s self-portraits in *A Self-Account at Forty*, *Hu Shi’s Diary While Studying*, and *The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu Shi* all found their way into his biographies written by others. These autobiographical materials provide the basis of the representation of his image but also invite questioning of their authenticity at the same time.[2]

Media coverage is another very important component in the process of the construction of Hu Shi’s image. When he studied in the USA, Hu Shi drew the attention of the public through the awards and activities. When he went back to China, he continued this visibility. In the official journal of the university, *Peking University Daily,* his official correspondence, the adjustment of the time of his lectures, the publication of his works, his participation in various clubs, and advertisement for his speeches were published from time to time, making Hu Shi one of the celebri-

2 See discussion on this point by Jiang Yongzheng in his *If Not Me, Then Who: The Biography of Hu Shi I 1891–1917*.

ties on campus. After Hu Shi came back in 1927 from his first visit to Europe, there were many detailed reports about Hu Shi's experience, including his early life, his study in America, and his work at Peking University. Hu Shi's friendly attitude and warm reception of the reporters could explain their frequency.

For example, in one of the articles the reporter gave a detailed record of his contact with Dr. Hu Shi. From the very beginning, the reporter felt Hu Shi's welcoming attitude. Hu Shi gave a quick reply to accept the interview and made an appointment with the reporter. In addition, Hu Shi was considerate enough to remind the reporter to call him beforehand in case he was not at home. On the appointed day, the reporter found Hu Shi's home easily following Hu Shi's detailed instructions. The first image grasped by the reporter was a diligent scholar who was writing his monograph:"At sight of me, Hu Shi immediately stands up and walks over to shake hands to welcome my arrival" (*Life* 44). Hu Shi introduced to the reporter that he was writing *The History of Chinese Vernacular Literature.* He just mentioned it casually, but when the article was published, this mention actually turned out to be a free advertisement for his book. The interview was carried out in a relaxing atmosphere. Hu Shi told the reporter that he knew the magazine very well and liked it very much. Such praise was sincere, and it was not difficult for us to imagine how happy the reporter must be after hearing this. After this interview, *Life* published many other articles about Hu Shi and made positive comments.

Hu Shi's image was also built by the impressions of his contemporaries. Xue Lin, the pen name of Su Xuelin 苏雪林 (1897–1999), was one of the female students of Hu Shi. In 1921, on one weekend she visited Hu Shi with other classmates. In one article, Su wrote about her impression of this visit. The article began with a description of the location of Hu Shi's home, a fashionable but bustling neighborhood. But the author found Hu Shi's home was surprisingly quiet so she admired Hu Shi's enjoyment of modern convenience without being disturbed. The author then offered a sketch about Hu Shi as a new-fashioned scholar busying himself answering phone calls and receiving many visitors to have no time to have his breakfast on weekends. So Su had the chance to see with her eyes what kind of breakfast Hu Shi was having and gave a detailed description of it: "a cup of coffee with milk and a plate of grilled bread" (221). Hu Shi's breakfast is a perfect combination of Chinese and Western food, which became the focus of their conversation. The breakfast was finished with an anecdote about the grilled bread, a traditional food of Hu Shi's hometown. Their following conversation was about the writing of the vernacular poetry. Su Xuelin contrasted Hu Shi with Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖(1865-1953), another Chinese scholar of the time, and felt Hu's humor was more interesting (223). Through her

recalling the details of this meeting, a Westernized Chinese and easy-going scholar was carved out.

The images of Hu Shi have not remained the same and have changed with age and environment. Different aspects of his experience and personality were highlighted in American and Chinese cultures. Grieder summarizes Hu Shi's American years as "a time of wide-ranging intellectual and social experimentation"(40). He thought, "Hu Shi became more thoroughly 'Westernized' and he was better able to understand the West—or at least America—in its own terms, and more appreciative of the appeal of American aspirations than were all but a handful of his Chinese contemporaries" (Grieder 40). In the eyes of his American classmates, friends, and researchers, Hu Shi's linguistic eloquence, academic excellence, rich extracurricular activities, independent thinking, as well as wide publicity distinguished him from the other Chinese indemnity students.

While in the eyes of his Chinese fellowmen, when Hu Shi returned to China and became a professor, then the dean of the College of Arts, and later the president of National Peking University in 1946, his professional roles constantly changed. To some extent, he reached the pinnacle of his status, for he became not only a leader in the field of education, academy, and culture but also a symbolic political leader with great influence in society, though he had no real power. At the same time, he also paid a great price for this prestige, and he became what he called a "public man" of controversy, and he involuntarily went up and down with the turbulence of the Chinese situation (Yu 225).

This interaction between Hu Shi and his contemporaries both in China and in the English-speaking world has formed a very interesting episode in modern Chinese intellectual history. The scrutiny of his interactions with the media and his contemporaries will help us understand better how Hu Shi's public image was constructed. In order to analyze the formation of the image of Hu Shi, this paper locates the image of Hu Shi in a large framework, focusing on the image of Hu Shi in the eyes of his contemporaries as well as his self-image, comparing the specific description of Hu Shi in the domestic studies and news media with the interpretation of him by the English scholars and reporters to broaden the dimensions of the present research. This paper treats different types of texts as documentary data, such as fictional writings, media reports, and serious academic research to interweave the meaning and reveal the image of Hu Shi in the collective imagination in Chinese and English cultures.

There is only one Hu Shi in the world, but there are numerous images of him out of different visions, partial or twisted. It is a challenge to obtain the one that is

closest to real Hu Shi (Sang 16). This paper focuses on the years between 1910 and 1949, during which period Hu Shi was a very active figure in the dramatic changes in China, and tries to offer suggestive images of Hu Shi during that period to lay a solid foundation for the accurate assessment of Hu Shi's historical position in the world.

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The Affective Language In-between: Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood*

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Abstract

The world literary space continues to be (re)shaped by new perspectives on transnational and relational patterns of meaning-making. The act of translation in particular can point to linguistic and thematic dimensions which contribute to the study of literature based on their glocalised links of creation and circulation. This article aims to study literary relational patterns by referencing Reiko Abe Auestad's theory of affect, which tackles the individual-environment nexus — hinting at an in-between dimension that is mapped through linguistic and thematic techniques of meaning-making. By exploring Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood*, this study further intends to analyse contemporary works of fiction and align them with the world literary scene via affective relational patterns which emerge in between global and local spaces.

Keywords: world literature, glocalisation, translation, affect, in-between, Ishiguro, Murakami

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Introduction

Glocalisation (a portmanteau of "globalisation" and "localism") is a term which acknowledges the interaction between local and global dimensions of human development. Looking at the literary field through this ambivalent lens, glocalisation can register the "worldly" nature of literature in translation. Rebecca Walkowitz noticed in *Born in Translation* (2015) how, in our contemporary times, authors tend to write

with the process of translation in mind: "These works are written for translation, in the hope of being translated, but they are also often written as translations, pretending to take place in a language other than the one in which they have, in fact, been composed" (4). One of the writing techniques that has the potential of shaping a "born-translated novel" is *pre-translation* — it appeals to an international audience by detailing specific cultural concepts which are otherwise familiar to local readers. Approaching the world literary dimension through what arguably is a "localised technique, we encounter literary works that are shaped by a hybrid writing style, noticeable at both linguistic and contextual levels. The hybridity is concentrated into an "in-between" position, experienced by both authors and readers, and even reflected by the contents of the texts in question. It is relevant to study this position in order to contribute to the global literary scholastic discourse by addressing a hybrid "space" which bounds together the local and the global. Then, how does an in-between perspective on glocalisation add to the discourse of world literature? In order to find an answer, we should turn our attention to the language used by authors who think "in-between" the global and the local.

Mastering the mundane dimension of human life, Murakami Haruki is one of contemporary Japanese literature's most emblematic authors who operates from an "in-between" position. His fictional worlds map intersectional spaces which directly affect human desires and distressing mind-body experiences. His texts cross borders and reach a universal stance on affect as he practices the *pre-translation* technique. Operating in his first language (Japanese), he simultaneously writes by keeping in mind the English translation of his texts. Added to this hybrid process are the intertextual elements within the plot, as he often references non-Japanese (most often North American) authors, musicians, and film directors. These two aspects, translation and intertextuality, have ultimately shaped Murakami's literary style — which is on the other hand referenced by scholars to contest the "Japanese" spirit of his novels (Strecher 354). Given that, traditionally, Japanese literary circles have been tracing a separating line between local (Japanese) literature and world literature, Murakami's works are often placed within a socio-cultural "in-between."

Within the world literary scene, Kazuo Ishiguro operates from an "in-between" position as well, aiming to write for a global audience while retaining local (English and Japanese — especially in his earliest novels) motifs. Moving from Japan to England at the age of five, Ishiguro writes in his second language (English). Although he possesses a rudimentary knowledge of his first language, Japanese, vague, suggestive, and ambiguous style permeates his works — most notably in his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World*

(1986). As such, the "multilinguistic" character of Ishiguro's texts advances the possibility for English to be studied through a glocalised lens, relying on its expressivity of global and local sentiments. Because of this reason, just like Murakami, both the Japanese and English spirits of his works are contested by literary circles. In spite of this, Ishiguro's aim in literature is transnational in nature. As he had previously declared, he writes with a global audience in mind. Arguably, he also makes of the pre-translation technique, but his process is reversed in comparison to Murakami's — Walkowitz took notice of Ishiguro's "effort to create works in English that appear to be translated from another language" (94).

Both authors generate a contemporary literary language which is embedded in between a glocalised relational pattern of pre-translation. Alongside this multilinguistic dimension, what also brings together Murakami and Ishiguro's texts are affective motifs of loss and desire. What results is an affective (minimalist) literary language which emerges in between glocalised spaces. The minimalist mention in between parentheses nurtures a crucial stylistic constant within Japanese literature: ambiguity — which encompasses emotional impressions through vague metaphorical constructions. Emotional impressions point towards a character's way of assessing their environment. Accordingly, they rely on languages of the mind and the body, registered by sensorial perceptions, which in turn are communicated through Japanese aesthetics of emotion. Ambiguity sets the ground for acknowledging this aesthetics while it simultaneously outlines glocalised spaces as being part of a kaleidoscope where binaries merge with one another. Ultimately, the language of ambiguity in literature subscribes to the language of affect at large.

My aim throughout this article will be to explore the role that the affective (ambiguous) language plays when analysing fictional texts of world literature. In my attempt to do so, I will closely read two novels whose fictional worlds appeal to an internationally situated audience — Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood* (1987). For both Ishiguro and Murakami, the ambiguous language describes the affective confusion experienced by their protagonists, Ono and Toru, respectively, when facing past lived events. The two narrators face affective memories which map their current in-between position in relation to their environment — understood at both temporal and spatial levels. Being caught up between the past and the present, their experience is marked by hybrid local-global interrelations, which manifest within a rapidly changing post-Second World War Japan. Orchestrated by affective remembrance, our protagonists' stories are concentrated within specific affective themes that depict their attitude towards change: for Ono, it is about feelings of nostalgia which reflect his attachment

to the past and reluctance towards a precarious present, whereas for Toru, his relationship with the world is concentrated into feelings of alienation which mark the disconnection between his present and past selves. Given this recurrent "in-between" theme, Ishiguro and Murakami design their ambiguous affective narratives through a "shadowy" lens, crafted with the help of dark-light motifs, which both enlighten and obscure their protagonists' perspective of events — hence the confusion they find themselves in.

All of the above being said, a holistic lens prompts me to take into account two sets of binaries and the "in-between" relational patterns they describe when interacting with one another: (i) local and global, in order to address the glocalised implications of our two novels, and (ii) light and darkness, in order to address the confusing affective perspective experienced by our protagonists who operate from within glocalised times and spaces. I envision the affective ambiguous language as a meaning-making tool which maps fictional worlds and the hybrid spaces they emulate. The ambiguous trait anchors the affective language into a state of limbo — both at linguistic and thematic levels — it is for this reason that I will refer to it as *the affective language in-between*. I am further interested in how the affective language in-between, based on its orchestration *and* depiction of individual-environment relationalities within glocalised spaces, may contribute to our understanding of Japanese texts as being part of the world literary scene. For this, I will rely on Reiko Abe Auestad's theory of affect, which addresses the importance of the emotional dimension by exploring the relation between humans and their environment, and consequently, within a literary context, the language which depicts it. However, before moving on to the affective theoretical framework, I want to first offer an outline of my approach to world literature based on relational patterns of *seeing through borders* — or the in-between position of "born-translated novels," to use Walkowitz's term.

Seeing through Borders

A literary vision which sees through borders is facilitated by endeavours rooted in relational patterns. But where could one look in order to find these patterns? To be more precise, what are the relational dimensions which facilitate the study of literature that crosses borders? Scholar Tsuchiya Masahiko's theory of "transborder literature" might offer us an answer. His term, when compared to the more widely used *transnational* literature, shifts our attention from a space of 'nationality,' understood as wholeness or homogeneity, to "border," underlining hybridity or in-betweenness. Reaching this point, it is important to mention that the two are not

mutually exclusive. After all, whether we talk about transnational or transborder literature, they both appeal to the larger discourse of *world literature*. In his modern definition of this field, David Damrosch underlines that "a work is considered world literature if it crosses the borders of its country of origin" (297), retaining its essence — across historical, cultural, and linguistic dimensions — even when translated. Engaging with Damrosch's perspective, Pascale Casanova depicts *the world literary space* — which she distinguishes from world literature as follows: "This conceptual tool is … a *space*: a set of interconnected positions, which must be thought and described in relational terms" (72–73). Defined as such, she proposes a hypothesis where literature itself is envisioned as a worldly space built on relationalities, and whose frontiers are not exclusively defined by political and linguistic borders. On the contrary, understood as a mediating space which is anchored in relational patterns, the world literary space anticipates the study of literature as a transnational dimension which *sees through borders*, thus bringing into dialogue the national and the "in-between" dimensions of a work.

Historically speaking, the consolidation of national literary models led to the transborder circulation of literature. Casanova offers a chronological timeline where she registers the rise of the "international literary space" during sixteenth-century Europe. Within this context, the circulation of literature was powered by literary authority and recognition, both orchestrated by national spaces (74). Ever since then, nations have stood the chance of advancing their literary traditions, reinforcing a transgression of values and ideals dictated by their national landscape. Later historical events of the nineteenth century urged the consolidation of national identities across newly formed nation-states. As the rise of independent states subsequently led to increased national rivalries, one interpretation of the events transports us to a scenario where literature was turned into a political tool. This ultimately generated a paradox: within a world of political interests and cultural authority, national rivalries gave rise to conflicts which *nurtured* cultural developments. To expand on this, one positive understanding of "conflict" alludes to an openness towards different ideas and perspectives of one's beliefs. Formulated as such, conflicts lead to actions which encourage engagement with the other — an engagement embedded into patterns of transgression (be them fictional or physical).

Nurtured by national rivalries, the literary space of the nineteenth century followed the same developmental paradox, and it set the ground for a new dominant literary field, anchored in acts of crossing national borders and/or language(s) of origin: *transnational literature*. On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that the transnational path followed by the literary field overlapped with a 'neutral' space

built on universal appeals of world literature: *the Paris World Capital* —"because France was the least national of literary nations, it was able to manufacture a universal literature while consecrating works produced in outlying territories" (Casanova, *The World* 87). Nevertheless, the world literary space was further consolidated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as literary interests exceeded European borders.

The emergence of popular literature outlined "the rapid spread of mass-oriented material in a post-national (post-Napoleonic) world in which political and economic exchanges would jeopardize the age-old closure of national cultures" (Baetens 336). Accordingly, I argue that the rise of popular fiction aligns with Casanova's call to puncture through the national delimitation of a text and consequently adopt a literary vision which *sees through borders*: "to illuminate the workings of this [*world literary*] space, and in particular the forms of domination exerted within it, implies the rejection of established national categories and divisions; indeed, demands a trans- or inter-national mode of thought" (Casanova, "Literature" 78). Outlined as such, I will further expand on the "worldly" implications of contemporary popular fiction and its movement across borders. In order to shed light on its position within the global literary scene, I will refer to what I believe is a relevant case for studying the lines among which local-global literary spaces develop: the Japanese literary scene — an in-between literary scene in itself. Defined by a "push-and-pull" perspective of belonging, Japanese literature has been (traditionally) isolating itself from the notion of 'world literature' throughout history: "'world literature' in Japan has traditionally meant 'foreign literature' usually excluding Japanese literature" (Mitsuyoshi 161). Nevertheless, the emergence of Japanese genre (popular) fiction over the last decades — Murakami Haruki's writings being a prime example — has challenged this traditional vision, instead aligning it with the *seeing through borders* process and ultimately positioning contemporary Japanese literature in between the local-global (glocalised) scene via the "popular" literary prism.

Bridging the Local and the Global — Towards the Affective Language In-between

The act of translation — perceived as a transnational/border mode of thought — bridges local and global cultural dimensions through linguistic techniques orchestrated by the scope of carrying meaning across borders. Within this context, rather than stemming from one singular point and further extending to multiple ones, the Japanese model of cultural dialogue acts as a point which absorbs everything that is new, and then blends it into its own cultural web. Often referred to as *Japanization* (Birlea 93), and consolidated throughout centuries of cultural interactions, this

model draws a differentiating line between local cultures and foreign cultures. To a certain extent, Japanese literary traditionalism subscribes to the same cultural model. As such, traditional scholars perceive everything that is written outside Japan as world literature, whereas Japanese literature is considered to be isolated within the margin of its national borders. Consequently, within the Japanese literary field, there is a distinctive line traced between the so-called *literary fiction* (high literature) and *genre fiction* (popular fiction) (Strecher 355). The former is referred to as "pure" literature, and it is valued by traditionalists for its display of moral and didactic models for social responsibility. In comparison, genre fiction is perceived as being defined by a surface-level scope of "entertainment," proposing no tangible models for social consciousness. In spite of the (unofficial) rejection coming from Japanese traditionalists (Frentiu 60), genre fiction continues to be translated, as its stylistic contents appeal to requirements set by the global literary market (Young 2). The style in question communicates sentiments which aim to transgress cultural and linguistic borders. It is within this context that Tsuchiya Masahiko depicted the rise of *transborder literature* (*ekkyō bungaku* 越境文学) — centred around acts of movement across environments and their immediate impact on individuals. Building up on Tsuchiya's observations, contemporary Japanologists align Japanese texts with world literature via the importance of transnational/border patterns, i.e. *translation*:

> world literature no longer denotes a category of fiction but a "mode of reading" by which texts acquire value in translation.… Tsuchiya's new vision of textual border-crossings thus signals a revisioning of world literature as a designation to which Japanese texts aspire even while they regard it as external or other. (Young 2–3)

Over the past three decades, an increasing number of Japanese scholars have started to direct their attention towards tracing connections between individuals and environments when depicting perceptions of the self. Tsuchiya's focus on spatial movements and their impact on individuals stand as proof of this literary endeavour. Another scholar who subscribes to this practice is Reiko Abe Auestad, who refers to theories of affect in order to analyse individual-environment relationalities. As such, relying on both Western and Eastern understandings of affect, she crafted a theoretical lens which focuses on humans as mind-bodies who are influenced by their environment. Auestad's theory of affect is grounded in acknowledging interactions between micro (local) and macro (global) spaces when analysing human experi-

ences. In the same manner, Tsuchiya's transborder analysis of literature registers an interest towards micro-macro relationalities and their influence over an individual's experience of the self. Understood as such, both scholars position the Japanese literary scene into dialogue with world literature.

As quoted above, Tsuchiya's transborder literature reduces the micro-macro gap and connects Japanese literature with global literatures via means of translation — understood as a new "mode of reading" which enriches the contents of a literary text. Similarly, Auestad points to translation when advancing Brian Massumi's concept of "distant reading" as a mode of aligning Japanese literature with world literature:

> Uninhibited and unrestricted, "distant reading" can liberate reading from institutionalized "biases" entrenched in a specific national historiography. And not least, reading in translation makes it possible to cover more works. You can read a lot of works across language and culture, which necessarily gives you a comparative perspective. (25)

Distant reading (or reading in translation) subscribes to the larger body of modes of reading, which in turn is directly influenced by the position of the reader within micro-macro cultural and linguistic spaces. It is in this spirit that I chose to dedicate the contents of this article to the affective linguistic implications of world literature. Emotions are universal. However, there are differences in the manners of processing them when it comes to national values and practices. Literature encapsulates this act of processing but also carries the word across its borders and offers new perspectives on shared emotional experiences. During this transnational literary process, the notion of othering acquires a positive quality, where emotional learning and processing arise from cultural differences. Adding to this, the study of language and its ambiguities of emotional expression may contribute to our understanding of patterns which describe affective individual-environment relations. Consequently, I will explore the affective ambiguous language employed by individuals when affected by micro-macro environments. In order to do so, I will closely read Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and Murakami Haruki's *Norwegian Wood* — two novels that present confusing sentiments experienced by individuals when interacting with their hybrid "in-between" environments. The sentiments in question are centred around motifs of desire and loss, which emerge in between an affective mode of linguistic expression — that is, *the affective language in-between*. The affective component crosses over linguistic and cultural borders, as it

is crafted through techniques which have in mind a global audience and acts of pre-translation. I consider these techniques crucial to understanding how contemporary Japanese fiction crosses its cultural and linguistic borders, and ultimately relates to world literature via the circulation of affective texts. Reaching this last point of the introduction, and before moving on to the analysis of the novels I mentioned above, I would like to expand on two relational dimensions which lay at the basis of the affective theoretical framework: affective mind-body-environment relationalities and in-between glocalised spaces. The two engage in a meaning-making feedback loop that ultimately culminates with the emergence of the affective language in-between.

An affective glocalised understanding of mind-body-environment dynamics acknowledges the co-development of global and local cultural spaces, subscribing to Casanova's call to "see through borders" and adopt an international mode of thinking. One considerable aspect which contributes to the current glocalised understanding of cultural patterns pertains to the field of linguistics and the theorisation of multilingualism — which requires us to extend our language choice in order to operate within local and global contexts. The aim of such a request is to draw our attention to the importance of linking the local and the global through linguistic reconsiderations. By applying Auestad's theory of affect to this endeavour, we can refer to contemporary fiction by analysing the language of affect in literature. In a Japanese context, the language of affect, embraced by post-1980s genre fiction authors, reflects an unrestricted interest in matters of (shared) emotional experiences when facing growing anxieties sparked by glocalised environments. They are the ones who bridge the local and the global by "overcoming the cultural frontiers that Japanese traditionalism has strictly enforced throughout time" (Frentiu). Ultimately, by adopting a vision which reconsiders local Japanese texts in "worldly" literature terms, their texts are orchestrated by the affective language in-between.

Mind-Body-Environment Relationalities

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio registers a pre-built affect in humans which is universally shared to a certain degree. The affect in question is processed by each individual through cognitive processes which fall under the influence of specific cultural spaces. According to Damasio's theory, if we trace a timeline for processing information which happens when individuals interact with their environment, the affect occurs before cognition (46). The patterns that communicate this individual-environment process are built in *and* through linguistic codes. We can refer to contemporary fiction as a ground for analysing the linguistic spectrum of both understanding and depicting affective experiences. This being said, the linguistic

spectrum is strongly defined by physical spaces, as well as it is filtered through cognitive processes, thus designing a creative interaction between mind-body-environment dynamics. Teachings from the "everyday affect school" (Wiegman 14) follow this understanding to a certain extent, as they define affect in terms of both embodied sensations and cognitive functions. Here, the affective and cognitive webs are interwoven into narrative constructions which trace connections between micro-macro environments. During her lecture on "Affect, Natsume Sōseki, and World Literature — Keynote Lecture in Japanese Studies," Auestad underlines how the environments in question describe the interaction between individuals' internal-external spaces. Following this understanding, while emotions pertain to the internal world of an individual, affect arises within relationalities established between individuals and their environment. Auestad further adds that affective experiences manifest themselves at an outside level, individuals being *affected* by their surrounding environment at a corporeal level: "[affect] is doubly embedded in something outside—namely, one's individual life experience in a corporeal sense (the memory of the past as experienced by the body), and a larger collective, social life in which one's individual life is necessarily embedded" (Auestad 14). By applying Auestad's theory of affect to our two novels, we can observe how the process of being affected is more or less embedded into external social factors, whereas the external world constantly regulates the internal emotional dimension of an individual — a dimension which is constructed throughout the interrelation of corporeal and social experiences. As such, the social experience regulates the internal reality of our protagonists — Ishiguro's Ono and Murakami's Toru — in an affective manner. This process shapes our narratives, which are centred around affective remembrance. Both Ono and Toru's recollections are affective in nature, as their memories are activated by their bodily senses, which in turn are stimulated by their interaction with their (changing) natural and social environments.

It is important to keep in mind that affect theory scholars do not translate social experiences through affective (bodily senses) terms alone. For them, social and historical constructions are explained through interwoven narratives of affective embodied sensations and cognitive processes. Auestad as well recognises the narrative implications of cognitive experiences alongside affective ones — however, she envisions a different dynamic between affect and cognition, as the latter does not keep up with the everchanging movement of the former: "What is fascinating and challenging about affect, I believe, is the opacity of its operation for consciousness. Its wide-ranging reach and malleability make it difficult for consciousness to keep up with its movement" (15). The movement in question further consolidates

the influence that the environment exerts over individuals who are part of it. Based on this, Auestad leads the discussion to a new perspective of the affective-cognitive dynamic: "You get transported outside of your usual self. In other words, your affect can teach you how little control you actually have over yourself, and how vulnerable you can be, because it exposes you 'naked,' as it were, unprotected by your usual, cognitive guard" (15–16). Auestad outlines here a scenario where vulnerability is recognised as a crucial step into one's journey towards self-consciousness. This step can only be taken when the cognitive guard is lowered, and individuals let themselves be affected by their external environment. Auestad adds to the affective spectrum by pointing to motifs such as disorientation and vulnerability.[1] Ono and Toru as well have to be vulnerable when facing their memories. The two's experience of vulnerability results in confusing perceptions which are further concentrated into affective themes: nostalgia for Ono and alienation for Toru. With this in mind, I will further develop on Auestad's implications of individual-environment dynamics in order to explore glocalised (in-between) spaces and their influence when crafting an affective language. That is, in order to better theorise how *the affective language in-between*, based on its orchestration *and* depiction of individual-environment relationalities within glocalised spaces, can contribute to our understanding of Japanese texts as being part of the world literary scene — via the Japanese-English multilinguistic dimensions, which together mark the glocalised creative processes of Ishiguro and Murakami.

Glocalisation: The Linguistic Implications of Seeing through Borders

For decades now, different cultural and political fields have been approaching social changes through a "globalised" analytical lens. In parallel, during the 1990s, the Japanese business scene (out of which advertising in particular) developed a more specific concept when it comes to matters of product development: *glocalisation* (Khondker). The term is used to describe a process through which global dimensions develop alongside local and regional ones. As such, the Japanese marketing scene acknowledges the connecting lines between micro and macro markets, as the relation between the two is reconsidered in terms of local and global develop-

1 In a similar manner, Tsuchiya Masahiko's understanding of transborder literature's scope subscribes to this take on distressing dimensions of reality. As such, he envisions transborder texts as depictions of the "mixed, confused, and hybrid experiences formed under postmodern and postcolonial conditions" (Young 2). His core argument addresses transborder literature by its ability to register movements (both physical and ideological) which trace relationalities between global and local cultural environments.

ments which evolve at the same time. The contemporary literary market can also be understood along these lines of micro-macro, or local-global development. Local literatures encompass cultural, political and ethical factors which subscribe to specific contexts, but their contents reach global audiences through processes of translation. On the other hand, the global literary market sets the tone for literary trends that orchestrate patterns for local literary markets. Formulated as such, a glocalised perspective of the literary market allows us to understand micro-macro relational patterns within literature.

The affective dimension advances the required language to approach global and local texts through a renewed understanding of modern and, consequently, contemporary fiction. It is in this spirit that we can adopt Auestad's affect theory, in order to re-evaluate modern Japanese texts and to liberate them from the exclusively localised echo chamber perpetuated by Japanese traditionalism, i.e. the division between local (Japanese) and world literary texts. Embracing this vision, Auestad encourages us to acknowledge the influence which the affective macro-world exerts over the sentiments of the micro-world. In other words, her proposed theoretical framework directs our attention towards means through which local Japanese texts are in dialogue with global literatures. This argument is also anchored into the 'role of the reader' promoted by early-twentieth-century Japanese author and theorist Sōseki Natsume. When trying to understand why people were emotionally challenged by different literatures, Sōseki developed a hypothesis grounded in affect theory:

> a hypothesis that literature is a device that elicits affects in the reader differently, because their life experiences are different … a lot of our affective reactions are conditioned through our interactions with the environment. It is, thus, the culturally specific part of literature that he has tried to come to terms with, through developing his own theory of affect. (Auestad 23)

Sōseki traced a common line between individuals' experientialities and their immediate environment. His affective take contributed to the larger discourse of world literature by addressing a glocalised perspective. As such, he acknowledged that literature could be interpreted among local-global lines of registering sentiments: "By grounding his theory of literature in affect, which is both universal and culturally specific at the same time, Sōseki finds a way to avoid the pitfalls of essentialist understanding of culture and national literary traditions" (Auestad 24).

What bridges the universal (global) and the culturally specific (local) for Sōseki are the linguistic dimensions of a text — its original dimension and its dimension of translation. As such, he registers a positive understanding of reading in translation: it enriches the meaning of a foreign text by adding meanings fabricated by a locally shaped mind to its contents. Formulated in 1907, this perspective anticipated the important role that translation, or "distant reading," currently plays within the contemporary field of world literature. By applying Sōseki's theory to our understanding of the affective dimension in contemporary literature, we can explore narratives which are socially embedded (at a "wordly" level) through glocalised linguistic practices. The two novels by Kazuo Ishiguro and Murakami Haruki are the literary materialisations of these practices. To expand on this, *An Artist of the Floating World*'s nostalgia was written by Ishiguro in English, while simultaneously catering to a global audience. On the other hand, *Norwegian Wood*'s alienation was written by Murakami in Japanese; however, through the pre-translation technique, the narrative style also addresses an English-speaking audience. As a result, the affective themes that dominate our two novels are shaped by local-global linguistic dimensions. As it was theorised earlier in the article, the linking tool for global and localised linguistic spaces is represented by the act of "seeing through borders" — that is, translation. The border serves as the in-between position which characterises Rebecca Walkowitz's "born-translated novels." The linguistic in-between is reinforced by a contextual "in-between," depicted by the affective confusion which results from our protagonists' interactions with changing hybrid times and spaces — distilled into Ishiguro's nostalgia and Murakami's alienation. The "in-between" linguistic and contextual dimensions can further be explored through the conceptual analytical tool that records the glocalised dimension of our novels, that is, *the affective language in-between*.

The Affective Language In-between

Attributed to economic and social developments, Japanese media of the 1980s recorded the emergence of a new generation of young people: 新人類 *shinjinrui* (new type of person). The term was used to depict the generations who did not experience the disruptive events which marked the war and early post-war years. In contrast, the *shinjinrui* grew up through a period of rapid economic growth and urban development. The new generation was composed of young people who were individualistic, avoided political engagement, and were not interested in adopting the spirit of sacrifice which defined the reconstruction period following Japan's capitulation (*The Japan Foundation*). And still, belonging to times defined by drastic social

changes and hybridisation of spaces, the *shinjinrui* adopted new ideals and sensibilities which combined contrasting sentiments of apathy and hope (*The Japan Foundation*). Within the literary field, this led to the emergence of what scholar Giorgio Amitrano described as the "New Japanese Novel," dominated by a new generation of writers whose texts outlined the feelings of disparity experienced by the *shinjinrui* (*The Japan Foundation*). Subscribing to the "mythology of the ordinary" (Frentiu 60), the affective language adopted by post-1980s authors communicated sentiments which were observed by both Auestad and Tsuchiya: distressing, vulnerable, confusing, and hybrid. Engaging with their texts, we can observe how the sentiments are communicated through an intimate language, tailored to affective mind-body-environment interactions, as well as to the border of glocalised spaces. In other words, the language of the *shinjinrui*, who live in between ambivalent sentiments (apathy and hope) that emerge on the border of local-global dimensions, can be read as *the affective language in-between*.

Alongside the spatial implication of the affective linguistic dimensions, there is the temporal factor that Auestad identified as individuals' corporeal understanding of their environments: experiences of the body which encapsulate memories of the past (Auestad 14). As such, spaces affect bodies which store experiences framed within a temporal framework of the self. Affective remembrance depicts the confusing sentiments experienced by protagonists as mind-bodies when interacting with their hybrid environments. Ishiguro's Ono and Murakami's Toru are the literary materialisations of Japan's hybridisation that occurred during the twentieth century — whether we talk about its historical, linguistic or artistic (contextual) dimensions. Ono and Toru's affective memories unfold within spaces of glocalisation. Being affected by their hybrid environment, they both become vulnerable to their past, which situates them within ambivalent perspectives of apathy and hope. This turns them into "in-between" individuals who face their shadowy (light-dark) past. As mentioned earlier, both Ishiguro and Murakami make use of light-dark motifs in order to symbolise the confusing (and ambivalent) feelings experienced by their protagonists when facing change. These motifs within the plot are doubled by the overall linguistic dimension of the narratives, which, written in 1986 (Ishiguro's *An Artist*) and 1987 (Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*), respectively, are crafted through glocalised practices the like of pre-translation (writing for a global audience).

The border between Japanese and English linguistic spheres (and spaces) is crossed over through glocalised linguistic process. Keeping this in mind, it is not a surprise that the in-between dimensions of our authors' texts often lead to the contestation of their English or Japanese character. However, within the context

of world literature, this contestation, although conflictual in nature, can point to a positive process that operates from within the glocalised dimensions of our novels — after all, the very contestation of our authors' linguistic and/or cultural identities can generate discussions which paradoxically situates their work within Pascale Casanova's "world literary space," that is — the space of interrelated distinctions. Casting the contestations aside, the glocalised nature of Ishiguro and Murakami's novels points to the linguistic and contextual elements which emerge from in-between affective times and spaces — past-present, local-global — further depicting sentiments (i.e. nostalgia for Ishiguro's Ono and alienation for Murakami's Toru) experienced by individuals when facing change. The affective linguistic in-between lens harbours the potential to zero in on these dimensions and situate them within the world literary space. More specifically, the affective language in-between can address the linguistics spaces and cultural specifics (English and Japanese), as well as the affective dimensions (dark-light literary motifs of nostalgia and alienation) that position Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and Murakami's *Norwegian Wood* as "born-translated novels" which "see through the borders" of literature.

The Affective Language In-between: Nostalgia

In *Two-World Literature: Kazuo Ishiguro's Early Novels*, Rebecca Suter contends that Kazuo Ishiguro's fictional texts challenge the "one-world" paradigm of literature (2). In order to do so, Ishiguro crafts fictional worlds which gravitate around themes of universal affective experientiality, avoiding a one-dimensional interpretation of cultural spaces. During the Nobel Literature Prize Lecture from 2017, Ishiguro addressed his universally situated "mythical" England when referring to the novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989). Arguably, his approach is a glocalised one, as it addresses both the global and the local:

> I wanted … to write "international" fiction that could easily cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, even while writing a story set in what seemed a peculiarly English world. My version of England would be a kind of mythical one, whose outlines, I believed, were already present in the imaginations of many people around the world, including those who had never visited the country. ("The Nobel Prize" 2017)

Formulated as such, the mythical (local-global) component accounts for Ishiguro's tendency to ground his texts into imaginative (re)interpretations of historical realities. The (re)imagined historical dimension informs on his narrators' tendency to

"see" across time and space, which ultimately affects their emotional and psychological inner processes and vice versa. In order to map this tendency, he relies on the emotional spectrum when crafting narratives which explore universal human experiences.

Indeed, the linguistic dimension outlines Ishiguro's endeavour of delivering worlds which are built on emotional-based explorations of the human psyche when faced with life-altering events. His earlier novels in particular — *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) — emerge among alienating spirals of temporal disparity, building up a "mythical" Japan by recording the years following the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The gap between past and present events is diminished by first-person narrators who write their lives in between nostalgic memories — sparked by sensorial perceptions which are rooted in physical spaces:

> One evening not so long ago, I was standing on that little wooden bridge and saw away in the distance two columns of smoke rising from the rubble. Perhaps it was government workers continuing some interminably slow programme; or perhaps children indulging in some delinquent game. But the sight of those columns against the sky put me in a melancholy mood. They were like pyres at some abandoned funeral. A graveyard, Mrs Kawakami says, and when one remembers all those people who once frequented the area, one cannot help seeing it that way. (Ishiguro, *An Artist* 32)

As such, narrators who are embedded in this temporal affective web are self-conscious in their account of events, whereas the "self-deceptive" and "self-protective" language (Mason and Ishiguro 337) they adopt denotes a surrender to an idyllic past. Despite this, by exploring a complete and realistic depiction of the affective spectrum, Ishiguro aims to deliver accounts of a hybrid human experientiality, which he does achieve by intermingling nostalgic perspectives of the past with transformative experiences of the present: "his characters must be realistically portrayed according to the contexts of their given situations, but their awareness of that situation must be seen as undergoing transformation conducive to the way actual people indeed do change" (Wong 14). Ishiguro's transformations unfold within worlds which are moulded in between altering sequences of affective change. Consequently, the affective dimension at large determines self-conscious narrators to express their transformative experiences through an affective language of self-expression. Formulated as such, the language they embrace can be read as "the af-

fective language in-between nostalgia," as it emerges in between lines and gaps of nostalgic remembrance.

Ishiguro masters the language of nostalgia when depicting a rapidly changing Japan in *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). Through this novel, we are introduced to first-person narrator Masuji Ono, an aged and retired painter whose speech, although introspective and minutely detailed, is shaped by an ambiguous language when reminiscing past events. His distant and recent pasts are filtered through affective experientialities embedded within the setting of a changing Japanese society from the twentieth century. These experiences give shape to Ono's unreliable account of events: "Dr Saito had spoken casually enough, but I got for a moment the impression that the whole table — Noriko included — had stopped eating to hear my reply. *It is quite possible, of course, that I imagined this*" (Ishiguro, *An Artist* 113, emphasis added). Ono's unreliability is brought to light by his hybrid environment which mirrors reality's new order: interwoven temporal and spatial dimensions, informed by a hybridisation of Japanese and American cultures. Adding to the disgrace of his past affiliation with the right-wing Japanese government, the emotional disorientation caused by his changing surroundings ultimately causes the aged painter's journey down memory lane.

And still, although throughout the novel it often appears that we are faced with a nostalgic narrator and his devotional surrender to an idyllic past, Ishiguro manages to deliver a multilayered and complementary account of human experientiality, as feelings of an optimistic future interweave themselves into the narrative. This emotional contrast arises from Ono's conflict of values: 義理 *giri* (duty) and 人情 *ninjō* (human feeling). The former is related to social responsibility, while the latter, as its name suggests, points to personal convictions and desires. The two are situated within an affective feedback loop, where social structures constantly permeate Ono's inner desires, whereas his internal emotional world melts into the external social environment. The feedback loop in question culminates with contrasting feelings of estrangement and recognition that simultaneously obscure and shed light on the old man's affective relation with his environment. Consequently, Ono does not always communicate his impressions by using direct language, as he sometimes prefers to use visual metaphors instead of delivering an introspective account of past events. Here, isolated passages defined by the character's lack (absence) of language permeate the narrative, bringing the environment to the fore of the novel. Through sensorial perceptions, Ono attunes himself to his immediate surroundings, depicting them as physical extensions of his psycho-emotional experientiality:

> I believe it was around this point that my teacher rose to his feet and, lantern in hand, made his way across the floor towards the back wall of the storeroom. The wall had previously been in darkness, but as he held the lantern up to it, three wood-block prints, hung one below the other, became sharply illuminated. Each of these portrayed a geisha adjusting her coiffure, each seated on the floor and viewed from the back. Mori-san studied the pictures for a few moments, moving the lantern from one to the next. (Ishiguro, *An Artist* 138)

In this scene, darkness and light interweave with one another in order to shape the environment. Both contrasting elements complement each other and reveal to Ono's observant eye everything that used to be hidden. The lamp's light reveals three wood-prints, all rendered in the traditional style of 浮世絵 *ukiyo-e* (floating world pictures). This is the style that young apprentice Ono intends to leave behind, embracing instead a more radical, propagandistic one, better attuned to the artistic scene which dominated political right-wing Japan during the years leading up to the Second World War. The change in movement, from sitting to stepping across the room, the shift from darkness to light, all these contrasts make up for a more direct and dynamic way of approaching all of the mentioned above. Ultimately, the character's lack of language that marks this memory becomes crucial to describing the light-dark atmosphere of the scene, as well as for revealing unspoken thoughts and sentiments from Mori-san's part (which Ono is aware of): disappointment with his student's decision to leave behind the *ukiyo-e* world.

The above-presented scene, which marks a visual rendering of the aged painter's conscious assessment of the past, is contrasted throughout the novel by his frequent use of hesitant language. Here, one may argue that Japanese readers might find Ono's speech to be naturally Japanese. To develop this idea further, the Japanese language allows speakers to express their opinionated ideas without risking imposing their personal perceptions on others. In Japanese, this is often marked by the grammatical structure — と思います *to omoimasu*, roughly meaning "I believe," "I think" (always used in the first person). Nevertheless, as Ōe outlined, Ishiguro is an author who writes in English. In accordance with this, and aiming to stay faithful to his goal of writing for an international audience, Ono's speech retains the Japanese vague mark of expression by making use of English formulations such as "I think" and "I suppose" — as these two phrases are often used in standard English as well, Ishiguro's style highlights the fusion of linguistic meanings and forms which stand under the larger umbrella of multilingualism. As mentioned at the beginning of this

section, Ishiguro aims to write "international" texts that can cross linguistic borders, even when situated in particular cultural spaces. Also echoing the events unfolding within the plot, the interlinguistic dimension that shelters Japanese and English marks of ambiguity reflects the hybrid character of Ono's glocalised (Japanese-American) environment.

Another element which accounts for the old man's staple way of expressing himself (one which overlaps with Ishiguro's specific literary speech) is his preference for addressing readers in a direct manner: "The Kasuga Park Hotel, *you may agree*, has these days a certain vulgar air about it, and I was somewhat unhappy with the choice" (*An Artist* 99, emphasis added). Ono makes use of this technique whenever he tries to describe his changing environment. Looking for a shared bias, the old man hopes that his "audience" agrees with his observations. At the same time, his choice to look for an outside confirmation reveals Ono's tendency to subconsciously question his interpretation of the new hybrid environment. After all, the motif of change at large affects Ono's manner of recounting his past. As such, his internal conflict is constantly shadowed by an external one, where the protagonist witnesses his changing surroundings — the pleasure district included, the very traditional setting of the floating world paintings. On the other hand, the conscious assessment of change leads to Ono's psychological burden of facing his memories. Within this context, echoing Ono's manner of speech, Ishiguro inserts "The Bridge of Hesitation" into the old man's story of nostalgic events. This bridge is mentioned in the opening of each of the novel's four sections (*October 1948*, *April 1949*, *November 1949* and *June 1950*). The bridge appears as a link to the past and to what Japan once was: a pre-war nation that celebrated the pleasure district and placed it at a high level of admiration by turning it into a subject of art, *ukiyo-e*. This contrasts with the young generations' perception of the pleasure world, which they associate with Japan's shameful recent past. Ono is acutely aware of this new attitude, while he simultaneously takes account of how Western cultural elements are getting more influential among the youth during the years following the capitulation. Going hand in hand with these, there are industrialisation elements which take over the city of Tokyo, directly influenced by the American occupation: business offices which are built over the ruins of traditional neighbourhoods, among which the pleasure district included. This entanglement of American and Japanese elements announces the new order of things, where the world is organised in an interconnected manner.

And still, traditional Japan remains present in the novel not only through Ono's dive into nostalgic memories, but also through the manner in which Ishiguro constructs some of his narrative episodes. Echoing Mori-san's scene, there is a dance

of light and shadow which paints Ono's episodic memories, directly linked to the visual core of the novel: the floating world. The scenes in question remind us of paintings which portray elements of the pleasure district — marked by a "floating," transient quality of time. They resemble hazy, but nevertheless, attractive memories. Here, Ishiguro masters the art of tracing parallels between the content of his novel and the composition of its narrative, as he depicts scenes which both illuminate *and* obscure Ono's reminiscing moments. The following passage displays a language infused with light-and-shadowy elements, shaping a contrast which accounts for the modern and interconnected reality which Ono embraces at the end of the novel:

> I smiled to myself as I watched these young office workers from my bench. Of course, at times, when I remember those brightly-lit bars and all those people gathered beneath the lamps, laughing a little more boisterously perhaps than those young men yesterday, but with much the same good-heartedness, I feel a certain nostalgia for the past and the district as it used to be. But to see how our city has been rebuilt, how things have recovered so rapidly over these years, fills me with genuine gladness. Our nation, it seems, whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, has now another chance to make a better go of things. One can only wish these young people well. (Ishiguro, *An Artist* 191)

Throughout the novel, we are invited to witness Ono's self-reflective account of change: being embedded in between spirals of temporal dissonance, he makes use of the affective language in-between nostalgia. And still, at the end of his story, the old man uses a speech infused with hopeful reflections of the future — a sharp contrast with the obscurity of his (re)imagined past experientiality. As such, Ishiguro's (re)interpretation of post-war Japan stands under the sign of a transformative hybridisation of times and spaces, affecting the old man's use of language. All in all, it is pertinent to notice how Ono grounds himself into an illuminating resolution, where his newly found hope emerges from his changing environment. Indeed, change culminates into a new positive experience of self-reflection, which transpires into the old man's final speech about a hopeful future for the generations that will come.

The Affective Language In-between: Alienation

As discussed earlier in the article, the 1980s recorded the emergence of a new generation of writers in Japan, who dominated the literary market through works of genre fiction — also referred to as "mass" or "entertainment" literature (Stretcher

373). Foregrounded by Murakami Haruki, Murakami Ryū and Yoshimoto Banana, the new wave of authors commented upon human affective disparities which were unfolding within urban alienating environments. The new generation was received with scepticism by promoters of "pure" traditional texts who rather valued literature based on its moral and social didactic models for a Japan that was still continuing to rebuild itself after the Second World War. In comparison, popular literature was perceived as 'entertainment' literature, permeated by the apathy and lack of perspective which defined the *shinjinrui*. This coincided with a larger cultural and national scheme which the literary market subscribed to *internationalisation*. The scheme was anchored in the movement established between inside-outside cultural spaces: going from the inside to the outside, and adapting the outside to the inside. The scheme was highly promoted during the 1990s, when at socio-political levels, the Japanese government employed the "soft power" tactic in order to spread Japanese culture across the world. Accordingly, the literary market applied the scheme by promoting a glocalised type of literature, in tune with marketing devices which targeted not only Japanese readers but international ones as well.

Domestic and international successes encountered by post-1980s genre fiction authors were possible due to their portrayal of universal affective disparities while 'ordinarily' mapping Japan's urban lifestyle (Frentiu 62). Adding to this was the major influence exerted by translation studies during the 1990s, which consolidated their role through the apparition of "Japanese New Books." Japanologist Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit considers this publication to be one of the most important steps "in the direction of seeing publications in the Japanese language as part of a global intellectual community and market place" (168). The pre-translation technique emerged from this direction, shaping narratives which mediated between cultural specifics and international readers. The technique was not unique to Japanese authors alone, but its adoption by post-1980s genre fiction authors defined the literary contents which were later associated with contemporary Japanese literature at an international level.

Forms of pre-translation, both linguistic and related to content, emerge in-between local-global relationalities. This ultimately leads to the creation of literary works which subscribe to a glocalised literary market. It is within this context that Hijiya-Kirschnereit raises a set of pertinent questions, addressing the issues sparked by a glocalised technique such as pre-translation: Do authors write for their local readers? In Japan, readers might wonder why a Japanese writer methodically describes specific cultural contents. Or do they write for a transnational literary audience? While doing so, authors risk going as far as mystifying or even exoticising

their local culture. Or do they write for a designated linguistic sphere — English? Most Japanese writers, those who care about their texts being translated at least, usually aim for their works to reach Anglophone spaces (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 172).

Addressing Hijiya-Kirschnereit's concerns, I believe it is important to study the linguistic implications of universal affect that the post-1980s genre fiction writers relied on. Such an approach can be justified when looking at their preference for fictional interpretations of transgressive patterns which are moulded on multi-linguistic dimensions. Reaching this last point, I do have to address one last issue: it is important to keep in mind that the pre-translation technique does not rely on the linguistic sphere alone. As such, one other relevant dimension is the thematic one, which orchestrates the universally orientated contents displayed by genre fiction narratives: glocalised relational patterns. Within this context, although the pre-translation approach seems to favour international readers, authors who make use of it do not completely detach themselves from cultural specifics; they rather choose to approach them from a "distant perspective" (reminiscent of Brian Massumi's translation as 'distant reading'). In comparison to Ishiguro who aims to be international in his writing, Murakami describes himself as being first and foremost a Japanese author who writes for a Japanese audience (Frentiu 63). And still, arguably the "face" of Japanese contemporary literature at a global level, he also makes use of the pre-translation technique (Kono) by writing his texts in English and then translating them into Japanese. Keeping this in mind, Murakami employs the pre-translation technique in order to alienate his Japanese readers, which equally reflects his alienated characters: "'I probably still haven't completely adapted to the world,' I said after giving it some thought. 'I don't know, I feel like this isn't the real world. The people, the scene: they just don't seem real to me'" (Murakami 203). As he sets his narratives within hybrid urban environments, Murakami employs the universal language of affect which both emerges from *and* shapes alienating glocalised spaces. Ultimately, his use of the pre-translation technique reflects the contents of his novels, which touch upon universal affective experientialities. Subscribing to a distant perspective, the affective linguistic dimension allows characters to record their mismatched and alienating environments. One last thing to keep in mind is that although hybrid (local-global) spaces are a constant within Murakami's narratives, they do not occupy a visible position within his texts, as they rather loom in the backgrounds of the narrative. Instead, they take the form of intertextual elements, which add to the "alienating" perspective that Murakami designs through his pre-translation technique:

> Beyond the trees we came to a gentle slope along which, at irregular intervals, was a row of two-storey wooden houses that had something odd about them. What made them look strange it's hard to say, but that was the first thing I felt when I saw them. My reaction was a lot like what we feel when we see unreality painted in a pleasant way. It occurred to me that this was what you might get if Walt Disney did an animated version of a Munch painting. (122)

In *Norwegian Wood* (1987), Murakami Haruki introduces first-person narrator Watanabe Toru, a thirty-seven-year-old man who recounts his student life during the 1968–9 university protests in Japan. As such, while landing in Hamburg, fading memories come back to him when listening to an orchestral rendition of *Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)* by the Beatles — a sad love song which for decades has been shadowing Toru's desolate life: "The melody never failed to send a shudder through me, but this time it hit me harder than ever" (5). Affected by this, Toru is prompted to make sense of his still growing alienation by going back to its roots. Hence, we encounter nineteen-year-old Toru who is caught up in between desolating feelings of loss — which gradually turn him into an apathetic observant of the political events unfolding within his immediate surroundings.

Early in the novel, we discover that his grief followed him ever since he was seventeen years old, sparked by the suicide of his close friend Kizuki. Ever since then, Toru lost sight of his position within the world: "I felt a kind of loneliness new to me, as if I were the only one here who was not truly part of the scene … Kizuki died that night, and ever since a cold, stiffening wind had come between me and the world" (96–97). It is no surprise that the language employed by Toru subscribes to his alienation — a disorientating state of being in between a shadowy past and a future with no light in sight. The man finds no roots in his present time, loneliness confining him to a state of temporal limbo, where hidden memories melt his entire being from within: "What if somewhere inside me there is a dark limbo where all the truly important memories are heaped and slowly turning into mud?" (13).

Rodica Frentiu outlines Murakami as an author whose prose is based on rhizomatic perspectives of not seeing, characters subscribing to the restless endeavour of making sense of their alienation: "Murakami's postmodern fiction tries to express, in anti-mimetic fashion, the difficulty of perceiving and understanding the world, outlining a disquieting state of incompleteness that derives from the equally disquieting characteristics of the surrounding universe" (63). Accordingly, in *Norwegian Wood,* Murakami embeds Toru into an alienating world, punctured by his

restless attempt to attribute an affective meaning to past lived experiences. As such, revisiting his desolate youth, the man becomes acutely aware of how difficult it might have been for him to develop a perspective that could have connected him to his immediate surroundings: “Memory is a funny thing. When I was in the scene, I hardly paid it any mind. I never stopped to think of it as something that would make a lasting impression, certainly never imagined that eighteen years later I would recall it in such detail” (Murakami 6). This is one example in which remembrance sheds light on Toru’s dark limbo. Sharing his impressions on disorientating past experiences, the man makes use of an affective language written in between temporal spirals of alienation in order to make sense of himself. The narrative which results is fragmented into affective-charged passages and blank spaces — the latter being an invitation to empathetically engage with Toru’s lived experience based on one’s own experientiality.

At the beginning of the novel, when Toru confesses to us that he needs to write in order to make sense of his memories, he does so in order to keep a promise to Naoko, Kizuki’s girlfriend. The girl, although a troubled person herself, grounds Toru into feelings of love which emerge from their shared traumatic loss. As such, the very first memory recounted by the man is about his reconnection with Naoko; pleading with him to always keep her in his memories. Although a confusing request at the time, young Toru, who was already harbouring a one-sided love for her, agrees without hesitation.

> The more the memories of Naoko inside me fade, the more deeply I am able to understand her. I know, too, why she asked me not to forget her. Naoko herself knew, of course. She knew that my memories of her would fade. Which is precisely why she begged me never to forget her, to remember that she had existed. (13)

Eventually, towards the end of the novel, Naoko’s request finally makes sense to him and especially to us, the readers, as it is revealed that she took her own life a few months later. As such, thirty-seven-year-old Toru relieves the moments he used to share with Naoko in order to keep alive her fading image. The man’s speech is infused with haunting feelings of loss, amplifying his sense of alienation. Ultimately, with the passage of time, his dark limbo renders him numb — echoed by his embodiment within affective environments:

> And nothing but scenery, that view of the meadow in October, returns

> again and again to me like a symbolic scene in a film. Each time it appears, it delivers a kick to some part of my mind. Wake up, it says. I'm still here. Wake up and think about it. Think about why I'm still here. The kicking never hurts me. There's no pain at all. Just a hollow sound that echoes with each kick. And even that is bound to fade one day.… Which is why I am writing this book. To think. To understand. It just happens to be the way I'm made. I have to write things down to feel I fully comprehend them. (7–8)

Translating them into a plethora of affective words, Toru hopes to find a solution to his feelings of despair. Ultimately, through writing, he hopes he can hold on to fading memories of Naoko — the one person who, despite his growing alienation, used to ground him in time and place during intimate moments of shared understanding. Witnessing the — desperate but hopeful — confession expressed in the above passage, one can only hope for Toru to ground his lost self by the end of the novel.

> Where was I now? I had no idea. No idea at all. Where was this place? All that flashed into my eyes were the countless shapes of people walking by to nowhere. Again and again I called out for Midori from the dead centre of this place that was no place. (350–1)

This is the passage that marks the end of our protagonist's affective journey to the past. Leaving us on an open note, it appears that Toru is still caught up in a space of disorientation. And still, reaching this last point, it is worthy to note that Murakami is often subtle in his manner of illuminating resolutions. To do so, he first takes an unexpected step and obscures them. Consequently, in *Norwegian Wood* as well, in order to find the light at the end of the tunnel, one must go back to its starting point — that is, the beginning of the narrative. As such, leading up to the introductory memory of Naoko's request, Toru recalls the girl telling him about a "field well," which, according to him, was only a figment of her imagination. Nevertheless, the passage of time alters Toru's own understanding of this past event, leading him to embrace the thought of an existing material well. Thus, while holding on to memories of Naoko, he crafts a detailed memory of the field well:

> It lay precisely on the border where the meadow ended and the woods began — a dark opening in the earth a yard across, hidden by grass … You could lean over the edge and peer down to see nothing. All I knew about the well was its frightening depth. It was deep beyond measuring, and crammed

> full of darkness, as if all the world's darknesses had been boiled down to their ultimate density. (8)

Throughout the novel, Naoko's "field well" and its darkness transform into Toru's "death centre" of a "place that was no place." Just like the girl relied on the young man to keep her memory alive, Toru calls on Midori's name to ground him in a definite place. Midori, alongside Naoko and Reiko, was one of the human links which connected young Toru to his surroundings. And still, already affected by the loss of his best friend, as well as by Naoko's later death (marking the loss of his most affective link), Toru keeps falling into the growing darkness of his mind's well, suspending him into a place that is no place.

These two imageries — the well and the place that was no place — connect the end of the novel with its beginning, engaging into a disorientating spiral of memories which fade with each spin; and still, much like Ishiguro, Murakami manages to create a narrative grounded into both illuminating and obscuring perspectives. Maybe it is this alternation of highly contrasting fragments which symbolically disorientates Toru's sense of self. Adding to this is his immediate environment which is filtered through his bodily senses, while attempting to keep his memories from slipping away.

Going back once again to the beginning of the novel, it is the song *Norwegian Wood* which prompted Toru's journey down memory lane. Affecting his composure, the song causes him a physical reaction as well: "I bent forward, my face in my hands to keep my skull from splitting open" (5). Toru's psychological and emotional pains are shadowed by a physical one, deepening his ever-growing feelings of disruption from the physical world. Similar to Ishiguro's light-and-shadow-infused narratives, Murakami simultaneously sheds light and obscures his narrator's use of language. Thus, we witness Toru's verbalisation of the contrasting, disruptive and disorientating perception of himself and the world he inhabits. As a result, from start to finish, he makes use of an affective language written in between feelings of alienation, mapping his attempts to piece together fragmentary memories in order to illuminate his sense of self within the world. Ultimately, by rendering alienating fictional spaces, Murakami lays down the ground for an exploration of the perspective of not being able to see, marked by "the difficulty of reaching the linguistic accuracy necessary to reproduce precisely the authenticity of living and feeling" (Frentiu 64).

Conclusion

It is no coincidence that I referred to “light-shadow” contrasts when exploring both Ishiguro and Murakami’s texts. Partially informed by the contents of the novels in question, both authors’ use of visual metaphors helped me when analysing the type of language employed by their first-person narrators. What I discovered is that the affective language they adopt facilitates our understanding of human lived experiences which stand under the sign of temporal and spatial disparities. As such, whether we look at Ono’s life which is embedded in between a nostalgic past, transformative present and hopeful future, or we take into account Toru’s state of being stuck in an alienating place that is no place, the language they use emerges in between temporal and spatial dimensions, shaped by their affective hybrid environments.

Going back to the beginning of this article, I want to address once again the question which guided me towards the exploration of the world literary space: what are the dimensions which facilitate the study of literature that crosses borders? In my attempt to find an answer, I probed the implications of a literary vision which sees through borders based on relational patterns of translation — that is, a process which interweaves both linguistic and thematic dimensions of meaning-making. Throughout my exploration, I anchored my main analysis in the affective dimension of human experience. On a more general note, I find this dimension particularly fruitful when approaching literary texts which emerge in between techniques of linguistic and thematic creation. Orchestrated by glocalised spaces, these techniques — addressing an international audience and pre-translating — define contemporary literature based on acts of crossing *and* carrying meaning(s) across linguistic, cultural and national borders. Formulated as such, the affective component engages in a creative feedback loop with linguistic and thematic relational patterns — which ultimately shed light on a literary text as a ‘worldly space’ that pertains to a dimension of creation that emerges within mind-body-environment relationalities of “affecting” and “being affected.” Acknowledging a holistic lens which zeroes in on complementary and contrasting experiences and perspectives, affect, as outlined by Reiko Abe Auestad, points to relational patterns of meaning-making. These further inform on individual-environment interactions that unfold in between affective glocalised spaces. By interweaving contrasting feelings, perspectives, and techniques of meaning-making, Ishiguro and Murakami’s texts leap into the plethora of world literature by employing *the affective language in-between*, ultimately displaying a universal affect which emerges in-between relational patterns of seeing through borders.

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Interview

"Reciprocal Gaze" in the Age of Globalisation and Digital Humanities: An Interview with Professor Tan Tian Yuan

Tan Tian Yuan (University of Oxford)

Li Weihua (Beijing Foreign Studies University, University of Oxford)

Shi Guang (Beijing Foreign Studies University)

Abstract

This interview commences with Professor Tan Tian Yuan's recalling his educational path and academic career. Then Professor Tan gives us his own opinions on various topics, including his research approaches of later imperial vernacular literatures, the interactions between so-called Chinese scholarship and overseas Sinology, SOAS and Oxford's contributions to British Sinology and his ongoing TEXTCOURT project. Professor Tan also shares his viewpoints on multiple aspects and characteristics of Chinese literature and culture, "New World Literature," and the relation between traditional Chinese culture and modern Chinese culture.

Keywords: later imperial vernacular literatures, TEXTCOURT project, Sinology, Digital Humanities, Chinese literature and culture

Shi Guang (henceforth SG): Good morning, Professor Tan. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to do this interview with you. At the very beginning, could you share your personal experience of growing up and studying with our readers? We believe that most of our readers would like to know these things. Why did you choose literary research as your lifelong career? Was there an event or a person that has had a significant impact on your choice?

Tan Tian Yuan (henceforth TTY): Looking back, I think the right word would be that I had *stumbled* into academia quite fortuitously, rather than having taken a conscious career choice. Hence, instead of a single incident or person, it would be fair to say that a range of experiences shaped my current path in one way or another.

I grew up in Singapore where I received my earlier education and academic training. My parents enrolled me in the only English-stream class of a traditionally Chinese-medium primary school, Shin Min Public School (Thomson), which really gave me the best of both worlds in bilingual education. The library, for a primary school, was also unusually large with an excellent collection of Chinese books, and it was there that I started borrowing books voraciously and happily reading all kinds of genres ranging from historical biographies to folktales and fictions. This early interest in Chinese books, reading freely without any predetermined goals, had a lasting impact on my education. When I later progressed to the Chinese High School and Hwa Chong Junior College, both known for their emphasis on bilingual education and Chinese heritage and culture, I had the opportunity to continue developing my interest in the subject in other ways and through various mediums outside the curriculum. My teacher in secondary school noticed and nurtured my interest in creative writing. I tried my hands at writing modern Chinese poetry for newspapers and literary magazines, and later also composed lyrics for songwriting competitions in my teenage years. Rather unconsciously, I think, this early experience of dabbling in literary writing as a practitioner drew my attention to reading and analysing poetry and also lyrics of Chinese pop songs more closely. I grew interested in exploring the art of using words. Even to this day, I may at times get annoyed by a certain "misplaced" word (in my mind only, of course) in the lyrics that does not rhyme or chime well with the melody, for instance.

All that while, as a science-stream student in secondary and high school, I was pursuing the above as hobbies rather than as my main subject of study. When it came to applying for a place in the university, however, I decided it was time to switch to majoring in Chinese Studies and Chinese Language at the Department of Chinese Studies in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences of the National Univer-

sity of Singapore (NUS), where I also studied at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in the same faculty in the first year. NUS laid the academic foundations for me in many ways. In addition to a comprehensive and well-designed curriculum, there were also many opportunities to prepare short research papers and to present in classes, which gave me a first taste of what it might be like to do research and formulate an academic opinion. Outside the standard curriculum, there were also other serendipitous opportunities and encounters that, in hindsight, inspired and shaped my academic interests. In the third year of my undergraduate studies, I was asked by a teacher at NUS, Professor Kow Mei Kao, to assist him in his book project in publishing an annotated bibliography for the collection of Ming–Qing Chinese fiction in the NUS Chinese library and that was the first time I systematically learnt to use bibliographies and related reference works. On another occasion, I was recommended by another NUS teacher to act as a research assistant (RA) for a US professor who was visiting the department and needed someone to comb through some early historical newspaper collections in Malaysia and Singapore for his project. As a rather ignorant young student at that time, it took me quite a while to only realise later what an eminent scholar this professor was (we are speaking of the late China historian Professor Philip A. Kuhn). Looking back now, I realise how valuable this opportunity was (Professor Kuhn was extremely generous and kind in his guidance) and most probably triggered my interest in conducting research. I've grown to love spending hours digging into archives and reading primary sources, which is an essential criterion to be a researcher. And these are just two of the earliest RA experiences. Later, I also acted as a research and teaching assistant in the US, and I learnt a great deal of different skills from all the teachers and scholars who had offered me such opportunities, which provided another dimension of informal training outside the standard university curriculum. But that is a whole new, lengthy topic that is best reserved for another day.

Back to my educational path — at the end of my undergraduate studies I was awarded a two-year master's scholarship from the Chinese department. This allowed me to explore further and take a first step in considering academic research as a potential career path. My MA supervisor, Professor Sun Mei, who completed his own earlier education in prestigious PRC institutions such as Nanjing University and the Chinese National Academy of Arts before obtaining his PhD from the University of Hawai'i, was incredibly supportive of the idea for me to learn in a different academic setting. I contemplated the idea of pursuing a further degree abroad, but at that time it was not really a "career plan." To be honest, my younger self in the 1990s probably did not understand what an academic career entails —

I was simply interested in the possibility for me to continue pursuing my research interests. It was therefore a significant moment when I received notification of a few scholarship offers from US universities because I would not have thought of studying abroad if not given a scholarship. I eventually decided to go to Harvard University, where I had the privilege to learn from the Dutch Sinologist Professor Wilt L. Idema who coincidentally moved from Leiden to Harvard around the same time; I was therefore among the first cohort of his doctoral advisees in the US. Hence, you can see that indeed it was a combination of numerous factors above that led me to this path of becoming a scholar of Chinese literature.

SG: We noticed that your research mainly focuses on drama, songs, and other forms of vernacular literature in the later dynasties of China. Why did you choose this research area? What features of the texts from this period appeal to you? Could you use an example to illustrate your basic position or method in analysing these texts?

TTY: I feel that each of us has a different kind of academic temperament that makes certain topics or subjects suit one better than the others. For me, later imperial vernacular literatures including fiction, drama, and songs have a certain vibrancy and directness that are appealing. I am also attracted to the ways later literatures often adapt earlier stories and motifs or respond to past writers and works in multiple ways. I am often inclined to trace how texts, concepts, words, or forms developed in Chinese literature, and later vernacular texts are perfect for such modes of research.

Some of these vernacular genres such as drama and *sanqu* 散曲 are also what we call performance texts, not that they all necessarily derived from a script from an actual performance, but that the genres are closely associated with a performative aspect — that gives an additional dimension to reading a verbal text, imagining how it might have been or could have been performed. In this regard, my approach towards these texts may differ from some other researchers of drama and theatre who focus on the actual staging practice or performance contexts. I am interested in those aspects too, which are critical to our understanding of Chinese performance culture, but in my own research I find myself more drawn to the dynamics between verbal and performative, and my aim is also in reading these vernacular forms within the larger Chinese literary tradition.

In other words, I take a more textual approach towards studying these later vernacular forms of literature. Two of my recent articles, one in English on "*Sanqu*, Ming Anthologies, and the Imperial Court" and the other in Chinese on the "Textual Worlds of Court Theater in Late Imperial China" (明清宮廷演劇的文本世界)

are examples of such an approach.[1] When we study a piece of work, we need to go beyond just speaking about a certain title X. Can we probe deeper and ask: Which version or edition of X are we referring to? Because they may not be the same and I am always curious why they might be different. The same work or a part of it can appear under a variant title, or in a different "position" in different editions, and that can tell us something. I like to find "answers" to questions or solve puzzles in literary history, and some colleagues have described my work as a kind of literary detective work. Of course, often in humanities research, there is no single, definite answer to a question, but that does not mean the questions are not worth asking, nor does it make the process less meaningful. In recent years, I have come to learn to enjoy more so the process of pursuing a certain line of inquiry and to accept that in many cases I will not find or have an answer.

Another approach that I consistently apply in my research is to read Chinese literature across cultures, and that is directly linked to my experience in studying and teaching Chinese literature in different countries and cultures. Some of my works such as *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China* are conceptualised with this in mind.

SG: In recent years, overseas Sinology has received more and more attention from Chinese scholars. It has often been described as the other mountain's stone (他山之石) and expected to polish the jade (可以攻玉). In other words, overseas Sinology is "the other" for Chinese academia. According to your own experience, is overseas Sinology completely different from the research of Chinese scholars? What are the similarities and differences between them? What changes can overseas Sinology offer to the Chinese academy?

TTY: About ten years ago, I said at the Beijing Forum 2014 that the boundary between so-called Chinese scholarship and overseas Sinology is converging, thanks to growing interaction and the globalisation of the academia. Overall, this converging trend still continues, and it is important to maintain such scholarly interactions.

Is overseas Sinology necessarily "the other" for Chinese academia? It remains useful to think of the unique history and developments "national" or "regional" Sinological traditions such as British or French Sinology, or the broader notion of European Sinology, as there are differences in the academic traditions in each coun-

1 See "In Praise of This Prosperous and Harmonious Empire: Sanqu, Ming Anthologies, and the Imperial Court," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 8.1 (April 2021): 139–62, DOI 10.1215/23290048-8898661; "Ming Qing gongting yanju de wenben shijie" 明清宮廷演劇的文本世界 (Textual Worlds of Court Theater in Late Imperial China), *Zhengda Zhongwen xuebao* 37 (2022): 5–52, DOI: 10.30407/BDCL.202206_(37).0001

try and culture that will manifest in the ways one studies all subjects (not just Sinology). I believe it is important to first acknowledge that every researcher involved in Sinology or Chinese Studies, whether it is someone within "Chinese scholarship" or "overseas Sinology," shares a common interest in knowing more about China. It is upon this common interest and passion that we should build our scholarly communications and collaborations, and from there we can appreciate how each of us may look at the same question using a different method or from another perspective.

The questions we ask are inevitably tied in with our respective academic contexts. "Chinese scholarship" and "overseas Sinology" are different in that they operate in different contexts and engage with different target readers and audience. One way to illustrate this is to look up where the department in relation to Chinese Studies is located within a certain University system and see what that tells us: the set-up and aims of a traditional Chinese department (Zhongwenxi 中文系) in Chinese-speaking academia will be quite different from those of a department of Chinese Studies in Europe or North America within the setting of the Faculty of Asian/East Asian/Foreign or Modern Languages.

In terms of what conversations between different academic traditions can offer to each other, I think the conversation should go beyond the comparison between "Chinese scholarship" and "overseas Sinology," and can be extended to other humanities subjects as well. In other words, the cross-cultural dialogue can be broader and not just limited within the field of Chinese Studies or Sinology. I once used the term "reciprocal gaze" in proposing such a mode of dialogues between Sinology and other fields of research in the humanities. For example, might a reader or scholar of Renaissance rhetoric be interested in Ming rhetoric? And what might be a meaningful way to discuss the concept of rhetoric in Ming China? These are the questions addressed in a chapter I recently wrote for the forthcoming volume on *Rhetoric in the Renaissance c. 1415–1640* under the *Cambridge History of Rhetoric* series. In this case, the "us" and the "other" are not between "Chinese scholarship" and "overseas Sinology," but between "Sinological scholarship" and "Western Renaissance scholarship."

In a way, this goes back to what I said earlier about reading across cultures, the importance of which was first suggested to me by my doctoral adviser. As with many US universities, Harvard requires PhD students to study three fields in preparation for the general examination (before one starts writing the dissertation): a major field related to one's dissertation and two other minor fields: for someone like myself who plans to work on late imperial Chinese literature, the first two fields were obvious — I studied with Professor Idema for the main field in Song to Qing

dynasty literatures and did the second field on early to Tang dynasty literatures with Professor Stephen Owen. For the third field, a more common or natural choice might have been a related field such as Chinese history, but my doctoral adviser Professor Idema suggested otherwise: "Have you considered studying something totally different, from another country or tradition?" I later realised this was not about asking me to do anything overtly comparative, but it was intended purely to open up a different academic world to me. I eventually chose to do a minor field on English Renaissance drama with Professor John Parker who works on Marlowe and the transition from medieval to early Elizabethan theatre, and also had the chance to attend classes by Shakespearean scholars such as Majorie Garber and Stephen J. Greenblatt and that then led me to explore new historicism, etc. Just like learning a new language, studying a different literary tradition broadens one's academic horizon. This is one of the best pieces of advice a doctoral adviser can give to a supervisee, and I must thank Professor Idema for that. I also pass on that same message to my own graduate students too.

SG & Li Weihua (henceforth LWH): You were a professor of Chinese Studies at SOAS, University of London. SOAS is a renowned centre of Asian and African studies. Could you briefly introduce the history and features of Sinology at SOAS? You're the Shaw Professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford now. Could you tell us about the current status of Sinology research at this prestigious university? Such as its features, research interests, the scale of enrollment, etc. What do you think are the differences between Oxford Sinology and SOAS Sinology?

TTY: I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to teach in these two incredibly special UK institutions. SOAS and Oxford are central to the history of British Sinology, and, in this regard, they share many common traits in having an illustrious line of pioneering and influential Sinologists. These have been well charted in many previous surveys, and there is perhaps no need for me to go into the details here. In tracing Sinological developments, it is also worthwhile to keep in mind that we are speaking about two different kinds of institutions. SOAS and Oxford are unique in their own ways.

I taught at SOAS for thirteen years. SOAS cannot be any more centrally located in Russell Square, with both the British Library and the British Museum just a stone's throw away: a sense of ready accessibility to some of the greatest Chinese collections in London greatly benefits all researchers and students of Sinology. Also, as you've pointed out, SOAS is a highly specialised university and in fact the only higher education institution in the UK specialising in the study of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Because of the compact size of the institution, one advantage

is that Sinologists across different departments can easily work together, and Sinologists at SOAS also find themselves amongst a close-knit community of scholars who are almost all engaging with research on non-Western countries and civilisations in one way or another.

Oxford, on the other hand, is the oldest university in the English-speaking world but also a different kind of institution from SOAS both in size and in structure. Oxford's Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (where most Sinologists are based) is part of a larger Humanities division that includes other faculties such as the Classics, English Language and Literature, and Medieval and Modern Languages. Soon after I joined Oxford in 2019, I was invited to participate in a workshop organised by the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) on "National Bards in Comparative Perspectives," where the professors of various subjects (Chinese, Classics, French, Persian, Russian, Spanish, etc.) all gathered on the occasion and each represented one's respective field and literary tradition in the dialogue. To some degree, the format of this workshop captures the nature of the Oxford academic network in which Sinological research is situated, as well as the potential ways in which Chinese Studies at Oxford engages externally with other fields and subjects.

If we look inward into the Sinological developments in Oxford, there is a huge legacy that we inherit — the history of Sinology at Oxford extends back to 1876 with the appointment of James Legge as its first Professor of Chinese — and we feel a strong sense of duty in upholding the legacy, while also embracing the new opportunities and challenges presented to us in the rapidly growing field of Chinese Studies today. Previous occupants of the Chair of Chinese at Oxford, from James Legge to David Hawkes, Piet van der Loon, and Glen Dudbridge, to name just a few, all made immense contributions to the understanding of Chinese culture through their translations, bibliographical surveys of Chinese texts, and critical studies on various aspects of traditional China. And while they each have their own distinctive areas of specialities, one may observe that they share a common characteristic that defines one of the key features of the Sinological tradition in Oxford: an uncompromising emphasis on text reading and on understanding premodern China through the mastery of primary source materials. Oxford is one of the very few universities outside Asia that continues to teach its undergraduates both classical and modern Chinese concurrently in their first year. This is essential. We want to train students who will be conversant in both classical and modern Chinese, knowledgeable about both traditional China and contemporary Chinese society, and most importantly, to understand the links between the old and the new.

At the same time, recent developments in humanities research may give us new ideas in exploring potential ways to enhance Oxford's strong text-based research tradition with other complementary approaches. One example is digital humanities, which may sound like a "new" mode of scholarship, but in fact Oxford has long been developing digital tools, methods, and resources for research in the humanities since the 1970s.

SG: With the advent of the digital age, the humanities are seriously challenged. In 2019, you launched the TEXTCOURT project, which seems like a response to this trend. What exactly motivated you to start this project? What progress has been made so far? Could you give us an example to show a specific difference between the output of this project and the traditional research?

TTY: Indeed, the arrival of the digital age is changing the academic landscape in multiple ways. My current TEXTCOURT project on "Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600–1800" embodies some of my reflections on ways to incorporate the different modes and methods of research (e.g., textual and digital) that we just talked about.

I do not see myself as a digital humanities scholar — digital humanities is a distinct field. Rather, I think of myself as a humanities researcher who is open to and interested in DH approaches when they are suitable for the type of research questions I wish to ask. And that was how the TEXTCOURT project came about. The decision to take a DH approach was more of a necessity — How do we deal with vast amounts of court drama scripts that are mostly anonymous, often casually titled that makes identifying them challenging, and by their very nature "untidy"? This inherent "untidiness" is part of the reason why such a rich body of performance texts have not yet received the scholarly attention they are due, and why they were often regarded as a closed and isolated world even though clues in these texts suggest a much more interconnected world. The conventional mode of literary studies, with an individual researcher focusing on a small corpus work centred around an author, does not suit the study of court drama on a much larger scale, with its voluminous and mostly anonymous corpus.

Funded by the European Research Council, the project allows me to build a research team in Oxford and, in collaboration with international research partners, we are exploring the potential of digitally assisted close reading in our study of court performance texts. We have launched a beta version of our database of digitised late imperial Chinese court drama scripts and related foreign records on our project website (https://textcourt.ames.ox.ac.uk/database/). To date, we have included more than five hundred scripts belonging to about four hundred plays; it is common

to find a court play in multiple scripts, which illustrates the complex yet exciting textual conditions and calls for closer textual studies. The primary objective of the TEXTCOURT database is to enable researchers to access these texts easily and, by making these texts available on the web in digitised format encoded according to the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) guidelines, the goal is to facilitate the drawing of internal links between these texts within the tangled web of court drama texts, external links to individuals, occasions, and objects, and cross-cultural links to court drama's global context. Such links and connections are often invisible and buried in the sea of voluminous court drama scripts.

For example, I am currently working on a corpus of incomplete and variously titled manuscripts associated with a set of Kangxi-era court plays. On the textual level, my research has uncovered interesting overlaps between two scripts that look distinctly different from each other, not only because they have different titles, but also they are different in length (one has more than a dozen acts and the other only eight). In the TEXTCOURT database, we can take advantage of the digital environment to allocate the same code to link the two scripts together, so that researchers searching for one will be alerted to the other under the same code. This is particularly useful in one case where we can display an untitled and incomplete act of one script alongside the other version that has a title and is complete. Readers who are interested can search for the code Q00533 under "drama scripts" in the database, which will display these two scripts A and B (https://textcourt.ames.ox.ac.uk/database/scripts/?search=q00533). On the page of each script, under the "Related" tab, the database also allows users to explore further, following their own research interests with suggested links to a list of keywords and entities. Take the same example of Q00533, the keywords include "Birthday play," "Kangxi era," "Manuscript," and "With paratext," and clicking on the link to "Birthday play," for instance, will lead one to a list of more than two hundred scripts in the database with a similar theme (https://textcourt.ames.ox.ac.uk/database/scriptkeywords/7/).

LWH: From your study experience, academic research and academic activities, we can see that your academic background and academic vision are very broad, involving European countries, the United States, Britain, China, Singapore, and other Eastern and Western countries. What do you think is the current trend of the development of international Sinology? How should Chinese academia respond to this development trend?

TTY: I consider myself truly fortunate to have learnt formally and informally from scholars of different countries and academic traditions. These learning experiences are all interweaved. For instance, when I was doing my PhD at Harvard, I re-

ceived grants from the university to go to Asia for summer research, during which I learnt methods of bibliographical research and textual editing from Professor Sun Chongtao in Beijing and was introduced by Professor Kin Bunkyo in Kyoto to Japanese Sinological approaches. A predoctoral fellowship from Academic Sinica also gave me a chance to learn from drama specialists such as Professor Hua Wei and Professor Wang Ayling. I suppose what I am trying to say is that it is sometimes difficult to delineate such educational experiences in a global context. For instance, the memorable experience of participating in the Kyoto study group with scholars who met regularly reading and annotating Yuan prints of Yuan drama in Japanese gave me a new understanding of close reading; at the same time, I also see parallels in some ways between that and my experience attending graduate seminars at Harvard reading closely and translating Chinese literary texts word by word into English.

The academic landscape is increasingly globalised and nowadays students have even more opportunities and exposures to many cross-cultural academic experiences. That is positive for the development of Sinology in an international context. I do hope that all countries (including Chinese academia as you mentioned, but also academia in other countries as well) will continue to encourage more interactions and collaborations across countries and across cultures.

Does that mean that we will be moving towards some kind of singular "international academic trend"? Personally, I hope not. It would be preferable if each country or region could develop its own academic style relevant to its own academic environment and climate because the essence of academic research lies in the possibilities of different approaches and the ability to understand and engage with differences.

Rather, it may be more useful to think about the range and variety of academic skill sets one can get to learn in such a global context. Some skills may be uniquely linked with a distinctive style of academic training in a different culture; others may be associated with the advancement of technology such as digital humanities. For example, I encourage my own graduate students to take up an introductory course on digital humanities even if their dissertation projects do not require them to do so. It is more about learning different skill sets, which will make one a more complete researcher. Even if we do not go on to apply a certain method directly to our own research, it helps us understand and appreciate other studies using such an approach, and it also expands the scope for intellectual communications across different fields.

LWH: Your research often involves a refined Chinese aesthetic. You often refer to the concept of "Literary World," pointing out that literary research should

not only study a literary work, but think about the world behind it, the scene at that time, and use the historical documents of that time to approach that historical scene. You think we can approach the literary world. In your opinion, how to present China's literary world more vividly in front of people, so that this exquisite Chinese aesthetic world can move more people?

TTY: What intrigues many readers of Chinese literature is the strong and amazing continuity and tradition in Chinese culture, which I guess is what you meant by "a refined Chinese aesthetic." I am often drawn by the ways in which Chinese writers respond and speak to the past (events, works, and authors) in their writing and some of my research attempt to outline how these were done in terms of language, style, and form.[2]

But at the same time, we ought to be cautious not to filter these into a certain kind of *essence* of Chinese culture, because often by doing do, there is a danger of overgeneralising. There are multiple aspects and characteristics of Chinese literature and culture that I hope we as researchers can uncover for the readers. Hence, as you noticed, I often use the term "Literary World," or in fact, more often in English I use the plural "Literary Worlds." These are the larger worlds behind the use of words and the existence of textual forms. I also find it more rewarding to consider a literary work as a piece of writing situated within a larger textual world, inviting readers to piece together all the connections on various levels. And these levels of reading and interpretations are intricately connected. We cannot access the larger literary worlds without giving close attention to linguistic and textual matters.

LWH: When we say Literary World, we may think of the concept of New World Literature in current academic circles. How do you think the New World Literature will affect our current Literary World?

TTY: I am not by training, nor in practice, a scholar of comparative literature or world literature, which as I understand is a field with stronger emphasis on modern and contemporary literatures; I shall therefore have to defer to specialists in those fields to address more adequately on the concept of "New World Literature". As far as I am aware, there are different opinions in support or in criticism of the concepts of "World Literature" and "New World Literature." While I can't speak on behalf of other colleagues who are devoted to such theoretical matters, I believe that any

2 E.g. "Shared Words and Worlds of Love in *Peony Pavilion*," in Tian Yuan Tan and Paolo Santangelo, eds. *Passion, Romance, and Qing: The World of Emotions and States of Mind in Peony Pavilion (3 vols.)*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014, 1454–81; "Reworking Songs Past and Present: Literary Forms and Traditions in Chinese Court Drama," Special Issue: "Conceptualising Chinese Court Literary Cultures," *Nanyang Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* (*NJCLC*) 4 (May 2023): 163–78.

discussion that would encourage one to consider more broadly the different connections and relations between texts and their wider worlds is a good thing, as long as we are aware that this is only one of the many ways and approaches to studying literature and every approach has its own way in enriching how we understand a text.

LWH: At present, International and Regional Studies has become a new academic research field in China's academic circles. How do you think about this research field? Can there be new breakthroughs in Sinology and China Studies in this research field?

TTY: The rise of area studies (e.g. in North America) historically had been more associated with disciplines such as the social sciences with its emphasis on modern China, and some see this as a narrower definition of Chinese Studies in contrast with Sinology (in Europe) exhibiting a stronger philological emphasis on text and language and focusing more on premodern China. But really, as we have discussed, these are complementary approaches that are both necessary and can contribute to our understanding of China as a whole. To a certain extent, we are already seeing this kind of dual emphasis as reflected in the rise of academic centres and institutes on both *guoxue* 国学 and area/regional studies.

Also, with the growing impact of China on the global scene, my personal hope is that leaders and policymakers worldwide will realise that cultural dialogues are just as important as political ones, and therefore the teaching and research conducted in "traditional" Chinese departments are just as significant as discussions on policies taking place in think tanks or other international relations organisations.

With the emergence of international Sinological centres, etc., it also indicates a growing awareness of studying different national literatures or countries (including Sinology/China Studies) within larger contexts, both within China and in other parts of the world. Boundaries are broadened. Increasingly, we find the inclusion of the study of China in different forms of "world" or "global" scholarship in Western academia. For example, I currently serve on the Board of Advisors for the *Renaissance Studies* journal, which is keen on publishing critical discussions and works on the concept of "global Renaissance" including those between China and Europe. This, again, is one of the many other "worlds" or broader contexts with which we may see Sinology or Chinese Studies increasingly being engaged. This is a positive sign that I hope will continue to develop in the coming years.

LWH: For a long time, you have been engaged in the study of Chinese literature and culture overseas, which means that you have seen and studied China through the window. But at the same time, you also have profound research and experience of Chinese culture, you are living in the home of Chinese culture. In your

opinion, how can Chinese traditional culture be better transformed into a modern one?

TTY: I am just one of many researchers working on Chinese literature and culture in various parts of the world. One may think of different roles of researchers, as you described, either as an insider living "in the home of Chinese culture" or as an outsider looking at China "through the window," depending on who one is, where one lives and works, and the language one speaks or writes. What these different roles and positions also indicate is that the field of Chinese Studies is made up of scholars who will approach the same text or same question from different perspectives in relation to the contexts in which they live and work.

Similar to what we were saying earlier about how "Sinology" is compared with the more modern term "China Studies," I see traditional Chinese culture and modern Chinese culture as two sides of the same entity: traditional Chinese culture will always be an integral part of contemporary China, and that our understanding of modern Chinese culture will be incomplete without adequate knowledge of its past and heritage, and vice versa. It is also about rethinking the place of Chinese literature and culture in the larger worlds (in terms of space) and in relation to readers then and now (in terms of time).

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Book Review

Fan Shengyu. *The Translator's Mirror for the Romantic*: *Cao Xueqin's* Dream *and David Hawkes'* Stone. Oxon and New York: Routledge. 2022. ISBN: 9781032147741. 250 pp.

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In 2022, Dr Fan Shengyu's book *The Translator's Mirror for the Romantic: Cao Xueqin's* Dream *and David Hawkes'* Stone was published by Routledge. This work is a general guide to the master translator David Hawkes and his English version of the all-time classic Chinese novel *The Story of the Stone*, also known as *The Dream of Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng*). Fan's close reading of the original and translation allows readers a better appreciation of the style of both and an understanding of the serious playfulness with which Hawkes approached his work as a translator. The work, featuring numerous detailed comparisons between Cao Xueqin's and David Hawkes' lives and characters, offers its readers a fresh perspective to look at the novel *Hongloumeng* and its translation *Stone* as two sides of the same coin and brings them closer to the true taste of them both.

Cao Xueqin's *Hongloumeng* (traditionally translated as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) could be regarded as the most sophisticated book by Chinese readers ever since its birth. The novel enjoys a special status in Chinese literature, and redology, the academic study of *Dream*, is becoming ever more active on the world stage. The seemingly romantic *Dream* has an all-encompassing content as John Minford observes: "Over the years, almost every part of the Chinese-speaking liter-

ary, philosophical, religious and political universe ... has become somehow or other engaged with the novel and its interpretation" (307). The Chinese writer and literary critic Lu Xun (1881–1936) concludes that different groups of readers will see different things in *Dream*: "Classical scholars see in it signs from the *I Ching*, Confucian pedants see debauchery, talented young scholars see love affairs, revolutionaries see the anti-Manchu sentiment, while gossip-mongers see scandals from the Imperial Palace" (145). The popularity and influence of *Dream* in China could be seen in the saying that "even if you were well-versed in the classics, if you could not talk about *Dream*, you were still deemed to be uncouth" (De 354). Despite its great reputation among Chinese readers, the comprehensive masterpiece is notorious for its difficulty in being translated as there are dense allusions, jargon from various fields, hundreds of characters' names and nicknames, and all types of classical Chinese poetry, among others. As for today, most of the novel's translations are excerpts, and the whole book has been translated by a very limited few, among which the two most famous versions are Gladys Yang's and David Hawkes'. Hawkes is a master translator and Sinologist who translated the first eighty chapters of Cao's *Dream*, and the latter forty were finished by John Minford. It is no exaggeration to say that *The Story of the Stone* is the lifeblood of David Hawkes, which could be proven by his resignation of professorship in 1917 from the University of Oxford "to devote himself fulltime to translating *Dream*" (9). Fan's *Mirror* is a book that decodes the translator's art in *Stone* and clarifies what makes it a classic.

Fan's *Mirror* argues that literary translation should be an art piece, and Hawkes' *Stone* is a perfect embodiment of this idea. The work illustrates Hawkes as a translator at work —from his preparation to revision, and how, in a transformative manner, he dealt with the pragmatic and poetic aspects of *Dream*. Fan addresses a wide range of topics in six chapters of his book. Chapter One depicts Hawkes' early life and how that fits into his later encounter with *Dream* and a lifelong commitment to *The Story of the Stone*. This chapter highlights that Hawkes' creativity is a result of both his knowledge in Sinology and his cultivation in the fields of gardening, painting, music, and poetry. Chapter Two analyses how Hawkes handles textual issues and the way he collates the source texts before translating. Fan expounds that the textual critic role of Hawkes is a primary part of the success of *Stone*. Chapters Three to Six comprise the second part of the book, which concerns the idea of Hawkes' sensitivity and creativity as a writer. Chapter Three reveals sound, shape, and style featuring the original work and how the translator manages to reproduce the visual and acoustic effects in *Stone*. By examining the specific techniques that Hawkes adopted in creating the visual and aural effects, this chapter demonstrates

Hawkes' ability to engage the reader. Moreover, the way that Hawkes relates sound, shape, and style to the delivery of emotion and meaning also provides the reader with a unique perspective of the "Hawkesian world." Hawkes' expert knowledge and command of English slang, social register, and rhetoric skills allowed him to recast social hierarchies and personal relationships in *Dream*. In Chapter Four, Fan indicates that just like its original work *Dream*, *Stone* is full of word games, and he offers clues to decoding the hidden meaning constructed by Hawkes in various forms. According to David Crystal, a writer's playfulness is reflected on several levels: typographical, sound-based, letter-based, and word-structure play (Carrol, 20). Fan illustrated Hawkes' imagination and genius ability of wordplay on these four levels, which further testifies that Hawkes is a very capable translator and an insightful reader of *Stone*. Chapter Five restores some essential aspects and stages of the translator's laborious revision process and points out that the key to a good translation is revision. For Hawkes, revision is a never-ending process. Fan presents some of the key revisions made in *Stone* from its initial manuscripts and typescripts to its published form. Fan also examined the translator's drafts, notes and writers, all of which showed Hawkes' enormous attention to detail in his revision. Chapter Six deals with the controversial issue of translating allusions. In line with Fan's argument that "literary translation is more literature than translation" (xxxiv), he elaborates how Hawkes as a novelist (rather than a translator) pays homage to his predecessors by giving examples of using Western literary allusions in the rendition of a Chinese novel. Readers can find a plethora of Greek and Latin elements and English classics.

Fan's *Mirror* encompasses multiple topics with quite in-depth views. Just as the title of the book, *Translator's Mirror for the Romantic*, indicates, Hawkes' *Stone* and the original *Dream* are the "two sides of a mirror" (Fan 167). The former is not only a translated text of the latter but also stands as a work of literature itself — a world constructed by Hawkes. Fan's *Mirror* offers its readers an approach to interpreting Hawkes' *Stone* and also, in a way, an opportunity to get closer to *Dream* through Hawkes' unique perspectives. Specifically, Fan presents the Hawkesian world to the reader in two general aspects: Hawkes' ability as a translator and his creativity as a writer. Regarding the first aspect, Fan reviews Hawkes' upbringing and educational background to demonstrate how his personal experiences helped him understand the setting and the social environment of an aristocratic family of *Dream*. Besides that, Fan devotes much ink to explicating Hawkes' language aptitude and his erudition in Sinology, which are the foundation for a successful translation. A pivotal point to Hawkes' great sensitivity comes from his mastery of several

languages, which helped him in more than one way. As illustrated by Fan in Chapter One, Hawkes referred to numerous materials about *Dream* researched by Japanese redologists, which turned out to be useful in text collation. Furthermore, since there are countless allusions in the Chinese original and most of them cannot find counterparts in English, translating these cultural-specific expressions is deemed impossible by the majority of translators. Hawkes, as a polyglot, solved this tricky problem by deploying allusions in multiple languages, including French, Latin, and Greek, which is evidenced in his *Stone*. In Chapter Five of *Mirror*, the author gives a list of examples of the Western allusions adopted by Hawkes. The reason that Fan advances Hawkes' practice of using Western allusions in the translation of a Chinese novel is threefold. First of all, Fan holds that literary translation should also be an artwork itself. Therefore, the freedom of creativity on the translator's part is required, and the traditional sense of faithfulness is not always favourable for reproducing a masterpiece like *Dream* in another language. Moreover, the act of referring to European literature is a mimicry of Cao's love for using a wide range of allusions in *Dream*. What is more, the integration of classic English, Greek, and Latin literary elements into a Chinese novel has added to the depth and width of Hawkes' *Stone* and brought a unique personality to it.

Another advantage of *Mirror* is the explanation of how Hawkes' cultivation of art and his personality contributed to the translation of *Dream*. Cao's *Dream* is regarded as an encyclopedia because it contains knowledge of religion, philosophy, music, opera, poetry, painting, medicine, architecture, horticulture, tailoring, culinary art, and politics. As observed by Fan, Hawkes' curious nature and personal interests in various forms of art such as music, painting, and gardening enabled him to be sensitive to the fine details of the subjects in these areas and translate them to his own taste. In addition, based on his contacts with Hawkes and thorough research, Fan notices that Hawkes' "profoundly melancholy attitudes toward life" (12) echo Cao's despair and depression as well as the tragic tone of *Dream*. On top of that, Hawkes resonated so intensely with the rebellious protagonist Baoyu of the novel, as can be seen when he relinquished professorship together with the strictures of the academic world before devoting wholeheartedly to translation (Fan 10).

Admittedly, Fan's *Mirror* is excellent guidance for readers to explore Hawkes' way of understanding and rewriting *Dream*. Some of the author's views about Hawkes can be subjective and fail to analyse the translator's unideal parts of *Stone*. Except for very limited examples of Hawkes' revised part covered in Chapter Five, Fan hardly mentioned any other "mistakes" in *Stone* as a translated text. Though Fan does not directly address the issue of translatability in the book, it makes sense

to deduce that he is pretty optimistic about the feasibility of translation by inventing new ways to get an idea across. This also explains why he thinks highly of Hawkes' approaches to conundrums, including poetry, allusions and even sound effects in translation. However, whether all of Hawkes' inventions are "ingenious strokes" or not remains elusive. An immediate case in this regard is Hawkes' rendition of names. In *Stone*, he used innumerable Greek or Latin names when translating those of religious practitioners in the novel — be they Taoists, Buddhist nuns or monks. For example, *jingxu*, which literally means "quiet and void," is translated by Hawkes as *euergesia* (a Greek word for "beneficence" or "good deed done"), and his version of *miaoyu*, whose literal meaning is "wonderful jade" is *adamantina* ("adamant" or "diamond"), to name only a few. Fan agrees with this way of translation as he comments that "[t]hese Latin-sounding names are used to give an impression of a scholarly or religious aura" (Fan 171). Nevertheless, using these culture-loaded names could be misleading as target readers familiar with the Latin literature would inevitably connect a character in the novel with the stereotypical impression embedded in a foreign name.

From the perspective of translation studies, the book is educational as translators can learn both specific translation methods with detailed text analysis and get inspiration from the predecessor's creative practices. Translation critics would be interested in finding how a nontheoretical way could be used in evaluating literary translation. For monolingual readers of *Stone*, *Mirror* is of much value as a guidebook to acquiring a deeper understanding of the novel's gist and means of artistic expression; for those who have read both the Chinese original and English translation of *Dream*, this book deciphers the easily overlooked word games and unveils covert allusions built in *Stone* by Hawkes. The book also has much to offer to the discipline of comparative literature as Fan makes some novel comments when he compares the Western and Chinese copious forms of poetry, ballads, allusions and rhetorical devices throughout the book. Fan's whole book is an attempt to promote the idea that a literary translation should have its own artistic value and expressive ambitions (192). Just as Fan suggests with the name of his book *Mirror* — readers should scrutinise *Dream* and *Stone* "side by side with enquiry, wonder and empathy and embrace language's power to move and change" (192).

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Chinese Environmental Humanities is a collaborative humanities project that showcases current research in the field of Chinese environmental humanities (later referred to as CEH in this review) published in 2019. It is a collection of fourteen chapters that bring together sixteen scholars from diverse disciplines, who explore the relationship between environment and humanities. By examining the two core concepts *huanjing* and *ziran* that shape the field of CEH, Chang argues that the practice of "environing at the margins" embedded in traditional Chinese culture can bring a refreshing perspective to Environmental Studies.

Taking landscape painting as a point of departure, Chang argues that in traditional Chinese culture lies an ecological view that can help envision a better future but has been overshadowed by the Western idea of modernity. For example, "the fusion of heaven and humanity" that has been the basis of "ecological civilization" is not a new or imported concept but has long been embedded in Chinese culture, such as in the form of landscape paintings (Chang 1). Thus, China plays a significant and unique role in the EH field, resulting in the significance of CEH. However, naming the field CEH raises questions about "Chineseness" — namely, are these specifically Chinese approaches to China undertaken by Chinese people? Do cases where "Chinese" become the local example of a universalizing or westernizing theory also belong to CEH? Chang answers these questions by arguing that these different cases can be read as "strong or weak forms of CEH," making CEH the field itself as a spectrum that can include more related cases (7). Chang then introduces the institutionalization of the field. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, EH conferences, workshops, and curricula have appeared in universities in mainland China, Hong Kong, as well as overseas.

By examining the premodern Chinese context, Chang teases out the definition

of "*huanjing*" and "*ziran*," arguing that the two concepts can bring alternative approaches to EH today, which can be considered one of the book's greatest contributions. She argues that *huanjing*, although in modern times, becomes interchangeable with "environment" in English; in the traditional context, it can be seen as a "practice." *Huan* literally means "encircle" or "environ," while *jing* means "territory" or "borders." Back in the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), *huanjing* carried the meaning of the establishment of an imperial or ethnic boundary and defending or expanding one's own territory by securing the border (12). From such an historico-linguistic perspective, *huanjing* can be read as related to "colony," signifying the practices such as the privatization of commons, public spaces, or lands that originally belonged to other human communities (13). Chang then uses the "U.S.-Mexico" anti-immigrant wall as an example of *huanjing* as a "practice of environing at margins," which demonstrates the ability of *huanjing* to open up our critics and reflections on transcultural and contemporary issues. In a nutshell, the re-examination of *huanjing* as a practice calls our attention to the process of **inclusion and exclusion** during the "environing" and invites examination of the "multiple forms of exclusive socio-environmental practices at the margins," where marginality includes not only identity and communities but also marginalized knowledge (13).

While the unique Chinese word *huanjing* evokes the re-examination of practices, *ziran* in the Chinese context provides an alternative, non-anthropocentric approach to sustainability. Instead of the anthropocentric idea of "saving nature," namely treating nature as something rarefied that can be preserved and passed on to the next generation, Chang argues that the Daoist concept of *ziran* brings the idea of enabling nature to recuperate, thrive, and flourish. It provides a shifting view of nature from object to subject and asserts the agency of nature to self-generate.

In such a theoretical framework, the fourteen chapters engage in "environing at margins" and are divided into three sections — namely "Chinese ecocriticism and eco-translation studies," "Chinese eco cinema and ecomedia studies," and "Sustainability, organic community, and Buddhist multispecies ethics." The time period ranges from premodern to modern, and the subjects include literature, film adaptation, documentation, translation, and advent-grade art, as well as indigenous studies and multispecies studies. For example, in the first section, Chapter 3 takes Yu Yue, Zhang Binling, and Liang Shumin as examples, criticizing Western modernity for its developmental mode of industrial-scale extractivism and mass consumption, and reconfirms the premodern Chinese values that are beneficial to the environment. Chapter 4 focuses on the literary works of healing written by ethnic minority women, illustrating how the center is redefined from the margins' perspective. In

the CEH theoretical framework, center and margin are no longer stable concepts — the herbs that can heal, although they "grow in undisturbed corners, are never marginalized" and can challenge the interspecies relationship (90). Chapters 5 and 6 take translation and adaptation as a critical lens, with Chapter 5 focusing on the French cinematic adaptation of Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem* (*Lang tuteng*) and its ecological implications, which shifts the focus from nationalism in the original story to the environmental issues in the film. Chapter 6 addresses the issue of the mass extinction of bionym ("names of plant and animal") in modern literature in translation practices.

The second section shifts to focus on different forms of media. Chapters 7 to 10 walk us through Xu Bing's *Silkworm Series*, Wang Junliang's *Beijing Besieged by Waste*, the *bianxian* practice at Nu River, and the "Yellow Eco-Peril" discourse. The third section examines the question of China's sustainability, organic farming in urban centers, and Buddhist animal ethics, as well as the monastic praxis of human-vegetal multispecies holism. Overall, the pieces challenge the binary definition of center and margin, as well as an anthropocentric view of the environment. This also echoes the position of the field itself in reality, as stated in the "Afterword" by Slovic: while CEH is itself still in a marginalized position, it certainly plays a central role in the development of China as well as the world.

Chapter 2 is a detailed example to illustrate how traditional Chinese culture can help provide new perspectives to the EH. Chang focuses on Lu Shuyuan and his Tao Yuanming studies, arguing that the politically marginalized "peasant-poet" can provide a critical frame to examine the "moonlight poetry" written by peasant workers, thus conceptualizing the "discourse of environing at the margins" that speaks for/with China's largest marginalized group — rural migrant workers — a vis-à-vis current systematic erasure of the pastoral mode of life (38). By tracing the early history of ecocriticism in China, pointing out the freedom brought by the Open Door Policy, and Lu's identity as a postcolonial scholar, Chang demonstrates how these factors provide a ground for Lu Shuyuan's eco-analysis and his effort to "humanize the ecological system and to ecologize humanity" (46).

Chang then dives into Lu's argument that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis, thus, a humanist issue (44). In this case, literature and art should serve to mend the broken spiritual sphere, and this is where poetry steps in. By comparing Tao's poems and the peasant workers' works, one can detect a similarity between the yearning for an agrarian culture and mourning for the loss of rural areas facing industrialization. In addition to spiritual meaning, Tao Yuanming's "Peach Blossom" poetry also provides a practical possibility in architecture and the

work-life sphere to achieve harmony between human beings and the environment. Tradition and cultural roots are specters providing analysis and possible solutions to contemporary crises.

Comments, Questions, and Critiques

It is certainly a valuable effort to incorporate traditional Chinese culture into the EH studies in the still Eurocentric academia. This collection can be seen as an effort to make invisible issues in developing countries visible, to show how marginalized knowledge (traditional Chinese culture, Daoist and Buddhist, and indigenous knowledge) can contribute to the study of ecology and bring an epistemological shift in treating the environment and nature. The division of chapters also provides a window to look at the various subject matters and methodologies in the CEH field. Overall, this collection is informative, well-researched, and contains many insights.

Still, some questions might be raised in order to better reflect on the CEH field. For example, one might be curious about whether methodologies in the CEH field are fundamentally different from other disciplines in EH, which circles back to the question of "Chineseness." Furthermore, how do we deal with the emerging new humanities field, such as environmental humanities or medical humanities, in the trending of interdisciplinary studies? How are the aims and methodologies of these fields different from the traditional ones? *Chinese Environmental Humanities* can be seen as a starting point to deal with these questions.

When it comes to the practice of incorporating Chinese culture into ecological studies, such as in the case in Chapter 2, one might ask, why does the author specifically refer to Tao Yuanming as a comparison to tease out the "yearning for home" motif in peasant workers' poems? While Tao signifies a politically marginalized poet escaping to nature for spiritual support and a traditional agrarian way of life, why not incorporate other poets who write about rural areas? In addition to Tao's poems, in Chapter 3, it is Buddhism that becomes the core concept serving as an Asia-centric alternative to the Euro-American modernity in Zhang Bingling's argument (65). Instead of seeking a particular answer, the broader concern behind these two questions is that, traditional Chinese culture is not a monolithic idea but ranges over a time period of thousands of years; thus, in a specific context, generalized appropriation should be avoided. Furthermore, while Chang argues that Tao Yuanming's poems can provide an inspiration for a more ecological way of living, such as providing new possibilities in architecture and a lifestyle that is slow paced and allows idleness, such lifestyle is normally enjoyed by the class of people other than peasant workers. How do we deal with current class differences in the discussion of

a utopian ecological view?

Finally, with the field developing so fast and emphasizing its relationship with politics and policies, one might be curious about what the EH curriculum envisions its students to do in daily practice. In other words, in practice, how does CEH deal with the gap between "the fusion of heaven and humanity" cosmology and the ruptures and chaos in reality? While we use landscape painting as a positive example of an ecological view, is there a danger that such painting only bears a nostalgic and utopian sentimentality? Furthermore, in the Western reception of such CEH, would the inclusion of Daoist or Buddhist spiritual thoughts induce a problem of "self-Orientalism?" Orientalism, raised by Said, points out a power structure where the Orient is treated as the exotic other to define the "modern, advanced" West. By arguing against Western modernity, is there a danger of reconfirmation of such a power relationship? These are common questions when emphasizing the "Chinese elements" in the humanities field and when coping with the gap between theory and reality. Overall, *Chinese environmental Humanities* is undoubtedly a valuable effort to bring Chinese voices into the environmental humanities field, while how we view the new humanities and how China positions itself in the field remains to be explored.

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