Project +

No. 21

Graduate Institute of
Foreign Languages and Literatures
National Taiwan University

December 2024

escapade

Project + No. 21, December 2024

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Published by the Graduate Institute of
Foreign Languages and Literatures, NTU

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acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

Ted Po-cheng Chung

This issue of *Project +* opens with a quiet yet insistent question: what does it mean to bear the weight of a world that no longer feels like home? Perhaps this yearning is not new to our moment; every era, in its own way, is defined by those who long to slip its grip. Escape is more than a mere retreat; it is a feat of imagination, and, at times, of survival. It is the narrative of a mind straying beyond the confines of its present, a body seeking respite from its burdens, or a heart daring to envision a world otherwise. In literature, as in life, such departures often arise out of crises: wars that fracture landscapes and lives, illnesses that shrink horizons, losses that feel insurmountable.

However, they also illuminate the human spirit's capacity to reimagine and reconfigure its conditions, although transiently. As Yang Mu reminds us, the act of grappling with despair is not without its gifts: "To the pessimist is bestowed the solemn right, to fathom the infinite light in the depths of the intellect."[1] Escapism, in this sense, is not just a retreat but an effort to discern the possibilities obscured by the weight of the present. This issue explores the faces of escapism: as an impulse born of exhaustion and resilience, as a critique of what binds us, and as a gesture toward what might set us free. From the personal to the collective, the physical to the metaphorical, these escapades are not merely detours but journeys that reveal how identities, desires, and communities are formed, tested, and transformed. What does it mean to run toward something or away? What can these departures teach us about the worlds we inhabit and the ones we hope to create?

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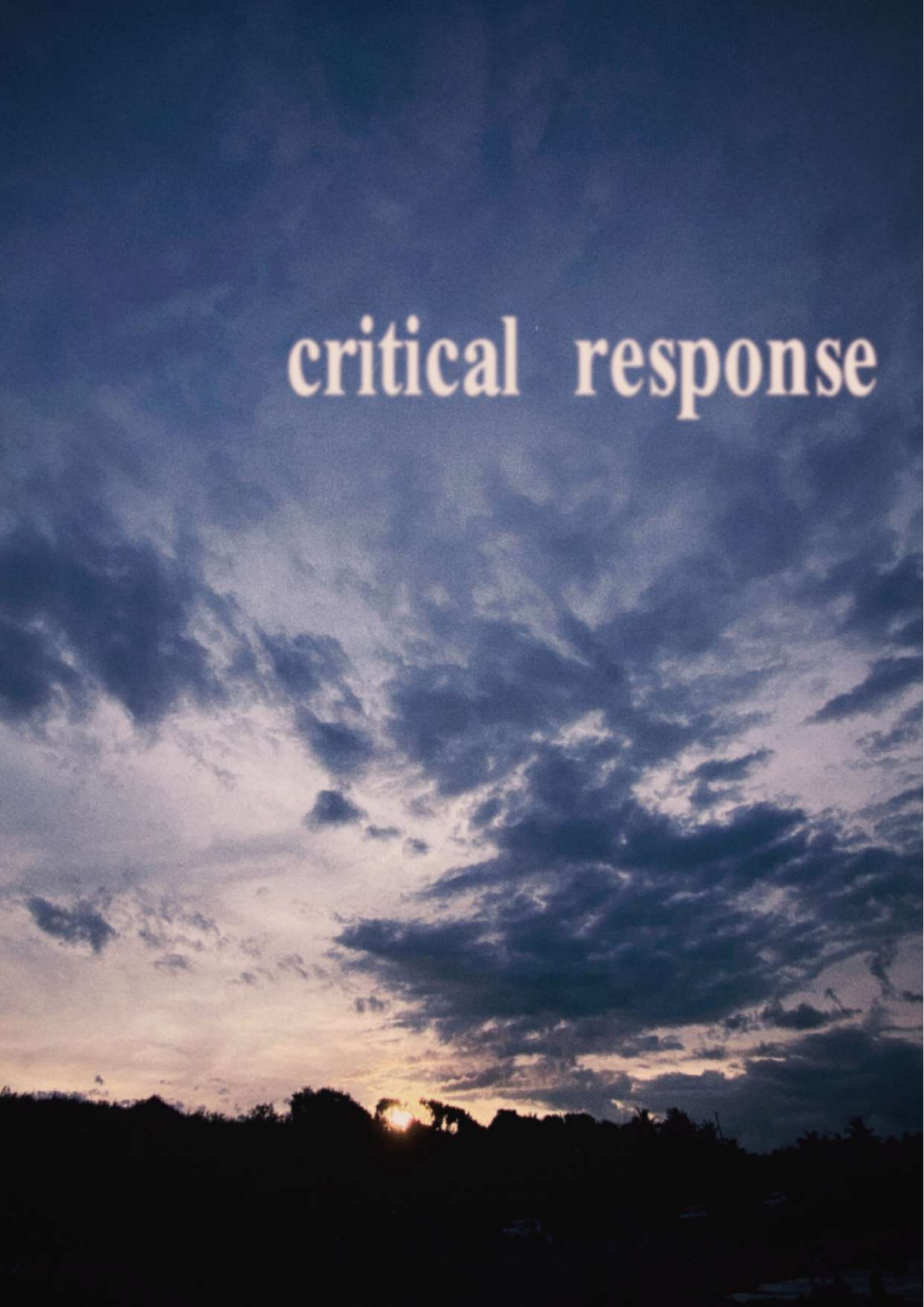
1. 〈主題〉:「悲觀的人有思維深刻的權力」


critical response

The Paradox of Escape within War Literature: Siegfried Sasson's Return to a Hated War in *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*

Maxi Grindley

Generally, to escape requires some form of spatial relocation: to escape the entrapment of prison, one must leave the prison and enter the outside world; to escape the mundanity of everyday life, one must leave the physical world and enter the digital realm. And yet, the very form of literature, specifically autobiographical literature, negates this. In order to write about what has passed, one must return to it. This remains true even for horrific events such as war. The question then becomes why do so many survivors of war voluntarily choose to return to it, if only mentally, in order to write about it?

In order to investigate this, Siegfried Sasson, especially his *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* collection, shall be used as a case study. First, Sassoon's relationship to World War One, the war he fought in, must be briefly examined. After all, there is every chance that a man "whose courage was legendary," in the words of Alistair Duckworth, would have enjoyed being a soldier and fighting a war sufficiently to gladly relive the experience through writing about it (66). That particular concern can be safely and quickly laid to rest. In 1917, Sassoon wrote and published his famous *Finished with the War: A Soldier's Declaration*, in which he refused to

report for duty in protest at what he felt to be the unnecessarily prolonged continuation of the war, stating "I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust" (1). Doctrinal as his opinion may seem here, his poetry provides an unexpected complication. There is certainly an argument at the very least that his poetry, which focuses so acutely and viscerally on the soldier's wartime experience, itself helps "prolong these sufferings" through forcefully reminding the soldiers of their experiences. Indeed, there should be no doubt about the nature of Sassoon's poetry: it does act as a return to the experiences of trench warfare, and it does so in a brutally visceral and direct manner. Regarding the former, it is a simple inevitability that, as Catherine McLoughlin states, "accounts of war are always authored, in the sense that the gap between the experience and the representation of conflict can be narrowed but never completely eliminated" (42). Moreover, as well as necessarily returning the author to their experiences, the nature of reading means reading these "accounts of war" inevitably positions the reader within the war too. Regarding the latter, two epitomic quotations from Sassoon's poetry will be quoted as examples to demonstrate this (and incidentally, it also shows the temporal distance McLoughlin alludes to between witnessing and writing an event). For instance, note the description of the death of an officer in "Counter-Attack": "and started blazing wildly ... a bang / crumpled and spun him sideways, knocked him out / to grunt and wiggle: none heeded him; he choked" (Counter-Attack, lines 29-31). Sassoon uses onomatopoeic language ("bang" and "grunt") to evoke the soundscape of the battlefield, while loading the sentence with verbs ("crumped," "spun," "knocked ⋯ out," "grunt," and "wiggle") to make the description of the scene almost filmic in its tracking of the action. The horror of the scene is then shown by the "bang" having the synesthetic agency to physically crumple the officer, which is indicative of the confusion of the battlefield.

Finally, the pathos of war is shown by the insignificance of the scene in the fact "none heeded him," which also serves as a negation of the author himself interestingly, helping elide the role of writing to concentrate attention on the action itself.

Another incident occurs in "Suicide in the Trenches": "in winter trenches, cowed and glum / with crumps and lice and lack of rum / he put a bullet through his brain" (*Counter-Attack*, lines 5-7). Here Sassoon adopts a different approach. The very simple structure (three four-line stanzas of octosyllabic rhyming couplets) is juxtaposed to first the syndetic listing of problems and then the dramatic description of suicide. The result is the same: the brutality of trench warfare is effectively remembered and evoked. It is also worth briefly mentioning the past tense in both quotations (e.g., "crumpled and spun" and "put") which formally manifests the inevitable temporal gap between Sassoon's experiences and writing. To return to the question of the introduction: why then did Sassoon write about—and, thus, return to—the very war he was trying to escape?

While a definite answer is naturally impossible to ascertain, one possibility is that Sassoon had to repeat the war literally in order to escape it literally and physically. In writing about the war Sassoon remembered it but he also re-remembered it, as in, he reinterpreted it. The nature of memory means that it is both the repeat of a previous event but simultaneously the original of itself, allowing it to be both entirely faithful and slightly novel. Natasha Alden describes how "regenerated, remembered past is both contingent, being interpreted, and also resistant to meaning; it is, however, all we have" (192). Thus, in writing about the war Sassoon remembers it on his own terms, allowing him to control and thus escape it. For instance, in "Suicide in the Trenches", the eponymous suicide is neither the beginning nor the end of the story. Sassoon first returns to the soldier's life, describing how "I knew a simple soldier boy / Who grinned at life in empty joy, / Slept soundly through the lonesome dark, / And whis-

tled early with the lark" (*Counter-Attack*, lines 1-4). While the title already imparts a sense of tragic morbidity on this description, this does not negate the idyllic enjoyment of life the soldier seems to enjoy. Sassoon therefore chooses to return to this suicide not only to mourn the death of the soldier, but also to celebrate his life. Indeed, the fact the boy overcame "empty" and "lonesome" aspects of his life guards against his suicide being read simplistically as a reflection of a weak character. The poem also ends with an admonition to readers at home to "sneak home and pray you'll never know / The hell where youth and laughter go" (*Counter-Attack*, lines 11-12). This didactic closing couplet—rendered particularly evocative through the religious imagery of "pray" and "hell"—shows how Sassoon has found meaning in returning to the horrors of war. In writing about the battlefield, Sassoon manages to elicit a moral message which had not been immediately present when in the war itself. Thus, writing about war facilitates an escape from it by focusing first on celebrating what was once had and then on changing what will be, rather than simply mourning what is currently being destroyed.

Part of the reason for this is that war is by definition a communal event, in which an individual requires an adversary and a team. Thus, Sassoon knows that to leave the war is not to end the war and hence cannot escape the war truly. His disinterest in prematurely leaving the battlefield is shown by the biting satiric mockery he employs in "Base Details," where he adopts a senior commander's perspective, suggesting they "[and] speed glum heroes up the line to death ⋯ and when the war is done and youth stone dead, / [they]'d toddle safely home and die—in bed" (Counter-Attack, lines 1; 9-10). The subjectivity of these commanders in the first sentence, especially considering the purposeful haste achieved through "speed," underlines that the soldiers' deaths are the direct results of their commanders' orders. While this may seem like a rebuke targeted directly at senior commanders, the final line seems to equate "toddl[ing] safely

home and d[ying]—in bed" more generally with dishonour through its contrast to the "youth [being] stone dead." For Sassoon therefore, there cannot be an individual escape from the war without a collective escape. The soldiers seemed to recognise his unity with them, considering Robert Nichols's paraphrase of a common refrain he heard from them: "'Hello, you know Siegfried Sassoon then, do you? Well, tell him from me that the more he lays it on thick to those who don't realize the war the better. That's the stuff we want. We're fed up with the old men's death-or-glory stunt'" (qtd. in Sassoon 5). This popularity should not be surprising considering, as Avi Matalon notes, "Sassoon gave voice to the troops and their suffering" (30). Possessing a rare literary skill, Sassoon was uniquely able to voice and articulate the feelings of the soldiers to the public. In doing so, Sassoon afforded an escape for his fellow soldiers too by allowing them to read about and recognise their own experiences in a comprehensible manner. As Daniel Pick notes, "each of us perceives in an inimitable way, but it is through the shared realm of language that we put our world together and can find, and also lose, our sense of meaning" (41). While war can be a disorientating and isolating experience, the nature of language, specifically literature, acts as a method of communal therapy through its mediative representation of the horrors in intelligible forms.

Hence, counter-intuitive as it may seem, sometimes to escape from something one must return to it. This is especially true of literature, wherein the separation between the primary act of experience and the secondary act of writing necessitates retroaction within composition. While this may seem like a hindrance, especially when encountering traumatic events, in fact the literary act of representation itself acts as an escape from war even as it returns to it. By mediating an alternate, intelligible version of war, war literature serves both the writer—in this case, Sassoon—and a soldier audience as a method of communally making sense of the horrors witnessed.

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Maxi Grindley (or 葛希彌 now too!) has just started his Master's here in the DFLL at NTU. Having finished his undergraduate in English Language and Literature back home in the UK last year, he is really enjoying his time in Taiwan so far! In his spare time he enjoy sports. He loves trying out new sports, but, like so many people, always come back to football eventually.


book review

Escaping from the Escape: Revisiting Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*

Maxi Grindley

Brideshead Revisited (1945) was a pivotal cultural touchstone for at least two generations of English people: it was instantly acclaimed when it was first published in 1945, and its television adaptation in 1981 was if anything more successful, breaking into American culture in a way the original had never quite managed. Despite the intervening time, I would argue both versions have withstood that infamous test: after all, I only read and watched them both within the last 10 years or so and they still managed to have a profound effect on me.

The reason that they can still both so potently impact their viewers is, I would argue, because they offer such a powerful flight of fancy for the reader. In order to understand this, one must first briefly recap the plot.

Taking place during World War II, the narrator, Charles Ryder, has just been requisitioned to the eponymous Brideshead, prompting him to reminisce on his own history with the Marchmains, the owners of this manor. He first encounters them through his intoxicating friendship with Lord Sebastian Flyte, their eccentric and charismatic younger son. Over the years, Charles maintains an ambiguous and fluctuating friendship with the family, despite Sebastian himself fleeing to Morocco and sinking into alcoholism there. The family's Catholicism is a continual source of confusion, as they each seem to adhere to it to varying, unclear degrees.

Eventually, Charles becomes engaged to Sebastian's sister Julia, but ultimately they do not marry as they are both divorced and cannot quite overcome the Catholic animosity to this state of affairs.

Though Waugh saw his novel as centring around the Catholic faith following his own conversion, I would wager most readers would disagree. While the television adaptation did not destroy the religious undertones, neither did it particularly centre them. Waugh himself likely anticipated this, writing in a letter to his literary agent, "the whole thing is steeped in theology, but I begin to agree that the theologians won't recognize it" (qtd. in Elmen 630). Indeed, if the theologians are unlikely to recognise the theology, there can surely be little hope that the average viewer or reader will be able to perceive it, especially considering its competition for attention: sheer romanticism.

When Charles is exploded from his boring, staid middle-class life upon meeting Sebastian, the reader too is dragged from the everyday mundanities of their life. The impact of this meeting is so great that Charles remarks "I date my Oxford life from my first meeting with Sebastian" (26), and in many senses the reader does so too. Who truly cares that the book is written in retrospect? From that inauspicious meet-cute—a drunken Sebastian vomits through Charles's window before leaving bouquets of flowers as an apology—we cannot help but fall in love with Sebastian, just as Charles does. What love is it: platonic, romantic, sexual, erotic? That is truly irrelevant—our infatuation is simply too great, too foundational to fit into such inane distinctions.

It is worth briefly dwelling on that first meeting, because it epitomises so much of Sebastian's charm, both for Charles and the reader. What kind of person chooses to throw up into an open window when one is already outside? What kind of person chooses to apologise by buying out a market

stall's stock of flowers and, uninvited, delivering them all to the offended person? What kind of person accompanies this apology with an invitation to lunch? What kind of person only apologises because their teddy bear Aloysius won't speak to them otherwise? And finally, what kind of person can charm the cleaner Lunt that his complaint changes from "I'd rather not have the money and not have the mess, *any* morning" to "I'm sure it's quite a pleasure to clean up after him" upon meeting the culprit (32)?

From that moment on, Charles and the reader are transported to another world, a more vibrant and colourful world. It is never quite as charming as Sebastian's eccentricities but it is certainly closer than anything the real world can offer. We meet Anthony Blanche, the flamboyant, exotic homosexual whose only flaw is his too-perceptive insight into those around him. We meet Julia Flyte, Sebastian's sister, whose detached imperviousness means she epitomises coolness. We meet Lady Marchmain, whose Roman Catholic faith grants her an unbreakable stability despite the assorted follies of her children.

And yet, we never quite feel satisfied. The answer for this is simple: just as Sebastian guides us on our escape from conventionality, he continually escapes himself from the very unconventionality we have been guided to. Even as Charles follows the "aesthetic education" (78) he receives at Brideshead all the way to becoming a successful painter, Sebastian has long since fled, all the way to alcoholic depravity in Tunisia. The reader too becomes increasingly entranced with the romantic and idealistic portrayals of the Flyte family's idiosyncratic quirks, but in doing so becomes increasingly distanced from Sebastian himself, who can no longer bear these very same quirks. The television adaptation's languorous, indulgent shots of the beauty of Brideshead only enhance this strange division between the reader and Sebastian.

Why then does Sebastian flee? From what exactly is he fleeing? I will not attempt to answer either question, because I think their very existence is the precise reason we continue to chase him. An integral part of Sebastian's romanticism—and indeed the romanticism of the wider society he leads Charles and the reader too—is his own unhappiness with it. Of course, we become infatuated with his world because it offers a magic beauty and an idyllic wishfulness we cannot find in the banal tedium of everyday life. But we only become obsessed with it because it is clear that even this—this being the very escape we did not even realise we were dreaming of—is not enough for Sebastian. How can we help chasing him continuously then? There is a small part of us which perhaps hopes he will find somewhere suitably brilliant and idealistic to satisfy even him—and imagine what a world that will be! But the greater part of us simply follows him to discover what it is exactly that so fatally flaws the escape he has so successfully offered us.

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For the author's bio, please see pp 14.

Poor Things: A Female Escape

Linda Tsai-ling Lu

Poor Things (1992), a novel by Alasdair Gray, is set in Scotland during the Victorian era. The novel was later adapted into a movie of the same name by Yorgos Lanthimos in 2023. It was not until I watched the film and grew frustrated with the male gaze that I decided to turn to the novel for a clearer view of the story. Reminiscent of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, *Poor Things* is not merely a story exploring the relationship between humanity and technology; instead, it's a story about a man-made woman's continuing escapades in a man-made world. Through the narrator Archibald McCandless, readers witness the coming-of-age story of Bella Baxter and her escapes. At first glance, this may seem like a female *bildungsroman*, but what caught my attention in Gray's portrayal of Bella Baxter's world is the males' expectations of Bella and Lady Blessington and their responses, particularly their runs from various men. It is through these escapades that these women, both Bella and Lady Blessington, have a chance to transform themselves and demonstrate their growth; however, I would argue that Gray's version of the *bildungsroman* is more about imposing ideas on women than it is about telling a true coming-of-age story for women.

From a claimed dead body in Godwin Baxter's home laboratory to Mrs. McCandless, the female protagonist explores the world through her

escapes. These escapes signify not only a change of surroundings but also a remaking of identities. At the start, Bella Baxter's rebirth can be traced back to Victoria Blessington's drowning in the Clyde River, an attempt to escape her miserable marriage to General Blessington, in which she was forced to undergo a clitoridectomy because of her sexual desire—considered abnormal and insane for a woman. After escaping her marriage and her life, Victoria is secretly given a new life when the brain of her unborn child is transplanted into her adult skull, making her Bella Baxter in Godwin Baxter's laboratory. In this novel, Baxter is "a distant niece whose parents died in a South American railway accident, a disaster in which she sustained a concussion causing total amnesia" (35). Her first escape is an act of rejecting the ideal of the respectable woman who doesn't "wriggle her hips" (218). Gray's attempt to highlight women's freedom of sexual desire is straightforward. In a conversation tracing the motivation behind Victoria's suicide, the male characters—General Blessington, Prickett the family doctor, and her father—blatantly state what they believe to be true: Victoria wanted to cure her "pathetic" desire; Victoria knew she was hysterical; Victoria was mad. In the patriarchal view, she was not only physically sick but also mentally deteriorated, and therefore, she needed to be cured.

As Bella, she seems to be given the opposite life that Victoria Blessington had suffered. Yet, the confinements return step by step with every encounter with a male character. Godwin Baxter, whom Bella considers a god, likely had nothing to do with giving Bella back her freedom but creating a woman who could meet his needs: "I needed to admire a woman who needed me and admired me" (39). Bella was deeply fond of Godwin, as he wished, under his unconditional care. It would be fair to say that Godwin dictated Bella's world by confining her to his house and homes-

chooling her. Godwin gave Bella freedom and respected her ideas, but it was all under the condition that Bella be his property and admire him as he wanted her to. The idea of a man believing he knows what is best for a woman contributes to Bella's first escape—her elopement with Duncan Weddingburn. In the elopement, Bella did enjoy the freedom of learning about the world: from benevolence to cruelty. Meanwhile, the consensual sex and Bella's unwillingness to marry him and comply with his plan, mentally and financially exhausted Weddingburn, who had no choice but to escape the elopement and accuse Bella of being a beast. In this elopement, Gray prompts us to think critically about sex and marriage: Do we judge Bella with Weddingburn's accusation? Or do we feel proud of her?

"One isn't born, but rather becomes, a woman" (273), as Simone de Beauvoir famously states in The Second Sex. It is inspiring to see Bella reclaiming autonomy over her body through her trips and escapes, where she had to remind everyone that it is normal for her to make her own choices about her body—having sex with Weddingburn and working in a prostitute house. Poor Things pays clear tribute to the second wave of feminism with Bella's demonstration of women's sexual and body freedom. However, I can't help but wonder about Gray's intentions for the end of Bella's coming-of-age story. Just when she has managed to shed the burdens of patriarchal expectations, she marries McCandless, becomes Bella McCandless, and embarks on a career as a doctor. It seems to me that her repeated denials and escapes from patriarchy are aimed at finding something that could allow her to prove herself by doing what is traditionally considered a man's work. Nevertheless, is a woman's growth the same as a man's?

Her glorious return to McCandless and Godwin Baxter as a person who "is no longer the pleasure-seeking somnambulist who eloped with

poor old Wedder" (189) mirrors the form of a *bildungsroman*, but I want to nuance the difference between a male-centered and a female-centered one. Bella's escapades have indeed brought her changes and confrontations with patriarchal society, yet her return is overemphasized as a success, especially with McCandless's unconditional acceptance of her, neglecting the inward change of her. I see a reversal of gender stereotypes: how Bella replicates what men do in society with her final letter, calling her husband McCandless mad because what he writes about her isn't true at all. As much as I appreciate the challenges to regain women's control over their bodies, I am not satisfied with how her escapades ultimately bring her back to patriarchal society, showing her success in becoming a different woman. Poor Things presents Bella's growth within the framework of a man's path to success, and it does draw attention to her transformation. However, in McCandless's narration, I see Bella working to become a changed woman along a path designed to mirror a man's successful journey assimilating in a man-made world. I cannot help but ask: Is her raison d'être having the autonomy over herself? Or is it becoming successful in the male judgments?

Gray has brilliantly highlighted the issue of female body through Bella's resilience and escapes and, in a larger scale, men's frustration over the attempts to control female body. Bella and all the other female characters (Lady Blessington and Mrs. McCandless) in the development of an autonomous female pose the question: What is it like to be a woman challenging the patriarchal norms? Does it render her poor things? Or, could it be those who try to lay their hands on a woman's body that are the poor things?

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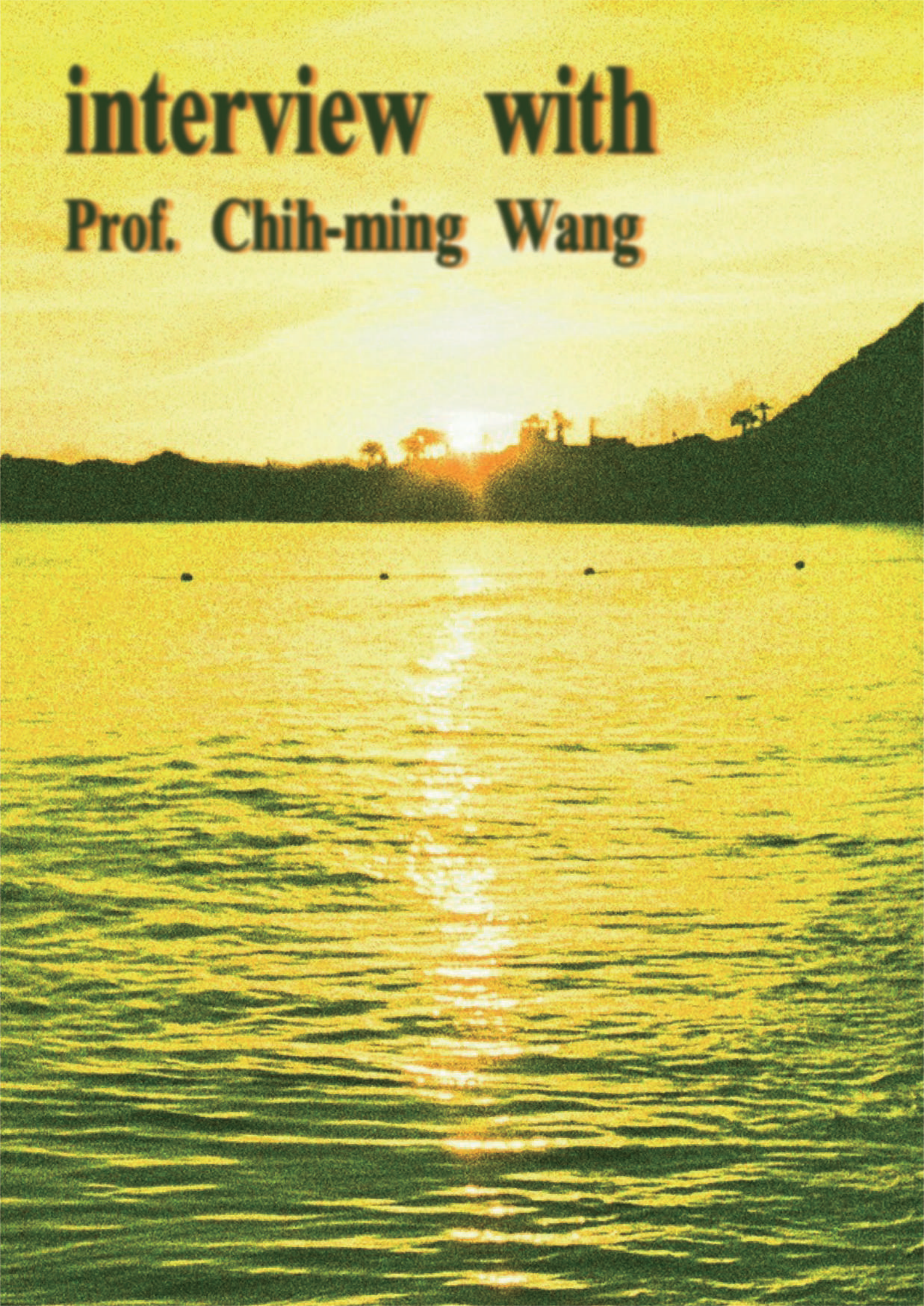
Linda Tsai-ling Lu is a second-year MA student in DFLL. She likes to linger in bookstores and buy books with pretty covers, but her reading can never catch up with new books. And she has never published a book review because she finds it scary to criticize people.

interview with

Prof. Chih-ming Wang



"A Window Gazing Upon the World": Rethinking New Courses and Possibilities in Taiwan's Foreign Literature Studies

Translated and edited by Ted Po-cheng Chung

Abstract

In this interview, Prof. Wang Chih-ming guides us on an intellectual journey to rethink the very nature of "foreignness" of foreign literature studies within an increasingly interconnected yet fragmented global landscape. He urges us to dismantle the traditional boundaries of the field by venturing beyond the dominant paradigms of English language instruction and Euro-American perspectives, prompting us to contemplate a fundamental question: What does it signify to study the "foreign" in our contemporary world? This inquiry serves as this interview's compass, leading to an assessment of the field's historical evolution, methodological approaches (especially in culture and ethnic studies), and potential transformations. Through a tapestry woven with personal experiences, observations, and theoretical frameworks, Professor Wang illuminates a field at a crossroads, confronting its inherent limitations while embracing new avenues for growth and continued relevance. He underscores the imperative to transcend a solely reflective approach to scholarship so as to encourage a more interventionist engagement with the world. In this trajectory, I believe this interview could be viewed as an attempt to invite students of DFLL to reimagine the role of foreign literature studies in shaping both our understanding of the world and our position within it.

Wang Chih-ming is a Research Fellow at the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, and an Associate Professor at the Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies, National Yangming Chiao-tung University. Professor Wang was a former visiting scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute and China Academy of Art; he also served as the chief-editor of *Router: A Journal of Cultural Studies* (2017-23). His research spans Asian American literature, inter-Asia cultural studies, and postcolonial theory, with a focus on race, migration, borders, and geopolitics. Between academia and reality, he works to connect care for humanities with political engagement through literary and cultural studies.

Interview

Chung: After reading *Re-Articulations: Trajectories of Foreign Literature Studies* (2021), I went back to revisit your essay "Bridging the East and West, Rebuilding Civilization," which is included in the two-volume *How Humanities Transformed the World: The Development of Scholarship on the Humanities over the Last Hundred Years* (2011). When I saw this essay in the library, I noticed that its earlier sections essentially serve as the predecessor of the introduction to *Re-Articulations*, titled "Knowledge Production on Cultural Boundaries: Foreign Literature Studies and Colonial Modernity." However, unlike in "Bridging East and West," the introduction to *Re-Articulations* additionally discusses two articles by Yang Mu (楊牧) included in his *The Spirit of Berkeley: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, specifically "What is the Role of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures?" and "Humanistic Education is University Education." I sense an underlying theme in *Re-Articulations* around your reflections on liberal humanism. When revisiting Yang Mu's work, you wrote: "The liberal humanism underlying Yang Mu's thought has been the ideological foundation of foreign literature studies since the Republic's founding; it is the core value sustaining scholars of foreign literatures through a century of political upheaval and intellectual liberation" ("貫穿楊牧思考的自由人文主義正是民國以來外文研究發展的思想底色，亦是在政治動盪與思想解放的百年歷程中，外文學者與外文研究賴以維繫的核心價

值"; my trans.; 11). Hereafter, it seems that reflections and critiques of liberal humanism thread through the whole *Re-Articulations*, especially in Chapter 7's discussion of "illiberal humanism," a concept proposed by Kandice Chuh in her *The Difference Aesthetic Makes* (2019) "as a method and premise for rethinking the humanities in an age of globalization" ("作為思考全球化時代人文研究的前提與方法"; my trans.; 397).[1] My question here is about the relationship between illiberal humanism and literature as a system of representation: if we frame our thinking around "illiberal humanism," is our ultimate goal to transform the mode of literary representation or to dismantle the dominant structure of liberal humanism?

Wang: To answer your question simply, let me start with two points. The first is that the concept of liberal humanism is particularly important to me because it offers a way to understand the academic production and intellectual traditions of the department of foreign literature studies. It's a foundation that underlies everything we study and write, whether in English or Mandarin. This foundation centers on two key concerns: a care for humanity and a commitment to a certain sense of liberty. These two elements are insepara-

1 According to *Re-Articulations*, Kandice Chuh's illiberal humanism specifically involves constructing a relational imagination through marginalized literature to reveal the intersections and entanglements between the world and subjectivity, thereby re-producing the knowledge in the age of globalization (396–98).

ble and particularly meaningful because they come together through literature. Literature have been seen as an extreme form of individual expression, a view that traces back to Romanticism, where figures like Wordsworth famously described poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." This Romantic conception of literature has become a foundational element in the teaching and scholarly practices of our department. The interesting part is that while this idea has Romantic roots, it must be understood within a tension between humanism and Romanticism, almost a dialectic. As we adopt this Romantic notion that literature represents individual expression at its height, our predecessors have also insisted on critiquing Romanticism, pointing out its limitations and suggesting that literature, above all, should aspire to reconcile and foster deeper care for the human condition.

Professor Lee Yu-cheng (李有成) encapsulates this perspective with the idea of literature as a tool for "benefiting the world": literature is for making good for the society. In this view, literature simultaneously records individual experiences and reflects a broader sense of social responsibility. Then, I think, through historical analysis, we can clearly trace how liberal humanism, with this dual focus, has shaped the traditions of the department of foreign languages and literatures at least until the 1990s. I will address how the situation has evolved after the 1990s shortly.

To return to the first part of your question: within the framework of liberal humanism, literature occupies a core but ambiguous position. On the one hand, it is profoundly

personal; on the other hand, it carries a strong societal dimension. This leads to the second part of your question about the relationship between illiberal humanism and literature: should we change the way literature is expressed, or should we fundamentally alter the underlying structure of liberal humanism itself? I see this question as critical yet perhaps too quick in its implications. From a materialist perspective, for instance, the conditions of society directly shape the culture and literature it produces. While this may sound overly deterministic, it remains a useful way of thinking. If we accept this, then the literature and culture we create will fundamentally reflect the social conditions of the time. If those conditions remain the same, liberal humanist literature will continue as it is; conversely, if we wish for social conditions to change, the modes, forms, content, and themes of literary production would change correspondingly. Thus, this is less about subjectively wanting to change something and more about analyzing objectively where our era has arrived and how it's evolving.

From this point of view, marginalized communities, or the "illiberal" aspects of humanism, remind us of the dark sides in history—sides that, in earlier times, were unseen or accepted as normal. However, in the face of contemporary global changes, it has become increasingly difficult to treat these issues as self-evident or unproblematic. Consider, for instance, the issue of educational inequalities today. It is clear that this is not a fair system, yet we cannot simply

change the rules overnight.[2] Recognizing this unfairness—or recognizing that the humanities themselves have illiberal dimensions—forces us to think about how our cultural practices might adapt to reflect these realities, if adaptation is even possible. The answer isn't necessarily to discard liberal humanism for something else; that would be a revolutionary approach, something our predecessors would likely resist since they took an anti-Romantic, even anti-revolutionary stance. This stance was shaped both by the historical context of the Chinese Civil War and by their intellectual inheritance, including figures like Irving Babbitt, who critiqued Rousseau and industrial culture. Looking at history, we see these "repeated dramas" that manifest differently in each era while retaining elements of continuity. The rise of illiberal humanism, in this sense, may represent a distinctive variation or symptom of our current age.

Chung: Thanks for your response. Building on what we talk about humanism, I see that beyond contrasting liberal and illiberal humanism, you're also bringing in the issue of aes-

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2 "[T]he issue of educational inequalities" here continues the topic discussed by Prof. Wang during lunch before this interview on 3 Sept. 2024. The conversation mainly focused on critiques of the social inequality created by Taiwan's bilingual policy. Wang argues that the bilingual policy is essentially a game for the rich, who can already afford expensive English education; their children can study abroad in the U.S. over winter and summer vocations and naturally excel. In contrast, ordinary families must allocate extra resources to meet the bilingual requirements of the policy, causing great anxiety among parents and students: students feel solely responsible for "learning English well," while parents from average backgrounds worry about affording English tutoring fees. This policy, therefore, reinforces a meritocratic outcome—students who meet the bilingual standard have a competitive edge, while those who fall behind are quickly left out. Furthermore, the core purpose of the bilingual policy is also questionable: if students learn English but cannot communicate with their grandparents, what is the real value of this so-called bilingual education?

thetic education. This is clear in your conclusion "For Students of Foreign Languages and Literatures," especially in the second and the third point, where you draw on I.A. Richards' idea of practical criticism. You suggest that in British and American academic institutions, increased professionalization has stifled critical and theoretical engagement. If we look at how Taiwan adopted theories after the 1980s, it appears that although the left gained ground, this success was largely superficial. In reality, academic knowledge production became so specialized and controlled that it moved further away from the public, isolating scholars in an ivory tower. Consequently, scholars "lost their voice in shaping what the public reads, watches, thinks, and feels" ("對群眾該讀什麼、看什麼、思考什麼、感受什麼，失去了發言權"; my trans.; 455), and, as you put it, the academy lost its "function of aesthetic intervention" ("美學介入的功能"; my trans.; 455). This seems connected to what Professor Lee Yu-cheng (李有成) mentioned about literature's potential of "benefiting the world."—or in other words, how public education and cultural life relate to academic knowledge production. My question is, when you talk about notions like professionalization or institutionalization, do you see any contradictions? For example, one of my classmates/friends brought up an interesting point. He said, "Scholars have their own strategic roles of professionalization. Even if you argue that cultural studies practitioners are at the front lines of dealing with social events, they are, at their core, not the same individuals. Similarly, the scholars in the academic institutions are not the same as those active in social move-

ment, nor must they be collapsed into a single figure. In essence, scholars work with an eye on the future, aiming to furnish intellectual resources that generations to come may one day harvest." To me, this defense of professionalized, academicized knowledge seems quite different from your stance. I think the issue lies in how you define and explain your take on what scholarly "intervention" may look like. So, how would you address this contradiction, and how do you define what it means for literature to "intervene" the society?

Wang: That's an excellent question, and I think we need to break it down on several levels. First, let's begin with the issue of professionalization. The critique that academic professionalization has confined criticism within the ivory tower is largely drawn from Joseph North's *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History* (2017). North's analysis primarily focuses on the North American context. While I find his observation reasonable, it cannot be transplanted wholesale to Taiwan. This is a point I touched on in the conclusion of *Re-Articulations*, "For Students of Foreign Languages and Literatures," where I made a brief comparison. According to North, by the 1980s, criticism in North America had largely become confined within academic systems. By "confined," he means that criticism had limited direct interaction with societal contexts. In Taiwan, however, the situation during the same period was quite the opposite: the academy was becoming deeply entangled in social movements. This discrepancy stems from two key differences: the specific social contexts and the historical moments of each place. The late

1980s and early 1990s marked a unique historical juncture for Taiwan, characterized by the end of martial law, the dissolution of the First National Assembly, and the rise of democratic movements. These movements were intertwined with the transformations of society and the nation itself, making them more than just activism by small interest groups: they represented a broader social transformation. To put it another way, the participation of academics in Taiwan, Mainland China, and Hong Kong in social transformation have reflected a tradition. If we look back at the May Fourth Movement, we see how intellectuals at Peking University, who were originally focused on studying classical texts, suddenly took to the streets, engaging in social upheaval. This change became integral to broader social transformation and reform. Similarly, while the 1970s saw relatively fewer such movements, both the North American Baodiao movement and the native- soil literary debate in Taiwan exemplified the same impulse: to leverage academic knowledge and resources to contribute to societal change. For a clearer picture of this tradition, one can refer to the collection of interviews with Lin Shiaw-Shin (林孝信), which I edited. Lin Shiaw-Shin represents this generation, though he wasn't in the department of foreign languages and literatures. However, many individuals of his generation shared similar experiences. In the department of foreign languages and literatures, there is also such a tradition. For instance, figures like Yan Yuan-shu (顏元叔) and Hou Chien (侯健) in the 1970s might not have engaged in interventions in the way we understand post-1990s activism, yet they still

facilitated interactions between academia and society.

This brings us back to your question: What does "intervention" mean? Let's take Yan Yuan-shu as an example. In his case, intervention operates in two directions. One is within academia itself, where intervention involves reforming the institution. This includes decisions about what students should study, what materials to use, and what courses to offer. These efforts aim to improve the institution from within; within the institution you try to make the institution better. At the same time, Yan also sought to extend his research and influence beyond the department of foreign languages and literatures. He discussed modern poetry, classical Chinese poetry, and even Taiwanese novels. Though this approach might seem more academic, his interventions initiated new discussions. These discussions might not have been universally accepted and were sometimes even met with hostility, but they still created an impact. This impact, in turn, contributed to the professionalization trend within academia. The paradox here is that the "revolutionaries" of the past are often labeled as conservatives today. This is precisely why we must return to the historical context to evaluate history. In their time, these actions carried revolutionary significance. Intervention, in this sense, must be understood as efforts contextualized within their historical moments. For the department of foreign languages and literatures in the 1970s, its primary goal was to rebuild the professional standards of academic practice. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Taiwan's university system had very low levels of professionalization—for instance, professors could earn promotions

without publishing in journals. This is unimaginable today, but it was the reality then. Yet, Yan's concerns went beyond professionalization. His main question was how to use Anglo-American literature as a medium (primarily through New Criticism) to invigorate research on Chinese literature and generate fresh perspectives. This carried a kind of ambition of the youth, like what Li Ao (李敖) might call the younger generation's desire to reshape scholarly norms.

Then, by the 1990s, the nature of literary intervention shifted more towards theories and cultural studies. Although there was some focus on ethnic studies, it didn't take as strong a hold. The connections between these disciplines and societal transformation became more immediate, and this kind of intervention highlighted the connection between societal change and academia, even if this connection seemed tenuous at times. For instance, cultural studies' greatest regret might be its failure to institutionalize itself more thoroughly. Today, Taiwan only has one semi-cultural studies program, as Chen Kuang-hsing (陳光興) puts it: the Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies at National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, which is half sociology, half cultural studies. While we have a Cultural Studies Association, it appears to be more likely an Institution of Taiwan literature now. To simply put, if you're looking at institutional change in academia, most of the transformation that took place in the 1990s happened outside the academy, in the social arena. This includes engagement with issues like the unification-independence debate. That's why I spent so much time discussing the Subject as Void in the theory chap-

ter of *Re-Articulations*. I think that is central to the unification-independence debate that shaped Taiwan's society in the 1990s.

Chung: Speaking of the debate on Subject as Void, I remember Professor Liao Hsien Hao (廖咸浩) mentioned in an online lecture hosted by Linking Publishing that he felt your stance on this debate wasn't very clear. He also had some critiques about how he saw himself "captured" in *Re-Articulations*. Do you think that, in the process of tracing history, you're in some way reconstructing it? When we look back on these debates, how do you think this retrospective framing affects our understanding of the discussions at the time?

Wang: This is also a great question. I remember Professor Liao's response that day. From what I recall, he felt that I had positioned him as being on the "losing" side of that debate. But that was certainly not my intention. I wasn't trying to label anyone as the "winner" or "loser"; rather, what this process made me realize is why the concept of subjectivity is so powerful, and why the idea of Subject as Void sparked such intense debates at the time. It profoundly captured the social pulse of that period in Taiwan—a time when Taiwan was, in a sense, emerging onto the world stage, and everyone was trying to make sense of it. Subject as void provided a space to grapple with that, but, at the same time, this space

emerged with a certain degree of forcefulness.[3] Back then, you could see that Professor Liao offered a direct and assertive response to that coercive aspect. But now, when we revisit this issue two decades later, we notice that those still-incipient debates have now become the framework through which we view everything. So while the argument in my book may seem to place Professor Liao on the losing side of the debate, I believe it's precisely by re-examining and re-organizing these debates that we can uncover some valuable aspects from it that still warrant further reconsideration today. This might reflect a shortcoming in my writing, where I could have been more meticulous and thorough. But my true concern lies in this: when we revisit these issues, as your question's latter half suggests, what stance should we take in evaluating them? How do we understand the impact of those discussions on where we are today? Take, for example, a line I quoted from Ho Chuen-juei (何春蕤): he said that, in some way, everyone is essentially "locked in the closet." At the time, he was, of course, referring to the "closet" in the context of queer studies. But when expressed in Mandarin, the word "closet" (櫃) also homophonically connects to a "box" or "container" (甌), and you suddenly realize that the concept of the "closet" has significant implications in our context. I doubt he realized this at the time, but now, twenty years later, you can see how the concept of

3 This "forcefulness" hints at the fact that perhaps Subject as Void contained a kind of implicit coercion in shaping how people came to understand this identity.

same-sex marriage itself is, in a way, another kind of closet. Twenty years on, even though queer identity may now be "out of the closet," it's moved into a new "democratic box." This, of course, is a subsequent development, but small details like these were incredibly illuminating during my writing process. They also made me realize that having time and distance to reflect on past events is actually quite helpful.

Chung: This also touches on what I wanted to discuss next: the issue of time-sensitivity. We often question whether certain theories or arguments still hold up over time or if, after a particular debate, their validity has expired, so we can set them aside. Specifically, I'd like to ask if the notion of relevance has its own time-sensitive nature or limitations. You've pointed out that one of the main questions in *Re-Articulations* is why relevance—rather than canonization or modernization—become the frame through which the department of foreign languages and literatures engage with the West in the post-Cold War era. You've also noted that the concept of relevance here is inherited from figures like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Yến Lê Espiritu, Édouard Glissant, and Shih Shu-mei (史書美). And of course, each of these scholars engages with unique interlocutors. But I wonder, while they do contribute to oppose certain dominant narratives, would this framework risk to essentialize marginalized communities or flatten the differences among them? For instance, the recent rise of archipelagic thinking argues that some island cultures and ecosystems were interconnected

before colonial incursions. However, this approach has faced pushback from other scholars who argue it risks essentializing island cultures and erasing their distinct boundaries. After all, the perceived "essence" of these cultures is itself a product of colonial history, an invention of the colonizers. So, given these dynamics, how do we approach the issues of relevance and time-sensitivity? Does the notion of relevance shift in meaning over time and across contexts?

Wang: Let me put it this way: I remember one of the critiques from Prof. Chen chun- yen (陳春燕) was precisely on this point. She felt that if old scholarship has to be relevant in the time sensitive sense, then any scholarship that isn't "relevant" doesn't seem to count. This reflects her attitude or stance toward cultural studies, which she disagrees with to some extent. This, I acknowledge, is a fair critique. I take that. And this brings us to the question of how we understand relevance and how we recognize or construct its context. In my book, a strong example of relevance is clearly ethnic studies, where the idea that "Other is closely connected to oneself" comes into play: that the Other we see on the screens might very well be ourselves. I think this idea has become increasingly apparent through issues ranging from Black Lives Matter (BLM) to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is one way of understanding relevance, and yes, it ties into the crisis you just mentioned: of lumping everything together and accepting them as the same. However, I want to say that while I don't oppose this understanding of relevance, my own view of relevance goes beyond it. That is, while the

book may emphasize this form of relevance—between ethnic studies, the Other, and oneself—it doesn't claim that this is the only valid understanding of relevance, or that relevance is limited to this. Rather, to me, the significance of relevance lies in how it opens up the imagination and thinking of relationships. What is relevant to me also depends on my relationship to that thing. The meaning of relevance, then, is to help you discover a kind of relationship through the sense of relevance. Similarly, if we look back at the historical development of our department, our predecessors were also seeking relevance. For instance, if Western traditions have epics, what do we have? This is a question of relevance: if epics are so significant in the Western literary tradition, why don't we have them? So, within this seemingly homologous relationship, they were also searching for relevance that provided a basis and impetus for their study and research.

Therefore, at the first level, I approach the meaning of relevance more positively and broadly; it's not confined solely to marginalized communities, even though that aspect is very important. This is where we shift from relevance to relationality. Perhaps in *Re-Articulations*, I did not emphasized relationality as what connects to what, and how are these relationships constructed. This idea comes from Glissant, who viewed relation as a condition. It's a condition in which things happen. For instance, if I form a relationship with you today, it happens under certain conditions, right? Those conditions might include, say, *Re-Articulations* or someone's introduction, which brought us together. That's a convergence of causes and conditions; because those condi-

tions existed, we met. From this perspective, relationality reflects conditionality: what are the conditions under which such a relation occurs? Now, returning to your partial critique of archipelagic thinking: you mentioned that archipelagic thinking turns something relational into sameness, into identity. I would argue that if we truly take relationality seriously, we should understand relationality outside the framework of identity, rather than understanding identity through relationality. What do I mean by this? It's not about claiming that all islands share the same suffering. Islands differ in size, in whether they're inhabited or uninhabited. If we delve into the history of islands, we find that they're not monoliths, and, thus, islands are grouped together for discussion. For example, in recent years, the concept of the First Island Chain spans from Japan's Okinawa to Taiwan and the Philippines. These islands may have no intrinsic relation to one another historically, but under a geopolitical condition, they're brought together. This creates a conditional basis for relationality. When we truly engage with relationality, we don't simply say that the First Island Chain is homogenous. They may play similar roles in U.S. geopolitical strategy, but the relationships among these islands are complex. Exploring relationality reveals that archipelagic thinking doesn't stop at sameness or identity. Instead, it seeks to understand the conditions under which relationships form, how specific conditions shaped by geography or geopolitics influence these formations, and how these islands are grouped together. Furthermore, it asks how this grouping process either erases or mediates the internal ten-

sions or affinities, whether gentle or fraught, between these islands. For instance, placing Taiwan and Japan in the First Island Chain may not seem problematic to many Taiwanese people, but including the Philippines might feel more contentious. But have you ever considered, though, how the people from the Philippines view Taiwan? Or how does Japan view Taiwan? And how does Taiwan view the Philippines? These questions, I think, lie at the very core of relationality.

Chung: So could we say that when we discuss relationality, we need to place it within a specific context and use that context to clarify how each part connects, rather than lumping all identities together as a single, unified whole from the outset? In other words, shouldn't we start by acknowledging the differences and internal tensions, seeing how connections form from those differences, instead of assuming that relationality is just a display of sameness?

Wang: A different way to express may help. The term identity here doesn't refer to a sense of self or identity politics but rather to sameness, as in "they all look the same." In this sense, perhaps sameness might be a better term. The point is that sameness is not the focus of relevance or relationality: just because I feel a connection with you doesn't mean we're the same. Maybe it's because something you did resonated with me, creating a nexus. I might have a connection with you, but that doesn't make us identical. For instance, say, you are dating someone; that doesn't mean she shares your

last name or your entire worldview. The key lies in understanding how the relationship between you two is constructed, which is what relationality emphasizes. From this angle, the critique you just raised—that some interpretations may imagine relationality as something involves lumping together unrelated elements and treating them as if they're the same—is a misunderstanding. Instead, relationality unfolds from its internal convergence and differentiation. Let me offer two examples to clarify. First, let's consider islands. Take Okinawa or even Taiwan, for instance. In recent years, people have started conceptualizing Taiwan as an archipelago. But why? What's the point of thinking of Taiwan as an archipelago? Does Taiwan even qualify as one? These questions challenge the conventional notion of Taiwan as just "Taiwan," disconnected from its outlying islands. When we include places like the Diaoyutai Islands, Kinmen, Matsu Islands, the Spratlys Islands, or Taiping Island, Taiwan becomes something entirely different. How so? Not merely in terms of having an Austronesian anthropological lineage, but as a political and geographical construct contingent on arbitrary historical circumstances. For instance, why does Taiwan claim that the distant Taiping Island as its territory? If not for the Chinese Civil War, how could we have constructed an airfield there and treated it as part of our southern frontier? In this sense, viewing Taiwan as an archipelago enriches its historical significance and underscores the conditionality that shaped the imagination of Taiwan as a cohesive community. Recognizing this fact is critical. It explains why Kinmen and Matsu have become Taiwan's most contentious yet pivotal boundaries with Mainland China. This is

the first example, showing how conditionality helps us understand relationality.

The second example returns to ethnic studies. When studying ethnic literatures in Taiwan, or in much of East Asia, including Japan and Korea, the first tendency is to "study our own people." If you're Chinese, you study Chinese American literature; if you're Korean, you study Korean American literature; and so on in Japan or the Philippines. This diasporic projection feels natural, even instinctive. However, the relationship underlying this projection—what Shan Te-hsing (單德興) calls a "peculiar sense of intimacy" and what Tee Kim Tong (張錦忠) refers to as the "niche" of studying Chinese American literature—is, frankly, fictional. I think we all chuckle knowingly because it's undeniably true. On what basis can you claim you're the same as your cousin from America? As you noted earlier, the cultural and experiential gap between you and them remains substantial. So, can this relationship be considered relevant? Perhaps, or perhaps not. Here lies the distinction between relevance and relation: not every relational link is inherently relevant. Instead, we must ask: What makes something feel relevant, and how do we expand a discussion of relation from that point? This realization has shaped my observations about the development of ethnic studies in Taiwan. Initially, diasporic projection led us to focus on Chinese American literary developments, believing them to be connected to us. However, we've often failed to articulate these connections clearly, especially as we must rely on American literary frameworks for legitimacy. Without such framing,

these discussions would likely be relegated to the department of Chinese literature instead. Therefore, I think this conditionality underpins our relationship with Chinese American literature. We should foreground it, acknowledging that the legitimacy of Asian American literature in Taiwan is deeply tied to America's status as an intellectual and a political empire. Without the legitimacy derived from America's intellectual dominance, Asian American literature wouldn't belong in the field of American literature. Without its political dominance, Asian American literature wouldn't seem worth studying in Taiwan. This is why transpacific studies, or its interventions into Asian American studies, matter. These literatures are relevant to us not because they represent our "cousins" but because they are part of "the American problem." This relevance, in turn, exerts a reverse influence, shaping our aspiration to emulate them, so much so that we aspire to be just like them. For us, this is both an external and internal reality. Externally, we cannot be just like them. Internally, this creates a complex: a kind of ambivalence in how we understand Asian American literature. On the one hand, they're often framed as marginalized Others. On the other hand, within our relationship to them, they aren't necessarily the marginalized ones. In many cases, they may even serve as dominant Others.

Chung: Actually, I feel that your reflections on this "internal complex" can already be seen in your master's thesis *Sailing Through Angel Island and Beyond: A Cultural Political Reading of Gish Jen's Novels*. While reading your other works, I

often feel like I can still see traces of your thesis lingering in the background. In the coda, there's a passage I would like to pay attention to:

> Heading East as a Taiwanese overseas student, I find myself treading on the same path of many Asian immigrants, and I could envision the possibility of becoming an Asian American myself. In many respects, this thesis looks somewhat like a preview of my prospective life on the other side of the Pacific. It is also like a kind of pre-taken therapy that aims to keep myself from falling sick in the phantasmagoric American multiculturalism. As a baby growing up under the spell of American pop culture and "brainwashed" by the American academe, I am indeed fascinated with the trans-Pacific prospect of crossing national boundary, of creating new identity, and of navigating my own self-in-split on the troubled waters of postmodernity. All these urges point to one destination alone—America—as if it is the point of gravity that holds everything together. However, isn't this U.S.-centeredness a feature of Asian modernity, a symptom that tells how much Asia is entwined with America on its way to modernization and economic prosperity? Isn't U. S. A. the frame of reference for Asian people who look up to the big brother with mixed feelings—awe, admiration, anger, and what not? Yet, still year after year many Asians cross the Pacific, as if that is our manifest destiny and an indispens-

> able segment in the course of self-actualization. As Hollywood symbolizes, America is a dreamlike wonderland. (89)

When I read this passage, I was reminded of how, in the introduction to *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, Gauri Viswanathan notes, in the preface to *Orientalism*, Said speaks of one of his motivations is the "'punishing destiny'" of being a Palestinian in the West, where they were held captive by a dehumanizing ideology (qtd in Said xv). Said explains that this chilling experience leads him to "'inventory the traces'" of dominating culture left on him through his personal academic training and pursuit (qtd. in Said xv). So, my question is this: from your master's thesis to the present, why have these traces of domination remained such an enduring and compelling research topic for you? Is this pursuit part of your broader reflection on Asian modernity and on your own lived experiences?

Wang: Wow, thank you so much. Honestly, I haven't thought about that thesis in ages. Hearing you quote it now, I'm actually pretty surprised. It seems like I haven't made much progress in the past twenty years, haha; I'm still writing about the same things. Wow, it's really interesting. I think what that reflects is a certain constancy between Taiwan's condition and my own life. That is, for my generation, we grew up under America's shadow. To be blunt, it's as simple

as that. Even though we weren't part of generation of Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇) when the slogan "Come, come, come to National Taiwan University; go, go, go to the United States" permeated in the society, the legacy of that era has been deeply influential for us. This ties into a broader question about how times have changed, something I've been reflecting on recently: what's the real difference between the 1990s and now? I'd say that, looking back at the '90s, before I went abroad to study, there was this sense of exhilaration, an excitement and anticipation. At the same time, though, there was also a vague sense of concern. That concern wasn't about whether I'd stay abroad permanently or come back; it was more about, I'm not sure what to do with that, right? Because the previous generation wanted us to become Americans. I don't know if this is unique to the waishen families,[4] but I think it's somewhat tied to diasporic experiences. If you read the novels of Nieh Hualing (聶華苓) or Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇), you'll see how Taiwan's instability made their generation feel a sense of being deeply unsettled. In the 1950s, people might have still believed in retaking the Mainland. By the 1960s, that belief had mostly vanished, so the focus shifted to securing a stable future: how to settle with peace and a sense of integrity, and how might we lay the foundation to secure a bright path for the future generations. From the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s, as American power kept growing, learning English and studying abroad

4 Waishen families here means families that came from Mainland China during/after the Chinese Civil War.

became, if you could manage it, the thing to do. If you couldn't, well, that was that. But if you could, you would. Of the five children in my family, the ones who didn't study abroad are few and far between. Not everyone went to the U.S., but studying abroad was almost a given. And I don't think our family was an exception. If you look at families like the Chiang family—well, obviously, the Chiang family's case speaks for itself. But for waishen families from the '60s and '70s who were relatively well off . . . like the family of Liu Chao-shiuan (劉兆玄), every single one of them was a U.S.-trained PhD. Even in the 1990s, this was still a common expectation: That is what is expected of you. Maybe parents wouldn't say it explicitly, but you could tell this was their natural line of thinking.

For me, though, two pivotal experiences shaped my perspective on my whole educational process. One, of course, was my American cousin. From a young age, I could sense an aura surrounding him. You just knew they speak better English and that they look better. It's like in Andrew Lam's essays. When Vietnamese Americans return to Vietnam, the locals perceive them the same way. I think I felt the same back then: these people are like they've come from heaven. But this wasn't just a child's reaction. It reflected broader cultural discourses shaping how we saw "them." Supposedly they're part of us, but not really, not clearly. This kind of relativity matters—relatives matter—but it's also about relative positioning. When you have this experience, this aura of America loomed large and it creates an emotional attachment. You feel like, that looks like a place I should be. But at

the same time, you're not sure you belong. I think that's what I was trying to express in that excerpt of my thesis: because I studied abroad, I felt like I could potentially become Asian American. But fundamentally, I knew I wasn't. My Mandarin was much better than theirs, and my academic foundation came more from the training of Mandarin than English. This made me curious about America, but also skeptical—is it really as great as they say? If it were that great, everyone would go. But what about those who can't?

Of course, at the time, I don't think I fully grasped this. I was just beginning to feel the immense influence America exerted. I wasn't entirely excited or self-congratulatory about studying in the U.S., thinking that I would automatically become Asian American. Instead, I felt uncertain and somewhat reserved about this anticipated future. Another essential moment for me, which I rarely talk about, was in 1996. I don't know if this still exists now, but back then, there was this summer program run by Japan Asia Airways, a Japanese airline established to maintain connections with Taiwan after our diplomatic ties were cut. For six weeks, students from across Asia gathered in Tokyo. My experience there in 1996 was eye-opening. For the first time, I met students from all over Asia. Through this Japan Asia Airways scholarship program, I noticed two striking things. First, U.S. pop culture unites us all. Despite our different backgrounds, everyone could sing American pop songs. Second, Southeast Asian Chinese spoke Hokkien, the same as our Taiwanese dialect. In that Asian setting, Mandarin was largely irrelevant. That experience had a profound impact

on me—I realized how dominant America was, yet also how limited its influence was. It provided a platform for interaction, but the differences among us were stark. Japan's role also stood out. For example, we stayed with host families, and my Malaysian friend and I were picked up by an elderly woman in a Mercedes and taken to a luxurious suburban home in Yokohama. She served us tea, bowed, and said, "Japan apologizes to you." I was stunned, thinking, "What's going on?" Haha. That experience planted the seed of my interest in Asia. So later, when I met Chen Kuan-Hsing (陳光興) and began collaborating on inter-Asia cultural studies, it felt natural, inevitable even. I think this is an experience relatively rare in the department of foreign languages and literatures. For me, Asia has played a significant role in my academic life, and it still does today.

Chung: Building on your reflections regarding your research motivations and questions, my next question focuses on research methodology. I've noticed that when you discuss ethnic studies in Taiwan—whether it is about Asian American or African American—you frequently use the word "resistance" to frame the intrinsic conditions of this field. You've said, "The approach of thinking through symbolism and resistance as methodology has broadly permeated in American ethnic literature studies in Taiwan since the 1990s, becoming a presupposition that is readily accepted without question" ("以象徵和抗爭為方法的思考模式廣泛地呈顯在臺灣1990年代以降的美國族裔文學研究中，成為大家習以為常、不須檢驗的預設"; my trans.; 401). In

this sense, do you believe that the "imagination of methodology" in ethnic studies that you mention: "how to create a distinct approach in foreign literature studies?" ("方法論的想像（怎麼做出不一樣的外文研究？）"; my trans.; 404)—differs only in terms of the research subject, while still adhering to a (re)presentational reading method? After talking with Professor Chen Chun-yen this summer, I'm also curious: if scholars in foreign literatures treat literatures merely as a way to present the real-world phenomena, wouldn't that risk erasing literature's unique capacity to question society and the world or to disrupt conventional meanings?

Wang: Good question. But I don't think the answer here is especially complicated. Simply put, the ability to "question society and the world or to disrupt conventional meanings" is a high-level concept. But it's considered high-level only when we adopt global humanities as a primary framework. In this context, I am part of the global humanities, so my point of direction is to speak to it. But this is where the issue arises: Why you? Why does your voice matter? As a scholar from Taiwan, why do I have something meaningful to contribute to global humanities? Or, to put it differently, regarding Literature as an abstract entity? Even if I do have something to say, why should others listen to me? This is the most direct response to these underlying questions. It's not that these questions are misplaced; rather, within this framework, there are numerous conditionalities. When we delve into these conditionalities, we are inevitably forced to consider several issues. First, geographically, where are you? Second,

what is your identity? Third, what can you say? The question of what you can say becomes particularly interesting because it depends on what you read, who you are speaking to, and what you are concerned with. Sure, I could focus on the global humanities in the abstract, but this isn't everyone's mode of self-positioning.

Chung: So, could we say that it is globalization that has led to a certain anxiety about the concern of "numerous conditionalities" you just mentioned?

Wang: I don't think it's quite at that level yet. Simply put, I find the way the question is framed to be a bit pompous. This isn't to say that it's wrong, but that this pomposity overrides many practical considerations. Personally, I lean more toward starting from practical considerations to explore what we can say and do. These are two distinct paths: one operates at a higher, more abstract level, where we don't necessarily need to address the issue of difference. My perspective proposes the opposite: it's precisely because we grow out of difference that it serves as the root of our progression upward. I can't just leap into the clouds and declare, "This is global humanities, and here I am." I need to climb up, like on Jack's beanstalk, to reach those clouds. So, we should ask how this tree grows and what shape it takes.

Regarding the issue of reading the texts simply as a method of (re)presentation, this ties into how we define what literature is and what it does. These are two related but distinct questions. The question of what literature is pertains

to definition, and there can be thousands of definitions, as everyone's relationship with literature is different. One the one hand, say, if someone is an office worker with no connection to literary studies, literature might hold meaning for them as leisure, entertainment, or even some kind of enlightenment. They would read literature in their own way, which would naturally differ from how a researcher reads it, right? This is the issue of what literature is.

On the other hand, the question of what literature does is about production. From the perspective of the readers, they might say that literature entertains them, thus the question of "what it is" also addresses the question of "what it does." But from the standpoint of a producer, the production of literature has intentionality or purpose. While we often say "the author is dead," producers still have intentions. They hope their work conveys something, achieves something. This includes researchers like us, writing books or articles, which are not merely about fulfilling SSCI requirements—though they are, in part, about that. What matters is what lies beyond such requirements. When we reintroduce the question of intentionality, the answer to what literature does becomes more specific and individualized. Take Pai Hsien-yung for instance, his aim might have been to capture the spirit of an era; for postcolonial authors, their goal might be to critique history, time, or society through literary representation. Once we understand that literature's meaning varies for every author, our approaches to it necessarily differ as well. You might critique an author, disagreeing with their literary techniques, intentions, or goals. Alternatively,

you might use their work to address the questions you wish to explore. In this sense, the issue of research methodology is not limited to the question of representation. Representation becomes a problem only if that's all we see. If, however, that's not all we see, then representation carries connotations and implications beyond itself. For example, Qian Liqun (錢理群) once remarked that some scholars are like Don Quixote and some are like Hamlet, or that, as a scholar, one possesses qualities of both. Of course, this is metaphorical; he was not studying Don Quixote or Hamlet directly. The point is that Don Quixote and Hamlet can be read metaphorically. I think this concept is important: a literary work can be treated as a metaphor rather than a factual representation: it is not reflectionism. For instance, encountering a Black character in a work doesn't mean the portrayal necessarily corresponds to real-life Black experiences. While there might be some correlation, it is not an isomorphic identification. If you insist on a direct one-to-one correspondence, then you risk falling into Chun-yen's critique, reducing your interpretation and assumption to mere (re)presentation.

But if the relationship isn't a simple reflection but rather a re-flection, an extension, or a projection—such as the way Don Quixote and Hamlet are framed—then our study moves beyond the level of reflection. For Qian Liqun, the significance of Don Quixote doesn't lie in his journey but in that moment when he confronts the windmills: the moment he challenges the impossible. This way of reading moves us away from a reflectionist view of realism and into another realm, where the researcher must ask what they can articu-

late through the work. This involves the individual researcher's capacities and conditions. Some might focus on explicating the work, while others might transcend explication to create something beyond it.

Take, for example, my writing in *Re-Articulations*. When I wrote the chapter on Hsia Tsi-an (夏濟安), I began with Pai Hsien-yung's short story "Winter Night" (冬夜). You might recall that in Chinese literary studies, "Winter Night" is often read through sharp contrasts: old versus young, cold versus warm, and so on. These interpretations are certainly valid, but I approached it in a metaphorical way. I saw "Winter Night" not just as a technical interplay of contrasts but as a juxtaposition of two protagonists: Wu Zhu-guo (吳柱國), teaching in the U.S., and Yu Qin-lei (余欽磊), teaching in Taiwan. The two old friends meet and envy one another's live. Interpreting this symbolically opens up a thread for understanding scholars of foreign literatures. While not every scholar fits this mold, it provides a clue to understanding how earlier generations of researchers of foreign literatures navigated their contradictions in historical contexts. On the surface, those doing well taught Chinese in the U.S., but they often felt they weren't doing well, as their work lacked connection to their national sentiments and served only the tenure system. Meanwhile, those teaching English literature in Taiwan, despite excelling and working hard, felt underpaid and unable to send their children abroad. A representational or realist reading would conclude that Yu Qin-lei represents Taiwanese scholars of the time, while Wu Zhu-guo represents those who studied abroad. That's fine,

shouldn't be the endpoint of analysis. Analysis should build on this foundation and move forward. Therefore, while I don't oppose Chun-yen's critique—it's based on real conditions—I don't think every researchers studying these topics operates the same way or is limited to this approach.

To add one more thing, this is also why I've shifted from traditional literary criticism to institutional and disciplinary histories. I believe research can involve different methodologies that don't necessarily fall into mechanical patterns.

Chung: Based on your approach and understanding to research methodologies, I'd like to delve into a related aspect—your perspective on literature, which, I believe, though not explicitly detailed in *Re-Articulations*, can be somewhat inferred. For example, when you cite Professor Feng Pin-chia (馮品佳), you mention literature's potential for "world-making" ("世界化成"; my trans.; 433), and when referencing Professor Shih Shu-mei, you foreground that literature is "worldly"—it exists within power dynamics, engaging in world-making while also contributing to the world's structure (405). I admit these references are somewhat decontextualized here, but I have a sense that you hold specific views or concepts about literature. Following this question, I have a more personal one: in your master's thesis, you mentioned involvement in editing a poetry collection titled *Sailing to Ellis Island*. Given this, it seems you have a particular interest in poetry. What led you to focus on novels instead of poems as your primary research path?

Wang: *Sailing to Ellis Island* was actually a collection of poems compiled as a group project by the students in Rob Wilson's class for our final assignment. Honestly, no one has likely seen that book; it was more of a creative student exercise than an actual publication. So, while we called ourselves "editors," it was just a matter of compiling our works and getting them printed. A lot of credit goes to Rob, as it was Rob who mobilized us and gave us this opportunity. He even referenced this collection in his own books, though readers couldn't find it anywhere. It was a kind of an inside joke. Many of the poems in it were written during his class. When I was younger, I had a poetic sensibility. I'd write some things here and there, though I wasn't particularly devoted or passionate about becoming a poet. To me, it's like the comedian Li Dan (李誕) once said, "If you're not a poet by twenty-five, you're hardly human." Haha. It's just that when you're young, especially if you're a literary type, you'll naturally have the impulse to write poetry. I think what Li Dan said is quite interesting—it's something normal from our own perspective. You'll want to scribble and jot down a few lines. If you have the background and training for it, this is as natural as breathing. There's nothing inconsistent about it.

Now, going back to your earlier question: What's my view on literature? I feel like that's too lofty a question. I don't have any particularly strong literary perspective. For me, it's very simple—all literary works, whether highbrow or lowbrow, are part of culture; they are social products. This links to the concepts you mentioned about "worldly" literature, being "in the world"—since they're social prod-

ducts, they have a social function. So, for me, the significance of literature lies in its social role. Edward Said explained the existence and importance of this social function even better. So, if literature means anything, it's because it has a social function or role to play. As researchers, our job is to figure out: How does it work? Where does it fail? And how does it persist? Consider the sheer volume of books published each year in Taiwan—thousands of them—yet only a few are truly remembered or widely read. This is even truer for academic books. Writing a book may take a decade, but reading it may only take a week, or maybe two if it's a long one. And how many of those books truly stay in your mind? Not many—unless you're someone like Fredric Jameson or Qian Zhongshu (錢鍾書), who seem to remember everything. In other words, there are so many literary works, but few leave a lasting impression. However, just because something doesn't persist doesn't mean it lacks meaning. It simply means it hasn't entered into the process of social function. It's part of the social world, but it doesn't engage with the social as much. Thus, the questions are what lasts? What resonates in a given moment, sparks memory, connection, or inspiration? To me, literary works are no different from Netflix series. I don't view them as particularly exalted. What I care about is what effect something has at a specific time. That's what I'm curious about. So, intrinsically analyzing what makes a great literary work? That's not what I do. It's not that I don't have preferences or opinions about it, but for me, that's not the most important question. In other words, I don't focus on how creators produce their

works. I'm mostly concerned with the influence and significance these works have within the social world. This is a question of reception (though it's not solely about reception), but it's definitely not a question of production. Of course, if the production process involves a social context, then that falls within my scope of interest. But how a writer stays up late drafting their work? That's none of my business.

Chung: We're now at the last question for today. In your conclusion "For Students of Foreign Languages and Literatures," I feel that you reflect on the future of the foreign literature studies with a certain clarity, looking at it beyond the discipline itself. There's one passage, filled with hope, that left a strong impression on me. You said, "We must dispel the illusion that foreign languages mean English, and foreign countries mean only Europe and America. We need to deeply explore the diversity and transformations of what lies 'beyond,' critically reflecting on the overshadowing of foreign literature studies by English and Euro-American perspectives. We should ask ourselves: beyond Europe and America, how much do we truly know about the world" ("我們必須撥開外文等於英文、外國等同歐美的想像迷障，深入探索「外」的多樣與異變，剴切反思英文與歐美對外文想像的籠罩。我們應該捫心自問除卻歐美，我們對世界的認識有多少"; my trans.; 450)? With this in mind, I believe perhaps it's time to revisit the question you raised in a footnote in your introduction: "When the department of

foreign languages and literatures no longer has to shoulder the task of English language instruction, how should it define its own teaching and research role" ("當外文系不再需要承擔英語教學的任務時，它該如何定位自身的教研任務" my trans.; 11n4)? At that time, you admitted in the footnote that you couldn't answer this question. Now that *Re-Articulations* has had two years to percolate, with discussions and feedback from readers and shifts in societal views on the humanities, how do you approach this question today?

Wang: I can give you an irresponsible answer, but this is the best answer I can offer. Because I don't have to be responsible, ha ha, I think it's the best. Once I have to take on that responsibility, it becomes difficult, so I think the "irresponsibility" should be stated as a premise in answering this question. Why is that? Because once you are in an institution, as the person in charge, large-scale changes are always terrifying. The person carrying out the reforms always bears the heaviest burden, so "responsibility" becomes crucial in this context. For instance, if I were the head of a department, trying to enact reform, I'd be carrying the expectations and critiques of all the faculty and students. This makes reform much harder to accomplish. Therefore, being able to speak without the weight of responsibility—without having to bear those expectations and criticisms—allows me to articulate a fuller vision, even if the reality remains rather stark.

What is this ideal? It means that if we take a serious look

at the "foreign" aspect of foreign literature studies (things beyond the West, beyond English), this also means that the department of foreign languages and literatures should be an academic unit that allows us to have a more complete and rich understanding of the world. In the past, the self-positioning of the department of foreign languages and literatures was to study the West, like how the Institution of European and American Studies claims to be the only unit within Academia Sinica that focuses on the West as their research subject. But what is the problem? The West is also changing. The "West" we face today is certainly not the ancient Greek-Roman West; our West is not the West of King Arthur, right? The West we encounter today, while still carrying cultural and civilizational backgrounds, exists in a shifting reality. So, if we truly open our eyes and look seriously at what the current West looks like, these so-called "white dead authors" should not and will not be our focus. It's not that they aren't important, or that their writing is bad or anything like that. No. It's simply that, from a practical standpoint, we need to view them within the context of the present. This is why I've said that literature is no different from Netflix: what you see is its social function.

If you want an idealistic answer, it would be that the department of foreign languages and literatures should re-invent itself, transforming from a unit focused on language teaching and transmitting Western thought into one that studies the world. Only then can it truly embody the meaning of "foreign", encompassing the diversity embedded in that foreignness. At that point, of course, you should have a

variety of languages; you should definitely train knowledge beyond just literature. This means that when you no longer stay confined to the imagined space of a faculty of literature, the department of foreign languages and literatures can become part of the humanities itself. What is the humanities? The humanities is the study of humankind, the understanding of people. Therefore, what we aim for is a comprehensive understanding of "humanities," and the department of foreign languages and literatures should take on this role. Why should we take on this role? Because, at least for now, the responsibility for preserving national knowledge and cultural traditions falls primarily to the department of Chinese literature and Taiwanese literature. I believe the department of foreign languages and literatures can transform into something like global studies, which means it doesn't need to be confined to specific cultural or racial contexts but should engage with the reality of social change and look for new pathways for thinking and research. This would bring academic production closer to reality. In practice, this means we need to find different kinds of professors and recruit different types of students. The traditional way of hiring teachers has been that when a course is offered, a Shakespeare scholar would be hired, a Renaissance expert would be hired, and a professor of modern literature would be hired—essentially, one person for each period of literary history. But if I were to shift the curriculum, redesigning it from a perspective that concerns current reality in a cultural studies-oriented manner, then the logic behind hiring faculty would not follow the traditional divisions of literary

history. This is what I mean by giving an "irresponsible" but sincere answer. Making such a change is not easy because it requires a complete transformation, but this transformation would be faithful to the spirit of the department of foreign languages and literatures: to be a window gazing upon the world. Going back a hundred years, when earlier scholars imagined the department of foreign languages and literatures, I think they saw it as a window to the world. For example, when you read Wu Mi (吳宓) or Wong Quincey (王文顯), their expectations for our department were that those trained in this department would help Chinese literature grow. Why could they help Chinese literature grow? Because they understood what the outside world was like. Chinese literature, through its engagement with the world, could bloom in different ways with the help of the department of foreign languages and literatures. Today, things have changed. The department of literatures is no longer necessarily a unit with a national mission. At least, the department of foreign languages and literatures is no longer that kind of unit. We can still help the department of Chinese and Taiwanese literature, but they may no longer need us, right? In other words, if the department of foreign languages and literatures no longer sees itself as a foreign language teaching unit, no longer as a translation training unit, and no longer as one solely focused on Western civilization, it can accomplish many more things. But if we still believe our task is to teach English, train translators, and study Western classical and modern literature, then it will be very hard for us to escape the constraints of our current reality.

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This interview was translated from Mandarin. For the original Mandarin text, please see the appendix on page 109.


creative writing

Shadow Play

Yves Po-hsun Huang

Eloi had been hearing sounds. It started one day when he gave his friend Poe a ride home on his scooter. At first it was a high-pitched whistle whirling in his ear, which he thought to be the air squeezed into the helmet looking for escape.

"Did you hear anything funny? Like a whistle?" He turned to the backseat at a red light.

"No?"

Then they were at Poe's front gate.

"Do you want to stay the night? It's already quite late." The lock screen read 3 AM.

"That's alright. I can't sleep anywhere else anyway."

"Alright. Text me when you're home." Poe reached into his back-pack in search of the keys.

Home was a strange word for Eloi. He wouldn't call his place home. It was a small dorm room provided by the university. He had been on the wait list for four years to finally get in. Before that he had lived in various places.

On his way back he almost crashed into a taxi at a flashing red light at an intersection. He did stop and check the cross street. No

cars. No headlights. Just as he was about to accelerate, a yellow shadow came honking and whizzing by from his left. He pushed back on his scooter by paddling on the ground harshly in a sudden. He looked up and checked again- it was also a flashing red light on the cross street. He had the right-of-way.

Sometimes he felt like taxis in Taipei were always trying to kill bikers and pedestrians, in a way that did not actually kill. They grazed by fast within a few inches and then fled the scene.

The whistle stopped as he padded on his chest trying to ease the scared heartbeats.

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A few days later Eloi was in the lab alone. He was watching a keynote speech on his laptop as he ran some experiments on his lab computer. The speaker was the CEO of a tech company. He talked about how industries across many fields had been enabling the newest AI model development by providing data and hardware and all the exciting new ways that model was going to help industries transform as rewards.

"We will be able to simulate how the product works in real-life physics in our supercomputers in full loyalty, virtually. We would like to design it, build it, simulate it, operate it, completely digitally."

They were building a digital universe in which manufacturers would be able to simulate how their products work, all the algorithms coherent to real-world-physics. Digital twins was the term he used to describe the simulated doppelganger.

Eloi always dreamt of having a twin brother. At dawn in his blurry visions he imagined a brother lying next to him, sinking in a crescent on the other side of the pillow. He dreamt of waking to a pair of eyes looking at his, flickering loving stares.

Then there was a humming in his ears. A disturbing undertone echoed the CEO's speech. He thought that was a malfunction. He paused the video. The humming was still there. He shook his head. The humming was still there, in his ears; his vision started to swirl as the sound derailed his train of thought.

He thought of a Science Fiction he read in a literature class. People live inside an underground machinery complex consisting of millions of standard rooms, which are white, hexagon, and minimalistic. The complex is called the Machine. Pretty much every need of the dwellers can be met in this room with the help of a system manual that instructs the residents how to interact with the Machine. A ubiquitous humming accompanies births and deaths as the machine perpetually operates, for the good of the people.

Everyone dies in the end. The Machine breaks down because apparently technology has been so advanced that people no longer need to know how it works.

Eloi hated that fiction. It was almost screaming something like "Technology is treacherous!"

"Technology is not treacherous." He thought to himself.

"Today we're discussing how or whether technology has taken away human agency." The Professor announced.

He did not care for fiction in fact. He only took the class for the general elective credits—something the university requires—in order to finish the degree.

The humming gradually faded away as his thoughts landed back on his lab computer. The results were just reported on a chart generated by the operating system: out of six hundred data only four came in relevant to the expected results.

"Stupid machine." The machine can't even render data in relation to the preset program, yet some novelists thought it was to take over the world someday.

Eloi did not really know why his professor had him run these tests for her. Sometimes professors receive funding by doing research for enterprises. They shared the results, with which the enterprises went on to develop products.

The humming started again when he walked back to his dorm alone, as he passed the city library. (Again, home was a strange word for him-) He did not realize it before it was soon replaced by a sizzling sound. Eloi tried to look for the source. In the darkened street, in the trees on the sidewalk, in the flickers of the street lamps··· but no. Not a single thing in sight radiates such sizzling.

It sounded like air particles escaping from the sparkling water. It sounded like snow. Snow on television. Eloi remembered when he was young at his grandparents' house. On rainy days, when the old Cathode ray tube TV lost signals, the snow on the screen made a sizzling sound. That was the first thing he heard after he got his hearing aids: two pieces of custom-made metal meticulously plugged into his ears, connected through nanowires to his brain.

He thought of Granny. She was a weird old woman, not just for him, but for everybody else, probably because she was Russian. It was not usual to see an elderly Caucasian settler in Taiwan now. They were often here just for a couple of weeks as tourists or visitors to their young children who worked in the city, before they hopped on an airplane back to their comfortable temperate regions.

The sizzling was getting louder. Eloi was not sure why Granny came to Taiwan. No one ever talked about this in the family, not even herself, and he never asked. His Grandpa, however, had a much well-told story, since he could not seem to stop talking about how he came to Taiwan with the troop in 1949. Eloi did not care to pay attention to his grandpa ranting about how the local Taiwanese people had all become slaves to the Japanese empire and how they were to unify mainland China one day. They never did. Eloi was bored of the patriotic nationalists. He had lived all his life in Taiwan, he had no family left China, and he had never had another life across the strait. But Grandpa and Granny did, although Eloi did not know much of it.

The sizzling was getting louder. Eloi thought about Granny and her silence again—even before she died last year··· Eloi had to force his own thoughts to a halt before they escalated into nostalgia, which is a term he could not think of without unease.

He looked around for anything to distract himself from spiraling thoughts. The street was darkened as the librarian shut the lights off, the sizzling getting louder. Eloi stopped at the window and

looked into the room now covered in shadows and reflections. The wooden window frame circled the periphery of his vision. The light inside the window was dimmed, shadows and reflections layering on one another. Through the darkened glass, he saw the librarian, a young woman with bleached hair. She wore a beige cardigan the same color as her hair. She was tidying the bookshelves. Over the silhouette of her body, there was the reflection of the street and trees and flickering street lamps. He saw her mouth moving, but he only heard the sizzling. It got louder. Then all he could hear was snow.

For a moment, Eloi froze. He was not sure if it was because of what he saw or what he heard. The librarian raised one of her arms over her shoulder, with a book in her hand, her lips still moving. She started swinging forward and backward, her joints fixed. Eloi listened as the sizzling ran high and low in frequency, like skiing on a glide crack. It looked like she was making the sizzling. Eloi wanted to turn his head around and leave but he couldn't. The brain signals got lost somewhere on its way to his feet.

Now he realized what that looked like. The Shadow plays he saw on Granny's television, a traditional Chinese puppet show in which puppeteers cast light from behind a screen, to project shadows of the man-manipulated puppets onto the screen, and to make the play.

The librarian's body jerked forward in stilted motions, her arm pivoting unnaturally. She raised a leg, one tumbled step towards the window. The sizzle reached a crescendo, rattling in Eloi's skull. His

chest tightened as panic crawled through his veins. He blinked hard, forcing himself to step back, but the image of the librarian stuck to his mind like a memory on repeat. It was as if her shadow had come alive, moving independently of the body that cast it.

He stumbled away from the window, his breath coming in shallow gasps. The streetlights flickered as he passed them, throwing erratic bursts of light onto the pavement. Eloi rubbed his temples, willing the sound to stop. The world spun around him, the sidewalk warping and curling in his peripheral vision. His hearing aids—they had to be malfunctioning. He reached up and pressed his fingers to his ears, fiddling with the small devices nestled inside.

The sizzle dulled for a moment, and a voice whispered through the static. He wasn't sure if it was his own thoughts or someone—something—else speaking.

"She's not real. None of this is."

Eloi staggered, grasping onto the edge of a lamppost. The world seemed to pulse in and out of focus, like a film reel skipping frames. He tore the hearing aids out of his ears and held them in his shaking hands. The sizzle faded slightly, but the world was still warped, still wrong. His mind raced. Was this a hallucination? Was he dreaming?

The street was quiet, the flickering lights now steady. The librarian was gone from the window. Everything felt eerily normal.

Eloi stood there, staring at the small hearing aids in his palm. Could it really be? He hurried back to his dorm. As he entered his room, the oppressive silence greeted him, but it was a relief after the chaos outside.

That night he sat on his bed, the hearing aids still clutched in his hand. Slowly, he inspected them. A tiny flicker of light caught his eye—something unusual. He hadn't noticed it before, but the left hearing aid seemed... off. It buzzed faintly, the sound he'd been hearing all along. He blinked, bringing the device closer.

That's when he noticed it—a tiny crack in the casing. It must have been damaged, likely affecting the signals and causing interference. He let out a shaky breath, feeling foolish for not realizing it earlier. The hallucinations, the sounds, the distorted reality—it had all been because of this tiny device. His hearing had been twisted by the malfunction, sending his brain spiraling into confusion.

Eloi let out a tired laugh, relief washing over him. The sounds, the shadows—it wasn't real. He wasn't losing his mind. It was just a glitch.

But even as the relief settled in, a nagging thought lingered in the back of his mind. Sounds···weird sounds. He was familiar with the idea of weird sounds, but he just could not remember exactly how. He placed the hearing aids on the nightstand and lay down, staring at the ceiling. The sizzle was gone, but the shadows in his mind still flickered, just out of reach.

Eloi sat on the edge of his bed, staring at the cracked hearing aid in his palm. He could not hear, but he could feel his own heart beat. Heavy pounding transmitted from his chest, and a strange sense of unease lingered, like a string that was loosened, but still attached. The malfunction explained everything—or at least, it should have. But the librarian's image kept flashing through his mind, her mechanical, puppet-like movements too vivid to dismiss. The sizzle,

the whispers—there was something more to it, something he couldn't quite grasp.

He thought of the whistle and the humming. The weird sounds. It was like something had been trying to catch his attention, or to lure him into full concentration, and then taking over his thought entirely.

He stood up and walked to the window, peering into the quiet, dark streets below. The city seemed unnervingly still, as though the world outside had been placed on pause. His mind drifted to his grandmother again. She had always been an enigma, the weird, quiet Russian woman, yet never talked about her past. She kept to herself, even in the family, speaking little about her life before she became the person he knew.

Grandma was against him getting hearing aids. "It's unnatural."

"He's gotta hear at some point," Dad said.

That was when Eloi had just started learning to read lips.

***

The next morning Eloi walked the same way to the lab. When he passed the library, he cast a look into the same window frame. Just shelves. Books. No blonde-haired librarian. No shadow. No puppet.

The humming started again, when Eloi keyed in a new set of data for the lab computer to run. He tried to ignore the flickering bars and numbers on the screen.

"Stupid machine."

"You do know that's the smartest computer we have, right?" The humming was suddenly interrupted with a promiscuous sound coming in from the door. Poe came to collect the paper report.

The report was printed on paper, in black and white.

When Eloi was younger, he'd been fascinated by the old black-and-white photos she kept hidden in a box beneath her bed. The pictures were of people he didn't know—somber-looking men and women, and places that seemed otherworldly to him: snowy streets lined with tall, grey buildings, and roofs shaped like onions.

"These are Lukovichnyy kupol." Grandma pointed at the onions. Eloi did not quite catch what she said.

"This data mining just never ends!" Poe's voice pulled him back to the lab.

"Did you hear something?" Eloi's sights still fixed on his laptop.

No answer.

He looked up and saw no one there. Just a pair of confused eyes looking into the reflection on the screen, staring back at him.

He thought again of the humming, the sizzle, the shadow play. It was like they were trying to catch his attention.

He unplugged the hearing aids again.

Sometimes, when it rained, the signal on the old TV would crackle, turning the screen to snow, just like it had tonight. She'd sit silently beside him, her face illuminated by the static, never moving, never reacting, as if the noise were a lullaby only she could understand.

"One day you will hear them, too." Granny's grey eyes darkened. Her hands gently caressed his ears.

"But granny, I can already hear." Eloi tapped his plug-ins.

"No. Not that kind of hear."

"When you hear them, we will have to run."

"Granny," Eloi whispered into the darkness, "what were you running from?"

Sometimes her presence was like a shadow cast by something long buried, some forgotten history never shared.

He glanced again at the hearing aids in his hands, and packed up his stuff. Seemed like it was not a good lab day.

On his way back he tried not to think about what he heard in the lab. He tried not to think about Poe.

His mind wandered to one particular story his grandmother had told him when he was a boy. It was the only time she'd ever spoken about Russia, late one night after a power outage left them in near darkness. She had lit a candle and sat him down, telling him about the long winters of her youth and how, in the snow-covered villages, people believed that shadows could take on a life of their own. They called it "zov teni"—the shadow's call. In the dead of night, the shadows reach out, whispering to those who had lost their way. If you listened too closely, they could lead you astray, make you see things that weren't there, even take you somewhere you were never meant to go.

At the time, Eloi had dismissed it as a fairy tale, just one of Granny's old superstitions. But now, standing alone in his dorm room, he couldn't shake the feeling that maybe there was something more to it.

***

Back in his room, Eloi turned off the hearing aids.

He lay in bed with the light on. A flicker of movement outside the window crept into the corner of his eye. He turned sharply, his heart quickening. There, just outside the window, a shadow shifted against the wall of the building across the street. It was faint, barely

visible in the dim light, but unmistakable—its shape didn't match any tree or object nearby. For a moment, it stood still, as if watching him. Then, as suddenly as it had appeared, it raised a limb from the torso, its joint fixed. It soon melted into the darkness, leaving only the faint echo of the sizzle in his ears.

Eloi's skin prickled. He backed away from the window, his breath shallow. He reached for the hearing aids on the nightstand, gripping them tightly in his fist. What if it wasn't just a malfunction? What if the device had somehow...let something in?

Granny's words whispered through his mind again, like an echo from the past: the shadow's call. You will have to run.

He shook his head, trying to dismiss the thought. It was absurd. There had to be a rational explanation. Maybe he was just exhausted, maybe the stress of the lab work and the late nights were catching up to him. But no matter how much he tried to convince himself, the sense of mystery surrounding his grandmother, her silence, and now the strange occurrences gnawed at him, pulling him deeper into a web of uncertainty.

With trembling hands, Eloi set the hearing aids back down. He wasn't ready to put them back in.

Outside, the night remained still, but the shadows seemed heavier, darker, as if they carried secrets that had yet to be spoken. Eloi closed his eyes, trying to block out the thoughts that threatened to consume him. But even as he drifted off to sleep, the sizzle lingered faintly in the back of his mind, sometimes shifting into whispers, sometimes it hums, sometimes it blows a whistle. Like a warning he didn't yet understand.

Yves Po-hsun Huang is a second-year MA student in the GIFLL at NTU. His research interests include Shakespearean tragedies, Science Fiction, and contemporary cinema. He also produces creative writing such as plays, short stories, and poetry.

Blue Trips

Haku-Isao Kou

1
Keelung happened in a ksana.

Brook was racing along Route No.5, past Xizhi, passing by several car dealerships, and suddenly a deep blue road sign flashed into view: “Welcome to Keelung City”—and at that exact moment, the entire sky opened up.

The first time he rode to Keelung was in his sophomore year, when he lived in the Downtown Area, the “old Taipei,” or the so-called “Siânn-lāi.” That summer break, during quarantine, the entire city came to a halt. Brook dissipates eventless college time, drifting around the dorm in short pink hair, counting days. That was when he received a message from Cedric, “Brook, let’s go for a ride. To Keelung.”

After a fifty-minute motorcycle ride, they found themselves entangled in the maze-like Ren’ai Market, with a photo of lipstick stains left on the mirror of an old salon. Nail salons, shops of miscellaneous products, and fish stands entwined in these three-stored buildings sitting over streets and crossroads.

Tiles were loose on the walls of Ching Yu Hall, seated on the slope of Hongdan Mountain. Cedric turned it over and saw a bug tightly nestled beneath.

“Before nightfall, I want to go to the beach.”

That was the first time Brook saw the coastline of Wai-mu-shan; that scene he would never forget—Blue, just blue. Unlike the confined blue grids framed by Taipei's skyscrapers, it was an endless blue, flowing from the sky into the sea, or from the sea into the sky, with seams where the fabrics of the two worlds stitched together. Keelung Island stood lonely on the other side of the blue, so small, immersed in the vast azure. Since then, whenever Brook felt himself sinking into deep blue melancholy, he found his getaway to Keelung.

2

The next year he was in a documentary class. When it was time to shoot the final project, the pandemic broke out again, and all his filming plans were canceled. Late at night, in the study room, he was pulling at his hair, trying to come up with a new script.

A documentary film was not supposed to be scripted. But desperate times call for desperate measures.

Days later, he started to resent the situation. The Professor was nice on them—he said a black screen with voice-over was fine, considering the pandemic. But not for Brook. He had to produce the best. The surging waves of despair within whispered in his ears, "Go to the coastline."

He asked a photographer "friend" to help shoot a short film. In return he had to sleep with him. It was a good deal, considering the aesthetic skill he had. It was a plotless short film of a person wandering through the ruins on the mountainside, kneeling under crumbled walls, holding a flower, carried by the tides, sinking,

sinking, sinking...and he gazed at the sunset amidst the waves. That was the second time Brook immersed himself in the sea. In the gently swirling water, in a blue haze, a story came into mind. He sent the script to two actor friends, along with two audio recordings. True friends this time, so little rewards were requested. After a few days of editing, thirty minutes of raw footage became an odyssey.

3

Later that year, a childhood friend his age drowned in their hometown. That time he was working on a film.

He came up with a new story at the seaside: The protagonist of the story drifts aimlessly through life. He looks for the shadow of a passed friend that ripples in every corner. He mingles from man to man, searching for the vanished silhouette. In despair, he encounters a phantom between the shore and the sea, neither human nor thing, neither ghost nor spirit. They wait shoulder by shoulder. One waits for his lover with anxiety, while the other waits with ease. Then conversations turn into arguments, embraces turn into wrestles. The protagonist strikes the phantom with stones. Shedding blood. White waves. Colorless sweat. And tears. He leaves the shore, never to wait again. The sought-after figure, however, smiles and watches from afar as he departs into the horizon.

Unfortunately, being a young director with a limited budget and a distrusting crew was no easy task. The production company dropped him very soon.

“After careful consideration and review of our current progress, resource availability, and the constraints we’re facing in both budget and timeline, we’ve made the difficult decision to discontinue the production. This decision was not made lightly. We’ll be discussing next steps and reallocating resources to ensure everyone is aligned moving forward.”

He realized that a lonely ending would never be a good ending. “Cedric, do you want to go for a ride? Let’s go to Keelung.” The neon lights of the night market were dyed with red, orange, and yellow. The Hutou Mountain night view dazzled with crimson and purple, but after the bustling crowd faded away, he always found himself lonely, immersed in the deepest blue.

4

He found himself sitting on the giant rocks of the Wai-mu-shan coast again.

This time, he made a new discovery. All that is blue, when it reaches the end, turns black. If one doesn’t look carefully, or if they doze off in the sea breeze, darkness immediately fills the space. The vast azure tightens within indigo, and then it gets compressed by darkness until the world returns to a narrow suffocation.

Like sitting in a movie theater, after the film ends, when the screen goes dark, and the theater lights remain off, only then does one suddenly realize that they’ve been just a shadow, sealed onto the seat.

5

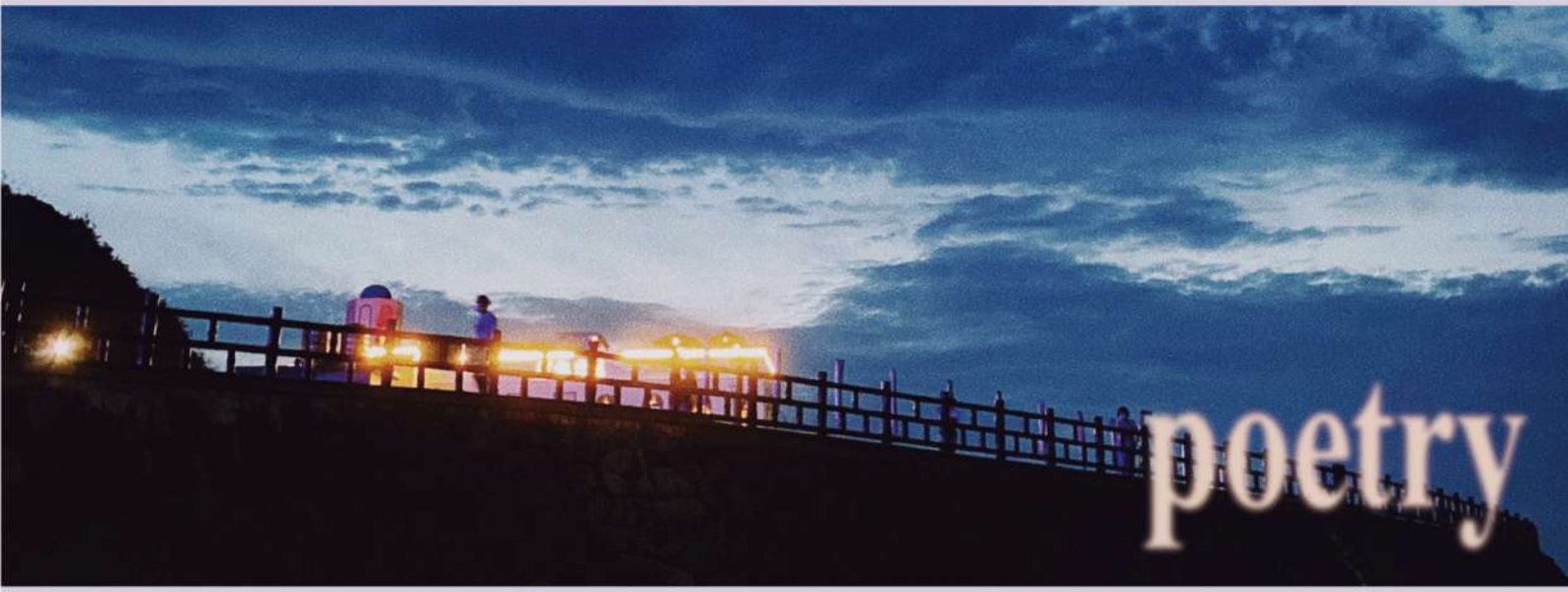
On a winter night, on the same coastline, this time Brook was in the passenger seat, sheltered behind metal panels. They listened to the cold wind like the crashing waves. There was complete silence in the car because they both knew, that saying one more word would crack the tense surface, and it would let out the deepest blues compressed within the darkness.

At the most vulnerable moment, they spent a poetic moment in complete vulnerability. It happened in a ksana—gray emerged from the black. Brook saw himself in the mist, bleeding, and his blood was blue. There was a swaying seamline between the gray and the black. Outside the car window, waves of deep blue burst into existence. Between the tides, all that is black, when it reaches the end, turns blue.

6

Motorbike raced. Clothes were drying in the wind. The blue crept into his depth of field.

Haku-Isao Kou **is an MA student in the Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures, NTU. His research interests are gender studies, late antiquity studies, and religious studies.**



Serenade

Yves Huang

Dandy dreams hemm'd on corduroy sleeves
A short walk in the city night
Fishbone fern braided rocket leaves
They stood and watched the neon light
Who stops time
Stops in time

Yves Po-hsun Huang is a second-year MA student in the GIFLL at NTU. He has up to forty poems that have not been published yet because he has very high self-esteem and does not take criticism very well.

Ad meridiem

Theo

I know a place where sufferings can't reach.
Desirèd Land, where agony's away.
"Let's leave for better places, what'd you say?
Over the sea, towards the golden beach.

Vinland is where we'll go: on our journey,
Enchanting songs we'll sing, and we shall dance
To melodies that'll lull us to a trance
Of utmost joy; we'll never feel more free.

Best Day of ours, dearest to us before
Extended its significance till now;
Delirium, to us, it'd still endow,
Elating us. But it'll enthrall no more.

Ad meliora we will row the oak—
Depart from Valhalla and Ragnarok.

Theo is an MA student in the Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures, NTU. He writes poems only occasionally. His research interests are disability studies and film studies.

That Funny Feeling

Yvon Pan

"You need to get so far ahead of yourself that by the time you reach yourself, you're a different person."—Elaine Castillo, *America Is Not the Heart*

I decided I did not
enjoy the assigned novel
after all

there was too much of me in it
and not enough distance
is this what representation feels like?
a cliché, a tired metaphor
a mirror that feels like a prank

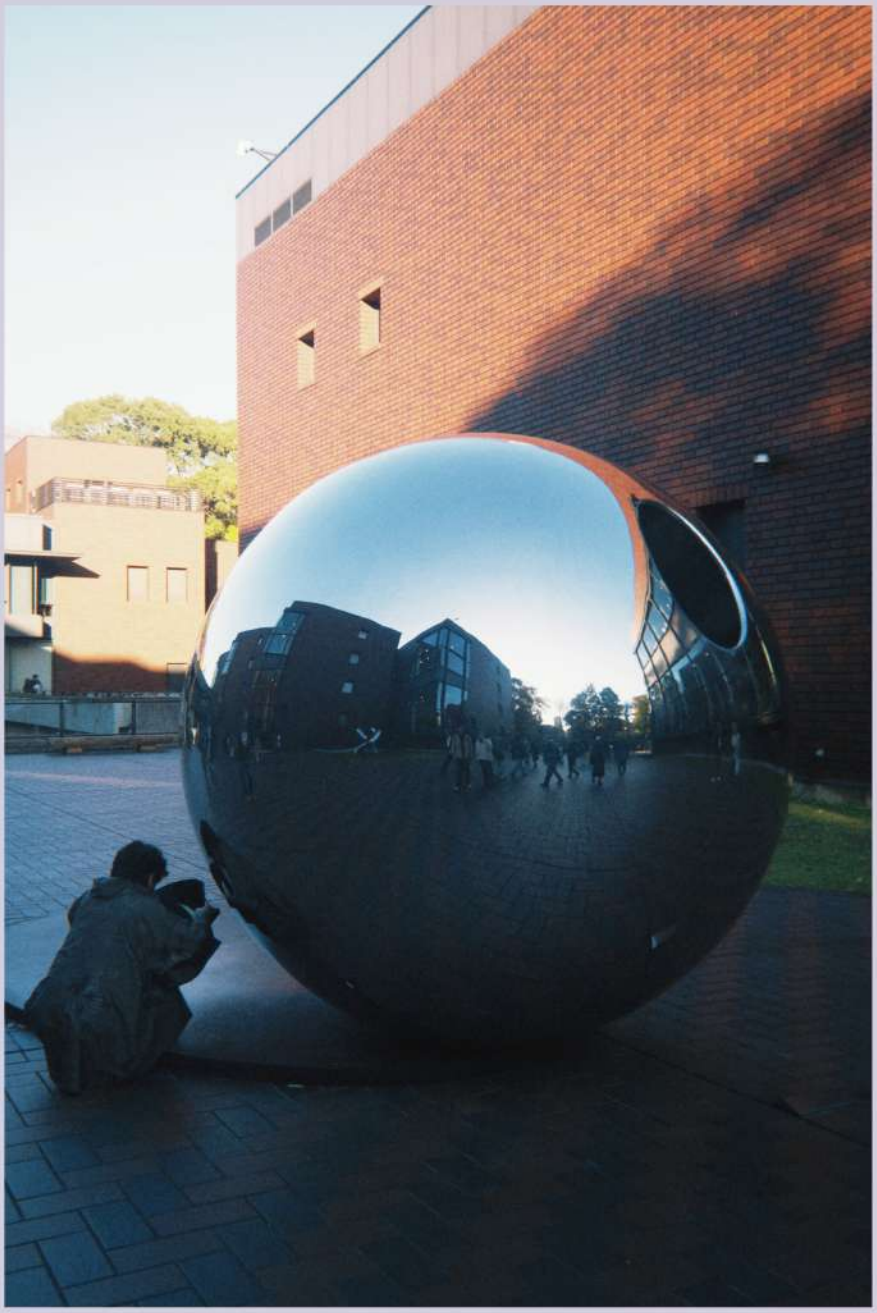
how do you cope
with being seen?
how do you find comfort
in likeness?
someone has taken your ugliest parts
stitched them together
and called it art

folks will always ask: why literature?
some years down the road
I would like to escape myself
ceases to be a proper answer

I find myself introducing my work
with a justification
a claim to identity
as if who I am predates what I do
as if I am writing my way back home, island to island

as if I'll ever know what home is
but a place where the heart
is not

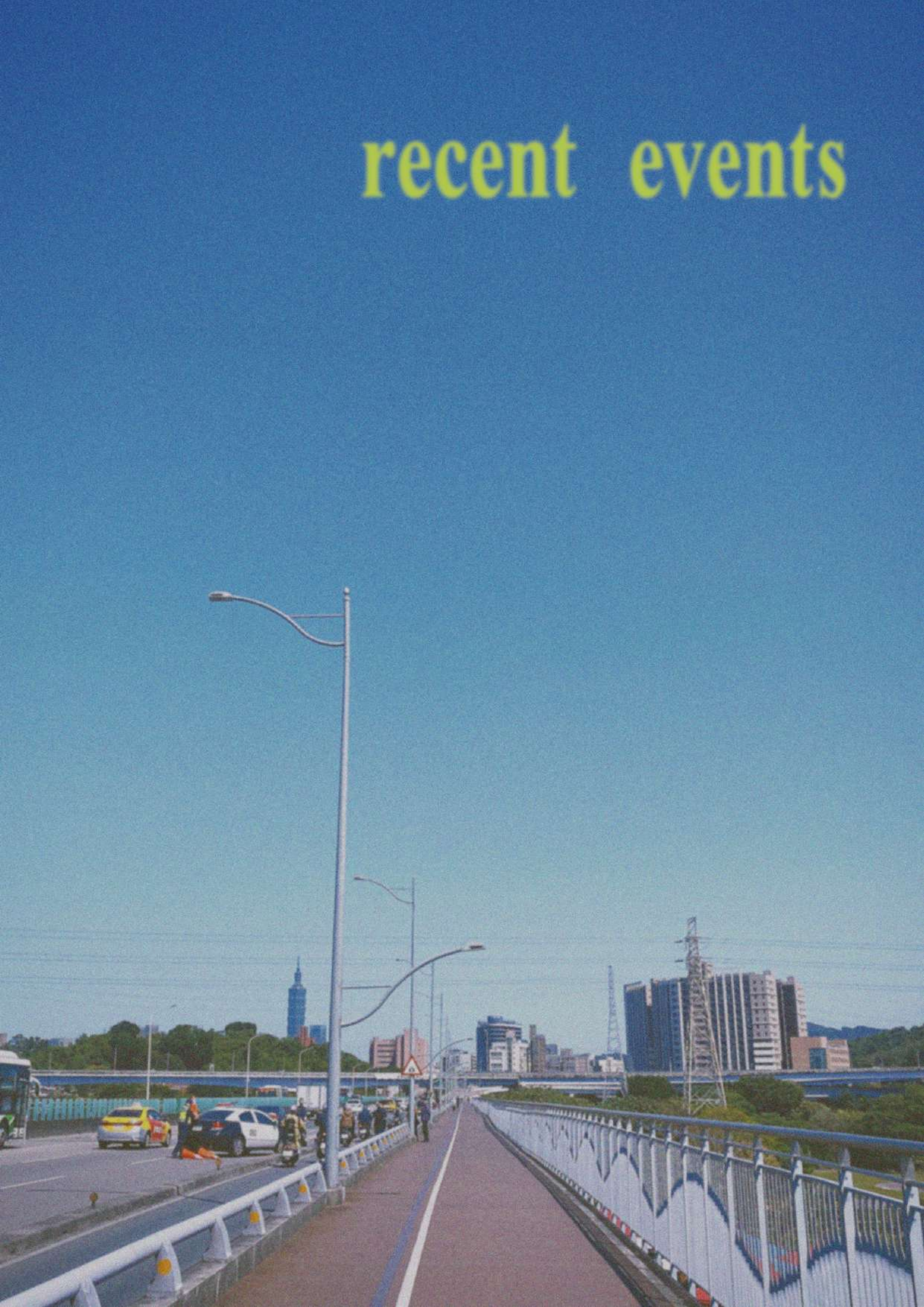
Yvon Pan is a Filipino Taiwanese MA student from GIFLL. They are working on their master's thesis as a less painful way (debatable) to acknowledge their heritage.



"The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material."

—T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919)

recent events



Fest.

2025 Taiwan International Festival of Arts

The National Theater and Concert Hall (NTCH) is preparing for the 2025 Taiwan International Festival of Arts (TIFA) with a lineup of 118 exciting performances from 11 countries and 18 programs. Highlights include: the French street dance pioneer Bintou Dembélé's "Flow_G.R.O.O.V.E.," "Body Without Boundaries," a performance that blends aerial acrobatics, tightrope walking, and rock climbing with dance, a special amateur version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, with an unconventional interpretation of both imagination and perspective, and many other well-known performances from around the world.

In addition to these, Taiwan will present its own unique contributions to the festival, reflecting a rich diversity of values and inclusivity. These include Legendary actor Wei Haimin, who will collaborate with director Wang Jiaying on the new work *The Queen's Name*, exploring the multifaceted image of Empress Dowager Cixi, the most powerful woman during the late Qing dynasty, "I. We," Part II, by Buralayan, which delves deeper into the "middle-aged" culture of the Paiwan indigenous people, and other thrilling shows.

This sensational mix of international and Taiwanese productions promises to offer a diverse and inclusive artistic experience at TIFA 2025.

Date: 21 Feb. - 28 May. 2025

Expo. KUSAMA Yayoi 1951-2005 from W Collection and More

This exhibition aims to go beyond Yayoi Kusama's iconic dots and pumpkins to explore her groundbreaking journey as an Eastern woman challenging the male-dominated Western art world. Spanning 1951-2005, this exhibition traces her surreal and abstract early works; it offers a look into her fearless creativity and transformative impact on contemporary art.

Host: Museum of National Taipei University of Education
Venue: Museum of National Taipei University of Education

Date: 21 Dec. 2024- 4 May. 2025

Conf. The 5th World Congress of Taiwan Studies— Taiwan in a Changing World: Past, Present, and Future

The conference warmly invites participants to explore the dynamic relationships between Taiwan and the world, from historical to contemporary times, and into the future. Topics of interest include history, philology, archaeology, ethnology, modern history, economics, Taiwan studies, European and American studies, Chinese literature and philosophy, sociology, linguistics, law, political science, and other fields within the humanities and social sciences. The event aims to offer a comprehensive and intellectually stimulating platform for global communities engaged in Taiwan studies.

Host: Academia Sinica
Venue: Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan

Date: 21-23 May. 2025

Conf. 2025 EALA Annual Conference: Disease and Death

Disease and death, awkward yet inevitable, linger in the margins of "sensible": visible but unspeakable. Yet, speak they do, loudly and vividly, through English literature. From Beowulf's elegiac ship burials to Stoppard's cheeky stage corpses, from Tennyson's waves of grief to Porter's distracted granny, these motifs transform silence into narrative. In this sense, we could ask what discourse do they shape or resist? The 2025 EALA Conference invites us to explore the unruly and ever-loquacious presence of disease and death.

Host: English and American Literature Association (EALA);
National Taipei University of Education; University of Taipei

Venue: National Taipei University of Education

Date: 18 Oct. 2025

Conf. 2025 CLAROC Annual Conference: Compose

"Compose" (構置) takes center stage at the 2025 CLAROC Annual Conference: a word both familiar and elusive, yet seldom fully explored. To Latour, Haraway, and Deleuze it owes its multifaceted life, weaving together coexistence, disassembly, and even chaos itself. How, then, mighty AI, ecology, or world literature compose new pathways for thought? With these questions, CLAROC invites us to recompose the field of comparative literary studies in unexpected ways.

Host: National Cheng Kung University, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature; Comparative Literature Association of the Republic of China (CLAROC)

Venue: National Cheng Kung University **Date: 17 May. 2025**

Conf.

Intercollegiate Conference of English Literature and Linguistic Media and Communication (ICELLMC)/ Call For Papers

The Intercollegiate Conference on English Literary, Linguistic Media, and Communication is a peer-reviewed event focused on the theory and application of English literature and linguistics within the framework of modern media and communication trends. The conference seeks to bridge English studies, communication studies, and multimedia practices by providing a platform for discussion, interaction, and collaboration among scholars from diverse interdisciplinary fields.

Host: College of the Humanities and Social Sciences & Department of English and Applied Communication
Venue: She-Wo Building S1204 Conference Room

Dates:
Deadline for proposals: 17 Jan. 2025
Acceptance emails sent: 14 Feb. 2025
Deadline for full manuscript: 14 Mar. 2025
Conference date: 26 Apr. 2025

Conf. Dickinson and Ecologies: Emily Dickinson International Society + Wenshan Conference (Hybrid)

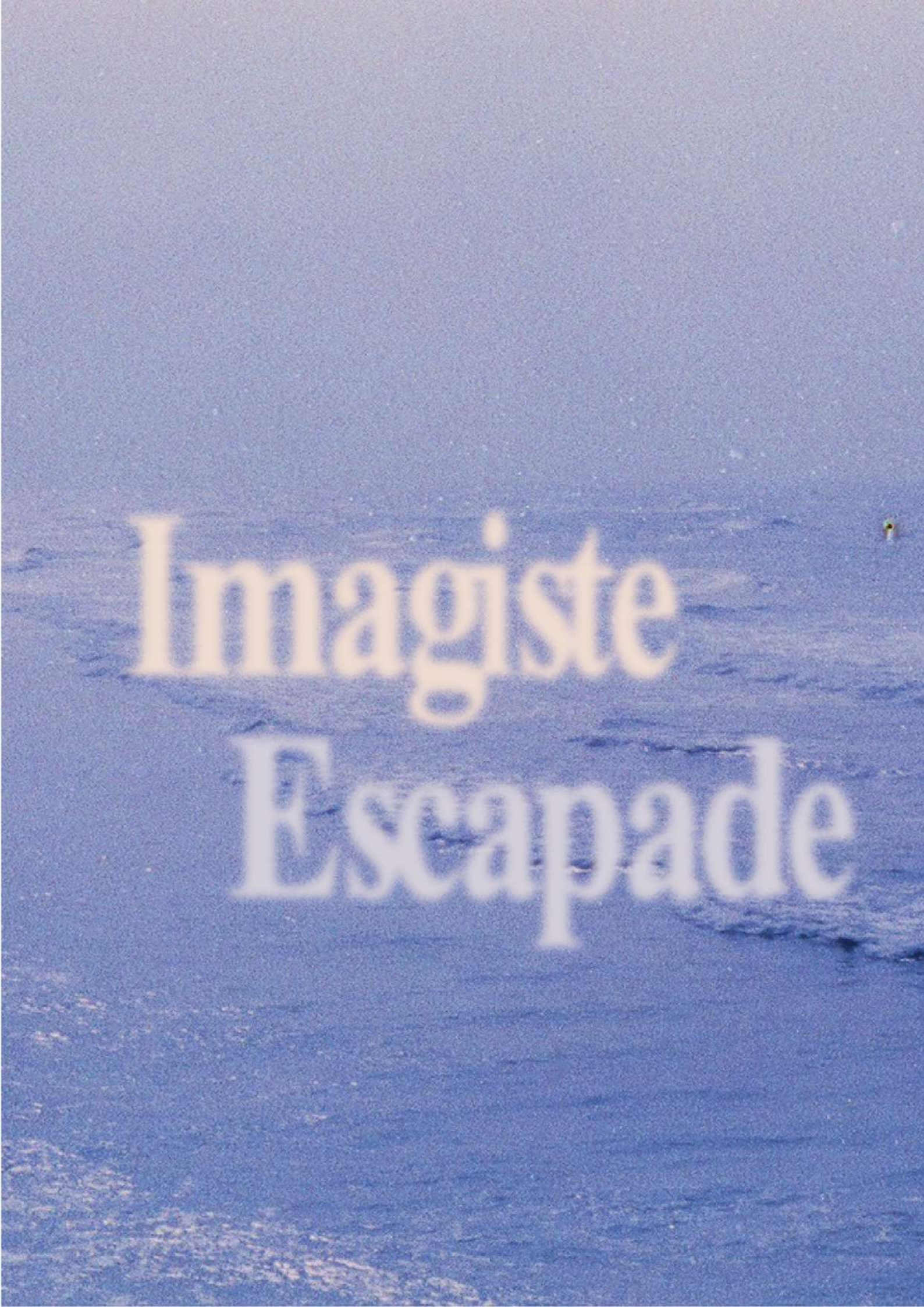
This conference aims to explore Emily Dickinson as an eco-poet through interdisciplinary and/or transcultural perspectives. It invites submissions including papers, panels, workshops, artworks, and collaborative projects that engage with Dickinson's ecological themes. The conference also seeks to examine how eco-critics have used Dickinson's work to analyze the human-nonhuman relationship and its relevance to the ongoing environmental crisis.

In conjunction with the conference, a hybrid workshop titled "*Writing into Dickinson's 'Possibility': A (Re-)generative Poetry Writing Workshop*" will be held. Nearly 140 years after Dickinson's death, her poems continue to "dwell in Possibility," influenced by the various versions—referred to as "variants"—in her notebooks and fascicles, along with their fluctuating punctuation, attempts at standardization, and shifting interpretations over time. Rather than attempting to limit the multiple meanings of Dickinson's verse, the Emily Dickinson International Society's 2025 International Conference aims to expand the potential of her work through this poetry writing workshop, co-hosted by award-winning poet and multidisciplinary researcher Patrick James Errington, alongside poet and Dickinson scholar Yu-Hung Tien.

Host: Department of English, National Chengchi University (NCCU)
Venue: National Chengchi University

Date: 19-22 Jun. 2025

thematic special section


Imagiste
Escapade

"What is an escapade to you?"
"Where do/would you go when you go on a solo escapade?"
"What is the most significant imagery that you have ever acquired from an escapade?"

Shane

I go to somewhere no one knows me, where I can be myself without the pressure of being seen by someone who knows me. I take the train to the beach in Taitung and look at the anglers. That reminds me of my grandpa, who was a fisherman.

Joy

I'd put aside my burdens and responsibilities to do something irrelevant. I go for a walk on the beach in Cijin, Kaohsiung. Or I watch live streams of FPS games. On the Sizihwan beach at 6:30 am, with some dogs but no humans in sight, on a chilly, but not cold, winter day in Kaohsiung.

Vanness

I sleep big and I sleep tight. Anytime. Anywhere.
One time during a sleep, I had an out-of-body experience where I felt like floating, and I saw myself sleeping.

Maya

I do cooking, baking, and crocheting.
I love the feeling when I see others eating and enjoying my food.

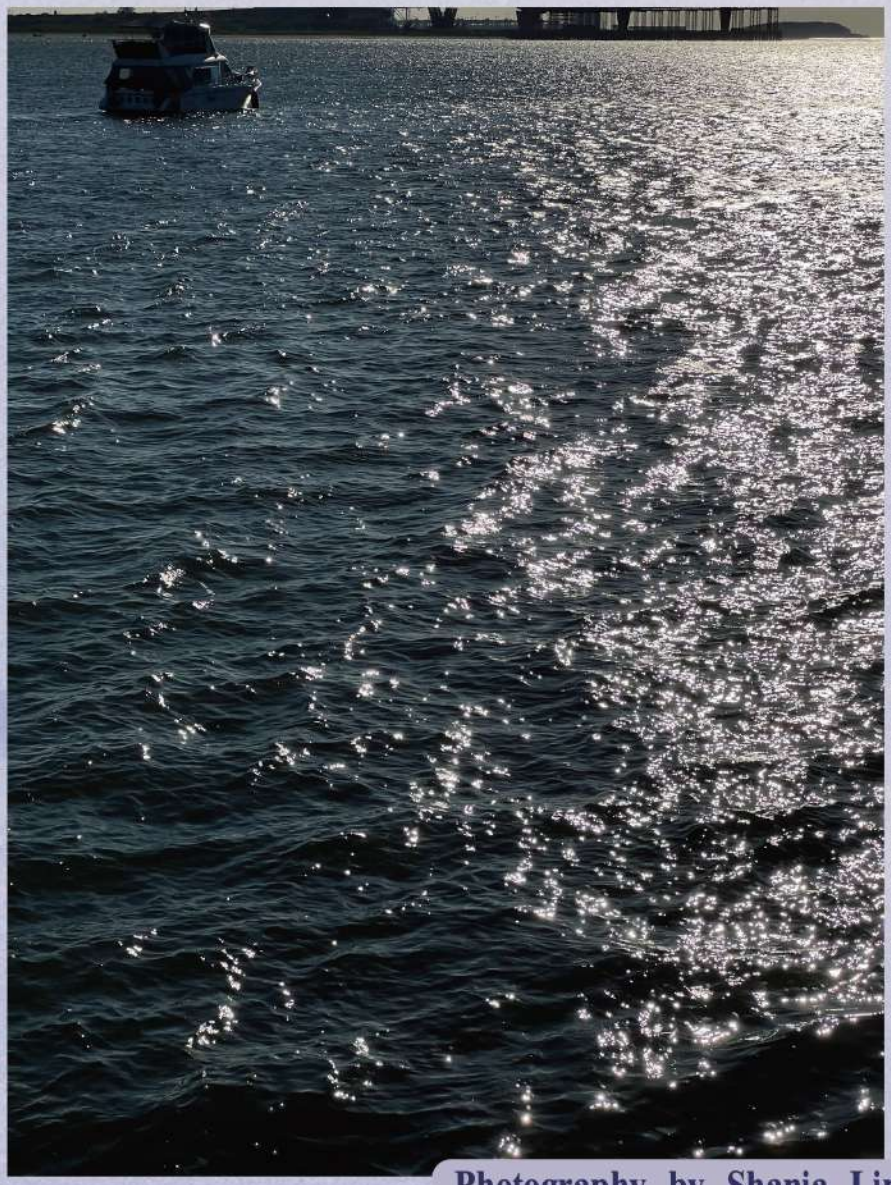
Maxi

An escapade is a kind of adventure which also acts as a purposeful escape from the typical and the conventional. In many senses, coming to NTU is one big escapade designed to push me out of my comfort zone. I think what one learns from embarking on escapades is more important than specific memories acquired in their course. Existing as antitheses to the normal, to the mundane, escapades force one both to learn spontaneously from the new experiences, and to reevaluate one's wider lifestyle and routines.

Photography by Lainey Hsu

Lainey

Go on night runs!
Exhaust my body.
It calms me, and I can put all the chaos away (temporarily).
I like looking up at where the trees meet the sky.



Photography by Shania Lin

Shania

I take the MRT to Tamsui. I walk along the Tamsui River.
The sunshine glistens on the river ripples. That calms me.

Photography by Clement Cheng

Clement

I would focus on myself. And do something to touch the surroundings.
Road trips! I go from Hualien to Kaohsiung by the South Link Highway. I also go swimming, staying up late doing nothing but scrolling on my phone.
The beach at sunrise, where there is nothing but the waves.

Via

I do out-of-control naps in the afternoon.

Photography by Haku-Isao Kou

Haku-Isao

Drop everything. A spontaneous escape. Sometimes I ride on my scooter (its name is Veronica) at midnight to the Keelung coast line, a good place for sashimi and sunrise. In the winter I also ride to Beitou for a midnight hot onsen.

The skyline and the sea. It is like a swaying seamline, where blue meets white meets gray meets black. I was mesmerized by how these few colors can make so many shades.

Shih-hao

Lying in bed all day listening to music while doing nothing. Sometimes I saw myself becoming an Apsaras in Dunhuang. I wore green silk robes and had an Oud in my hand as I danced in the sky.

Shih-hao's playlist


editors' notes
ASK 9106

Ted Po-cheng Chung

I believe the notes presented here offer an opportunity to challenge the idea of individual authorship of the works featured in this issue. For my part, I want to take this chance, first and foremost, to extend my gratitude to my colleagues Yves and Linda, who not only placed their trust in me to complete my interview project, but also poured their energy into editing this issue of *Project +*, polishing the works within it time and time again. It is truly an honor to stand alongside you as one of the editors of *Project Plus* December 2024. Nor can I overlook the help of Justin, who persisted through the summer to engage in discussions with me. His insights sharpened my thoughts as I tried to design the questions and crafted the trajectory of the interview. To Professor Wang Ching-chih, I owe a profound debt of gratitude. Without hesitation, she guided me at the initial stage of this interview project so that I could have a starting point to do this kind of work. Furthermore, her thoughtful cautions and insightful suggestions throughout the development of this project were invaluable. Equally

instrumental were the ideas of Professor Chen Chun-yen, from whom I benefited immensely during the summer. I am deeply thankful to her for sharing her critical review of *Re-Articulations*, as well as for offering her discerning perspectives on cultural and ethnic studies in Taiwan. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Wang Chih-ming, who not only graciously accepted my interview invitation, but also answered each of my questions with thoughtfulness. His warm encouragement before and after the interview coupled with his meticulous assistance in revising the transcript leaves me significantly grateful.

Linda Tsai-ling Lu

I wonder what the world would be, if we couldn't run away from our trouble. Would we be able to continue to struggle for what we care? Would we become way more puissant than the present us? I wonder. Yet, I am also very grateful to be able to escape when I want to—binge-watching *Star Wars*, running along the riverside without my phone and music, sleeping without setting an alarm. I enjoy my escapes. In the December issue of *Project+*, readers are invited to delve into the escapades in fictions and explore the reasons behind them and, maybe, some precious tips for escapes.

Also, this issue would not have happened without the amazing work of Yves and Ted—my smart, humorous and creative cohorts. It has been very wonderful and honorable to work with them. I cannot show my gratitude more to them for their energy, assiduousness and patience. They indeed bring the best out of escapades. I can't wait to share this fun issue with everyone!

Yves Po-hsun Huang

Have you ever thought about throwing everything away and running away? I have. Several times. And I have done that, actually. It felt amazing. And I believe many of you have, too. That's how this issue came into being: We would like to explore the "escapes" that people picture, adventure, and capture. Within them maybe there is a rupture. This extra layer of meaning makes escapes *escapades*.

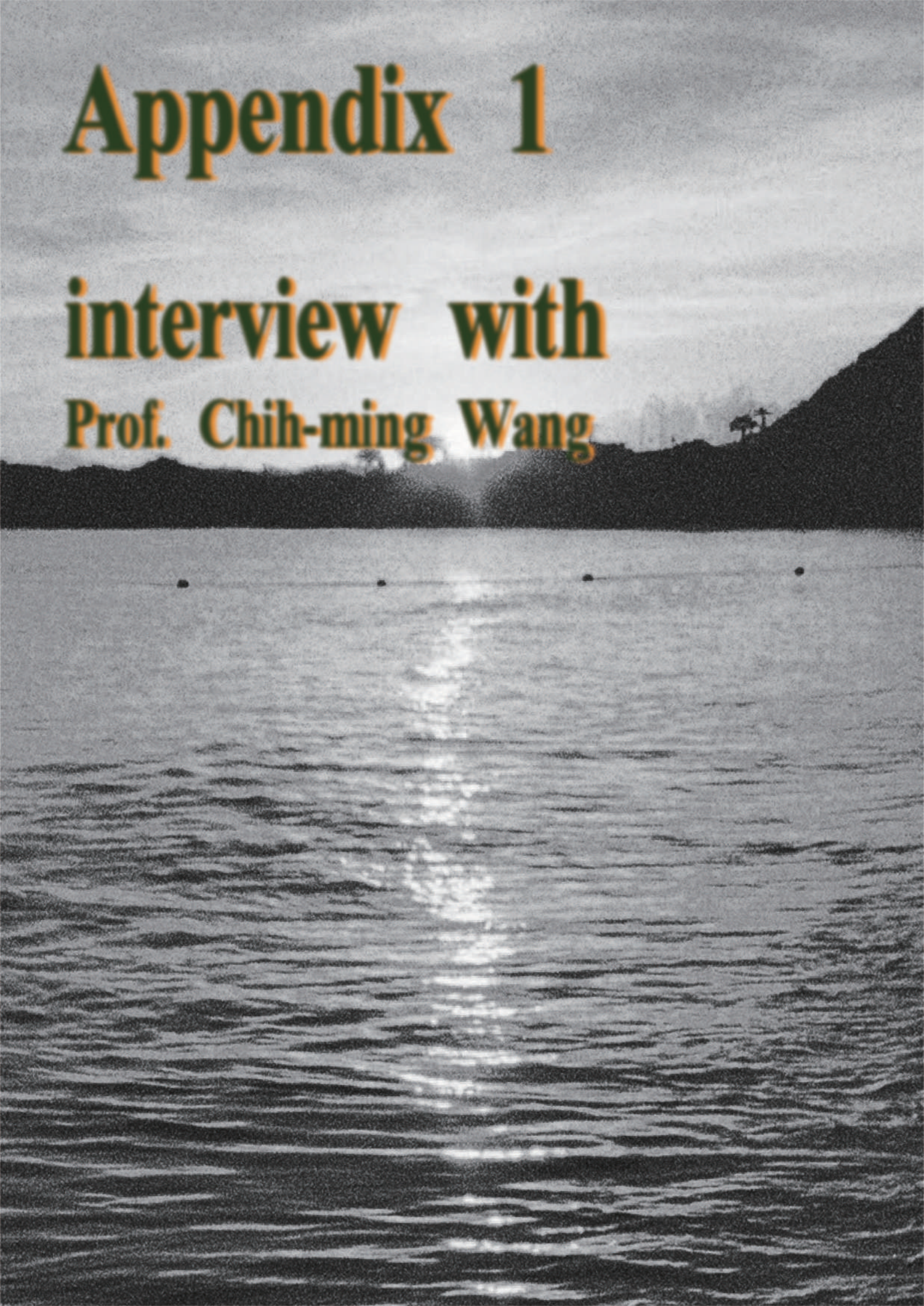
Shout out to my lovely fellow editors, Linda and Ted, for putting up with my ceaseless ranting. Also, thank you for teaching me about die Entdeckung der Langsamkeit as I wait and wait and wait for your texts to be edited! A big thank-you to the editorial advisors Professor Kao and Professor Nolan. Most importantly, my respect and sincere appreciation to all the friends who have submitted to this issue: Clement, Haku-Isao, Joy, Lainey, Maxi, Maya, Shania, Shane, Shih-hao, Theo, Vanness, and Via. Without any of you this issue would not have received the success it enjoys today.

My personal message to those who are yearning for an escape—Go. Just go. And don't forget to tell me about it when/if you come back.

Appendix 1

interview with

Prof. Chih-ming Wang



「一個面向世界的窗口」：探討外文學門之所往與所能

鍾博丞 Ted Po-cheng Chung

摘要

本訪談重新審視外文之「外」的意義。智明老師透過歷史化學科的疆界，反思以歐美中心為主的外文系既定範式，引導我們重探一個根本的問題：在當代世界中，研究「外國文學」的意義與目的是什麼？特別是在日益緊密卻又支離的全球局面當中，如何界定外文學門的功能與定位？以這個問題為經緯，此次訪談闡述了外文學門的歷史脈絡、方法論轉折（尤以文化與族裔研究為重），以及未來之變革契機。智明老師以個人經驗、觀察與歷史的縱橫編織，揭示此學科所正身處的轉捩點，既須面對其固有局限，亦需反思如何藉此擁抱新徑以及與世界連結的新關係，如何致力於更積極地介入社會現實。在這層意義上，此次訪談可作為一種邀請，嘗試啟發讀外文系的人重新想像外國文學的研究，思考研究外國文學這件事如何形塑我們對自身歷史的思考以及對所處世界的理解。

王智明教授簡介

王智明。現任中央研究院歐美研究所研究員，兼任陽明交通大學社會文化研究所副教授，曾於哈佛燕京學社與中國美術學院擔任訪問學者，亦擔任《文化研究》主編多年。他的研究橫跨亞裔美國文學、亞際文化研究與後殖民理論，近年更關注疆界、移動與歸屬等議題。在學術與現實之間，他試圖以文學與文化研究連結對人的關懷與政治的介入。

鍾：　在看完《落地轉譯》之後，我也回頭去看了老師寫的〈溝通中外、重建文明〉收錄在《人文百年、化成天下：中華民國百年人文傳承大展》那個厚厚的兩本書裡面。在圖書館裡看到的時候，我發現這篇前面的內容基本上就是《落地轉譯》一書緒論〈文化邊界上的知識生產：外文研究與殖民現代性〉的前身。但，有別於〈溝通中外、重建文明〉，《落地轉譯》的緒論裡多討論了楊牧老師收錄於《柏克萊精神》中的兩篇文章，也就是〈外文系是幹甚麼的？〉以及〈人文教育即大學教育〉。我認為有一個隱約可在《落地轉譯》裡面看到的主題就是老師對於自由人文主義的思考。老師在反芻楊牧老師這兩篇文章時說：「貫穿楊牧思考的自由人文主義（liberal humanism）正是民國以來外文研究發展的思想底色，亦是在政治動盪與思想解放的百年歷程中，外文學者與外文研究賴以維繫的核心價值」（11）。此後《落地轉譯》對於自由人文主義的各個反思和批判似乎可見其貫穿於全書的立論當中，其中在第七章中的〈美學製造的差異：不自由的人文主義〉是直接地提到鄒坎德絲（Kandice Chuh）在《美學製造的差異》（*The Difference Aesthetic Makes*）中所提出來的「『不自由的人文主義』（illiberal humanism）」以「作為思考全球化時代人文研究的前提與方法」（397）。[1] 我這裡想問的是有關文學作為一種再現系統與不自由人文主義的關聯：如果我們以「不自由的人文主義」為架座思考，要促成自

1　根據《落地轉譯》，鄒坎德絲的不自由的人文主義的概念，具體而言，就是透過弱勢文學來構建一種關係性的想像，以揭示世界與主體的多重交界與糾結，從而重新建構當代知識（396-98）。

由人文主義這個宰制結構的轉變的話，我們的終極目標是要轉換文學的再現，還是要消除自由人文主義這個宰制結構呢？

王：　簡單地回答兩個方面：第一個是說，自由人文主義的這個命題對我來說很重要是因為它提供了我們理解外文系學術生產以及知識傳統的一個線索，就是說，不管你做什麼題目，不管你用英文或著用中文寫，fundamentally，在你的知識系統裡頭有這麼一個東西在，這就是自由人文主義，也就是說：you are concerned about human，You are concerned about certain sense of liberty。這兩個東西是在一起的，而且特別重要的是，它們是透過文學在一起的。文學作為個人表現的極端，這其實是浪漫主義時期以降的文學觀點，所謂，文學就是Wordsworth說的，個人「強烈情感的自然流瀉」（the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings）。這個是整個在外文系的教學以及實踐傳統中的一個很重要的根源。有趣的是，雖然剛剛那個是一個浪漫派的表述，但這個根源必須回歸到一個所謂人文主義跟浪漫主義的抗衡或是詰辯的關頭上去。也就是說，當我們一方面傳承浪漫派對於文學的認識的時候，認為文學是個人情感的自然流瀉的時候，同時我們這些前輩們在說的是，浪漫派的這個主張是有問題的。文學更多的是要去調和、去對人世有更多的關懷。用李有成老師的說法就是一種「淑世」的概念：literature is for making good for the society。所以一方面它是記錄個人，二方面它有這個社會關懷的面向。那麼，我覺得透過歷史爬梳，你就比較能夠清楚看到自由人文主義一直存在於外文系的傳統，起碼一直到九零年代。至於九零年代之後的狀況，我待會再說。

所以回答你問題的第一個面向就是，文學在自由人文主義的傳統之下扮演的恰恰地是這麼一個核心又曖昧的角色：一方面它是高度個人，可是二方面它又有一個很強烈的社會面向。這就回到你剛剛問題的後半部，就是所謂不自由人文主義跟文學的關係，到底是應該改變文學表現的方式，還是改變整個自由人文主義根本的座架？我自己理解，這個問題是一個具有批判性但是走得太快的一個問法。意思就是說，如果你動態性的理解，或是用一種唯物論的角度來理解文化跟文學的生產的時候，唯物論的觀點就會是，你有什麼樣社會條件，就會產生什麼樣的文化。這當然是有點機械式的說法，但是不影響唯物論作為一種有效的思維方式。那麼如果我們接受這樣的一種思維方式，那就是說，生產出來的文學與文化基本上反應了我們當時的社會條件。從這個角度來說，如果我們的社會條件沒有改變，那麼自由人文的文學創作就會繼續下去；相反地，如果你希望社會條件有所改變，那麼相應的文學創作的方式、形式、內容、主題也就會跟著相對的變化。所以這不取決於主觀的要或不要的問題，而是我們怎麼客觀地分析這個時代走到哪裡了，以及它會怎麼樣的變化。

從這個角度來說，所謂弱勢族裔，其實也就是「不自由」的這個角度提醒我們的就是說，在這些歷史過程中，其實有這些陰暗面，那這些陰暗面在早一個時代來講是不被看見的，或著說，是被視而不見的，或是被視為理所當然就該如此。可是今天在面對世界的變化時，我們很難再把這個東西視為理所當然，就像我們剛剛講教養的這些問題，你擺明了就知道這不是一個公平的遊

戲，但你不可能在一夜之間改變這遊戲的規則。[2] 所以當你去認知到這個「不公平」的時候，就像當你認知到humanities are illiberal的時候，那你可能要去思考的是，我們的文化如何做出相應的調整，如果它能夠做出相應的調整的話。而不是說單純地說，一定要把自由人文主義拿掉，換上另一個東西，那是一種革命性的思維，可能是我們的老前輩們他們不會同意的思維，因為這些老前輩基本上採取的是反浪漫派的立場，也就是反革命的立場，這個「反革命」的立場，不僅僅是來自國共內戰的脈絡，同時也來自他們的師承輩，就譬如說同白璧德（Irving Babbitt）對於對於盧梭（Jean-Jacques Rousseau）的批評，對於所謂工業文化的批評。所以當我們回到歷史，你會看到一些 repeated drama，在每一個時間用不同的方式展現，但是每一次的重覆都有變化。那麼不自由的人文主義大概是我們這個時代的一個變化或徵候。

鍾： 感謝老師的回應。那麼，承剛才自由人文主義的問題，老師除了要談及不自由人文主義與自由人文主義的關係之外，我認為老師藉著自由人文主義還想來談所謂「美學教育」的問題。這在結論〈給讀外文系的人〉裡面的第二、三點可見，老師在這個問題的形塑、闡發上，

2 這裡的「教養的這些問題」系延續九月三號訪談前，在午餐期間智明老師所談及的話題，主要圍繞在對雙語政策帶來的社會不平等的批評。智明老師認為，雙語政策其實就是有錢人的遊戲，因為有錢人原本就能負擔昂貴的英文教育，他們的孩子寒暑假可以去美國遊學，自然就學得好。而相對之下，普通家庭要為了符合政策的雙語要求投入額外資源，造成家長與學生的極大焦慮：學生開始得為「學好英文」這件事自己負責，而普通家庭的家長得開始煩惱有關籌措孩子英文補習費的事情。這樣的政策反而強化了meritocracy的結果，即，那些能夠達到雙語標準的學生在競爭中更有優勢，而落後的學生則更快被淘汰。此外，雙語政策的核心意義也很值得質疑，即使學生學會了英文，卻無法與祖父母溝通，那這所謂的雙語教育又有何意義？

主要建立在對瑞恰慈的「實用批評」（practical criticism）的討論[3]：英美學院的專業化導致批評和理論的批判性被取消了。以此為基準，依照老師你的看法，我們可以反思臺灣自1980 年代之後接受理論的洗禮之後，雖然左派獲得了勝利，但這個勝利僅僅是表面上的；現實中，學院的知識生產在高度的專業化、規訓化了以後離開的群眾，被閉鎖在象牙塔內，而學者也因此「對群眾該讀什麼、看什麼、思考什麼、感受什麼，失去了發言權」，學院的知識生產也遂失去了「美學介入的功能」（455）。這與老師剛才所提到李有成老師所主張的文學可以「淑世」的看法有關，也就是民眾的教育與文化生活與學院的知識生產的關係。我的問題是：在談「專業化」或著「學院化」時不知道老師你有沒有看到一些矛盾？像是我的一個同學在和我討論這個問題時說了這段話：「專業的人有專業的人的戰略位置，就算你說那些搞文化研究的人都站到第一線好了，那根本也不能算同一個人，研究室裡的學者跟站在社運現場的學者不是同一個人，也不用化約成其中一個，學者做的事朝向未來，讓以後的人有思想資源可以用」。在我看來，這段話，與老師的主張相反，是在捍衛知識生產「專業化」或著「學院化」的價值。綜合兩者的看法，我認為問題出在老師你對於「介入」的定義與論述不夠明確，因此這裡我想請問老師如何看待這樣子的一個矛盾，以及老師如何闡述文學如何介入的這個問題？

3 這裡瑞恰慈的「實用批評」圍繞在《落地轉譯》裡對諾斯的著作《文學批評：一部簡明的政治史》（*Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*）（452）的討論之上。

王：　你這個題目很好，我覺得它必須被分成好幾個層級來討論。第一個是這樣子的，我們先從專業化的問題來看，學院的專業化使得批評被閉鎖在象牙塔內的觀察，基本上是出自諾斯（Joseph North）的《文學批評：一部簡明的政治史》（*Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*）。他討論的主要是北美的脈絡。那這個觀察我覺得是有其道理的，但是這個觀察沒辦法百分之百的移植到臺灣來，這是我在結語〈讀外文系的人〉裡頭稍微做的比較：從諾斯的角度來說，北美在八零年代，批評好像已經被閉鎖在學院的系統裡面。所謂「閉鎖」的意思是說，它跟社會的脈絡比較沒有直接的互動，但在同一個時間點，在臺灣的狀況是恰恰相反，就是整個臺灣的學院是捲進到社會的運動裡面去。那這個當然有兩個地方的實際落差，但我覺得更根本的當然說是每個地方的社會脈絡與歷史時刻不一樣。一九八零年代末、一九九零年代初，這是臺灣的歷史時刻：解嚴、廢除萬年國代、民主運動。這些社會運動是被捲在整個社會跟國家的變化當中的，所以它不只是一些少部分利益團體的運動，而是整個社會轉型或社會改造的過程。應該這麼說，學院人士參與在 social transformation 的中文語境（臺灣、大陸、香港）裡面，我覺得形成了一個傳統，因為如果你回頭看，五四那一代人就是這樣。明明是在北大好好的讀古書的人，突然之間跑上了街頭，而且這個變化深入到了整個社會的轉型和改造；同樣地，七零年代可能比較沒有，但是不管是在北美的保釣運動或是在臺灣的鄉土文學論戰，其實都有這麼一股力量要讓學院的知識跟資源能夠介入到社會的改造，如果你看我編

的林孝信的訪談集大概就會比較清楚。[4] 林孝信是一個代表人物，但他不是外文系的人，可是在他那一輩有很多類似的人物。所以我覺得在外文系裡頭也有這麼一個傳統，雖然譬如說七零年代的幾位前輩，顏元叔也好，或著是侯健也好，不像我們理解的在九零年代以後那樣子的介入方式，可是他們依然是在聯繫學院與社會的互動。

那這就回到你剛剛那個問題就是什麼叫做介入？在顏元叔的身上，我們就拿他做例子吧，介入有兩個方向，一個是在學院裡頭的改造，就是說，我讓學生來學院裡讀些什麼，包括教材選什麼、課程該開什麼。這些其實就是一種介入方式。就是 within the institution you try to make the institution better，但同時，顏元叔也希望他的研究跟影響力可以超越外文系的範疇，所以譬如他會去談論現代詩，談中國的古典詩，乃至於去談臺灣的小說[5]，這其實也是一種介入的方式，雖然它看起來相對地學院了一點，但是他的介入啟動了不一樣的討論；這個討論也許不被正面地接受，甚至被惡意地批評，但是它造成一些影響。那這個影響再度回到學院裡頭就是所謂專業化的趨向，所以這裡弔詭的地方就是，當年的革命派，最後都被我們看成了保守派，可是，這也是為什麼我們要回到歷史語境看待歷史的原因，因為在那個時代做這些事情其實是有革命意義的。介入就是在這個意義上面。七零年代這些的外文前輩，他們一方面要重建學

4 這裡的訪談集是參考〈【楊照談書】1081226 王智明等人《從科學月刊、保釣到左翼運動：林孝信的實踐之路》第1集〉。*YouTube*，臺北電臺931，2019年12月27日，https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIzW-pXnb6qs&t=9s。以及〈【楊照談書】1081226 王智明等人《從科學月刊、保釣到左翼運動：林孝信的實踐之路》第2集〉。*YouTube*，臺北電臺931，2019年12月30日，https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-yYQ-DTsmr8&t=623s。

5 此處所指的是〈台灣小說裡的日本經驗〉一文。

院實踐裡頭專業化的程度，因為從五零年代到七零年代，臺灣大學的專業化程度是非常低的，也就是我們的前輩基本上不用發期刊就可以升教授的，對吧，這個在今天是不可能想像的，但在當時後就是如此。但這還不是他最關懷的一個問題，他最關懷的一個問題是怎麼樣透過英美文學的中介（其實主要是新批評的研究方法）去讓我們對於中國文學的研究更為蓬勃、可以有一些新的看法。這裡當然是有一種李敖意義上，年輕人想接棒然後改變學術習慣跟做法的企圖心。

所以等到九零年代以降，文壇的介入就更多地是在理論、文化研究（族裔研究的話有一部分但是沒有那麼地強烈），但起碼就是理論跟文化研究，因為它們跟社會的轉型和改造有更直接地接連，所以這樣的介入會讓你覺得，好像社會的變化而跟學院裡面沒有關係，但那個連結，起碼就資源的獲取與論述的變化，一直都在。譬如以文化研究來說，文化研究一個可能最大的遺憾就是它沒有把自己的建制化做得更為龐大。到今天來講，臺灣有的文化研究學系只能算半個（這是陳光興老師的說法），就是陽明交大的社會與文化研究所，一半是社會所，一半是文化研究的研究所，我們有一個文化研究學會，但現在更大程度地比較接近臺灣文學學會的樣子。簡單講，如果你要從學術建制的轉型與改造來說，那麼九零年代的 transformation 更多是不在學院裡頭的，而在於社會上面，如何介入統獨的辯論等等。這也是為什麼在談理論那章的時候花了很多的時間談空白主體，是因為我覺得那

其實是內在於整個九零年代臺灣社會最核心的統獨辯論。[6]

鍾：　講到空白主體，我還記得廖咸浩老師在一場聯經辦的線上講座上講到說他認為似乎看不到老師你在論述空白主體時候的立場，他對於在《落地轉譯》裡自己「被捕捉到的身影」有意見。[7] 老師你是否認為在「爬梳」歷史的過程中，某種程度上反映的是對歷史的一種重構？當我們回顧這些辯論時，老師你認為這種重新審視過去的框架，會如何影響我們對當時論述的理解？

王：　這也是一個非常好的問題。我記得那天廖老師的回應，印象中應該是這樣子的，就是他覺得在這個辯論當中我把他放在一個失敗者的位置上。那這個當然不是我的意圖，我並沒有要在這裡說誰是贏家誰是輸家，而是在這個過程當中，讓我明白一件事情，就是主體性的概念為什麼這麼的 強而有力，為什麼當時空白主體的問題有這麼多的論辯，是因為它很深刻地捕捉到當時地社會脈動，那個「社會脈動」其實就是臺灣要從這個地表當中浮現起來，然後大家要try to make sense of it；空白主體的說法則提供了一個 make sense of it 的空間，可是這個空間的浮現帶有一定暴力性。在當時你可以看見說，廖咸浩老師對於這個暴力性提出了一個很直接，而且很正面的回擊，可是二十年後你再看這個事情的時候，你會覺得，當時的那個還未成形的辯論，在今天已經成為

6　有關「空白主體」的討論主要出現在《落地轉譯》第六章的〈理論的轉譯：「空白主體」與「身分危機」〉一文裡。

7　〈2021/12/17｜《落地轉譯：臺灣外文研究的百年軌跡》新書線上講座｜王智明｜劉紀蕙、廖咸浩、涂豐恩〉。*YouTube*，文化研究國際中心ICCS_IICS，2021年12月20日，https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-AgX-DSqKmU。

我們所有一切事情的框架了，所以書裡的論述看起來像是把廖老師放在論辯失敗的一方。但我認為恰恰是透過去重新整理過這個論辯，使得我們看到了當時那個論辯當中，有一些很珍貴的部分到今天還值得我們去重新考慮、討論。這個也許是我在書寫方面不夠仔細和周到的地方，可是真正的關懷其實是在於，當我們重新看那個問題的時候，就像你問題的後半部那樣，我們會站在什麼樣的立場來評價這個問題？我們會如何理解當時候那個討論對我們今天的影響？比方講，我用到何春蕤的一句話，他說所有人其實都是關在櫃子裡面，在當時，她當然是在講 Queer Studies 裡頭的closet。可是當她用中文表述的時候，因為那個「櫃」又通「甌」，所以你會突然發現說，喔，那個「櫃」的概念在中文的語境裡其實是很重要的。在她講的時候，我想她也許不會想到這個事情，可是二十年後，當我們在回顧時，你就會發覺說，所謂的同性婚姻其實也是另外一個closet。在二十年後，所謂的 queer identity 雖然已經 out of the closet 但是他們進入了另外一個 democratic box （「甌」，小箱子）。這當然是後續的延伸，但在撰寫的過程當中，這些小地方其實給我很大的啟發，也讓我覺得說，當你有一段時間、距離在看過去的事情的時候，其實是比較有幫助的。

鍾： 這也是我接下來想要談的，也就是所謂的時效性的問題。我們常會思考某些理論的論述是否仍具有效用，或著說，這個論述在某場論戰過後的時效就過了，我們就可以把它束之高閣。[8] 具體而言，我想問的是老師所談

8 此處「束之高閣」為訪談時智明老師語。

的「相關性」（relevance）問題本身是否也有這種時效性或某些局限？老師說過，《落地轉譯》一書裡面有一個很重要的問題就是：為什麼是相關性——而不是經典性或現代性——成為後冷戰時代，外文學門接受與理解西方的座架。而相關性的概念，是老師從恩古吉（Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o）、艾詩畢莉杜（Yến Lê Espiritu）、格里桑（Édouard Glissant），以及史書美（Shu-mei Shih）等人那裡繼承來的。這些學者有各自要對話的對象，但我在想，這一框架在對抗某些論述的同時，是否可能也本質化了某些弱勢族裔，或者抹平了這些群體間的差異？例如，近年來有關島嶼性思性（archipelagic thinking）的主張認為說，某些島的文化、生態在殖民者到來之前是相連在一起的，但這個主張不免遭到另外一派的學者質疑，這種觀點本質化了島嶼文化，反而消弭他們各自的界線。畢竟這些文化的本質、原初性也都是一種殖民歷史的產物，是殖民者發明出來的。因此，在這樣的狀況之下，我們該如何看待「相關性」以及隨之而來的「時效性」的問題？「相關性」的概念是否會隨時間與場域的變化產生不同意涵？

王：　讓我這麼說吧，我還記得春燕對我的其中一個批評就是在這個問題上，她覺得說如果 old scholarship has to be relevant，那好像不能 relevant 的 scholarship 就不能 count，這是她對文化研究的態度也好、立場也好，覺得比較不能夠同意的地方，which is a fair critique，I take that。所以這就會牽扯到說，我們怎麼理解相關性是什麼，以及如何看見或建立相關性的脈絡。在我書裡，比較強烈的相關性的例子顯然就是族裔研究，就是你覺得

他者即己身，那些你在螢幕上看到的他者可能就是我自己，我想這個「從黑人的命也是命」（BLM, Black Lives Matter）到新冠疫情的過程中，這個問題越來越清楚，這是一種對相關性的理解，所以有一點你剛剛所說的，把 everything lump together、accept they are the same 的危機。但我要說的是，我不並反對這樣如此來理解相關性，但我對相關性的理解並不僅僅是如此。也就是說，這個書也許強調了前面那樣的相關性，族裔研究、他者跟己身的相關性，可是你並不會主張說只有這個想法才對，或相關性的意義僅在於此。相反的相關性的意義，對我來說，在於它打開了一個關係的想像和思考，就是 what is relevant to me also depends on my relationship to that thing。所以相關性的意義在於，透過相關的感受，讓你去找到一種關係。同樣地，回到整個外文系的歷史過程當中，我們的前輩也在找相關性，比方講，西方有史詩，我們有什麼？這個就是一個關於相關性的問題：如果西方文學傳統中史詩如此重要，那麼我們為什麼沒有？所以他們也在這個看似同構的關係裡面去尋找一種 relevance，這個 relevance 給它一個研究得以出發的動力跟契機。

所以第一個層次上，我會比較正面跟廣義地看待相關性的意義，不見得只有弱勢族群的那個才叫做相關性，即令那也是非常重要的。這裡就必須要從相關性進入到關係性的轉移，在《落地轉譯》可能我沒有這麼強烈地去談關係性，就是 relationality：什麼樣的東西跟什麼樣的東西是有關的，以及他們的關係是怎麼被組構起來的？這更多是格里桑的想法，就是 relation is a condition。它是一種條件。譬如我今天跟你發生關係，它是在一個條

件當中發生的，對吧？那個條件可能是，比方我剛剛講的，因為這本書或某人的介紹，所以我們見面了，那就是因緣聚合，因為它的條件存在了所以我們見到。從這個角度來講，其實 relationality 折射的是conditionality，就是 what is the condition in which such a relation happened。所以回到你剛剛問題中對島群思考的批評。你覺得島群思考把 relationality 的東西變成了 sameness，變成了 identity。那我要說的是，如果我們真的 take relationality seriously，我們其實應該從 identity當中脫開來去理解 relationality 而不是從 relationality 去理解 identity。什麼意思呢？就是不是劃歸於島嶼的都是承受同樣苦難的人，島嶼當中也有大島跟小島的差別、有人島跟無人島的差別，所以如果真的我們進入到島嶼的歷史的時候，你就會發覺島嶼不是鐵板一塊，島嶼之所以會被放在一起討論，比方講這幾年比較常講的就是第一島鏈的概念，就是從日本沖繩到臺灣再到菲律賓，被放到第一島鏈，這些島其實彼此互不相屬，或歷史上有必然關係，但在一個地緣政治的條件中中它們被放在了一起，這就是一個 conditionality for relationality。那如果當我們真的進入到這個 relationality 的時候，你就不會說第一島鏈長得都一樣，它可能在美國地緣政治的思考當中扮演類同的角色，但是它彼此的關係是複雜的，所以當你進入關係性的討論的時候，你就會發覺說，其實，這個島群思考的角度並不是要停留在同一性，不是要停留在認同，而是要透過這樣的一個地理或地緣政治的特質去理解形成關係的條件，或是這個特定的條件如何受到這個地理的特質的影響而形成，使得這些島嶼被收納在一起，而這個收納又如何抹滅，或是調和了它

們內部或溫柔或緊張的關係。所以，比方說，臺日放在第一島鏈可能對很多臺灣人來講沒有不好，但臺菲放在第一島鏈就不好了，可是你有沒有想過，菲律賓人怎麼看臺灣的？日本怎麼看臺灣的？臺灣怎麼看菲律賓的？這些其實才是整個關係性的核心問題。

鍾： 那麼是否可以說，討論關係性時，我們應該將它置於特定的脈絡中，並透過這個脈絡去梳理各部分之間的關聯，而不是從一開始就將所有 identities視作同一個整體？也就是說，應該先從彼此之間的差異和內部張力出發，再看如何形成彼此的連結，而非反其道而行，直接將關係性視為一種同質性的表現？

王： 應該得換一個表述方式。所謂的 identity 在這裡不是身份認同的 identity，而是同一性，就是 they all look the same，所以sameness 可能是更好的一個說法，也就是說 sameness 不是 relevance 或著 relationality 的重點，所以當我覺得你和我是相關的，並不表示我和你是一樣的，只是因為你做了什麼，你讓我有所感動，所以我覺得我們在這裡有一個接合點，大家可以碰到，或是說，我跟你發生了某種關係，但這不表示我們兩個就是一樣的。譬如說，你交了某個女朋友，不表示說這個女朋友就跟你是同一個姓，然後就會有同一個想法，重點是你和她的關係是如何構成的，那才是 relationality 的重點。所以，從這個角度來講，你剛剛的批評其實是說，對於所謂關係性的想像把很多不相干的東西放在一起，把它們都當成是一樣的，那我要說這是一個對關係性的誤解，關係性反而應該是從它內在的聚合跟差別展開來。我給你兩個例子。我先用島嶼的例子說明，比方講沖繩群島，

或是臺灣群島，臺灣好了，現在開始有人會把臺灣當成群島來看待對不對，那這個目的是什麼，為什麼要把臺灣當成群島來看待呢？臺灣有什麼資格當成群島呢？臺灣可以算一個群島嗎？這個問題的提出，其實是要去挑戰，把臺灣當成是臺灣的說法。也就是說，預設臺灣就是臺灣，沒有其他的附屬島嶼，所以當我們把其他的附屬島嶼也放進臺灣的版圖的時候，比方說，釣魚台，比方說，金門馬祖，比方說，南沙群島、太平島。這時候你看到的臺灣是不一樣的臺灣，不一樣在什麼地方呢？不是僅僅是有南島語系的人類學系譜，更多的是一個政治地理的任意結構。太平島這麼遠，臺灣憑什麼把它當領土，對吧？講白了不是這樣嗎？如果沒有國共內戰的歷史，我們怎麼可能在那邊搞了機場，視為南疆，對吧？所以從這個意義上來講，當你用群島或島群的概念來看待臺灣的時候，其實是在豐富臺灣的歷史意義，也在突出臺灣，形成自身這個想像社群的 conditionality。你要去認識和承認這個事實。所以你才會有金門馬祖成為臺灣跟大陸之間今天最核心，卻也最麻煩的一個邊界。這個是第一個例子，用 conditionality 去理解 relationality。

另外一個例子要回到你剛剛要說的族裔研究。在臺灣研究族裔文學，在東亞很多地方也一樣，日本也是，韓國也是，就是，我們的第一個傾向都是 study our own people。所以你是華人，你就讀華美文學，如果你是韓國人，你就讀韓美文學，日本也是，菲律賓也一樣。那這種所謂的離散投射，是很自然的事情。可是這個關係，單德興老師說的「特殊的親切感」，這個研究華美文學的「利基」就像張錦忠老師說的，是虛構、虛幻的。

我想我們大家都可以會心一笑，因為確實是如此嘛。你憑什麼說，你跟你美國表哥是一樣的呢，對不對？從你剛剛聽的午間的談話來講，你就會知道說，美國表哥還是跟你差距很大的。所以，這個 relation，可以是 relevant 嗎？也許是，也許不是。所以 relevance 跟relation 就有一個區別在，不是你有 relation 的東西都是 relevant，而是要去思考什麼東西讓你覺得 relevant，然後從那個東西裡頭去展開一個 relation 的討論，這是我在看臺灣的族裔研究的發展時，得到的一個體會。就是說，我們透過離散的投射，首先地看到了華裔美國文學的發展，然後，我們以為那是跟我們有關係的，但是我們從來沒有辦法把那個關係說得很明白，特別是我們需要用一個美國文學的架構來說，這個是合法合理的，不然它就應該跑去中國文學系了。所以我覺得這個東西才是我們的 conditionality of that relationship。那我們應該把這個東西放到前台來，也就是說，亞美文學在臺灣的 legitimacy，其實跟美國作為一個知識上、政治上的帝國是相關的；如果沒有它作為知識帝國的合法性，亞美文學就進不到美國文學的範疇裡；如果沒有它作為政治帝國的合法性，亞美文學也就不會值得被臺灣拿來研究。這也是我們對於跨太平洋研究，或著跨太平洋研究對亞美研究的介入，就是說，他們之所以 relevant，不是因為他們是我們的表哥、表姐，而是因為他們是 part of the American problem。然後才形成了對反向影響，so much so that we aspire to be just like them的思考。那個，對我們來說，是一種既內在又外在的事實。外在的事實是，we cannot be just like them，因此它構成一種內在的情結，就是我們怎麼樣理解亞美文學：一方面他們好像被當成

是弱勢的他者，可是同時，在我們的關係之中，他們未必是弱勢的，更多時候可能是一個強勢的他者。

鍾：　其實這裡關於情結的思索，我想從老師的碩士論文《航越天使島：任壁蓮小說的文化政治學閱讀》就可以看到了。在閱讀老師其他的著作時，我都覺得很像隱隱約約都可以看到老師碩士論文的影子，後面 coda 有一段話我把它節錄下來：「作為一名來自臺灣的海外學生，我發現自己正走在許多亞洲移民的相同的道路上，並能想像自己成為亞裔美國人的可能。在許多方面，這篇論文有點像我在太平洋另一端未來生活的圖景；它也像是一種事先的強心劑，旨在讓我身在美國多元文化的幻影中而不受其影響。身為一個在美國流行文化影響下成長的孩子，我確實對跨越國界、創造新身份，以及在後現代的動盪中探索自我感到著迷，而所有這些衝動都指向一個共同的目的地——美國，仿佛美國是把一切緊密聯繫在一起的重心。然而，這種以美國為中心的觀點是否反映了亞洲現代性的一個特性？這是否是一種顯示亞洲在邁向現代化和經濟繁榮過程中與美國密切交織的跡象？美國，作為一個參考的框架，是否是亞洲人以複雜情感（敬畏、仰慕、憤怒等）仰望的『老大哥』？年復一年，許多亞洲人仍然穿越太平洋，彷彿這是我們的宿命，是自我實現過程中不可或缺的一部分。正如好萊塢所象

徵的，美國是一個夢幻般的仙境」（筆者自譯；89）。[9] 我在讀這段話的時候，同時想到的是在《權力、政治與文化：薩依德訪談集》的緒論裡，薇思瓦納珊（Gauri Viswanathan）提到薩依德在《東方主義》的序章談到促使他去研究東方主義的其中一個目的，是因為「置身西方的巴勒斯坦人那種『懲罰的命運』（the "punishing destiny"），遭到去人性化的意識形態所挾持」，而「這種令人心寒的經驗引領他去研究……以便『清查』（"inventory"）宰制文化在他身上的那些『痕跡』」（38）。我想請問老師：從碩士論文到現在，為何這些「宰制的痕跡」對你而言是一個始終深具吸引力的研究問題？這是否是你反思亞洲現代性，以及你自身生命經驗的一部分？

王： Wow，非常謝謝你。我大概幾百年都沒有想過那篇論文了。聽你說的那段原文之後我也很驚訝，看來我這二十年來沒什麼長進，哈哈哈，寫的東西都是一樣的。Wow，it's really interesting。我覺得，那是一個臺灣狀態與自我生命狀態的 constancy，就是說，我覺得我們這一

9 原文："Heading East as a Taiwanese overseas student, I find myself treading on the same path of many Asian immigrants, and I could envision the possibility of becoming an Asian American myself. In many respects, this thesis looks somewhat like a preview of my prospective life on the other side of the Pacific. It is also like a kind of pre-taken therapy that aims to keep myself from falling sick in the phantasmagoric American multiculturalism. As a baby growing up under the spell of American pop culture and 'brainwashed' by the American academe, I am indeed fascinated with the trans-Pacific prospect of crossing national boundary, of creating new identity, and of navigating my own self-in-split on the troubled waters of postmodernity. All these urges point to one destination alone—America—as if it is the point of gravity that holds everything together. However, isn't this U.S.-centeredness a feature of Asian modernity, a symptom that tells how much Asia is entwined with America on its way to modernization and economic prosperity? Isn't U. S. A. the frame of reference for Asian people who look up to the big brother with mixed feelings—awe, admiration, anger, and what not? Yet, still year after year many Asians cross the Pacific, as if that is our manifest destiny and an indispensable segment in the course of self-actualization. As Hollywood symbolizes, America is a dreamlike wonderland."

代人就是在美國的陰影下長大。講白了就是這樣。我們雖然不是處於白先勇他們「來來來，來臺大，去去去，去美國」的那個時代，但是我覺得他們那個時代的 legacy 在我們身上是很強烈的。這也就牽扯到時代變化的一個地方，這也是我最近常常在想的問題，也就是說，九零年代跟現在的差別到底在哪裡？我可以說，對九零年代，當時我還沒有出國唸書，一方面有一種exhilarating，有一種興奮、期待的想法。可是同時在另一方面已經有一種隱隱約約的 concern。那個 concern 倒不是說，之後留不留下來的問題，而是說，I'm not sure what to do with that，right？因為我們前面一輩的人，都是希望我們成為美國人的，特別是，我不知道這是不是外省人獨有的這種家庭教誨，但是，我覺得跟這個離散經驗有一點點關係。如果你讀聶華苓或是白先勇的小說你就知道了，臺灣的動盪使得這一輩人都不安於世，如果五零年代還相信反攻大陸的話，到六零年代基本上已經相信反攻不了大陸了，所以重點是，怎麼樣安身立命？怎麼樣能讓後輩子孫有好的發展？所以，從六零年代，七零年代，到八零年代，在美國國力日漸上升的情況下，學英文這件事情，到美國唸書這件事情，幾乎是如果你辦得到的話，你就會這麼做的。你辦不到的話沒辦法，但如果你辦得到，你就會這麼做。所以，我們家這一輩五個小孩，沒去唸書的是少數人。不一定是去美國啦，但是沒有留洋唸書的是少數。我不覺得我們家是特例，我覺得如果你展開來看，蔣家不說，蔣家一定是如此，只要是六、七零年代、外省人，還混得有一點樣子的，譬如說劉兆玄，他們家每一個都是留美博士。這個常態到九零年代還對我們是個常態，就是：That is what is

expected of you。也許父母親嘴巴不講，不會說你一定要怎麼樣，但是，如果你可以……這個對家長來講是一個很自然的想法。

可是對我來說，我在求學過程中有兩個很重要的經驗，一個當然就是我的美國表哥，所以很小的時候你就會感受到某種美國光環的籠罩，你就知道說，they speak better English，they look better。就像如果你看 Andrew Lam 的文章，他談這些越裔回到越南，越南人對他們的感覺就是如此。我覺得當時的我其實大概也是這樣，就覺得說，這些人真的是天國來的人。但那當然也不單純只是小孩的直接反應，在那個文化環境下，早已經有很多論述在形成我們對於「他們」的想法。Supposedly 是 part of us，可是 not clearly、not really。這就是所謂的 relative matters，一方面親戚是重要的，二方面它是一個相對的問題，相對的關係。當你有這樣的經驗跟光環的時候，你就會對美國這東西有一種情結。就是 it looks like some place I should be，但是呢，你又不是很確定你是不是可以。我覺得這是剛才我的碩士論文裡面那段 potentially 想要表達的意思，就是說，我確實好像因為出國留學所以 potentially 覺得我可以變成（亞裔）美國人。可是，foundationally speaking，我其實不是。因為我的中文可能要比他們好很多，我的學術養成，其實有更多是來自中文的訓練，而不是英文的訓練。然後，因為這個東西，所以你會對美國這件事情開始感到好奇，但也有懷疑，就是，真的有他們說的這麼好嗎？這麼好的結果應該是大家都去啊，那去不了的人怎麼辦呢？

當然，當時我覺得我沒有想那麼遠，純粹只是對於美國的這種強勢的影響有點體會的，也就是，我並沒有

單純地只是沾沾自喜地覺得說自己要去美國念書了，然後就會變成亞裔美國人，並沒有這樣，我反而是說，在這個可能的前景或期待下，反而感覺到不確定，或某種的保留。另外一個對我來講很重要的時刻，我也很少提到，是在九六年的經驗，我不知道你們現在還有沒有這個東西，當年日本亞細亞航空公司，就是在中日斷交之後才成立的，為了保持臺日之間航線才成立的一個航空公司。在九零年代，他們有一個基金會，很長一段時間，一直在做亞洲學生的交流工作坊，是一個 summer program，六個禮拜的時間，亞洲各地的學生一起去。那我就跟這些人一起在東京待了六個禮拜。九六年的經驗對我來說是大開眼界。你第一次看到來自亞洲各地的學生。在這個日亞航獎學金的經驗裡，我發現兩個很有趣的事情。第一個就是，US pop culture unite us all，大家來自背景不一樣的地方，但是都會唱美國的流行歌曲。第二個就是，東南亞華人講的福建話就是我們的臺語。在這個亞洲的場合當中，其實中文是不重要的。我覺得這個經驗給我一個很大的衝擊就是，我理解到美國有多麼的強勢，可是我同時也覺得美國所能 cover 的其實是很有限的，它只是提供一個交流的平台，可是彼此的差異性是很大的。那當然還有日本的關係，包括我們有一個經驗是住到接待家庭裡頭，我跟一個馬來西亞的朋友一起去，然後這個接待家庭的老媽媽開著賓士來接我們，然後到一個橫濱郊區的一個高檔房子，我們一進去，她端著茶上來，然後跟我們鞠躬說，日本對不起你們，我說，發生什麼事了，哈哈哈。對我而言，某一種亞洲的種子是在那個地方種下來的，因此當我後來認識陳光興，跟他做亞際文化研究時，對我來講沒有什麼違和

感，我覺得這是很自然跟必然的一件事情。這個我也覺得是在一般外文系裡面比較少人會有的經驗，就是相對於其他人來講，亞洲在我的學術經驗裡面扮演著很大的角色跟作用，直到今天。

鍾： 延續這邊老師對於自己研究動機、問題的發展以及反思，我接下來的問題聚焦在研究方法上。我有注意到，老師你在談論臺灣的族裔研究時（亞裔也好、非裔也好）老師常用「反抗」這個字眼來框定作為這個學科的內在條件。老師你說：「以象徵和抗爭為方法的思考模式廣泛地呈顯在臺灣1990年代以降的美國族裔文學研究中，成為大家習以為常、不須檢驗的預設」（401）。在這層意義上，老師所說的，族裔研究對於「方法論的想像（怎麼做出不一樣的外文研究？）」（404）是否只有在研究對象上有所不同，在文本閱讀上一樣是「再現」式的閱讀方法？在暑假與春燕老師討論之後，我也想問，如果外文學者只把文學當成是現實現象的舉例說明，那會不會抹滅了文學可以對社會、世界提問，可以岔出意義規範的能力？

王： 好問題，但我覺得這個回答也不會太複雜。其實簡單講是這樣，「對社會、世界提問」、「岔出意義規範的能力」是一個很高層次的東西，但所謂的很高層次也只是當我們把 global humanities 作為一個主要的框架的時候，我是 part of the global humanities，所以 my point of direction 是要對這個東西說話。好，但這個時候問題

就來了，就是 why you？Why does your voice matter？作為一個臺灣的學者，我為什麼能夠對 global humanities 發言？或著是說，對於文學（大寫的文學），我能夠說出一些什麼不一樣的東西嗎？或著是說，即便我有什麼好說的好了，為什麼他們應該聽我的？所以這個是面對那樣的問題意識的一個最直接的回應，也就是說，不是說這個問題意識不對，而是說在這個問題意識下面它有很多的 conditionality。所以當我們進入到這個 conditionality 的時候，我們就不得不去思考幾個問題。第一個，地理上，你在哪裡？第二個，你的身份是什麼？第三個，你能說什麼？所以能夠說什麼的問題就變得尤其有趣，因為它 depends on what you read，who you are speaking to，and what you are concerned about。那我當然也可以去關懷 global humanities in the abstract，但這不是每一個人的自我定位。

鍾： 所以我們可以說是因為全球化所引發的自我定位的焦慮嗎？

王： 我覺得還不到這個層次。簡單講就是說，我覺得那個問題的提出有一點點 pompous。不是說不對，而是那個 pomposity override many practical considerations。而我比較傾向的是，當我們從 practical considerations 出發的時候，我們能夠說什麼跟做什麼。這是兩個不同路徑的討論。一個路徑是在比較上層抽象的位置，所以回過頭來，我們不需要去討論差異性的問題，可是我的立場認為，事情恰恰相反，正因為我們是從差異性當中長出來的，所以

差異性是我們往上爬的那個根，我不可能一下子跳到雲端上說，這是 global humanities and here I am。我總要順著某顆傑克的魔豆長出來的樹才能爬到雲朵上面去吧。所以我們就要問：這個樹是怎麼長成的、它長成什麼樣子。

有關於最後文本閱讀上僅僅作為「再現」式的閱讀方法的問題，我覺得這牽涉到我們怎麼認定文學是什麼，跟做什麼。「是什麼」跟「做什麼」是兩個相關但是不相同的問題。「是什麼」是定義的問題，所以對於「文學是什麼」的定義可能會有千種萬種，因為每一個人跟文學的關係是不相同的。如果你今天是一個不做文學研究的日常上班族，如果文學還對你有一點意義，它可能就是消遣、可能就是娛樂，也有可能是 some kind of enlightenment，but you would read literature as you would read it，就是那個上班族他讀文學的方法不會是跟作研究的你是一樣的，對吧。這個是「文學是什麼」的問題。

可是「文學是做什麼的？」這就是一個關於生產的問題。從接收者的角度來講，他可能會講說，文學對他來講是娛樂，所以這裡「是什麼」就同時解決了「做什麼」的問題。可是從生產者來講，文學的生產是有目的性或意向性的，雖然我們都說作者已死，但生產者其實是有他的意向性。他希望這個東西能夠傳達些什麼，做這個事情能夠達成些什麼，包括我們做研究的人本身，寫一本書，寫一篇文章，其實都不僅僅是（當然也是）為了滿足 SSCI 的要求。So what is more than that is really what matters。當你把這個 intentionality 的問題放回來的時候，那「文學做什麼」的答案就不會只是各式各樣的

collection，它可能是非常特定的，而且是 person specific 的。所以對白先勇來講，他可能就是要寫出一個時代的身影；對我們熟悉的後殖民作家這些人，他們可能就是要透過文學的再現來形成對歷史、時代或社會的批判。所以當你搞明白了文學對於每一個作者的意義都不盡相同的時候，那麼你面對它的 approach 也就必然不同。你有可能是要批評他，不同意他的文學表現手法，甚或不同意他的意向和目的。你也有可能是要藉由他，去展開你要展開的問題。所以在這裡，研究方法上的問題上，並不會只侷限在再現的問題上面。再現會成為問題只是因為 if that's all we see，但是，if that's not all we see，那麼它就有一個 outside of representation 的 connotation 跟 implication。譬如說，我們這麼講吧，錢理群曾經有這麼一個說法，他說，有些學者是唐吉軻德，或著說，他作為一個學者，他有唐吉軻德的一面，也有哈姆雷特的一面。那這當然是一個比喻性的說法，他不是去做哈姆雷特或是唐吉軻德的研究。可是，這意味著唐吉軻德跟哈姆雷特都可以 be read metaphorically。那我覺得這個概念是重要的，一個文學作品它是可以被當成一個隱喻來對待的，而不是被當成一個 factual representation，它不是 reflectionism。不是說我今看到一個作品裡面有黑人角色，所以黑人在現實當中一定是如此，他也許有一定的對應關係，但他不是isomorphic identification。所以除非你把它當成一個單純的對應關係，如果你是這樣的話，你就會進入到春燕的批評裡面，就覺得，你只是在做 representation。

可是如果那個對應關係並不是單純的一個reflection，而是一個 re-flection或是一種 extension 或是 projection，

比方講，像是唐吉軻德跟哈姆雷特的說法，那麼，我們對他的研究就不會只單純停留在 reflection 的層次上。所以唐吉軻德對於錢理群來講，他的意義就不在他的那個旅程，而在於他對面風車的那個 moment，就是作為一個挑戰不可能的那個人。我覺得這種讀法，會使我們離開比較寫實主義的 reflectionism，而進入到另外一個語境裡面，就是當你身為做研究的人，你要透過他，才能講什麼東西。這就會牽涉到每一個研究者的能力跟條件，有些人可能就是在做explication，有些人則可能可以透過這個 explication，做出一個超越這個 explication 的東西。

比方說，回到《落地轉譯》裡面，我在寫夏濟安那章的時候，我的開頭是白先勇的〈冬夜〉，不知道你有沒有印象。〈冬夜〉在中文系裡有一個特定的讀法，就是有很多強烈的對比，譬如說老年跟年輕、冷跟熱……等等。那，對我來說，這些解釋都是可以被接受的，可是我在這裡把它當成一個 metaphor 來看，就是說，我看到的〈冬夜〉除了是這些技巧上的對比之外，更強烈地是兩個主角的對位，一個是吳柱國在美國教書，另一個是余嶔磊在臺灣教書，然後兩個老友彼此相見，相互羨慕。所以當我們把這個看成是某一種象徵的時候，其實它就展開了我們對於外文學人的認識的一條線索。當然不是說每一個外文學人都是這樣子，可是它形成了一種線索，供我們理解外文研究裡的前輩們在當年的歷史語境當中，怎麼面對自身的矛盾。表面上看，混得好的都在美國教中文，但是在美國教中文的覺得我混得不好，因為我寫的東西都跟我的家國情懷沒有關係，就是為了美國的 tenure；在臺灣教英國文學的覺得說，雖然我的

英國文學教得很好、很努力，但是賺的錢實在太少，這樣我的小孩都沒有辦法出國唸書。所以如果只是再現式或寫實反映式的閱讀，就會說余嶔磊就代表當時的臺灣人，吳柱國就代表當時的留美學人。Fine。但那不該是這個分析的結論。那個分析應該在這個基礎之上往前走。因此，我覺得說我不反對春燕的批評，確實這樣的批評是基於一些現實的狀況，但是我也不覺得每一個人在做這類題目的時候，都是以同樣的方式，或是只能做到如此。

再多說一句，這也是為什麼我從傳統意義上的文學批評想要做建制史或是學科史。我覺得說，在研究方面上面有一些不同的操作方式，不必然要陷入在一個比較機械化的模式。

鍾： 針對老師對於研究方法的理解，接下來我想問一個與之相關的問題，一樣是出現在《落地轉譯》卻沒有明講的事情，就是老師的文學觀。我想這個透過老師所引用的學者可以略知一二，在引用馮品佳老師的時候，有特別提到文學有「世界化成」的可能（433），在引用史書美老師的時候，也特別說到文學是「在世」（worldly）的，它身處在權力的關係之中，既介入世界的構成，也可以構成世界（405）。這當然都是我自己有點去脈絡化的把它節錄出來，但我隱隱約約覺得老師對文學擁有某些特定的看法，或著說觀念。再來，接續著這個問題往下問的是一個比較私人的問題，就是，在老師的碩士論文當中，有提到過之前曾參與過一本叫做 *Sailing to Ellis Island* 的詩選的編輯，那我想老師應該對詩有一定的興趣，那為什麼後來選擇以小說作為主要研究方向與發展職志？

王： *Sailing to Ellis Island* 其實是當時我們在 Rob Wilson 的課上同學彼此的期末作業然後整合在一起的的詩集。應該沒有人看過這個書，這是當年的少作跟遊戲之作，所以所謂的編輯也不是真正的編輯，就是我們大家把它合起來然後拿去印這個樣子而已。A lot of that has to credit it to Rob，因為是他調動我們，給我們這麼一個機會，他甚至在他的書裡頭會引用這個東西，讀者還找不到這個書，這是某一種無傷的玩笑吧。很多這裡頭的詩是在他課上寫的。我年輕唸書時也會有詩人情懷，所以我也會寫一些有的沒的，但沒那麼執著跟強烈地想要成為詩人。就像李誕說過的，二十五歲以前不是詩人的，大概不是人，哈哈哈。就是年輕人，只要是文藝青年多少都會有寫詩的衝動，我覺得李誕說這話是很有趣的，就是說，從我們自己的角度來看就是一個很正常的事嘛，你會想要塗塗抹抹，寫個一兩句，等等，如果你有這樣子的訓練背景跟修養，這是再自然不過的事，沒有什麼 inconsistent 的部分。

回到剛剛前面的問題就是，我的文學觀是什麼？我覺得這太高大上了，我並沒有什麼太強烈的文學觀，我只是覺得很單純的，所有的文學作品，不管是 high class 或 low class，其實都是文化的一部分，也就是，它們都是 social product。這就比較牽扯到你剛剛講的「在世」、「入世」的概念，也就是說，只要文學是 social product，它就有 social function。所以對我來說，文學的意義在於它有這個 social function。薩伊德（Edward Said）更好地解釋了這個 social function的存在跟重要性。所以

if literature means anything，it is because it has a social function to play，or a social role to play。作為研究者，我們的工作就是去 figure out how it works？Where it fails？And how it stays？不要說太長的時間，就一年當中出的書，在臺灣，上千本；留下來的，大家會記得、會讀的，沒幾本。學術書更是如此，寫一本書花個十年，可是讀一本書可能就花一個禮拜，也許久一點吧，兩個禮拜好了，也就差不多把書看完了。可是真的能夠留下來在腦子裡的，大概沒幾本。當然，除非你是像Fredric Jameson 或著錢鍾書這種腦容量特別大的，你會記得很多東西。換言之，有這麼多的文學作品但是留下來的未必很多，沒有留下來的不意味著它沒有意義，只是說它沒有進入到這個 social function 的 process 裡面。It's part of the social world，but it doesn't engage with the social as much。所以比方講，什麼東西留下來了，或著說，什麼東西在某一個時刻產生效果，包括讓你產生記憶、連結、讓你覺得受到啟發。所以對我來說，文學作品就跟 Netflix 的電視劇是一樣的，我並沒有把它看得特別的崇高，我在乎的只是，什麼東西在什麼時候發生了什麼作用，我好奇的是這個。所以 intrinsically 怎麼寫出一個好的文學作品，我本身不做這個分析，不是說我沒有自己的關於這個東西的選擇或偏好，但是起碼對我而言，那不是最重要的問題。換句話說，我不關心創作者如何創作作品，我關心的是他在這個 social world 裡頭，發揮的影響力跟意義是什麼。這是一個 reception 的問題（也不僅僅是 reception）但絕對不會是 production 的問題。當然，如果說那個 production 牽涉到的是一個 social context 就那會是我關心的範圍，但是作家怎麼熬夜寫文章 is none of my business。

鍾： 現在來到今天的最後一個問題。在結語〈讀外文系的人〉一文中，我認為，老師站在外文「之外」思索外文學門的未來大概有一定的輪廓了。有一段內含著期許的話讓我印象深刻，老師你說「我們必須撥開外文等於英文、外國等同歐美的想像迷障，深入探索『外』的多樣與異變，剴切反思英文與歐美對外文想像的籠罩。我們應該捫心自問除卻歐美，我們對世界的認識有多少(450)？我想，是時候可以回顧老師在緒論裡面的一個註腳所提到的問題：「當外文系不再需要承擔英語教學的任務時，它該如何定位自身的教研任務」（11n4）？老師當時在那個註腳裡面坦言自己還無法回答這個問題，那麼現在經過《落地轉譯》問世之後兩年的發酵（這也可以呼應到老師剛才所提到的 social function），經過一些與大眾接軌的講座、經過一些讀者給予的回饋，以及這兩年來社會對人文學科一些看法的轉變，請問老師現在是如何面對這個問題的？

王： 我可以給你一個不負責任的答案，但這是我能夠給的最好的答案。因為我不用負責任，哈哈哈，所以我覺得它是最好的，一旦我要付這個責任，我覺得就會很困難，那麼也因此，我認為這個「不負責任」要放在回答這個問題的前提之中。原因是什麼呢？因為一旦你在一個機構裡面，成為機構的主事者，巨大的變革永遠是令人驚恐的，因此要執行改革的那個人永遠是背負著最大的承擔，所以「負責」在這個狀況底下就很重要。假設我今天是外文系系主任，要做改革，我就得背負著所有老師跟學生的期待跟批評。這件事就會使改革做起來不那麼容易，也因此我能不負責任地說話，不用承擔那個期

待跟批評的時候，說起來的理想會飽滿一點，雖然它的現實會很骨感。

理想是什麼呢？就是說，如果我們認真地看待外文研究的「外」（西方之外、英文之外的這些東西），這也意味著，所謂的外文系應該是能讓我們對這個世界有更完整跟豐富的認識的教研單位。以前外文系的自我定位就是說，我就是研究西方，像歐美所就說，我們是中研院唯一一個以西方為研究對象的單位。可是問題是什麼？西方也在改變。我們今天的「西方」絕對不是希臘羅馬的西方；我們的西方也不是亞瑟王的西方，對吧？我們今天面對的西方，固然有這樣文化、文明的背景，但是它是處在一個變動的現實當中。所以如果我們真的張開眼睛，認真地看待現在的西方長什麼樣子，那麼這些所謂的 white dead authors 就不應該、也不會成為我們的焦點。不是說他們不重要，也不是說他們寫得不好或什麼的。不是。就是純粹從一個 現實的脈絡裡頭來看待它，這也是為什麼我說，文學跟Netflix沒有什麼差別，因為你看的是它裡頭發生的 social function。

如果你要一個理想主義的回答，那這個答案就是說，外文系就應該改造自己，從一個語言教學，跟傳遞西方思想的單位，成為一個研究世界的單位。這樣才能夠成就其「外」，就是它那個「外」本身所包含的多樣性。這時你當然應該要有各種不同的語言；你當然應該要有文學之外知識的培訓。那也就是說，當你不再單純地留在文學院的那個想像的時候，外文系它就應該可以成為 Humanities 本身。什麼是Humanities？Humanities就是人學，對於「人」

的認識。所以，我們要的就是對「人」的整全的認識，那麼外文系應該來承擔這個角色。為什麼外文系應該來承擔這個角色？因為承擔本國知識、文化傳統的傳承的角色，起碼就目前來講，是被中文系、臺文系所承擔下來了。我覺得外文系可以轉型成為一種 global studies，也就是說，它不需要把自己侷限在特定的文化或是種族語境裡面，而是去面對現實社會變動的事實，然後尋找一種思考、研究的路徑，也因此學術生產會跟現實更緊密地結合。放在實踐的語境裡頭就意味著，我們要找不一樣的老師，我們招學生會招不一樣的學生。以往找老師的方式是，我今天這個課開出來，莎士比亞要一個老師，文藝復興要一個老師，現代文學要一個老師，是一個蘿蔔一個坑下去找人的。可是如果我今天整個課程規劃也轉軌了，成為某種文化研究意義上，對現實關懷為出發點的一種人文學研究的話，那麼我找老師的邏輯就不會依循這些文學史的分段。這就是我所謂的不負責任，但很誠懇的回答。要這麼做不是一件容易的事情，因為它是整體的改變，可是這個改變才是忠於外文系的精神的，即作為一個面向世界的窗口。回到一百年前，前輩學者在想像外文系的時候，我覺得他們也是把自己當成面向世界的窗口，譬如你讀吳宓，你讀王文顯，他們對外文系的期待是，這些培育出來的人是要來幫助中國文學成長的。為什麼他們可以幫助中國文學成長？因為他們知道外面的世界長怎麼樣子。中國文學在這個與世界的交鋒當中，透過外文系的幫助，可以長出不同的花朵。那麼，時移世變，今天的文學系不見得是要承擔國家使命的教研單位，起碼不是外國文學系不再是那樣的

一個單位，我們還是可以幫助中文系、臺文系，但是他們未必還需要我們，對吧？換言之，如果外文系不再把自己當成一個外語教學單位，不再把自己當成一個翻譯訓練的單位，不再把自己當成一個只研究西方文明的單位，那麼它可以做的事情是很多的。可是如果我們依然相信自己要做的是訓練英文、操作翻譯、研究西方古典及現代文學，那麼，我們就很難走出現實的困境。

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