

**OCCASIONALITY: A THEORY OF LITERARY EXCHANGE BETWEEN US AND
CHINA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Michael Segal and Bill Quinn.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses nineteenth-century Sino-American literary exchanges, both conventional and unconventional, to forward a theory of transnational uses of literature. I argue that there is a kind of transnationalism that is characterized by minimal adjustment. In occasional transnationalism, the literature or literary practices of the other are cited to enable a thought experiment or a political enunciation and are then set aside. I track this phenomenon in Sino-American exchanges of the long nineteenth century (1800-1910) and offer readings of the *ad hoc* transnational writings of Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dong Xun, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Qiu Jin and Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton). As its uses of literature will show, the transnationalism between China and America in the nineteenth century often showed no particular desire to underwrite the narrative of Sino-American relations or engaging that rhetoric but superficially. The positivist logic of the literary exchange (which authorizes them as the “proof” of transnational happenings) breaks down when we look at what literary exchange meant to historical actors whose outlooks toward transnationalism and even nationalism were not yet synchronized.

Moving between analyses of literary global networks and the narratology and form of individual pieces of writing, this dissertation makes explicit that the relation between this kind of transnationalism and the logics of the uses of literature. Using other people’s literature to create conditions of thinking that nothing else can effect produces unscripted engagements that tend, in the end, to walk away from permanent influence. In each of five chapters, I read a Chinese-US literary exchange as a case study in the theory of recessive engagement. Intransitivity happens even when (or, rather, especially when) exchanges are happening in the foreground of Sino-US relations, being

touted as emblems of cross-influencing. Uncovering unlikely affinities between Chinese and American poetics, historiography, utopianism, philosophies of social activism, and transformations of the public sphere, I further argue that the history of Sino-US literary exchange in the nineteenth century is a romance of the sociality of literature. This is the belief, fueled by transnational formation, that literary contact effectively mediates political action and contemplation, as well as cross-cultural difference. Such a romance encourages the deferral to other people's literature in the praxis of utopianism; at the same time, through its own tricks, this romance reveals and revels in the likelihood that reading other people's works might make no difference at all.

OCCASIONALITY: AN INTRODUCTION

Every year, more books—both popular and academic—show us that China engaged with the West (and vice versa) earlier and deeper than we had thought. This dissertation could be considered one of these contributions, as it treats the understudied literary history of Sino-American cross-thinking before the 20th century. It is a sign of the times that “pre-histories” of modern transnationalism have come into vogue: intimations of a prospective future gain reassurance and edification from examples of collaborations in the past. Such investments are lodged in the topos of the literary-cultural exchange (文化交流), which gets away with the double ontology of projection and reality. Studies of exchange have focused on its power differentials—questions of who gets the shorter end of the stick in the politics of language and representation when cross-national imaginings are activated. As we both judge and romanticize impact—i.e. interactions that make a difference—it is perhaps time to consider non-impact, crossings driven by occasion.

Bracketing the poetics of recognition and synthesis that have dominated transnational literary studies, *Occasionality* focuses on the outwardly momentous, yet ultimately recessive, transactions that populate literary exchange in pre-20th century East-West contexts. The dissertation surveys a kind of cross-national contact that only literature can occasion, one in which the literature of the other makes certain immediate and private possibilities more likely and the articulation of political contingency possible at all. These literary exchanges are noncommittal “exploitations” of

the expressive, aesthetic, communicative and philosophical potential of the other's literariness. The latter "gives occasion" to an unrelated thought, idea or project and is then set aside with the rich implications for cross-national influence signified in the exchange forfeited. The immediate objects of study in this dissertation are therefore the many kinds of uses of literature that, to this day, our critical habitus either over- or under-signifies: on-the-spot translations, brief thought experiments, name-dropping, self-energizing, and other social activities and political fantasies shallowly sustained by reference to the ways in which others use books or to the ways in which otherness can be used in books. The readings in this dissertation theorize occasionality in literature without recourse to intentionality and its rhetoric of oppression and subversion, appropriation and creative misuse, focusing instead on the internal characteristics of literature such as narrative logics and the demands of their materiality.

Intransitive literary exchanges proliferated in nineteenth-century Sino-US relations before collaborations and cross-ethnic transactions between China and the US were codified. This is not a claim of insularity. The extensive sharing of Chinese and American texts and cultural materials in the nineteenth century did produce certain historical and cultural outcomes in Sino-U.S. relations; in fact, this dissertation depends on the existence of a *very close* nineteenth century Sino-American world. Chinese and American writers wrote and thought much more (and much more matter-of-factly) about each other than one would assume.¹ Any thorough reading of nineteenth-century American and late Qing literature and letters will reveal the ubiquity of cognizance and treatment.² Early American attitudes toward China were routed through the intentions and disappointments of Evangelical Christian missionaries in China, Pacific commercial interests, diplomatic strategies, the increasing presence of Chinese immigrants, and Progressive Era immigration politics.³ China, for its part, figured America into its cartographic imaginary in the 1830s, and continued to translate, publish, digest and account for American literary and cultural production through the early 1900s.⁴

The figure of George Washington, whose abdication of power became a catch-phrase for recessive governance, appeared in many political tracts, including one published for the Taiping Rebellion in 1855. American abolition texts deeply impacted the Qing dynasty's last-ditch modernizing efforts and—more familiar to scholars—early national reform.

While crossings began as early as the mid-eighteenth century, however, the late 1860s marked the beginning of the institutionalization of “cultural exchange” between the two nations. Between 1869 and 1872, the Qing imperial government sent over 120 young men to various universities in the US and the highly curated transmission of ideas that followed created deep reverberations on both sides of the Pacific.⁵ A joint effort by Congress and the Smithsonian Institute in 1869 forced the first large-scale book exchange between the US and China, with stipulations that the “trade” be balanced.⁶ Through the 1860s and 70s, the Methodist missionary Young John Allen worked with the Education and Translation Bureau of the government in Shanghai to produce over 250 volumes of translations, later published by the Methodist Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese.⁷ Transnational newspapers (those touching on global matters published by American nationals for Chinese audiences) appeared in the 1860s, including the *North China Herald*, *Wan Guo Gong Bao* 万国公报, and *Shen Bao* 申报, and these sometimes published acculturated versions of American literature. At the onset of China's self-strengthening movement in the mid '60s, publishing houses—most notably the Jiangnan Arsenal and the Tongwen Guan 同文館⁸—produced large-scale translations of Western scientific and technical literature with the assistance of the Englishman John Fryer (later professor of Asian literature at the University of California).⁹ During this time Japanese intermediaries also began the dissemination of Anglo-American texts into the mainland, their influence reaching its height during the New Culture Movement of the late '90s.¹⁰ This condensed history is intended to show that a cross-Pacific public sphere was slowly emerging in the nineteenth century through the sheer

availability of texts—availability that, it is important to note, was often engineered. It was not until quite late in the nineteenth century, however, that such exchanges had a specific purpose or ideological bias. And even during the period of the institutionalization of exchange there were cross-uses of literature that completely ignored or rejected the politics of diffusion. If we take literary exchange out of the lockstep formation of Sino-U.S. relations and pay attention to the objectives and goals that were actually espoused by nineteenth-century Chinese and American writers, we find divergences from the narratives of appropriation, dissemination, and collaboration. What we find instead are minimal (though not insincere) investments in others and in others' literature as a set of opportunities to make that which did not seem politically, experientially or rhetorically plausible, plausible.

Occasionality tracks this phenomenon in Sino-American exchanges of the long nineteenth century (1800-1910) and offers readings of the ad hoc transnational writings of Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dong Xun, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Qiu Jin and Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far). On the US's side, China-thinking served as a delivery mechanism for calibrating historiographic methods for a post-Revolutionary world, legitimating the utopian designs of the Free Soilers, shoring up Progressive politics, and redesigning the public sphere. On China's side, US-thinking served as a delivery mechanism for reforming the Manchurian state, reclaiming classical literature, and campaigning for women's rights and literacy. As my examination of the uses of literature will show, the transnationalism between China and America in the nineteenth century often showed no particular desire to underwrite the narrative of Sino-American relations or to engage that rhetoric more than superficially. Washington Irving, for example, saw an optimal way to reflect on the changes to historical writing in the modern democratic state in the various ways in which China might have, but didn't, fully intersect with America. Intransitivity was the non-negotiable condition of Irving's metahistoriography. Dong Xun's "translations" of Longfellow's

poetry were for the occasion only, revealing much about the practice of poetry as political upkeep and social lubrication. Emerson and Qiu Jin argued that the literariness of others should become an impetus for domestic political change but insisted that this could really only happen if literature were used and then discarded, left behind. For Emerson and Qiu Jin, the most hardline instrumentalism was the one that best preserved the power of literature and the one that promised the least amount of ideological corruption. Edith Maude Eaton allegorized cross-national literary exchange to contest the notion that reading about something changes you for good. Working in a period before cultural exchange became a formalism, this dissertation asks what historical actors thought the cross-cultural uses of literature were or what they should be—and examines how such ideas were activated by exchange—as opposed to how we might construct from their exchanges a literary history between China and America to complement the history of their bilateral ties in the nineteenth century. Put another way, this is a story of literary inter-pollination between China and America in the nineteenth century that is, in each case, minimally invested or completely disinvested in inter-pollination.

Through literary analysis, this dissertation takes Giorgio Agamben's theory of potentiality and its recognition of the pervasiveness of unactualized experience—of late so useful to queer, affect and ecocritical studies— and moves it into the realm of transnational studies.¹¹ In its literary-historical treatment of unactualized experience, *Occasionality* pays respects to Anne-Lise François' theory of "recessive action," which she develops in her ecocritical readings of Romanticism.¹² Tracking the uncounted experience—happenings and knowledge so recessive they might as well never have happened—François demonstrates how one might conduct a literary history out of moments of lost, but not regretted, potential. From trees spiked with nails left over from anti-logging movements to reticent literary characters who shun even the fulfillment of vindictive self-denial, François pushes us to accept the ontological validity of things and events that do not claim

significance of any kind, to settle with incomplete actions that do not “make good” on interpretive/economic/rhetorical opportunities. Her literary criticism models an alternative to utilitarian, historicist hermeneutics that force things to demonstrate an improvement on what has come before and, when they cannot, project ethical poignancy onto reluctance or withdrawal. *Occasionality* absorbs this intervention by studying limited transmission as a formal phenomenon, rather than as a moral position or an aesthetic preference for ephemerality. Only in literary analysis can we excuse literary exchange from teleology and evaluation, both forms of making things count towards a narrative that can only be had in retrospect.

Under the frame of intransitivity (and its inherent ideological neutrality) we can begin to enter the so-called archive of nineteenth-century Chinese-US exchanges and see something other than US discursive imperialism and Orientalism and China’s coming under the influence of the West. We also see something other than F. S. C. Northrop and Ernest Fenollosa’s visions of a fusionist, transcultural cosmopolitanism.¹³ Unlike cosmopolitanism, the uses of literature in this archive have little interest in describing the experience of being in the world together, or ways of engaging the other in order to construct a shared literary modernity. All of these narratives of East-West modernity regard transnational formation as a contributive practice of accretion, rather than as a kind of construction of the mind in its own right. Several of the historical figures in this dissertation “use literature” transnationally in order to create conditions of comprehension. In many of these cases, what require comprehension are the limits of transnational identification and emulation. A ready example comes from Alexander Hill Everett, one of the first editors of the *North American Review*. Everett conducted a formal analysis of the Ming dynasty novel *Yu Jiao Li* 玉娇梨 (*Jade and Pear*), a novel in which the hero marries both of the heroines. In “Chinese Manners,” Everett used the Chinese novel’s economy of romance to disprove the applicability of Malthusian principles to American reform. The argument was contorted, to say the least. Everett’s exegesis of

the novel contributed to a long-standing disagreement with the “theory of the perfectibility of man” and what he perceived as the erroneous attempts to “revive [it in America] as the basis of a practical reform of the institutions of society” by the utopian socialist reformers Robert Owen and Francis Wright.¹⁴ In this particular instance, Everett wanted to reprise his point as a form of genre analysis. The ideal romance novel, he argued, is characterized by the practical necessity of suffering and sympathy, and their prolongation. The deferral of marriage (by calamities, misunderstandings, but, most importantly, by the presentation of a rival) “must ever remain the only legitimate object of a true novel.”¹⁵ The Chinese custom of allowing three-person marriages is ruinous to the form of the novel because, for one, it disables the creation of necessary distress and, two, it deprives the reader of the pleasure that distress brings. Everett uses the novel’s violation of novelistic economy to mock the political goal of “having it all ways.” As a thinking technology, *Yu Jiao Li* moved Everett closer to articulating his position on domestic programs of reform. Everett (and Chinese writers as well) fostered expectations conditioned by their own unique political contexts for how a piece of foreign literature can be used; that is, not for opinion-forming and self-educating but as a set of conceptual shortcuts that ease social projects and political enunciation.

Transnational East-West studies, though it examines the impact of contact on political reform (especially on China’s side), runs into difficulties weighing the “slightlessness” of impact. The field was first proposed as an alternative to both structuralist and impact-response paradigms, drawing attention to the dynamic, collaborative origins of nation-building. The guiding premise of Transnational East-West studies is Marshall Sahlins’ theory that any kind of contact means accommodation and any kind of accommodation means transformation.¹⁶ Transnational historicism recovers these pathways over and against the persistent rhetoric of isolated development and intact societies. For example, Lionel Jensen argues quite persuasively that early Sino-West exchange co-produced Confucianism, one of the most enduring self-legitimizing narratives in modern China’s

state formation and also, perversely, one viewed as authentically Chinese by the West.¹⁷ The historical dynamism between East and West produced the discursive conditions that made it ironically possible for each to regard itself as unique and distinct. According to transnational theorists, this dynamism also engendered modernity itself. Lydia Liu attributes the origins of the cybernetic unconscious to the early Western fascination with Chinese textual production and misapprehensions of Chinese grammar.¹⁸ R. John William's latest book, *Technology and the Meeting of East and West*, sees transnationalism as responsible for the notion of a therapeutic relation between techné and environment.¹⁹ Richard Jean So's forthcoming book, *Pacific Community: the Rise and Fall of a US-China Literary Network*, argues that new writing technologies shaping and shaped by twentieth-century literary collaborations replaced the Enlightenment paradigm of the republic of letters with that of a literary network.²⁰ These sophisticated, dialectical histories of synthesis are attended by a critical ethos that either mourns the tolls that synthesis can take, or mourns its failed aspirations. For Liu, for instance, language-based exchanges, far from an innocent kind of sharing, initiate a complicated series of negotiations powered by homogenizing tools like bilingual dictionaries and international treaties.²¹ Forgetting that nationalist movements were always already transnational, the May Fourth movement and the New Youth movement in early twentieth-century China hard-wired the results of these negotiations into fictions of authentic or essential Chineseness. Working in a similar vein, Haun Saussy finds that early East-West exchanges helped to develop the philosophies of history that were then used to manage China.²² Zhang Longxi, Q.S. Tong and Rey Chow examine how misconceptions of the Chinese language have enabled not only Western theories of language, on the one hand, but also more tenacious forms of reification and social control vis-à-vis China, on the other.²³ Yunte Huang's brilliantly realized literary history of the nineteenth-century Pacific is, at its deepest level, an accounting of transnationalism's micro-violences through the literary products of cross-imagination.²⁴ So's rise-and-fall narrative asks how the particularities of the US-China

literary network diminished the political viability of the utopian future it was meant to secure. The history of East-West contact, like the history of modernity, is one that eventually comes into grief.

The forfeiture of sustained cross-culturalism in the works I examine represents a different order of interaction within a story that I find extremely persuasive and historically accurate.

Translingualism was indeed the site of traumatic self-reinvention in twentieth-century China; China-thinking was indeed a driving factor in the mythos of writing-as-techné from the seventeenth century through poststructuralism to this day. The flow of ideas, goods, and people from China to the US in the long nineteenth century did indeed shape the latter's nation-building and public sphere. The aporias of US imperialism were indeed underscored by its relation to Asia. However, without contesting transnational formation, this dissertation unsettles the assumption that literary exchange facilitated it. Literary exchange, in my definition, is not a historical formation but the manifest form of an emergent romance with the very notion of literature's sociality. Transnationality occasioned a shift on both sides of the Pacific in the perception of what literature could *do*. As a system of circulating texts became a proxy for actual contact, exposure to texts took on utopian potentials that exceeded those texts' actual properties. Because political relations were increasingly mediated by textual exchange, the literary, to borrow Jacques Rancière's argument, became imbued with its own sense of expressivity.²⁵ It was seen as able to initiate its own self-impelled set of chained consequences. The romance of the sociality of literature also meant that, in the liminality of cross-national spaces, a bibliographic subject—one supersensitive to books and their availabilities—could be installed in place of a historical one. Transnationalism between China and the US in the nineteenth century marked the precise historical juncture at which people began to overinvest in the communicative powers of literature and, at the same time, question and play with those overinvestments. For instance, Washington Irving hypothesizes that proximity to sinological texts causes a kind of historiographical psychosis. Edith Maude Eaton cheekily suggests that literary

encounters across cultures are less a reflection of reality than a mythology of impact. As an unregulated exercise, “literary exchange” took all kinds of forms, harboring logics orthogonal to the very historical processes that it seemed to prop up. Intransitive contact shouldn’t be regarded as a reduced or resistant form of participation, then, but rather as a reckoning of transnationalism’s own historical constructions with the uses of literature on the ground.

Using literature has its own logic of contact. It is distinct from that of translation, translanguaging, and the exchange of goods, distinct from literary representation and literary worldedness. Neo-phenomenologies of reading (represented by Michael Warner’s “Uncritical Reading” [2004] and Rita Felski’s *The Uses of Literature* [2008]) and their recognition of the multiplicity of our forms of engagement have revised our notions of interpretive communities and expanded our definitions of “use.”²⁶ We use and have always used literature for self-maintenance, the business of getting on and getting by, and for transcendence, the business of putting oneself in another state. In this dissertation, acts of “using literature” should not be taken in the narrow senses of calling on a book to galvanize political activism or to balance a wobbly table; rather, I mean to excavate the sense of having the content and the packaging of a piece of text make something happen immediately, of literature being able to *do things* to you, to animate you into thinking things. Literary exchange, which had no definite parameters in the nineteenth century, could be better conceptualized, then, as a form of remediation, a matter of putting foreignness or foreign texts in another literary environment in order to see what the new juxtapositions can *effect*. With varying degrees of literalness, the chapters in this dissertation treat literature as media, agentic both in its content and its physical manifestations.²⁷ Giving attention to the scripted circulation embedded in a piece of literature’s physical form, I examine not only the effects writers imagined literary objects could have on their audiences but also a literary object’s own demands on the peoples handling its exchange. Viewing foreign texts in circulation as media and as tools of thought foregrounds the

intransivity and intransigence that writers pre-planned for their cross-cultural explorations. We are able to see, after Bruno Latour, the curiously diverse semi-literary, semi-material things that people believe can make them act, as well as the speed by which these “things” become inoperative and fall by the wayside.²⁸

Taking a reciprocal format recently popular in both China and American studies, *Occasionality* consist of five chapters that alternate between Chinese and U.S. writers and between exegeses of English and Chinese language texts.²⁹ We begin not in history, but in historiography. Chapter One, “Chinese Americas That Never Were,” begins by reading a “Rip Van Winkle” story on both sides of the Pacific to reveal how narrative can use erasure to challenge the notion of a historical subject, i.e. one aligned with history’s trajectories and completely responsive to the prevailing form of history-writing. Recessive Chinese-Americas, a transnational configuration that could have been, offered a powerful tool for narrating history’s contingencies and historiography’s whims. Washington Irving’s meta-historiography, the central concern of the chapter, was occasioned by this recessive Chinese-America. For Irving, China was an immanent presence in America’s pre-Revolutionary past and writing that immanence was a commentary on the geopolitically unstable present. Further, for Irving, the transatlantic evolution of sinology exposed history as determined by textual practice, rather than the other way around. Discursive China allowed him to ponder what it means to write history against textual and discursive excess and hold oneself accountable to the results of deliberative historicism. This chapter thus sets forth the hypothesis that transnationalism is a way of reacting to changes to textual practice in the public sphere.

In Chapter Two, “The Uses of Literature,” the imagination of other people’s reading practices is the praxis of ecstatic politics. I look at Emerson’s involvement in the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868 in order to argue that Emerson romanticized China’s literary system as an instance of a realm within which the ecstasy of reading could be preserved in a political institution—his ideal

form of governance. Contextualizing Emerson's China-thinking, this chapter reconstructs the politics of transpacific collaboration in the 1860s/70s amongst former abolitionists and Reconstruction reformers—people who had felt that moving the entirety of the US Pacific-ward would dissolve slavery—and argues that Emerson went along with their thinking up to a certain point. Rejecting triumphalist narratives of East-West convergence, Emerson saw US-China relations as an opportunity to revive an earlier thesis about the political uses of the sudden (but necessarily brief) inspiration that comes from literature. Within a model for reform that secures the activational powers of inspiration against the enervations and compromises of going too far along, cross-identification can never be anything but a contingent mode of acknowledgment. From Emerson's transnationalism, which is really just a demonstration of his sociology of literature, we begin to formulate an ethics of intransitivity.

The relationship between media and intransitivity is the subject of Chapter Three. "Optimism's Medium" studies the foreign minister Dong Xun's translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life" onto a paper fan, a gesture hailed as forging Sino-US relations. Using a comparative approach, this chapter examines the many forms of textual handling that are mistakenly lumped under translation, as well as the ways in which these types of textual handling defy the theory of translation-as-importation. The delight over bringing other people's literature into one's aesthetic space, where it can be enjoyed materially and ahistorically, troubles the critical commonplace that Anglo-American texts shaped China's perception of itself in the late-Qing period. Optimism about other people's literature (and the experiential promises contained in them) codifies literary objects as objects that mediate action, and reinforces an understanding of literary circulation as the suspension (rather than the promotion) of cross-culturalism. Drawing on the uses of poetry in both Chinese and US contexts, I show how engaging without importing and acknowledging without consuming can take place even in the most ostentatious forms of cross-nationalism.

Minimal adjustment receives its fullest theoretical articulation in Chapter Four. Portraying the revolutionary feminist writer Qiu Jin as the Chinese version of Emerson, “Bibliotopias” examines Qiu Jin’s simultaneous enthrallment with Anglo-American reform literature and her suggestion that this literature needs only to be mentioned and neither read nor verified. Qiu Jin’s writings up to her death in a revolutionary uprising reveal the dilemma of using other people’s literature as a call to arms, the dilemma, that is, of wanting a single outcome out of citing works that may very well provoke unwanted responses. Against all the possible ramifications of looking Westward, and, most specifically, against the ramification of China being made to feel inadequate, Qiu Jin develops the bibliotopia. The bibliotopia is a space that allows political subjects to take advantage of the existence of something like the American abolitionist text while living in the suspended time of being *about to read* it. By analyzing Qiu Jin’s citations of Western literature in her own utopian writings, the chapter revisits Benedict Anderson’s hypothesis that nationalism is the practice of believing that other people read, and finding the barest indicators they do so as good as the most reliable evidence. I argue that Qiu Jin’s romance of the sociality of literature and its various minimal investments expose the logics of the international imagined community and the way that this imagined community, for all its rhetoric of distant participation, bends toward intransitivity.

The epilogue, “Bibliographic Habitats,” closes in on the meta-critical argument developed through the main chapters. Deconstructing two stories about literary circulation by the Asian-American writer Edith Maude Eaton, “Bibliographic Habitats” recovers the fantasy of perfect responsiveness to text as a symptom of Progressive attitudes towards East-West relations. Reading the trials of the “Spring Fragrances” and their white neighbors as allegories of these twin fallacies, this chapter posits that transnationalism has its own distinct sociology of literature that is, like any other, “constructed.” Transnationalism relies on the archive—who read whom and where they recorded that influence—to “prove” impact, thus sustaining the tacit agreement in literary studies

that engagement is always absorptive and change-producing. Eaton shows us the comic-tragic things that come out of forcing proximity to other people's literature to act as a load-bearing example of exchange. Her stories remind us that if we credit the increasingly popular belief that more writers and literary movements were more cosmopolitan and transnational than we had thought, we need to also acknowledge what this belief cannot account for: implacable distances that literary exchange does not care to placate, literary contact that makes no difference, and cross-imaginings that decline to underwrite historical collaborations.

CHAPTER 1

Chinese Americas That Never Were

In the April 1872 issue of *Shen Bao*, China's flagship private newspaper, "Rip Van Winkle" was published in loose translation under the title "A Sleep of Seventy Years 一睡七十年." Possibly the first piece of American fiction in China, "A Sleep" appears without any paratextual information or mention of Irving, a mere sliver of a story sandwiched between an admonition about hearsay and gossip and reportage on the violations of British missionaries in the traffic of children on the Yangtze River. The story itself bridges these two articles by also addressing historical crisis and how the news of crisis may best be delivered. In "A Sleep," the young scholar Wei one day finds himself in an oasis in the mountains where he is met by three Daoist saints. After imbibing their liqueur, the young scholar falls asleep only to wake up seventy years later. Bearing the distinct imprint of "Rip van Winkle," Wei only registers the passage of time when he notices that his rifle (火枪) has rotted. Like Rip, he returns to his village where everyone else has aged. Wei learns that he has completely bypassed the domestic life into which he thinks he had just entered (his wife and son have already passed away), discovering that his newfound social identity is consigned to nostalgic chit-chat.

Without any historical dressings, "A Sleep" might pass as any other folktale but for two important clues: the modern rifle and the specificity of "seventy years." Like "Rip Van Winkle," "A Sleep" capitalizes on the structural suitability of a "before and after" story for conveying pessimism about contemporary historical happenings without having to go into too many details. Only in "A Sleep" the historical referents are changed: the twenty years of Rip Van Winkle's slumber becomes the seventy years of European incursion into China, including the punitive and humiliating Opium Wars and the Unequal Treaties that followed;³⁰ the American Revolution blanked out by Rip's sleep becomes the death throes of the Qing Dynasty.

The Chinese “Rip” appears to be a straightforward case of the transculturation of historical consciousness that occurred between China and the West before the end of the Qing dynasty and the new republic, a phenomenon which has drawn a lot of critical attention in the past decade. Disguised as timeless folktale, “A Sleep,” like “Rip,” actually pushes consequential events to the fore; the political changes/trauma of the recent past fill up the discursive space opened up by the storyline’s central enigma. The sleepy themes in the story turn out to have a demystifying effect because to read the texts properly is to self-historicize correctly: no one can read “Rip Van Winkle,” including the villagers in the story, without realizing that the Revolution is missing or that it may only have produced a superficial change in the village. As Michael Warner astutely observes, “America here looks if anything too historical (with) at least three cultures and four polities occupying the same ground in rapid and confused succession” (790). “A Sleep” is also a story about forgetting that does not want the Chinese audience to forget, which may be why it shows up between an article coaching the readers on how to sift out real news from fake news and gossip and another article detailing the perfectly avoidable drowning of a dozen Chinese children by a Christian missionary on a boat ride from Yang Zhou. Theoretically, if you read the three in a row you will come out a more responsible, better informed, politically mobilized national subject. But if the story has as its goal the transmission of Hegelian historical consciousness to China, “Rip van Winkle” is an odd choice for a template. The historical consciousness trained in this story has no “potentiality” to it; it wants to be happily squandered. According to the logic of “Rip” there is a way to skip over history such that, when you realize you have skipped over it, the only thing you need to do is agree to be one of the people who can attest to its passing. In the story amnesia claims the proper way to register the parallelism between forgotten pasts and the historical present but “registering” the parallelism also marks the extent of the troubles one needs to take. And, in fact, minimal trouble-taking describes “A Sleep”’s modus operandi. In the event that horizontal reading across the pages

of the newsprint does not occur, the story has made little provisions for the successful delivery of historical consciousness in its opening remarks. It does not care to point out to its the readers the fact that the original story may come “from the West.” Among the many tales of men who stumble into the mountains and slumber away for hundreds, and even thousands of years, the scholar Wei’s story is advertised as only as another version, no timelier or more urgent. Perhaps the Chinese readership will see the story and suddenly realize all of the costs of its being asleep to Western incursion in the past seventy years—or it won’t. The story doesn’t care.

History had to happen somehow. “A Sleep” courts the logic of *who cares how it happened, it happened*. As such the story captures in literary form a dilemma shared by all historicist explorations of global interactions between China and the West before the twentieth century when materials were scarce but the stakes were high. The fact that history had to happen somehow confronts historicist explorations of the literary production during any period of discursive uncertainty, especially one such as the transpacific relations of the nineteenth century. Despite all the counterindications, despite all the peoples and texts who are shown to have not actively abetted history’s happening, it happened: America moved from a relatively open to a relatively constricted approach to China, slowly finessing its foreign relations with China against the examples of British treaties and in accordance with its own imperialist commercial activities, and ultimately throwing out the baby with the bath water with the Chinese Exclusion Acts, an emblem of the vicious race politics of the fin-de-siècle. China would also enjoy a productively ambiguous relationship with America until the end of the nineteenth century when American texts like Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, Arthur Smith’s *Chinese Characteristics*, and Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law*, as well as the news of the plight of Chinese coolie labor abroad, facilitated the ultimately self-betraying self-examinations that culminated in (though by no means finished with) the controversial May 4th Movement in the second decade of the twentieth century. If we skip over the details, as Rip Van Winkle and the

scholar Wei do, then these summaries make up the long and short of Sino-US relations 1800-1910 which no amount of textual recovery will alter. Before-and-after historiography haunts any literary-critical retroprojections of transnationalism, projects which hope to find in early transnational relations either an explanation for or a resistance against the kind of outcome-oriented history that makes the cut for school textbooks and Wikipedia pages. This often becomes an exercise in retrograde motion because such projects have to constantly search for counterfactual or counterhistorical developments in the archival texts which must bear the weight of either having to “go against” history or provide satisfactory answers to its traumas.

It is one thing, however, to apply a transnational lens to literary exchanges that fall somewhere between the before and after of China/West, America/East relations in the nineteenth century and quite another to see what transnational thinking of that time cultivated in literary obsessions with before-and-after historiography and the spaces in between. In other words, rather than recuperate alternate histories through transnationalism, we must recuperate the complex metahistoriographic self-awarenesses that historical transnational thinking, by providing a unique field of reference, made possible where other forms of thinking could not. If we find the logic of before-and-after historiography ironically productive, frustrating, terrifying and even at times funny, so, I imagine, did historical figures. It makes no sense to deprive them of this self-reflective agency just as it is unnecessarily ungenerous to say that just because historiography then does not look as it does now, historians of the past were unaware of history’s constructedness. This chapter shows that Chinese and American cross-imaginings in the nineteenth century occasioned a form of metahistoriographic agency through literary codes that allowed writers to reflect wryly and digressively on the fact that “history had to happen somehow.”

I begin the story at an early point in the history of literary encounters between China and America: seventy years before the publication of “A Sleep,” approximately the time that the fictional scholar Wei falls asleep, in early republic America. For however much “A Sleep” appearing in newsprint in China in 1872 might say about American literature’s global reach prior to the twentieth century, it also discloses the global origins of American literature in the early nineteenth century. Long before Rip Van Winkle “went to China,” China had come to “Rip Van Winkle” and its tendentiously formed America. And as elusively as Washington Irving runs through the Chinese story, China also runs through his. A large portion of this chapter demonstrates how Irving used China’s immanent presence in America to puzzle out geopolitical configurations of the new nation that will never come to pass, and how he staged his intervention as a writer at the juncture where China-the-nation and China-the-subject-of-sinology met American historiography. In the long nineteenth century, these were “early” moments. But, as we all know, “early” is merely an expeditious way to mark the “before” in a “before and after” story so when I open the dissertation with Irving and China in 1800 I know I risk casting a telos on to the case studies in the rest of the chapters. I take the risk to expose it. As we will see in the case of Irving, the earliness of these transactions has no bearing on how much history the actors in this moment felt were behind them, now much left before them, and the extent to which they felt that transnational thinking can generate an aesthetic barrier to the tacit injunction to “get on with history.”

While we might go to nineteenth century Sino-American transnational literary imaginaries to learn more about China and America “before” the “after” happened, what we learn instead is what it means to live as we do now. History is happening all around us both as events-in-time and the countless media that vie to structure, order and decipher them. History simultaneously feels open to possibility and deterministically closed, crucially important and casually dismissible. These paradoxical sensations do not so much incapacitate us as amuse us, sensations we dilate through

fiction, through reading other people's fiction, through experimental historiography, through textual practice, and through reverie. At every level at which they operated, Chinese/American cross-imaginings created codes for reflecting on the psychosis of writing history and then having to live (in) it. Impossible to classify as either "moving history along" or "resisting history's movements" these transnationally-occasioned writings take the "Rip Van Winkle" approach to historical consciousness. Historical consciousnesses are not made alike and the "Rip Van Winkle" narrative structure, which fascinated Chinese writers well into the twentieth century, cultivated a particular kind. This kind of historical consciousness, premised on an *ex post facto* application of a "before/after" frame to history's passing, is not painful in and of itself. In fact it is as easy as waking up from a deep sleep. But because this historical consciousness has no practical application in a storyline designed to make it moot, it must be ultimately acquiesced to, painfully this time, as a social identity. Momentous and terrible things may have happened but in our structuring fictions, nothing looks or feels too different except for experience of skipping over them and the multiplication of authoritative voices that "betray the fear that [those] experiences might remain less than real if we did not establish their continued contribution to a narrative whole" (François 150). This kind of historical consciousness, which I daresay is more widespread than the Hegelian, nationalist, high-stakes kind, has a hard time representing itself without being mistaken for the other kind. It requires a narrative meta-code such as "Rip Van Winkle" that manages to address history without, as I described earlier, "historical dressings." As I will show, the written forms that confirm history's happening—that document the discursive and paradigmatic determinisms and contingencies—actually need to posit outside the jurisdictions of cross-national movements an unactualizable time-space to which narrative may aspire.

In anticipation of the chapters ahead I want to briefly touch on two important themes that I will cover in this chapter: one, the bibliographication of history—the absurd fun of giving history

over to the logic of texts' internal reference, and two, the biographication of history—the approximation of history as a lived life. For Foucault, genealogy, or the academic study of history's "becoming," has the task of recovering bodies "totally imprinted by history" (83). This chapter also looks at bodies "imprinted by history" but in an at-once more literal and less histrionic sense than Foucault had intended. These fictional bodies in my study are imprinted by history-as-genre. They take on, and are consequently made discontinuous by, the abundance of texts and voices from this genre that try to order and make sense of past events for them. History does not "destroy" these bodies, to further the reference to Foucault; something far less drastic happens. Accounting oneself to disparate historiographies creates small existential emergencies that cause no dramas but for the one of their ultimate unimportance. In the nineteenth century, China and America put each other's literature to work in service ambivalent feelings about historical consciousness, under whose dispensation one feels uneasy and misplaced but not so much so that one could not get on with life and business as usual. In transnational metahistoriography the pain of historical consciousness is easily set aside (hard as it may be to believe from this end of history) and, importantly, so is the transnational thinking which occasioned it. Historical consciousness' slightness of impact finds critical resonance the weakness of the transnational ties in some of these cross-imaginings. The more China and America turned to each other to make sense of their own histories, the more history and global relations seemed themselves like low-stakes games that can be played in and through the vagaries of textual practice.

1.

Who does Rip Van Winkle encounter in the mountains before his sleep of twenty years? According to the consensus of his fellow villagers and many modern readers, Rip meets up with

none other than the ghosts of “Hendrick Hudson” and his men. This identification allows Rip to go back and make sense of the oxymoron of the “grave roysters,” their doomed revelry capturing perfectly the pathos of Hudson’s cohort marooned by their mutinous crew on their abortive second trip to the New World. But since the characters can only conjecture, there is no way to ascertain who Rip actually sees. The same event that takes Rip out of historical time (he sleeps through the American Revolution) forces him to hand over his sense of historical management to his community, who fashion what might otherwise be personal reverie into a historical encounter, albeit a bizarre one. After some deliberation, his community settles on Hendrick Hudson, the regional hero of Dutch-America’s past. An inspired choice, Hudson reappearing as a return of the historical repressed accomplishes what Michael Warner calls the “resol[ution of] national history and personal memory into folk temporality” (791). And yet “folk temporality” turns out to be as discursively unstable as real-politico time, and the “folk” hero here raises as many questions as the anxieties he assuages. For it is important that it is Hudson, and not some other historical figure’s eidolon, whom Rip and the lay historians in his village decide he sees. The story “Rip Van Winkle” originally belongs in the same collection of “posthumous writings” of the fictitious Diedrich Knickerbocker that includes *A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*.¹ “Hudson” might have suggested to Irving’s contemporaneous readers *A History*’s recounting of Henry Hudson’s misguided execution of the Dutch East India Company’s orders to “seek a northwest passage to China” (64). Readers might have remembered that Hudson, in failing his directive, inadvertently laid the foundations of an extensive Dutch settlement in the area now known as the Hudson River Valley. “Hudson” is shorthand for an emergent system of counterfactual historiography for the new nation, one that configures America along a transpacific axis with China at the far end. To telescope my argument: Rip’s encounters in the Kaatskills mark an eclipse,

¹ Hereafter, *A History*.

specifically the historical alternative of a massive, mercantile Dutch regime successfully stretching from West to East that never came to pass.

In “Rip Van Winkle,” China is located directly at the other end of the speculative tunnel created by Rip’s supernatural encounter, a spectral manifestation of what Wai Chee Dimock, in separating Irving from his Anglo-American circuits, refers to as the author’s “unerasable habitat[s]” (39). China represents one such inerasable place in Irving’s Dutch-America, which is itself a fast-disappearing habitat. In two far lesser-known but strikingly similar stories called “Dolph Heyliger” and “The Storm-Ship,” collected in *Bracebridge Hall*, Irving more transparently connects China to America’s vanishing pasts even as he underscores China’s symbolic status as a communal memory machine. The same evil spirits that roll through the Kaatskills in “Rip” roll through his 1849 “Dolph Heyliger,” where they are “nothing more or less than a spell of these wizards [that] prevent[ed] Hendrick Hudson] getting to China in this same direction” (*Bracebridge Hall*, 204). In “The Storm-Ship,” the “peals of thunder” heralding the entrance of the roysters in “Rip Van Winkle” precede the appearance of a Flying Dutchman-like ghost ship in Hudson Bay. As in “Rip Van Winkle,” the local villagers are first alarmed but quickly grow accustomed to the supernatural phenomenon, which they historicize (and thus rationalize) as the one of the many hauntings of “Hendrick Hudson, and his crew of the *Half-Moon*; who, it was well known, had once run aground in the upper part of the river, in seeking a northwest passage to China” (211). The space reserved for America’s eventual nationhood is, in both “Rip” and “The Storm-Ship,” displaced by a ghostly historical alternative, a vignette of Hudson and his crew forever stuck in the senseless and the ludic after their abortive China trip.

China and its odd-double, the sleepy New Amsterdam, loom over Irving’s America as a reminder of the counterfactual status of its origins. So in these Hudson stories the specter of Hudson and the “what might have been” appear with every historical event that further seals the

fate of the Dutch empire in North America (the American War of Independence; the “capture of New Amsterdam; and the subjugation of the province by the English” (*Bracebridge Hall*, 211)).

Following A. B. Shamsul’s notion of the “nations-of-intent”—imagined groupings of national and international polities that compete within and against the standing nation-state³¹—we might say that Irving’s receding Dutch America foregrounds unfulfilled, possibly idealized national and international configurations. The drowsiness of “that village of great antiquity” in which “Rip Van Winkle” is set echoes the “succession of drowsy ages” attributed to China in *A History of New York*: the ancient Dutch village and China are two sides of the same historical coin; they are each, in a perverse imagination, where the other “should be” in America’s cultural past.

These Hudson-China texts serve as accordion pleats in what Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky terms Irving’s “human time-consciousness”—a different historical track on which America remains as a way station in the China-Dutch empire that never was. Irving embeds “China” into his short stories and longer nonfiction, I argue, to tap a subconscious knowledge in the body politic that America could have been a Chinese America. By suggesting that China represents to Irving an alternative configuration for the new nation that cannot be glimpsed through historicism alone, I take up Dimock’s reorientational suggestion that we use textual practices to open up Irving’s work to “alternate worlds” (“Hemispheric” 39). My premise, however, is that not Irving’s Chinese Americas metonymized this or that alternate world. Rather, each Chinese America represents a different metahistoriographic investigation into why history-writing makes some worlds seem more or less plausible. Rather than hold “China” constant as a discrete entity, we need to understand the interaction between China and America in the nineteenth century as a “clash of discourses,” the most frictive of these the one over “differentiated histories” (Huang 6). Irving’s Chinese Americas reveal as much the significant role of China in early Republican thinking as Irving’s own interest in clashing discourses, especially those that mediated his sense of what is historically knowable. To read

these stories is to acknowledge the contending forces of historical management in play *before* the grand récit of nineteenth-century American history (and its relationship to China) was hypostasized. Uncertainty over the form of historical management, especially as it impacts the social being, defined the roles that each nation played in the other's imagination. China's spectrality exists in the historiographically-managed space of Rip's village, a conceptual space delimited by communal memory, amateur historiography, and human noise and chatter. With "Rip Van Winkle" serving as the ur-text of Irving's China-enabled meta-historiography, the rest of this chapter will recover Irving's long and changing relationship with China as he configured it in *Salmagundi* (1807), *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (1809), *Astoria* (1836), and *Wolfert's Roost* (1855). Together, these works show that, far from simply propagating an ideology (about China, about the typology of the Chinese, or about nation-building), Irving keeps up with the changing uses of China-thinking as well as the sheer abundance of sinological texts in early Republican culture to dramatize the various affects of historiography—namely the experience of holding oneself accountable to official history consolidated under the pressures of bibliographic and discursive excess.

2.

Irving took up historical writing at the cusp of the professionalization of the genre in America. The field's conditions of possibility were later circumscribed by the likes of William Hickling Prescott, Francis Parkman and John Lothrop Motley. Although the credit is usually given to these figures, Irving was the first to use the formula of writing and critiquing American history obliquely by chronicling the displacement of a temporally-distant and geographically-adjacent Other. Thus Irving helped transition American historiography from the historical romance of Walter Scott's era to an empiricist approach made possible by the abundance of data from New World colonization.³² Unlike his professional successors, however, Irving aggressively and consistently

blurred the boundary between historical information and authorial fabrication. He intervened in the genre of historiography by drawing attention to its odd self-cancelling tendency. History-writing was, for Irving, a herculean task that announces its own preposterousness. This strand of thinking usefully explains China's operational importance in his oeuvre.

In Irving's time, Chinese alterity had become such an overused trope that it could be easily retooled for his aesthetic experimentations in hyper-self-conscious historical writing and the historical subject. In the nineteenth century Atlantic world, "China" reached discursive saturation and Irving, along with his American contemporaries, inherited sinology as a full-bodied field complete with its own internal philosophical, theosophical, and methodological contradictions. As John Kuo Wei Tchen, A. Owen Aldridge, Caroline Frank, and other cultural historians have documented, young America came into a longstanding tradition of China-thinking from the European Enlightenment which, when combined with the early republic's extensive mercantile trade with the Qing empire, meant that China/Chineseness broadly understood was not a foreign concept in the new nation but more a domestic staple. Like the topic of land improvement, China was an indispensable part of early American self-education and thus a way of knowing the world and knowing within the world.

Many of the historiographic technologies at Irving's disposal were made available to him from an eighteenth-century tradition of China-thinking—a transatlantic sinology that shaped emergent macrohistorical theories. The macrohistorical/cosmic opening of *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* actually contains a brief reworking of European sinology, although one would hardly know it from the way Irving presents this subject as so much nonsense on top of a pile of nonsense. Irving entertains the idea that Noah actually landed in China and was better known to the Chinese as Fohi, a theory that he claims is circulated by Chinese historians who "deservedly rank among the most extensive and authentic... inasmuch as

they have known the world longer than anyone” and corroborated by “Dr. Shuckford,” who argued that Noah’s ark, when the flood receded, “rested on a mountain on the frontiers of China” (400-1). Although Irving discredits this theory through wordplay (using “Dr. Shuckford” instead of the historian’s real name, Samuel Shackford), the theory did exist and was quite popular in its time.³³ Shackford’s monograph *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected* (1743) postulated that Noah may have been Fohi, the first emperor of China.³⁴ The work falls within a long and well-established tradition in European historiography of integrating ancient China into a Noachic genealogy.³⁵ After intentionally deflating these historical theories *A History* moves on to entertain and discount a body of scholarship that advances a directionally opposite thesis: instead of “Noah goes to China,” this was the idea that America was “first discovered by the Chinese” (403). Irving cites Grotius and Vossius’ claim that “Peru was founded by a colony from China... the first Inca, being himself a Chinese” (407). Hugo Grotius’ *De origine gentium Americanarum dissertatio* (*Dissertation of the origin of the American peoples*) (1642) established a racial and cultural continuity between the Chinese and the Peruvians³⁶ and Isaac Vossius’ *Variarum observationum liber* (1685) claimed that Chinese diaspora populated the Americas. Vossius and Grotius, made into self-important buffoons in *A History*, in fact forwarded ground-breaking models of Chinese diaspora that were fundamental to the rise of material anthropology. In Irving’s *History*, these “China” theories that seem bogus (because satirized) are not only very real (produced out of scholarly labor), they also laid the groundwork of early modern world historiography.

Recycling macrohistorical texts animates Irving’s historiographic intervention. Deploying such sinologies show how easily the authentic production of historical knowledge can devolve into misinformation, frivolity and hoaxing.³⁷ This touches an irony in Irving’s own work: his yearning for public recognition of his propensity for historical work frequently coincided with a tendency to parody historiography even as he legitimated it. Irving’s identifiable historical works, though

internally differentiated by degree, are always a mash-up of macro- and microhistories, lore, hagiography, travelogue, economic history, universal cosmology, and, not least significantly, painstaking surveys of other historians and current historical perspectives. Under such a mixed allegiance to historiography as such, the production of knowledge about China becomes a mirror image of Irving himself. China's very status as a cipher—an ideological invention of modern European self-making—renders it a testy subject of objective inquiry: bogus information about China is always threatening to become authoritative knowledge generated by rigorous inquiry, and the same is true vice versa. Irving deeply appreciated this kind of irony and his whimsical historiography in *A History* thus shares a psychic affinity with China-as-a-Western-construct as they both straddle the threshold of sense and nonsense.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the state of sinology mirrored the confused state of historical knowledge: both were “text-heavy” fields glutted with Jesuit manuscripts, European Orientalist monographs, lengthy discourses in the English history of ideas, and myriad false leads and dead ends.³⁸ China-thinking takes the form of radical citationality and self-referentiality in a closed circuit of archival materials that might either be apocryphal or foundational. Irving did not only reproduce this facet of China-in-the-West as way of writing history; he also calibrated it to reflect the predicament of the social being that lives in history. In the slightly earlier work, *Salmagundi* (1806), Irving transforms the cultural theater of a Chinese-inflected America into a site of metahistoriography. In the figure of Will Wizard, the “Chinese” contributor, Irving continues and updates an earlier European tradition that yokes Chineseness to alternative topographies of historical knowledge and ways of traversing them.

A hodge-podge of characters and commentary, *Salmagundi* collects the bits and pieces that make up the fabric of civic life in early America. The sum of the whole, however, lacks the structural patterning and gravitas of History. Within the world of *Salmagundi* things imbued with historicity

present constant stumbling blocks in everyday living and knowing if only because the status of the “historical” is casually, indeed flippantly, granted to any and everything that self-identifies as having a “history”: the “history of a tile” (132); “the history of the famous Peach War” (209); the “history of Cinderella, Valentine, Orson and Bluebeard” (137), and the history of Mustapha Rub a Dub Keli Khan’s breeches (179). The preponderance of “histories” generates a self-cancelling effect: everything is history, nothing feels like history. *Salmagundi* focalizes the idea of historical knowledge as diffused knowledge in the figure of Will Wizard. Will Wizard and his Oriental affiliates, Linkum Fidelius and Chin-Chin Fou, are amalgamations of the eighteenth-century European Orientalist trope of the Chinese sage and the typology of the early American China traders. As the odd, talkative member of *Salmagundi* returned from his extended stay in Canton, Wizard performs a Chinese identity chock-full of stock Orientalisms including a “waistcoat of China silk” which he “boasted... [as] the work of Nang-Fou, daughter of the great Chin-Chin-Fou, who had fallen in love with the graces of his person, and sent it to him as a parting present—[she who] was a remarkable beauty with sweet obliquity of eyes, and a foot no larger than the thumb of an alderman” (*Salmagundi* 121). To use Philip Deloria’s famous phrase for this kind of cultural cross-dressing, Will Wizard “plays at” Chineseness.³⁹ Burlesquing his own alterity, Will Wizard offers Chinese counter-examples as social critiques of cultural formations in the new republic and as such, he lightly spoofs Oliver Goldsmith’s “Chinese” traveler-critic, Lien Chi Altangi, an Orientalized character who satirizes Anglophone society in *Citizen of the World* (1760).⁴⁰ In Goldsmith’s original as well as Irving’s adaptation “Chineseness” does not represent an inverse image of the Anglo-America or the ultimate Other. Instead, the key characteristic of “Chineseness” inheres in something like a constant reference to obscure (even made-up) historical figures and antiquarians that the audience would neither know nor care to look up.

Enacting the practice of apocryphal historiography in the odd habits of Will Wizard, Irving foregrounds the similarities between manufactured Chineseness and manufactured archives. With a dead earnestness that makes him the butt of many *Salmagundi* in-jokes, Wizard repeatedly refers to lost archives that only he can recover. Promoting a ratcheted attention to textuality, manuscript transmission and historical loose ends that are “serious...or only bantering, no one can tell” (237), Wizard embodies a facet of sinology cultivated since the first Jesuits in China: that the wild goose chase of textual labor is the precondition of historical recovery.⁴¹ Unorthodox means of historical recovery turn out to be Wizard’s primary agenda. Wizard claims that his “great uncle, by his father’s side, [was] burnt for a witch in Connecticut,” and this gave the family the name of Wizard (66). This archetypal American family history appears to be severed by Will Wizard who bears none of the recognizable traits of this genealogy despite his claim to such an ignominious pedigree. Yet, Wizard maintains, a roll of rice paper records the secret of his ongoing ties to this pre-Revolutionary ancestry. The existence of these “confounded Chinese manuscripts” is guaranteed by Linkum Fidelius, the “sage” directly connected to Confucius, and yet they never appear (236). Langstaff announces he will present these manuscripts to the readers, but he never does. Referring to another promising document that may or may not be the same manuscript, Wizard laments that he lost all but “one sheet of a stupendous bundle which still remains uninvestigated,” a gift “presented to him as a literary curiosity from his friend, the illustrious Rip Van Dam, formerly lieutenant governor of the colony of New Amsterdam” (306). This uninvestigated archive serves as a weird bridging text between both Wizard’s ancestry and Dutch-America, from whence Van Dam hails. As implausible as it may seem, the Chinese scroll (if it ever appears) would restore crucial connections between the Salem witch trials, Confucius’ lost writings, and a hero from the Hudson River Valley. The most tenuous of associations at work here strengthens the sense of China-thinking as the historiographic practice of tantalization. Figuring out the secret connection requires only that one follow up all the

textual leads, find all the misplaced manuscripts, and decipher all the barely legible clues. *Something* in the lost texts entrusted to Wizard links up ancient Confucian manuscripts to the history of pre-Revolutionary America from New Amsterdam through the witch-trials, and it can be yours for the having if you would only deign to “por[e] over old scrawls that would puzzle a whole society of antiquarians to expound” (304). Of course, nothing come of these leads since Wizard’s China-America clues are navigable but not really navigating anywhere, and appetites for apocryphal histories and secret historical movements are whetted only to be spoofed. Tucked away in China somewhere or amongst a few Chinese who traveled West are possibly illuminating historical material for early America—yet they can only be referenced, never accessed.

Chineseness signals unactualizable historical knowledge and Wizard’s luscious promises of alternative “histories” prove, in the end, to be a tease. Further, Wizard’s case proves that the excessive self-referentiality of these archives disables one’s ability to live in the historical presence. Wizard may or may not ever find that Chinese scroll and thus reestablish himself as a historically continuous subject, but his own person presents an important and unique iteration of the famous inversional relationship between Chineseness and historicity in the nineteenth century. Embodying or living history fails as a viable way to live as a social being in the present. Looking too far and long down historical rabbit-holes takes its toll on Will Wizard’s physical person: “his whole face seemed to be converted into a folio leaf of black letter,” and his countenance would “curl up into an expression of Gothic risibility, not unlike the physiognomy of a cabbage leaf wilting before a hot fire” (304). His liminality as both text and symbol is further underscored by the other characters who “studied him as one studies an old manuscript or inscription.” Of the entire cast of characters in *Salmagundi*, Wizard alone bears the brunt of the willy-nilly absorption of fake histories and all possible historical tangents. Internalizing the effects of historiographic confusion, as Rip van Winkle does, Wizard has a hard time relating to anyone. Like Rip, Wizard performs civic relationality when

his is, in fact, already a historical artifact. Will is taken by Evergreen to a ball and ends up embarrassing everyone. His antisocial behaviors, all traceable to his China experiences, provoke his friend the narrator to exclaim, “What was to be done with such an incorrigible fellow?—to add to my distress, the first word he spoke was to tell Miss Sparkle that something she said reminded him of a circumstance that happened to him in China” (253). Present communication always turns into occasions for other stories. The ontological burden of having unofficial transcripts of history *in oneself* renders him unsociable, which is another way of saying “out of touch with real time.”

Turning Chinese takes the form of a literary and linguistic grotesque that is more intent on performing asociality than overcoming it. The same logic can be seen in “Tea, A Poem” which lists the consequences of American women succumb to Chinese-induced “super-verbosity.”⁴² The poem tells story of a “China ship [that] proudly arrives in our bay” turns out to be a Trojan horse containing all kinds of suspect ingestibles. Initially, this poem seems to indicate the breakdown of sociality caused by the consumption of things Chinese.⁴³ The narrator calls out the Hong merchants, “Samquas... Chinquas... Chonquas,⁴⁴ “[w]ho discharge on our coasts your cursed quantum of tea,” to “think, as ye waft the sad weed from your strand,/ Of the plagues and vexations ye deal to our land. (*Beauties* 118). “Beauties” who “rise to Souchong” (a variety of tea from Fujian) will “drink in imperial a friend at a sup, / Or in gunpowder blow them in dozens all up” (118). Even that most prized of Republican virtues—friendship—and that most valued of Republican types—the virtuous wife/mother—disintegrates under the insidious influence of Chineseness. America’s providential future, premised on amicable heterosocial relations that model ideal citizenship, comes to a halt when its citizens turn Chinese. At the same time it is Pindar Cockloft, a self-styled “poetic mill” who “grinds” old verse into doggerel couplets, who makes these insinuation. He lambasts republican women turned Chinese in poetry so outrageously bad that it becomes one more noise that the reader has to consider and set aside. Already in *Salmagundi* Irving shows that for the many discursive voices

which self-servingly force associations between China, excessive sociability and broken historicities, some filtering is required.

Irving's ironic politicizing of the discourse of Chinese alterity supplies the missing link in China's irremediable association with ahistoricity in the nineteenth-century transatlantic world, a phenomenon that tends to be attributed to Hegelian thought alone. The various scenes from *Salmagundi* that I have presented reveal an earlier manifestation of that phenomenon in which the mappability of an in-house concept—"natural sociability"—onto "Chineseness" determined China's fate in Anglo-American historiographic praxis. The turn of the nineteenth century was a moment of marked uncertainty about the status of China on the global historical timetable, an uncertainty was fueled, somewhat counterintuitively, by conflicting portrayals of the "natural sociability" of Chinese civilization.⁴⁵ Indeed, by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, China's idealized harmonious social makeup lost whatever prestige it previously had for the Western imagination. In his essay for that bible of American scientific racism, *The Indigenous Races of the Earth*, Francis Pulszky makes the unexpected, but ultimately ungenerous, claim that

In China all the citizens are politically equal: legally there are neither patricians, nor slaves nor serfs; neither privileged nor unprotected classes in the country. In short China is the country of enlightenment, of equality and of the bamboo,—paternally applied to everybody, from the prime minister to the humblest tiller on the ground. (201)

Along with Hegel, Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill, Pulzsky makes the equality of conditions and opportunities which eighteenth-century Anglo-American saw as so exemplarily modeled by and enforced in China as *the cause* of its cultural stagnation. In the late 1830s, Tocqueville asserted that China had reached a crippling stasis. The "equality of conditions" so crucial for egalitarian societies

can lead to a democracy, or, Tocqueville warned, China. Nearly twenty years later, taking cues from Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill repeats this warning to the West. Once a country reaches perfect equilibrium, it stops producing culture and falls out of History. Using China as an example, Mill demonstrates how rapidly social equality, by stalling progress, can turn into historical dead-weight.⁴⁶ China's social makeup, which is identical to a democracy for the most part by Westerners' own count, becomes a liability in the grander scheme. This happens not least because democratic models demand the extension of stadial histories to other civilizations, which can then represent stages of varying degrees of "close but not quite." In having China play out the consequences of "equality gone wrong," these writings force us to emend the notion that early America, along with the rest of the Western world, made China into its inverse image. Rather, the elective association of Chineseness with asociality bears an indexical relationship to democratic historiography where China had to be disqualified as a matter of course. The consolidation of the art of writing democratic histories, that is, histories using a stadial model updated for a democratic timetable—would, ipso facto, require very different Chinas that would be entertained and disavowed. It is no coincidence, then, that so many of American's nation-building texts, which grapple with the concept of democracy in praxis, chose to dismiss China perfunctorily as a stagnant civilization, one which fell out of historical time.

Twinned in *A History*, Dutch America and China undergo the same historical-aesthetic management as can be seen in a later story called "Broek: or the Dutch Paradise" (1855). "Broek" offers a short but disquieting sketch of an "amphibious little (Dutch) village" gone Chinese (*Wolfert's Roost* 230). This broek's stock oriental landscape—a case of dystopic Orientalized Europe in miniature—is old hat. The more interesting question is, where is this "Dutch paradise," which resembles no existing broek, actually located? In casually telling us that Broek was "modelled upon Van Bramm's [sic] description of those of Yuen min Yuen, in China" (230) Irving drops us a hint.

Popularly known as Van Braam, Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest was a member of the 1794 VOC embassy to the Imperial Palace for the commemoration of the sixtieth birthday of the Qing emperor Qianlong (“Diplomatic Missions”).⁴⁷ At Qianlong’s court, Van Braam copied the design of the Summer Palace (Yuen Min Yuen) and replicated his Yuen Min Yuen in a town called Croydon outside of Philadelphia in 1794.⁴⁸ His *“China’s Retreat”*— a prototype of the *China Pavilion in Disneyworld’s Epcot*— was immensely popular at the time, drawing huge crowds of visitors daily. One of those visitors, the French historian and statesmen Moreau de Saint Méry, gushed that **there “it is even impossible to avoid fancying ourselves in China while surrounded at once by living Chinese (servants) and by representations of their manners, their usages, their monuments, and their arts”** (*American Journey* 214).⁴⁹

Irving’s “Broek” may be the first of America’s theme parks with the American contexts erased, thus portraying a simulated Chinese America so unrecognizable that one cannot even tell it is America anymore. Presenting American topoi as an admixture of Dutch and Chinese iconography allows Irving to repackage these unerased pasts as vignettes and therefore timeless and un-placeable. After touring the Dutch village for a while we suspect we are no longer in a manufactured Chinese setting, but *the* manufactured China. The stagnant lake on which rests a defunct pinnacle (trading ship), the gardens full of bobbing Mandarins, and the townsfolk’s unapologetically earth-bound, moribund mindsets—all of these tropes belong to the pervasive late eighteenth-century European construction of China as an emblem of impeccably efficient management, orderliness, secular self-content, and perfect tranquility—a space outside of historical progression.

China, troped as European chinoiserie, is a throwback to a Dutch idyll that never really existed in the first place. By the same logic it is also a telltale sign of cultural atavism, making everything around it ahistorical. Without any intention of recovering Irving’s China-relations, Irving’s most recent biographer Andrew Burstein tosses out this simile in his discussion of the

dramatis personae of *A History*: “Van Twiller is Lao Tzu, and he is creating a Tao for the Dutch. Doing nothing, nothing is left undone” (77). Burstein’s inspired transcultural analogy actually hits right on the mark. Dutch passivity is almost identical to the prevalent late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century stereotype of China: too lazy to take a long view, egregiously slow on the uptake in the face of imminent historical change. Rather than tag Irving as colluding in the ideology of “ahistorical China,” we might better understand his Dutch-Chinese-America as an elaborate aesthetic compromise. In order to make pasts that we don’t even remember as pasts “felt,” Irving deploys a temporal-spatial transfer—what was previously a dislocated past now becomes dislocated, time-stopped space. “read modern historical writings as strategies on the part of the historian, either explicit or implicit, to configure a temporalized space in which the multiple conflicts and contradictions of the present time are narrated historically and made meaningful” (Tang 7)

The imaginative twinning of Dutch America with China necessarily implies that any account of a Chinese America has to submit to revolutionary heuristics since Dutch America would eventually make way for the new republic. This conceptual limitation looms over Irving’s discursive use of China from *History* to his last China-inflected work and the last work I will be discussing in this chapter, *Astoria*. Slowly switching from moderate Federalism to Jacksonian Democracy by the 1830s, Irving began to experiment with globally and retroactively deploying “democratic time.” Thus does one of his imagined Chinas fit neatly into a story of rupture and revolution:

The “vast empire of China, though teeming with population and concentrating the wealth of nations, has vegetated through a succession of drowsy ages, and were it not for its internal revolution, and the subversion of the ancient government by the Tartars [sic], might have presented nothing but an uninteresting detail of dull, monotonous prosperity.” (*A History of New York* 313)

Irving dissertates here what he dramatizes in “Broek: the Utopian Dutch Village”: the similarity between pre-contact China and pre-Revolution New Amsterdam. Willfully outside of history and drowsily performing antiquity, Qing dynasty China is in *A History*, as Rip was in the story of his namesake, forcibly awakened from its slumber. Significantly, Irving breaks the pattern of stereotyping China as the land that time forgot. His China awakens, and his historicizing of China’s “awakening” also stands out from other political theorists’ on several points. For one thing, Irving’s assessment of China is informed by recent history and current events; the “Tartar Revolution” refers to a series of Muslim/Tatar uprisings in Xinjiang, Shanxi and Gansu (regions around the Tarim Basin) from the 1750s up to and beyond the time of Irving’s writing. Over-determining the political impact of the Tatar rebellions and calling the rebellions an “internal revolution” and a “subversion of the ancient government” allow Irving to draw a parallel between China and the pre-Revolutionary America romanticized in the rest of *A History*. Both were sleeping but both would be abruptly rejoined to democratic historical time, his “awakening of China,” hitched to his Dutch America, of course only gains its urgency by proxy.⁵⁰

Contra a reading of these episodes as symptoms of national anxiety, China-thinking was, for Irving, an externalization and re-sublimation of internal contradictions, especially those of living history. Chinese Americas afforded the most effective technology for a self-distancing version of literary nationalism not because it represented the encounter with ultimate Other, as is commonly assumed, but because it allowed Irving to make good on the aesthetic debris in the clash of historical discourses—that metahistorical dissonance, not the histories themselves, his immediate object of study. In one of his last major works, which he advertised as “real History,” Irving again took up as a subsidiary interest how and where to register the leftover affect of watching the twinned New Amsterdam and Chinese America slowly slide out of possibility and out of communal memory. Bound up with China and its place in different national histories is a complicated selection

mechanism for the conventional devices that would present the pathos of destinarianism in its most compelling light. In the 1810s, Irving repurposed Scott's historical romance formula, pairing an enlightened figure with a superstitious foil in a remote historical time, for an American landscape and ideoscape.⁵¹ Irving took an immediate interest in this type, which, however romantic and nostalgic, would, along with his epoch, pass out of view.⁵² The contrast between the mundane operations of the historical now and the romanticized visions of a disavowed alternative history would produce, under Scott's rubric, the optimal sensorium of historicity. Thus Irving boasts of *Astoria* "that this work, without any labored attempt at artificial construction, actually possesses much of that unity so much sought after in works of fiction and considered so important to the interests of history" (viii). Never mind historical facts, in this work one could *feel* that history was happening.

Astoria represents a shift in Irving's approach to China-inspired historiographic technologies. Here the possibility of a Chinese America—now spread across the Pacific—no longer seems as distant as the Hudson pasts but still retains its pathos by representing one of those configurations of the new nation that could have held out, but didn't. Out of the life story of John Jacob Astor and his aborted Chinese-American fur trading empire on the Pacific coast, Irving ekes a historical romance out of the juxtaposition of trans-Pacific configurations of the new nation and a single individual whose visions of such configurations were confounded. Using John Jacob Astor's commercial empire built on the China fur trade that starts in the Mississippi, *Astoria* extends northwest across the Rocky Mountains, regroups in the Columbia River basin, and expands across the Pacific to China by way of the Sandwich Islands. In *Astoria* (the utopian construction), one could look out onto the Pacific from a "fortified post and port at the mouth of the Columbia River" at a prosperous trade empire bolstered by "direct and frequent communication with China" (*Astoria* 500).⁵³ To the counterfactual question posed indirectly in his stories—what if Henry Hudson had

discovered the Northwest Passage—Irving has given us one version of the answer in *Astoria*. What the VOC failed to realize in the 1610s, the new republic of America might have accomplished in the 1830s, building on the trading infrastructure of the VOC (and its subsidiary, Astor’s Pacific Fur Trading Co.) The historical romance rides on the story’s counterfactual largeness in having a hero whose grand, global visions had no traction with the contentious, backward-thinking local population, Irving could amplify a historical possibility that had not only passed but was also passé.

Occupying a space that Yunte Huang might call a “transpacific imaginary,” *Astoria* speaks both to earlier inter-Atlantic phenomenon where “the Far East serve[d] as a fantasy space for mercantile capitalism” (Markley 4) and a shift toward transpacific commercial solutions to domestic problems in American debates from the 1820s through the 1860s. Irving describes the international fur market that makes round trips to Canton, where China’s voracious appetite for pelts results in such “immense prices” for Canadian sea-otter that “it was as if a new gold coast had been discovered” (32). He follows the pelts into China’s domestic markets, noting with remarkable precision that there the fur of the “red (fox) is employed for trimmings, linings and robes; the latter being variegated by adding the black fur of the paws, in spots or waves” (513). The richness and detail of Irving’s research is matched only by the appeal of China as a commercial bandage for a nation beset by economic woes that would culminate in the Panic and Revulsion of 1837. After a round of Jeffersonian embargos that left merchant elites and artisanal industries on the East Coast in the lurch, the period from 1810 to 1830 saw the collapse of Irving’s family’s import-export business (the P. and E. Irving Company). In his introductory comments, Irving felt that Astoria alone would fulfill Jefferson’s call for a “commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by ‘free and independent Americans, and linked with us by ties of blood and interest’”(619).

In many respects Astor’s dream of a republic that just keeps extending west until it joins up with the far East could be read as a continuation of several transpacific Continentalist projects since

and before Henry Hudson, as they are described in the deconstructive accounts of Continentalism and Manifest Destiny by Richard Kluger, Anders Stephanson, Reginald Horsman and Thomas Hietala, among others.⁵⁴ For complicated political and historically contingent reasons, the transpacific extensions of the United States as envisioned by as disparate figures as Alexander MacKenzie and Thomas Hart Benton never passed. As far as Astoria was concerned, the terms of the 1848 Oregon Treaty—terms which Irving helped draft—reconfigured American-Anglo-Indian relations in that region in ways that foreclosed any further possibilities of a de-nationalized, trans-Pacific commercial republic. From this perspective, *Astoria* provided Irving with another chance to engage in counterfactualism to experiment with the historical formula. Irving could exploit the pathos of pairing current historical reality with a previously alternative future before the notion of a transcontinental America—a continuous grouping of federal states stretching from east to west—seemed inevitable. *Astoria* invites the confusion of unrealizable history and History-writing as modes of registering destinarianism, and so offers anything but a replay of destinarianism in literary form.

Astoria goes beyond the disturbance of the Manifest Destiny fantasy to touch on a complicated national eros that, in the words of Stephanie LeMenager, harbored “the niggling fear that a certain portion of the continent would never belong to the US, *not really*” (691): going so far West as to go East represents the conceptual breaking point of national coherence. But in reframing *Astoria* as the transpacific extension of the anxieties of literary nationalism we should also refrain from overwriting deeply contingent moments in American literary history with a deep sense of historical inevitability, as Robert Levine cautions in *Dislocating Race and Nation*. Historical contingency describes the affect as well as the cause of Irving’s vicarious exploration of the transpacific imaginary in Astoria, and this affect is registered in a number of ways in Irving’s developing historiographic practice. Contingency takes the form of the presentiment of the fast-paced switches in historical possibility from which even transpacific ventures were not excused: Hudson, Jefferson Benton,

Floyd, Seward, Whitney, Astor—this list only shows how quickly different versions of Chinese America fell in and out of favor. Trying to keep his transpacific utopian project afloat becomes a fool’s errand for Astor, the legitimacy of that project pulled at the edges by paradigm shifts back on the East coast and in “the East.” In the Sandwich Islands, for example, Astor and company find the king Tamaahmaah nothing like the “magnanimous monarch” of romanticized visions of the East. Tamaahmaah figures out that he can export his island’s sandalwood to Canton directly instead of letting Astor’s fur company act as middlemen, and when his cargo returns not in the form of goods and monies, but a hefty bill for custom fees and other anchorage charges, he decides to “have harbor fees [for Hawaii] also” and “[i]n this way... turned his China speculation to account” (42). Once and again, Astor and his men fail to see the interchangeability of the official account to one such as Tamaahmaah who, feigning commitment to the older, romantic model of colonialism and sovereign reciprocity, turns out to be much better versed in the language of transpacific credit and trade economies.

Rather than the hubris of overexpansion, the pathos on offer in this work, I would argue, obtains in the forfeiture of narrative coherence that inevitably occurs when you give yourself over to transpacific narratives. Astor doesn’t comprehend the existence of a constantly changing official narrative to which he must hold himself accountable, or the changing narratives deployed in the Pacific, or, finally, that numerous third parties must uphold his understanding of the possible. Two of the major themes of *Astoria* are “disaffection” and “departure from the plan,” conditions that bespeak the incoherence of having to conduct an (inter)national project under irreconcilable rubrics, each with their own fantasies of what transpacific spaces can and should provide. A still further failure lies in Astor’s own “the departure from the plan... as to the voyage of the Beaver, subsequent to her visiting Astoria,” thus producing “a series of cross purposes, disastrous to the establishment” in such a way as to prevent Astor’s agent, Mr. Hunt, from “execut[ing] faithfully, and

to the letter, the part marked out for him by the master mind which has concerted the whole” (617). Having his grand plans once and again foiled by narrative asides and changes of plans on the part of agents, functionaries and intermediaries—that is, traditional nobodies—Astor’s fate resembles Jonathan Lamb’s revisionary reading of Captain Cook’s fate in the Sandwich Islands. Consigning oneself over to alternative systems of accountability in the Pacific means being neither able to account for oneself nor hold the official plan in place (*The Things Things Say*). Constantly surprised by a transpacific politic that no longer operates in the old predictable ways, Astor struggles with the changing configurations of his “nation-of-intent”; this turns him into a historiographic artifact. It is Rip Van Winkle all over again, except this time the dislocated past that slides out of historical possibility by becoming “History” is not Hudson’s counterfactual Chinese America, but Astor’s own counterfactual version. In Irving’s works, China-thinking closely parallels historical thinking that must recalibrate itself continuously to current political climate, which, in turn, reflexively ratifies the particular historiographic convention chosen in the first place.

As we have seen, the new nation in Irving’s understanding is one that compulsively manages the past and one that deliberates on the acceptable and unacceptable forms of history-making in the public forum of conversation and in the production of text. “Rip Van Winkle,” “A Storm-Ship,” *History* all wrap up not with an authoritative closure, but only the cacophony of the contending voices of “historians” and their amateur speculations. Many of Irving’s protagonists experience what Lauren Berlant terms the “relay through which the historical can be said to be sensed before it is redacted” (66). And, for Irving, the affective upshot of occupying a punctum that “appears singularly ahistorical” translates finally into the “ongoingness of adjudication, adaptation and improvisation” (Berlant 66, 54). To come back to the village, for Rip, is effectively to lift his encounter out of the supernatural and consign his own experience to a *deliberative* historicist process which finally determines that China, Hudson, New Amsterdam and the United States follow each

other in lock-step progression. This act of ratification may be the only way for the villagers caught in drastic political transformations to make sense of themselves and their relations to each other, even as this measure proves unsatisfying. The point that the story registers is not the contrast between pre-Revolutionary America and post-Revolutionary America—that tension is but the story’s conceit. The real argument of the story is that various pasts have to be retroactively assigned as specter and lore due to the tiring, disaffecting obligation to update oneself to political time.

3.

Nearly three quarters of a century after Irving’s first Chinese America, Irving may or may not have gone to the China of his work’s unerased pasts. Transculturation makes folk settings that feel unique to “Rip van Winkle” appear undeniably Chinese in “A Sleep of Seventy Years.” The attributability of “A Sleep” to “Rip Van Winkle” is open to debate, and perhaps ambiguity of origins is a fitting problem for a story about abeyance.⁵⁵ Unassisted by any corresponding milestone in Sino-American relations—we only know that the founder of *Shen Bao* was British⁵⁶—any attempt to pin down the source of the story would have to turn to imagined transnational flows. At the same time, the appearance of “Rip” in China, through whatever real or imagined transnational channels, suggests on both sides a shared interest in the alternative forms of literary historical management offered by unactualized time (the history lost to sleep within the story). The attributability question—is “A Sleep” really an adaptation of “Rip”?—fades in significance in light of a greater insight that the same problem offers: the Chinese America/American China that can only seem to exist in text is already slipping away, and the dissolution of its contours turns into the proving ground for a new type of historical management. If “A Sleep” does come from “Rip,” the choice of this storyline complicates the critical commonplace that the introduction of Western texts goaded China’s into an often misdirected sense of its own “ahistoricism” and political slumber in the face of

foreign incursion. “A Sleep” avails from “Rip” two hard truths about historical consciousness: its inevitable overtaking of the space reserved for fantasy and the sheer dispensability of the subject who sets it into motion only to be left by the wayside of its official operations. Socially out-of-commission, the scholar Wei “disappears into the mountains never to be seen again.”⁵⁷ With his vanishing into the mountains and the typical last lines of lore, the story erases its global ties. As the Irving examples prove, in nineteenth-century literature, Sino-American relations are often to be found under purposed erasure. But the real point is these texts that conceal their global affinities use the management of historicity afforded by those very affinities to find new ways of narrating the ultimately mundane fate of the subject who wakes up to historical consciousness within a radically transformed political landscape.

CHAPTER 2

Ecstatic Reading

“To increase the probability of the improbable”—

Niklas Luhmann on literature as a medium of
communication

“Books are for nothing but to inspire”—Ralph Waldo

Emerson, “The American Scholar”

“China interests us at this moment in a point of politics”

Thus announced Emerson at the banquet in honor of the Chinese Embassy in August of 1868.⁵⁸ The Second Opium War had just ended. Prominent figures in US political reform—Alexander Bullock, Charles Sumner, Caleb Cushing, and Emerson himself—had gathered at the St. James Hotel in Boston with the US commissioners to China and a special envoy consisting of members of the Qing dynasty Tongzhi Restoration—Zhi Keqing (Chih Ta-jin), Sun Jiasheng (Sun Ta-jin), Ta Taihuang, Ting Sunzhu. The event promoted the ratification of the second Sino-American treaty that secured mutuality, commercial favoritism and extra territoriality for both nations. Answering to the toast, “The Union of the Farthest East and the Farthest West,” Emerson drew from stock praises—China’s venerable antiquity, China’s inventions, etc.—and rehashed the favorite nineteenth-century slogan of updating “ancient China” to the global timetable. His encomium was but one in a line of performative speech acts crowning a decade-long “Cooperative Policy” between China and America in the middle of the nineteenth century that culminated in the

Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868.⁵⁹ “This auspicious event,” Emerson declared, “marks a new era.”⁶⁰

And yet, for Emerson, China “concerned us at this moment in politics” only partially for the stated reasons behind what historians now call the “Cooperative Policy,” which assigned to Sino-American relations the task of radically recalibrating the nation and thus wiping away its most pressing social problems. With this announcement, Emerson turned the topic of China toward one of his perpetual interests—the social use of literature—and made good on another development in the dinner speeches. Behind the rhetoric of “the oldest nation” joining the “newest republic” in all of the speeches presented there emerged a new role for literary exchange in foreign policy, an important talking point not to be found in the previous Tientsin Treaty of 1858. In his speech, Anson Burlingame offered the anecdote of the Chinese scholar “Tung Ta-jin,”⁶¹ and his translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Psalm of Life,” as a prelude to imaginative cross-cultural identification. Many of the other speeches also defined international political commensurability in terms of the exchange of texts. Charles Sumner, for example, lamented that Milton had cited “the Chinese” in *Paradise Lost*, but no such textual embedding exists the other way around; the Burlingame-Seward Treaty would redress this by letting the U.S. trickle into the Chinese literary imaginary. In an extended bibliographic metaphor, Caleb Cushing compared pre-treaty China to a “sealed book before the world” that would now have to open itself up.⁶² Analogizing Sino-American exchange to the opening of a book occasioned a shift in the perception of Chinese history, with textual innovations acting as positive indicators of a nation’s unfolding and maturing.

When Emerson opened the “book of China” for his audience he turned to the chapter on China’s own use of books and circles back to an ideal form of governance in which the effects of reading can be preserved in a political institution. Emerson pointed to the practice in China of basing in its selection of officers for governance on their performance in competitive literary

examinations and suggested, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that America might learn something. On America's failure to follow the Chinese example, Emerson lamented that the then senator of Rhode Island had "twice attempted to carry through Congress, requiring that candidates for public offices shall first pass examinations on their literary qualifications for the same."⁶³ "China interested us at this moment in a point of politics" only superficially and provisionally for the reasons behind the "Cooperative Policy"; the interest does not apply trans-nationally but intranationally. In Emerson's mind, China modeled a sociology of literature that institutionally and programmatically tied matters of reading to matters of governance. As Emerson would write in the preamble tacked on to the speech four years later, China "makes ecstasy into an institution." The extension of this last desideratum of transcendentalism—the desire that ecstasy be brought into the parameters of formalism—becomes the undeniable proof of China's preoccupation in the same dilemma that haunted Emerson his whole life: how to preserve a powerful idea—an ecstasy—long enough to render it an effective, implementable policy but not so long as to ossify thinking and acting, thus neutering the power of that original idea.

Both in its sociopolitical practices and in its status as cipher in America, China, for Emerson, straddled the space between the abstract literary and immediate social problems and offered a shortcut for connecting the two. By historicizing what may, on Emerson's part, look like a passing and superficial interest in Sino-American policy-making, and probing it for deeper resonances within his works, I resituate Emerson's rhetorical and political endorsement of romantic Sino-American foreign policy within a program of national rejuvenation in the 1850s and 60s. Although quite short and almost hopelessly pro forma, the Chinese embassy speech offers a rare opportunity for readers to bring several strands of Emerson criticism into the same viewing plane: Emerson's earlier preferences for non-formalized reform versus later commitments to proceduralized change, Emerson's problematic transnationalism, and Emerson's interest in the sociology of literature.

Emerson's China-thinking provides crucial connections between his reform politics and his advocacy of a universal intellectual socialism. The final part of this chapter examines the force of Emerson's use of literature as an intervention in transnational and hemispheric studies today.

“Inspired we must forget our books”

The Chinese embassy dinner showcased Emerson at a particularly illegible moment in his career—illegible not because he produced work that was difficult to read but because he produced work so clearly belonging in the category of public relations' stock forms. Designed for the passing occasion, the speech marks Emerson as someone who went along with whatever was in the air. Four years later, he reused the “farthest East and the farthest West” phrase at the Japanese embassy and, according to his biographer Ralph L. Rusk, managed to “muste[r] up enthusiasm enough to discover the romantic aspect of the late emergence of Japan from national privacy [by praising] ‘the enlightened policy of President Fillmore’ that ‘sent Commodore Perry to that country.’”⁶⁴ Emerson's willingness to go along with a triumphalist rhetoric of transpacific designs would, to many critics, redouble whatever offenses he had already made against Asia in his literary practices. The two critics who have analyzed the speech both study what happens to Emerson's universalism when a literary China meets a geopolitical one. In a cogent analysis of the role of historical management in US expansionist rhetoric, Jeanine Abboushi Dallal finds in Emerson's embassy speech a belittling of China's history that happens through a metaphor of entextualization: “from the beginning... [China's ‘wars and revolutions’] are textual, ‘occur[ing] literally in the ‘annals.’”⁶⁵ For Dallal, this leveling of other people's historical traumas is characteristic of Emerson's brand of “expansionist discourse” which leans on Universalist reductionist approach toward other cultures. Defending Emerson from Gallal's critiques of soft imperialism, Tamara C. Emerson argues that Emerson sets up a diachronic model of symmetry between East and West in which cultures do not take from but

reconstitute one another. To borrow from the title of her study, Emerson “relates transcendentally,” not instrumentally.⁶⁶

This small argument over Emerson’s Chinese embassy speech reflects a bigger debate over Emerson’s legacy in transpacific studies. Emerson had a long dalliance with Oriental literature and the Orient, and often re-presented his findings with the cringing reductivism of collapsed particularities (for example, “the Chinese pagoda is clearly a tartar tent”).⁶⁷ Entire books in English and Chinese have been dedicated to Emerson’s Asia complex⁶⁸ and some critics have, for compelling reasons, called out his Orientalizing thinking as a homogenizing universalism that corroborates US cultural and economic imperialism.⁶⁹ The transnational turn in American studies has by-and-large come out against Emerson. Myra Jehlen was one of the first to associate Emerson with American expansionism. Giving his audience a philosophy by which identity can be kept intact despite of the nation’s unchecked development, Emerson “perfected the invention of America.”⁷⁰ John Eperjesi names him as one of the originators of American Pacific economic Orientalism, adjoining the essentialized “religious-philosophical Asia” to an economically exploitable one.⁷¹ A damning critique of late comes from a panel on repositioning America which I myself will attend at the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) in Toronto. Drawing from Carolyn Porter’s work, the panel takes as its premise that “what vexes the American subject’s ability to position itself in history and geography is an Emersonian literary tradition of ahistorical and reified consciousness.”

An alternative to the imperialist Emerson comes from Wai Chee Dimock, who sees him as one actor in a far larger network of cultural translation, appropriation and ideologization in deep time. Dimock’s Emerson is cosmopolitan both in space and time, his global ties strengthened and not mitigated by his deliberately ahistorical translingual praxis: “going back hundreds of years,

triangulating at every step, reading the Koran by way of German, and looking forward to Malcom X and James Baldwin by way of Goethe and Hafiz, Emerson is American only in caricature.”⁷² By transposing world literature into American literature, Emerson, in Dimock’s view, worked under a fundamentally different time scale that “thread[s] the long durations of other countries into the short chronology of the United States.”⁷³ Dimock’s extended recovery of the composite world literatures that Emerson stitches and re-stitches proves that Emerson worked in “deep time,” in which the literature of others “are not thousands of miles away but hauntingly here, not ancient but contemporary.”⁷⁴ Dimock is not the only critic to offer a redemptive reading of Emerson’s cosmopolitanism. Many critics have turned to “worldliness” to explain Emerson’s idiosyncratic form of political dissent before and after the Civil War.⁷⁵ These readings construct Emerson’s cosmopolitanism, inhering either in his theory of interpersonal subjectivity or in the “world consciousness” of his textual practices, as a bulwark against indictments of problematic race thinking and/or American exceptionalism. Their cosmopolitan reading of Emerson allows us to unhinge Emerson from the Mathiessenian narrative of the American Renaissance and the utterly nationalist preoccupations with which he is sometimes associated, allowing us to hear in Emerson’s China speech something other than the bad faith rhetoric of US cultural imperialism at the cusp of the Progressive Era. But I argue that what we hear *little resembles* a sustained global, transnational consciousness and conscientiousness that seems to make or break a canonical author’s relevance in today’s academic climate.

Emerson’s provable cosmopolitanism opens but a trick window into his theory on the uses of world literature. Though an archaeological critical method will yield many references to China (and other countries and their literatures), Emerson has no “China” corpus from whence we can glean a sustained interest in China or cross-cultural literary exchange. Conventional wisdom would expect to find all mentions of China before the speech slowly warming toward the country,

culminating in the celebratory remarks. Instead we find China in Emerson's oeuvre before and after a receptivity to everything that was "out there" on China, positive and negative. We know that Emerson read the latest monographs on China: Father Huc's *Travels to China*, James Legge and David Collie's translations of Chinese classics, Lawrence Oliphant's *Narrative of Lord Napier's Mission to China and Japan*, and Joshua Marshman's *The Works of Confucius*.⁷⁶ In the 1860s and '70s we find Emerson conversant in transatlantic discourses of China in political theory, which he transposed on to domestic impasses. In these cases, Chineseness is often deployed as a pejorative adjective: "England is Chinese in her servility to wealth";⁷⁷ "use of war" is to "break up in a nation Chinese conservatism, death in life";⁷⁸ and English and Americans "look of a Chinese narrowness."⁷⁹ "Chinese narrowness" and "Chinese conservatism/death in life" disclose his newfound identification with a belief running from de Tocqueville to Hegel to Mill that China's exemplary equality dead-ended its democratic social processes, its conservatism contributing to its historical stagnation.⁸⁰ In these examples what we glimpse of sinophobia tells us at least as much about Emerson's readiness to consider and/or cite from ambient discourses only to fill a particular philosophical or rhetorical need.

During the period Emerson read and cited most from recently-available translations of Chinese literature, he was also thinking hard about how to erase one's reading traces. In *Notebook EL* (1849-1860), Emerson often penned quick quotations from Collie's *Four Books* and Legge's *Chinese Classics* next to his manuscript poems, sometimes even on the same page.⁸¹ But the Chinese influence cannot be seen in the literary product, though writer Richard Grossman was so convinced it existed in the poetry that he published an edition of Emerson's poems side-by-side with selections from *Tao Te Ching*.⁸² (Unable to point to any one line in the poems that prove influence, however, Grossman had to rely on the logic of juxtaposition). The eclectic nature of notebooks, compounded by Emerson's tendency to let radical adjacencies of unrelated texts speak for themselves, will forever

prevent us from knowing how these chosen snippets of Chinese poetry and philosophy call across the pages to the poems. Mixed together in *EL*, the Chinese quotations clearly bore an inspirational logic to the manuscript poems; what they inspired, however, was poetry that thematized the abandonment of influence. The manuscript poems of the 1850s revisited time and again the image of undoing one's reading, with such lines as "Inspired we must forget our books," "Burn up the libraries!" and "I leave the book, I leave the wine" (i.e. walking away from influence).⁸³ Like the snippets of *Mea Hung*, *Shang Mung*, and *Chung Yung* Emerson cited, the poems thematize at once the social force of ideas, and the need to remain non-committal to the sources of those ideas. I will come back to Emerson's undoing of literary sources in the final section, but for now we can say that though Emerson's China-citations leave a record, an examination of this record reveals cultural crossings whose impermanence and self-erasure cannot be smoothed away with a change in scale. To read Emerson's relationship to China, then, we must adjust our own approach to "reading" transnationalism and be willing to entertain a transnationalism that insists on burning its bridges.

"The co-presence of the revolutionary force in intellect"

In Emerson's energy-model of cosmopolitanism, the occasional uses of literature model a kind of political idealism. This is the idea that ideas *per se* can become the condition for a new system of thought, one that pushes the boundaries of existing socio-political structures in substantive, measurable ways while remaining beholden to that original, conditioning idea. Kerry Larson describes it as a form of "intellectual cruising."⁸⁴ The whatever-works approach to literature (or anything) has one of its most succinct articulations in *EL* manuscript poems: "A comrade or a book is good/ that puts me in a working mood."⁸⁵ In this equation, the thoughts of others are considered valuable if they are good enough to inspire a will to (political) action, and not beyond that.

But what does the “whatever-works” approach look like with the workaday of actual historical events and discourses? As scholars of Emerson well know, the precepts of early Emerson—with their insistence on ecstasy, impersonality and disinterest—throw his later, more synthetic political maneuvers into irritating relief. Critics have asked how we might reconcile an Emerson who had “reservations about reform movements because participation in them would force him to align himself with a sect or party and thus undermine his ability to speak to the regeneration of society as a whole” with the late Emerson that we find in the frontlines of organized reform.⁸⁶ In one of the earliest treatments of this discontinuity, Stephen Whicher reads Emerson’s open endorsement of programs of change such as the abolition movement as “acquiescence” to institutionalized reform. David M. Robinson suggests that we try to understand this discontinuous Emerson in its historical context, mainly the obdurateness of slavery in mid-century America and the politics of desperation that it molded. Emerson’s 1840s writing revealed “a dissatisfaction with the ‘flash-of-lightning faith’ based on moments of ecstatic but unpredictable illumination” that, by the 1850s, “yield[ed] a new orientation toward social relationships, ethical action, and political reform.”⁸⁷ T. Gregory Garvey’s edited volume, *The Emerson Dilemma*, takes as its central topic Emerson’s late concerns with the “discrepancy between thought and action” and attempts to flesh out the continuity between the earlier and later Emerson by looking at transitional texts/encounters. We read about an Emerson warming to the doctrines of social progress under the influence of William Ellery Channing (Michael Stryck), an Emerson swayed by John Brown’s fanaticism (Harold K. Bush), an Emerson who, in run-ins with figures like William Lloyd Garrison, James Freeman Clarke and Wendell Phillips, came around to more dogmatic and incendiary forms of abolition (Len Gougeon).⁸⁸

Most of the literary critics who study the conversional Emerson prefer to look for traces of transcendentalism in obviously transitional pieces, such as “Experience” and essays from *The Conduct*

of Life and avoid such a clearly-marked piece of official-speak as the Chinese embassy speech. But a serious treatment of the awkward genre of the pro forma is exactly the challenge laid out in the 1860 essay, “Fate,” the piece that set the tone for the writings composed in the 60s and 70s and that cast the longest shadow over the Chinese embassy speech, as I will show. “Fate” was Emerson’s answer to socio-political inertia and defeatism fattened by various discourses of social, genetic, intellectual determinism in the second half of the nineteenth century; instead of denouncing these discourses, however, Emerson totalizes them. “Fate” openly acknowledges that “the hope to reform men” comes up against “immovable limitations” that have gained currency in public discourse such as the determinisms of up-bringing and personality, phrenology and anatomy, predispositions in patterns of thoughts, the forces of nature and the environment. To minimize the legitimacy of the various discourses of determinisms—scientific racism, social determinism, karma, technologism—Emerson proposes one of his great counterintutions: accept all of them wholesale; go along with every kind of determinism. A man’s “fate,” echoing the memorable image from “Circles,” resembles a tightly tethered circle: his “power is hooped in by a necessity, which, by many experiments, he touches on every side, until he learns its arc.” His arc (the circumference of limitation) can, nonetheless, at any moment, triggered by anything, open out to larger circles. This geometrical conundrum—you can hop distances longer than your tether—means that models of enlargement can infiltrate circumscribed spaces and radical thinking can be *stumbled upon*. Emerson is not upholding the precious notion that thinking frees us, but simply observing that one never knows what can happen when we take up for consideration any line of thought, however quietist it might be. Coming across the thought of another, “our own mind is roused to activity, and we forget very fast what he says, much more interested in the new play of our own thought, than in any thought of his.”⁸⁹ And the end of these unplanned thoughts is not simply “thinking a new thought,” but something poststructuralists have debated for years: the seemingly impossible ability of the habitus—“those

embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own obviousness”⁹⁰—to jolt itself out of the present conditions of reality that, through the practices of the habitus, have made itself seem inescapable. To prove his point implicitly, Emerson proceeds to give examples of how “fate slides into freedom” using the language and logic of various discourses of determinisms in the process. In this model of sudden inspiration, reformers (both public and private) who find themselves with nowhere to turn because everything points to the futility of intervention realize that they can turn toward most anything, even if it is entrenched, determinist thinking itself. I suggest here that instead of building a narrative that would locate in “Fate” the stirrings of a conversion complete by the mid-1870s, we might instead read “Fate” as a thought-experiment put to the test in many of the speeches and lectures of the 1860s and 70s, which reflected an allegiance to determinism back to itself. In this genre of Emersonian writing—as well represented by his embassy speech as anything else—can we see the seriousness with which he takes up ambient discourses to provoke, as James Frank described, “a perfectionist transformation and self-overcoming.”⁹¹

In his recent, provocative critique of New Americanists’ readings of Emerson, Johannes Voelz argues that their charges of expansionism or quietism either way has to be reexamined in light of Emerson’s “audience-directed philosophy.” Understanding radical politics as an “implicated” process, Emerson “had to partially affirm his listeners’ worldviews.”⁹² This section will try to reproduce the experience of listening to Emerson’s Chinese embassy speech, and how saying what everyone expects can embed a sociology of inspiration. I recontextualize the drive to reform that motivated his China-thinking, and show how his mustering “energy enough” for transpacific policies is paradigmatic of a way of thinking about China that tied in to immediate political and sociological concerns back at home. The Emerson who paid attention to emergent Sino-American realities drew from a specific idealism—the use of foreign policy as a *reform technology* in the antebellum and

Reconstruction period (1850-1870). This Emerson may seem like very distant cousin of the cryptic Emerson of “Fate,” but, as I will show, this Emerson carries out exactly what “Fate” prescribes by internalizing the language of Progressive determinism that dominated transpacific discourse to move toward a vision of a political order that guarantees (because it proceduralizes) the unpredictable social force of literature.

Transpacific policies’ promises of tangible change for the nation attracted Emerson, who had witnessed the emergence of sinology as an important component of US political discourse.⁹³ Within the genre of China-thinking-as-domestic-reform, the Burlingame-Seward Treaty pitched China as a “technology” that could rejuvenate the nation. In the years leading up to his 1868 speech to the Chinese embassy in Boston, Emerson was introduced to a series of legislators and diplomats who in the 1850s and early ‘60s had sought extra-constitutional solutions for what seemed to be endless stalling and compromise on the issue of emancipation. Few historians have noted that some of the most vocal proponents of “higher law” were also the most stalwart champions of new Sino-American relations, and even fewer literary historians have noticed Emerson’s movement within these circles. William Seward and Anson Burlingame, who drafted the treaty of 1868, caught Emerson’s attention in the late antebellum period and inspired a frenzy of endorsing speeches and articles.⁹⁴ The connection between the rhetoric of Sino-American relations and Anti-Slavery is most clearly seen in Burlingame, better known by most for his famous speech against South Carolina Democrat Preston Brooks (who had physically assaulted Charles Sumner in the Senate) and the triumphant pistol duel challenge afterward that scared Brooks away. In a speech to the House of Representatives in 1856, Burlingame called the use of US territory for slavery as a “perversion of history,” which has to make way for a liberal economic and technological expansionism.⁹⁵ During the Civil War, Lincoln appointed Burlingame as the US envoy to China and Burlingame soon

outfitted Reconstruction politics with a new goal: to have the US extend “equality” to China—and, by way of doing that, affirm its own sovereignty, as part of its experiment of extending equality to its own citizens.

For William Seward the most efficacious solution to problem of national reconsolidation after the Civil War presented itself in an unlikely place, in what we might call a technological intervention: if you radically reconfigure the country’s geo-commercial coordinates then, as Walter Lafeber said of the Cooperative Policy, “an American community no longer had to be imagined.”⁹⁶ Long before the Civil War, Seward saw that policies tying Pacific expansionism to the development of technological infrastructure can bring about desired social reforms. In his 1855 address, “The Dangers of Extending Slavery,” Seward appealed to “higher law” and reasoned that the U.S. Constitution had within it loopholes that permitted not only the justification of slavery but its spread into Texas and Mexico. All the while, he was already working on another front. Urging the US government to turn its eyes Pacific-ward, Seward, in an 1852 speech delivered to the US Senate, “Commerce in the Pacific Ocean,” put forth arguments for a US commercial hegemony in the seas. Seward advances here what would subsequently become the most compelling justification of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty: “Whatever nation shall put that [oceanic] commerce into full employment, and shall conduct it steadily with adequate expansion, will become necessarily the greatest of existing States; greater than any that has ever existed.”⁹⁷ The technological restructuring that would have to come with oceanic expansionism would precipitate the “irrepressible conflict” between free and slave-holding states more quickly than “higher law.”⁹⁸ After the Civil War, anti-Reconstruction Democrats butted heads with Seward and Burlingame on the issue of the Sino-American relations brought about by Pacific expansionism. As historian Najia Aarim-Heriot documents, the “Negro problem” in postbellum California had transformed into the “Chinese problem”; many Democrats opposed the immigration clause of the proposed second Sino-American

treaty on the grounds of the coolie labor influx.⁹⁹ Against opposition to the establishment of what Democrats lampooned as “American and Oriental aristocracies,”¹⁰⁰ Seward and Burlingame proclaimed that “practical sense dictated that the new diplomatic agreement include provisions facilitating the exchange of populations and the interchange of population.”¹⁰¹ Such a treaty with China was thought to be able to quickly solve many problems at home unrelated to China, and was, therefore, a piece of romantic foreign policy.

At the close of the 1850s, Emerson complained that America had superficially overextended itself, going so far as to “interfere... in Canton and Japan.”¹⁰² But the events of the ‘60s changed his view of what transpacific policies could accomplish. As a result of his exposure to this romantic foreign policy, China and national reform become functionally connected in Emerson’s mind: “We have seen slavery disappear like a painted scene in a theatre; we have seen the most healthful revolution in the politics of the nation—the Constitution not only amended, but construed in a new spirit. We have seen China opened to European and American ambassadors and commerce.”¹⁰³ Like many in his cohort, Emerson entertained a non-sequitur by associating China’s opening to the US with domestic, technologically-mediated structural changes. In March of the same year he lists under the category of “Revolutions” a series of observations: “When I see... the Chinese, instead of stoning an ambassador if he steps out of the walls of Canton, now choosing Mr. Burlingame as their ambassador to Western countries... [when I see] my message sent from Boston to London in sixty seconds. The plough displaces the spade; the bridge displaces the ferryman; the press displaces the scrivener; the locomotive the coach; the telegraph the courier.”¹⁰⁴ Such identification of Sino-American collaborations as hard evidence of social change can be entered in the books with only a small amount of reductionism as Progressive propaganda, especially since Chinese openness seem to signal, *a fortiori*, desirable social and technological improvements at home. His associations reveal the

degree to which romantic Sino-American policy had been advertised as a boon for domestic infrastructure.

Emerson's willingness to give such a structured set of responses to developing Sino-American relations would seem like concession to programmatic reform policies within his late struggles with the compromise of political "formalism." Indeed we find in this rhetoric an unabashed willingness to not only entertain but support outright what in Chinese might be called the 形式化 *xing shi hua*—schematic reform and perfunctory assurances that that things are getting better. This "new orientation" can be seen in the rhetoric of his endorsement of the signing of the Burlingame Treaty: "This auspicious event," Emerson declared, "marked a new era, an irresistible result of the science which has given us the power of steam and the electric telegraph." Improved Sino-American relations fall under and bolster the logic of progressive determinism. This Emerson actively endorsed agendas of improvement, even if these are achieved mechanically—happy outcomes in the tides of change—and not intellectually, as an earlier Emerson would demand. Clearly referencing China, Emerson's 1867 lecture "The Progress of Culture" begins by chronicling the lateral cultural crossovers in the Progressive Era: immigrants "come from crowded, antiquated kingdoms to enjoy" technological advancements, new social freedoms, etc.¹⁰⁵ The convergence of the "oldest empires... of venerable antiquity" with the "newest nations" under the sign of progress ushers in a laundry list of social improvements bolstered by "American institutions": along with friendlier Sino-American relations, "the abolition of slavery, the success of the Sanitary Commission and of the Freedmen's Bureau... the abolition of capital punishment and of imprisonment for debt; the improvement of prisons; the efforts for the suppression of intemperance; the search for just rules affecting labor; the cooperative societies; the insurance of life and limb; the free-trade league; the improved almshouses; the enlarged scale of charities... [and] the incipient series of international congresses."¹⁰⁶

In “Lectures of the Times,” Emerson wrote that the scholar’s role in public politics is to show “hospitality to every new thought of his time.” The “perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power” is not contradicted by a total investment in structured reform.¹⁰⁷ In fact, as “Progress of Culture” shows, the perfunctory listing of improvements makes more vivid the possibility of impulsive action. If we follow that essay to its end we find that the scene of China-meets-America and the rhetoric of cross-cultural betterment that you can really see, only serve to precipitate a newfound appreciation of universal equivalences and equi-distances. “The Progress of Culture” is an odd, cross-purposed piece that begins with conventional vignettes of cultural progress but pivots to talk about literary history; soon the narrative cultural progress in the Progressive sense starts to make very little sense since, as Emerson says, “the world is always equal to itself.”¹⁰⁸ The “progress of culture” brings into view the triumphalism of amalgamating cultures and social improvement only to really bring into view a theory of how inspiration works. Literature—loosely referring to other people’s recorded ideas—makes quickly apparent what positivist indicators will take a long time to show: the fact that models of improvement already exist in the world in any one mind’s encounter with another’s and, therefore, can immediately matter in the world regardless of time and distance. It is not clear how Homer and Shakespeare, whom he cites, anticipate the particularities of Progressive era improvements; it is not supposed to be clear. What Emerson refers to as the “co-presence of the revolutionary force in intellect”¹⁰⁹ does not involve the application of ideas to political acts; rather, to radicalize intellect means letting activational energies move freely from one arena to another. In this circuit, tangible socio-scientific improvements provoke one to “wonder at the world” and superficial appreciation of the progress of culture “confers [to] the processes of an individual mind concordance and agency in the world at large.”¹¹⁰ Through the technologically deterministic vignettes of social change, you intimate the how abstract inspiration can be harnessed to make real change in the world. Literary history, for its part, brings culture’s

mediations into view by allowing us to perceive how the sudden inspirations in one person's mind and those across the ages and continents can line up in equipollence and translate into (without ever needing to directly address) the prevailing social reforms of any particular historical moment.

Sharon Cameron's judgment of Emerson's style, in which "nothing belongs except rhetorically or positionally," applies equally to his mediations of experience (whence Cameron derives his "impersonality") and his improvised interests in Sino-American relations. The lack of apology with which Emerson assumes any voice, indulges any thought-experiment—in sum, his famous inconsistency—reveals, quite consistently, the ways that people get themselves to think in a certain way, or take up a certain cause. Ventriloquizing the talk of the times is the preliminary step toward turning the discourse back to the social force of literature. Thus his speech, though it recycles some of the rhetoric of "The Progress of Culture" and takes the proper attitude toward such public events, reveals itself as provisional from the outset. The "immigrants from Asia" that "come in crowds" contribute the stereotyped virtues that were often used in pro-Chinese immigration rhetoric, such as: the "power of continuous labor," "versatility in...adapting to new conditions" and "stoical economy."¹¹¹ Emerson then runs through "the advantages of the new intercourse between the two countries [that] are daily manifest on the Pacific coast." Most curiously, though, the speech proceeds *as though it were the case* that Sino-American relations have produced these positive results. The whole speech begins quite strangely in the hypothetical tense: "I *suppose* we are all of one opinion on this remarkable occasion" (italics mine). The rest of the speech never resolves the ambiguity laid out in the opening remark—is the supposition sarcastic?—and only continues in the hypothetical: "I am quite sure that I heard..." "it appears that..." The same pronouncements that rhetorically secure the wishful thinking of transnational ventures (a form of "wishful speaking," if you will) also parade their own rhetorical detachment.

To Emerson political activation is by definition cross-cultural (because anything and everything is fair game); yet, the moments of activation never accrue to cross-culturalism. It helps to look at an example of what that may be. For Oliver Wendell Holmes, one of the other guests at the Boston Embassy dinner, the transformation of China-as-legend into China as one half of a Sino-America utopia creates a geographical nearness and a social expediency that obviates the need for words or texts to serve as the transmitters of culture:

BROTHERS, whom we may not reach

Through the veil of alien speech,

Welcome! welcome! eyes can tell

What the lips in vain would spell,--

Words that hearts can understand,

Brothers from the Flowery Land!

...

Open wide, ye gates of gold,

To the Dragon's banner-fold!

Builders of the mighty wall,

Bid your mountain barriers fall!

So may the girdle of the sun.

Bind the East and West in one,

Till Mount Shasta's breezes fan

The snowy peaks of Ta Sieue-Shan,--

Till Erie blends its waters blue

With the waves of Tung-Ting-Hu,--

Till deep Missouri lends its flow
To swell the rushing Hoang-Ho!¹¹²

What “alien speech” and “lips” cannot communicate, the conjoined China-America can facilitate. Holmes’s literary inspiration is predicated on the impossibly romanticized proximities that the Cooperative Policy and the Burlingame-Seward Treaty will engender. With only a little exaggeration we can say that, in Holmes’s utopia, one can launch a boat in the Missouri River in the morning and find oneself coursing in the “Hoang Ho” (Huang He, Yellow River) by afternoon. Literary production—here, the poem itself—fixes the ecology of transculturalism that such Sino-American fantasies have enabled, but the ecology itself does not need any literary or comparably complicated communicative system in order to function: it operates by simple proximity.

In contrast to Holmes, Emerson, who in his journals wrote that he “hated Peking” and “never wanted to drink from the Yellow Sea” held an interest in China that never generated scenographies of a closer world.¹¹³ For Emerson, propinquity in and of itself means nothing and certainly does not replace the literature’s mediating role. And if literature mediates, what it mediates is not cross-cultural exchange. Many of the other speeches, for example, promoted the often less-than-innocent idea that nations exchange, little-by-little, their literature, culture, and peoples in the process of geopolitical collaboration and commensuration. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, the mayor of Boston, announced that China was poised to “tender to the whole civilized world an interchange of all that can be of any benefit or profit to individuals or collections of people.”¹¹⁴ In this view, China’s arts and cultural achievements only concern us in their capacity to represent China’s “claim” to “common respect.” The exact nature of literary-exchange is immaterial because, after all, it only serves to decorate and lend legitimacy to the geopolitical union. And so while Cushing, Burlingame, Sumner and others read into China and America’s hypothetical literary exchanges the desired political ones, Emerson intentionally muddied the conversions even as he held on to the shared

notion that thinking about China can inspire domestic reform and lead to wanted domestic social outcomes. The newfound proximities between China and America for Emerson ultimately amounted to a shared praxis of practicable intellectualism in which literature holds an at-once paradoxical and conventional relationship to the government. When Emerson finally touches on the relationship between Chinese literature and Chinese politics through an anecdote about Confucius, he conscripts it as an example of this kind of political order, rather than advertise it as a sample of Chinese literature that should (or shouldn't) be folded into the American consciousness. Elsewhere Emerson wrote that Confucius "exhort[ed his audience] to be active in the world as scholars but also to aggressively address the problems of society and government."¹¹⁵ A journal entry further shows his association of Confucius with a particular brand of reform:

Reform. Chang Tsoo and Kee Neih retired from the state to the fields on account of misrule, and showed their displeasure at Confucius who remained in the world. Confucius sighed and said, "I cannot associate with birds and beasts. If I follow not man, whom shall I follow? If the world were in possession of right principles, I should not seek to change it."¹¹⁶

Twenty-five years later, in the Chinese embassy speech, he returned to Confucius and the role of scholarly wisdom in governance:

His rare perception... put[s] always the blame of our misfortunes on ourselves; as when to the governor who complained of thieves, he said, 'If you, sir, were not covetous, though you should reward them for it, they would not steal'... At the same time, he abstained from paradox, and met the ingrained prudence of his nation by saying always, 'Bend one cubit to straighten eight.'¹¹⁷

In this anecdote, Confucius takes a critical position to the government and, simultaneously, provides practical advice that does not contradict the nation's "ingrained" ways. Thus he provokes the governor to consider a more just method of governance with a subversive riddle, at the same time

advocating a “Bend one cubit to straighten eight” approach, an aphorism which efficiently suggests that a certain amount of compromise and sacrifice of idealism is necessary in any political governance. Emerson presents these two kinds of postures as a non-sequitur (connected only by a temporal coincidence, “At the same time”) and thus harmonizes the contradiction without reconciling it.

It is not that Reconstruction American reform would stand to enlarge its intellectual circuit by importing the Chinese literary model, but that Chinese literature as it stands in relation to China—in Emerson’s treatment—represents a model of enlargement that Emerson has championed all along. The declaration by Emerson with which I started this chapter—“China interests us at this moment in a point of politics”—provides the pivot from China as geopolitical partner to China’s own sociology of literature. The fact that China might interest the US politically is not hard to appreciate, then as now, but what really interests Emerson is in what follows that pronouncement, an invocation of China’s literary examination system that engineers a return via intertext to his own thoughts on social democratic reform in America. Taking lines verbatim from his 1867 speech, “Fortune of the Republic,” Emerson laments America’s failure to implement a similar use of literature in America when Congress failed to pass Rhode Island senator Thomas Jenckes’ bill demanding qualification tests for civil servants. Interestingly, Emerson purposely mischaracterizes the nature of Jenckes’ civil service reform (which would peter out by 1875), calling it a “bill... requiring that candidates in public offices shall first pass examinations on their literary qualifications for the same.” In reality, Jenckes did not model his bill after the Chinese system at all, nor stipulate that the exam contents be “literary” (as Emerson would have known). Jenckes’ push for open competitive examinations in the election of civil servants came from within a Reconstruction movement to “check the “centralization of all appointing”” and curtail patronage during Andrew Johnson’s presidency.¹¹⁸ Emerson’s knowledge of China’s literary examination system most likely

came from Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, which contains this oft-quoted comment on what he called "Chinese Literary Governors":¹¹⁹

By far the most interesting fact I hear about the Chinese is one on which we cannot arrive at clearness, but which excites endless curiosity even in the dim state: this namely, that they do attempt to make their Men of Letters their Governors!¹²⁰

For Carlyle, the reorganization of politics so that "men of letters" may govern, no matter how unlikely, has to be made practicable because society has "fallen into decay [and] fallen into incompetence, producing such dire social malaises as the inability of "millions of men [to] gain food for themselves."¹²¹ For Emerson, the attractiveness of this type of meritocracy also lay in a perceived need for political reform back at home. Rhetorically conjoining the failures of Reconstruction reform and Carlylian Sinophilism, Emerson says that "China has preceded us, as well as England and France, in this essential correction of a reckless usage; and the like high esteem of education appears in China in social life, to whose distinctions it is made an indispensable passport."¹²² In other words, ahead of Western nations, China has devised concrete protocols in the uses of literature (thus "correcting" its "reckless usage"). Even explained this way, though, Emerson's compliment remains a strange one: China's exemplarity lies in its regulation of literary scholarship in politics but this it accomplishes by systematizing, or making superficial, the transferences between the two spheres. Literary knowingness functions as a "passport" to "social distinction" in Chinese society—that is, as something doubly superficial: a systematized and an obvious formality. If we idealize literariness in a particular way, then Emerson's choice of words here could easily be construed as a cynical gesture that only reemphasizes China's reputation as a vast, irredeemable bureaucracy in which merit only takes the form of empty formalities. But this is precisely the role he wishes literariness to take, its social force falling outside the realm of hermeneutics. Like a passport, it only has to be shown and stamped to serve its function. His call for "the co-presence of the

revolutionary force in intellect” requires an alternative conceptualization of literariness and agency, one that gives preference to a model of literature’s social agency as superficial (“superficial” in the literal and not pejorative sense) rather than agonized and agonistic. The shallow correlation between learning and action in it figured here acts as rhetorical double for shallow correlation between the Chinese practice and the current crisis of American reform: the not-quite applicability of the Chinese literary examination model underscores the political potential of the anecdote.

In the preamble that he later added to the Chinese embassy speech, Emerson once again formulates how a country might move ecstasy (without diluting it) to the stable ground of policy, to locate it in a permanent, official place without giving up any of its demands on ad hoc intuition.

Nature creates in the East the uncontrollable yearning to escape from limitation into the vast and boundless, to use a freedom of fancy which plays with all works of Nature, great or minute, galaxy or grain of dust, as toys and words of the mind; inculcates a beatitude to be found in escape from all organization and all personality, and makes ecstasy an institution.¹²³

Rereading “the East” in preexisting terms central to his own philosophy represents a mainstay in Emerson’s theory on the uses of literature, which insists on the extension of a universally applicable paradox: an aversion to entification—the objectification and formalization of ideas and things—accompanies an politically necessary drive to objectify, formalize, and institutionalize the ephemeral ecstasies of the mind. Hence, in this preamble, Nature creates a yearning to “escape from limitation” but it does so partly by inculcation, that is, through a repetitive and authoritarian process that returns us to a limiting authority. Even if we accept that Nature “inculcates” the “escape from all organization,” the final word—“institution”—is still the very picture of organization. Thus the preamble joins determinism and ecstasy into a nexus, not by reconciling them (dialectically or functionally), however, but by allowing them to stand in oxymoronic adjacency. This oxymoron offers the one of the most concise versions of the political sensibility cultivated in “Fate.” Like

“Fate,” the preamble serves up constant reminders of the tethers of limitation, but here these tethers serve to implement ecstasy and thus secure its political utility from whimsy and chance. This logic is preserved in the preamble’s palindromic structure (“Nature creates in the East the...yearning to...use a freedom of fancy which plays with all works of Nature”), which presents formally a proposition put forth in “Fate,” and suggested as early as his essay “Nature” (1836). “Ecstasy” grows out of a reflexive act in which Nature creates impulses that can play with Nature. Like the “toy figures in a toy house” clause in “Fate,” Nature here entreats its subjects to regard everything as “toys and words of the mind” to the degree that such a way of thinking becomes standard protocol (encapsulated further in the oxymoron of “restlessness” and “beatitude.”) I have used the word “paradox” to make this political model (and its unorthodoxy) legible to my readers, but Emerson himself does not consider such a model paradoxical. We can escape “organization” and dissolve personality into impersonality without shunning inculcation and institutionalization, since what these formalisms enforce is the practice of taking up thought experiments without lingering.

“I want not metaphysics but only the literature of them”

Emerson’s own uses of world literature, namely his habit of testing programs of change in the textual laboratories of whatever piece of foreign literature he happened to have on hand, serves as crux and emblem of his theory of the uses of literature and provides for us the final piece of the puzzle of his China-thinking. I have shown how Emerson freighted China with a non-aggregational, non-committal approach to literature and ideas in them; having this elective affinity did not prevent Emerson from submitting the claims to Chinese literature to Chinese “problems.” In his 1875 essay, “Resources,” Emerson critiques a crassly material understanding of resources and cites the example of the “Chinaman in California” sending American products back to China and starting a market for American goods there. He has no qualms about using Confucius to deliver this point home (“the old Confucius in China admitted the benefit, but stated the limitation” of a too-literal

appreciation of resources).¹²⁴ Confucius is invoked with no consideration for contextual coherence—almost as though Legge’s *Chinese Classics* happened to be the book he grabbed from his shelf.¹²⁵ Paralogically redistributed over the immediate situation, Confucius, as with so many others, represents one of the endless resources from which Emerson pulls to make a point.

I am of course not the first to notice Emerson’s arbitrary use of intellectual resources. Most of the critics I have included in this essay—Whicher, Robinson, Garvey, Larson, Cameron—have all written on Emerson’s tendency to take things up only to set them aside. Stanley Cavell has asked that we read Emerson’s essays as a series of philosophies of thinking (and thinking’s contingencies), rather than as a whole philosophy. His intervention led to Cary Wolfe’s systems-theory reading of Emerson, in which he argues that, for Emerson, thinking is “not active apprehension...but rather an act of reception.”¹²⁶ Against Cavell’s classification of such a way of thinking as acquiescence to unsolvability, however, Wolfe sees it as evidence of Emerson’s prowess in theorizing the condition of modernity. For Wolfe, the “systematicity” of Emersonian thought comes from his recurring observations that the inducements to thinking are contingent, that we can only take from the environment (the complexity of things out there) that which we can use and to which we can only maintain a “temporalized relation.” I agree with Wolfe that Emerson models and theorizes that which happens all the time to everyone (as theorized by someone like Niklas Luhmann)—and his intuition that Romantic constructivism has erroneously labeled this phenomenon “negative capability.” However, I reject Wolfe’s implicit claim that Emerson is only describing what is true—only more sensitive to the counter-intuitiveness of cognition than others—but remains ultimately, as Luhmann was, uninterested in modernity being anything other than what it is. I would go further to say, risking exactly the kind of idealism that Wolfe’s Luhmannian reading side-steps, that Emerson does not only model the contingency of thought but formulates it into an ethics of cultural difference. We arrive at this ethics not by dismissing the useful of “literariness” as an analytic, as

Wolfe does,¹²⁷ but by reconsidering Emerson's investment in a literariness indifferent to cultural/national/ideological/historical specificity and the "close-reading" model, one that disavows the cultural and intellectual associations naturally formed in the process of using someone else's literature/literary systems to think a new thought. Emerson suggests that there should be a mode of cross-cultural contact that promises the radical organization of society, but does not in the same gesture freight the transaction itself with a representational politics. Only by examining his intransitive transnationalism can we bring one camp of Emerson scholars (who write on his ecstasy, his proto-pragmatism, and his modernity) together with another group who struggle with the way his universalism looks situated in the expansionist politics of the mid-nineteenth century.

Emerson's ethics of the uses of literature comes to us by way of a touchstone counterintuition in his political transcendentalism: there exists an inverse relationship between the amount of time you linger on the thoughts of someone else and the amount of "difference" that encounter can make. Annoyed with the methodological thoroughness of "Hegel and the Hegelians," Emerson once penned in his journal: "I want not metaphysics, but only the literature of them."¹²⁸ This complaint does not indicate preference for one genre (literature) over another (metaphysics), but voices Emerson's theory that the literary manifestation of a thought cuts through a genealogy that weighs the idea down—an appealing mechanism for someone "who only want[s] to know at the shortest of the few steps, the two steps, or the one taken."¹²⁹ Here we are presented with the classic Emersonian paradox introduced in his 1838 "Address to the Divinity School": those who laboriously sift through the thoughts of others are those who take mental shortcuts, opt out of thinking; conversely, those who only keep a kind of running tab of ideas, as so many titles on a bookshelf, take the shortcuts that are necessary and generative. And as evidenced in this journal entry and in many of his essays, Emerson does not want "the literature of them" for excavation: one

just has to tune in and tune out to a universal stock of intellectual resources as it takes “very little time to entertain a hope and an insight which becomes the light of our life.”¹³⁰

Any kind of “literary” entity should only mediate our cognition *but briefly* as the mind soon hits overload and has to keep moving. The institution of ecstasy only works if we “do not think so much of the point we have left, or the point we would make, as of the liberty and glory of the way.”¹³¹ “Deep time” represents the opposite temporal scale with which that Emerson works: no time at all. The after effects of any model of enlargement should quickly disappear. The First and Second Series and much of earlier works prescribes and describes the short-livedness of the initial stage of any social, intellectual or human “thrill” before those “thrills” are nominalized, reified, formalized and codified into predictable pathways of behavior.¹³² Similarly for reading, brief attention spans form the precondition of, and not the obstacle to, powerful experiences of literature. One of “Emerson’s own provocations regarding the uses of literature,” argues T.S. McMillin, “takes the form of a schematic of reading that is and has to be “preposterous”: “[i]nstead of promoting a practice of reading that masters the subject, consumes the text, and tends toward the end of interpretation, an alternative, ‘natural’ reading would attempt a lively, responsible, continued consideration of the nature of a text in such a manner as to propagate that nature.”¹³³ In such a reading process a new discourse disrupts an ossified way of thinking in a process that is not driven by ideology but purely stimulated through a regained “immediacy to the (consequently extratextual) Real”¹³⁴—in the way that one might feel moved to act by the words on the page now, but not necessarily a day later. McMillin’s vision of Emerson’s uses of literature as fundamentally anti-hermeneutical and as serving intellectual purposes where social sensibility fails describes a sociology of literature in which systematic relay between literature and reality increases in proportion to the contrary and inspired ways in which texts are read.

Everywhere Emerson invokes the literature of other cultures to precipitate the drawing of a new circle that could not be conceived otherwise, and he takes on a transhistorical comparative approach in which the literature of world historical figures enjoys a radical proximity to the problem at-hand (e.g. Confucius can shed light on the mannerisms of American youth).¹³⁵ For Emerson, the redrawing of a new circle is neither a widening out nor a scaling up, neither a new social network nor a cross-cultural connection. The pedagogical function of citing “world literature” does not inhere in educating native audiences about world literature but, as I have described, in *disrupting stable pathways in the formation of one’s social consciousness*. An intertextual moment in his essay on “Woman” offers a good example of how Emerson makes social reform—and, by association, China—a matter of the way you read, as opposed to what you read. In “Woman,” a Lecture delivered at the Women’s Rights Convention in Boston, 1855, Emerson waxes that “the action of society is progressive. In barbarous society the position of women is always low—in the Eastern nations lower than in the West.”¹³⁶ To prove this Emerson makes the bizarre, though, for him, not unusual move of citing from *Chinese Classics*, and even that in parabolic form: “‘When a daughter is born,’ says the *Shiking*, the old Sacred Book of China, ‘she sleeps on the ground, she is clothed with a wrapper, she plays with a tile; she is incapable of evil or of good.’ And something like that position, in all low society, is the position of woman; because, as before remarked, she is herself its civilizer.”¹³⁷ The way he cites Chinese literature here constitutes a discernible breach in the rules of the use of other people’s literature for social purposes. If it does not strike Emerson as ironic to use a Chinese text to offer commentary about a social problem which seems to exist in China—a barbarous “Eastern nation”—it should certainly have occurred to us. In making this meta-move, Emerson makes it impossible to determine if the *Shiking* is being cited as an representative text (of the rhetoric behind the oppression of women) or, because the *Shiking* allegorizes the position of “daughters,” as an example of a nation’s literary consciousness about its own unequal structures. The introduction of

the literary into the social foils any attempt to make the kinds of one-to-one associations that John Guillory has critiqued in *Cultural Capital*—namely, the institutionalized agenda of making non-canonical texts represent their marginalized polities. The economy of the use of literature in Emerson’s essay “Woman” points to the ineffable logic of a text’s own world-making, and disabuses us of synecdoche as a way of understanding literary-cultural connections.

One could argue that Emerson falls into the trap described by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, where commensurability is extended to the East only to make it the site of thought-experiments, that he considers an Orient that has “no life apart from the ideological constructions foisted on it.”¹³⁸ Without exonerating Emerson from a certain amount of nineteenth-century Orientalizing zeitgeist we can still say that Said’s critique of cultural appropriation—in which others and otherness get co-opted as sources of renewal and self-affirmation—mis-describes Emerson’s approach, which moves from generative idea to generative without systematically incorporating them or letting any image of a culture fix in his mind. The network of literary texts which represents his “resources” abdicates the politics of representation as well as the sovereign claim to ideological ownership. We can trace this in his much neglected late speeches on the topic of books. At the same time he drifted in and out of policy-making as cultural functionary, Emerson revisited with renewed urgency his view of “Literary Ethics,” giving a series of lectures on books and literary ethics that both cultivated and promoted a method of politically-purposed reading/learning that shunned the kind of ideological commitment that might produce a predictable set of political responses (in the sense that one might read abolitionist tracts and act in accordance to their tenets thereafter). In “The American Scholar” (originally as a lecture called “Literary Ethics” and later reused for speeches like “Books”) he wrote that: “Books...are for nothing but to inspire. I better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system.”¹³⁹ His “Literary Ethics” called on people to undo the effects of their contact with other people’s thoughts, to

disassociate from the sources of one's creativity, lest we become "mortgaged to the opinions and usages of Europe, and Asia, and Egypt."¹⁴⁰ What looks like self-preservation—let's not follow the philosophies of Asia, Europe or Egypt too closely lest something happen to the way think—becomes, through the unraveling of the metaphor of "mortgage," a wholesale abandonment of intellectual property. "All men catch the word," he writes, "for it is verily their as much as his."¹⁴¹ Thinking has to be spontaneous, but it does not have to be original.

Shunning what he calls "compensatory" approaches to other-thinking, Emerson's instrumental use of world literature interrogates our most doxological commitments to cross-culturalism as intellectual property. Under a Capitalist model of knowledge aggregation and ownership, the thoughts in the past stay in the past and one roots through them to shore up the legitimacy of a claim in the present. Emerson's model of intellectual socialism attacks the notion that ideas are intellectual property. In his 1875 essay "Quotations and Originality" he once again attacks the notion that you "quote" from a person in time, and not from a transcendent, timeless unity. Great men think great thoughts because they pull correctly from the Universal Mind, and therefore their thoughts "quote" one another, retain formal resonances as a result of coming from the same originator. And yet, because great men pull from the Universal Mind, their thoughts no more belong to them, no more belong to any body of thinkers, than to anyone else. Confucian thought belongs as much to Emerson's immediate need as to Confucius himself, but Emerson does not then "own" or speak for Confucius just because he cited his works. In this example we can see a repudiation of the conflation of national social problems with the discursive uses of a nation's literature. "Past" and "Present" and vast geographical stretches (such as the fixed distances between Confucius and Montaigne and Zoroaster), and all the thoughts that were ever thought exist in what he calls "equipollence," or perfect geometrical relationship to one another on the same spatial-temporal plane. The universalization of intellectual resources does not form a sustained world consciousness,

as Dimock suggests, but a democratization of accessibility. People from different places in different times are nonetheless equidistant to the “Universal Mind”; a good mind pulls unabashedly from this fund and unabashedly tosses the idea back once it is used. The literary becomes the condition for a new information network that no longer holds cosmopolitanism to an artifactual standard, but reveals it to be inherently “reader-centric.” Remodeling thusly, Emerson demonstrates the folly of marking out signs of literary cosmopolitanism (such as intertextuality, global rhetoric, translation) when cosmopolitanism, like self-reliance, *inheres in method*, with intertextuality, global rhetoric, and translation and other “literary” markers serving as the points of delivery, not what is delivered.

For Emerson, there exists no correct attitude toward, nor correct appropriation of, China or Chinese literature in the long-run, no extended stay in the geopolitical folds of deep time, because there isn’t for any particular thing or any discourse in the long-run. In this essay I have argued that he engages Sino-American relations within the frame of foreign policy in order to make it a matter of reading ecstatically and, consequently, a case-by-case, moment-to-moment phenomenon. While reading ecstatically should translate into tangible reform politics, nothing should dictate how the processes of reading should be transubstantiated into the matter of social conduct. The “institution of ecstasy” also happens to be a universally applicable oxymoron. China, for its part, is a book that can be opened at any page, from which any idea can be taken and the spread of its “literary” never fully syncs with its historical or contemporary reality. Thus Emerson poses the biggest affront to the notion of literary sovereignty—a model under which we currently labor—his intellectual socialism suggests that nothing that we read or write (our “literary” extensions) belong to us. By extension, no literary production by the Chinese “belongs” to the Chinese, no Persian use of literature belongs to the Persians—and, on the upshot, nothing can “belong them,” either. Novel, if perhaps controversial, Emerson’s world literature functions as a communicative medium serving to facilitate

thinking and speaking only. Once used, it and the connections it has occasioned rightly vanish (except, of course, for the pesky problem of the ink still remaining on the page).

CHAPTER 3

Optimism's Medium

“To speak of optimism's relation to the timely likewise is to speak of optimism's strenuous and strange relation to time”—Michael Snediker, *Queer Optimism*

“每人一首詩，后面排著四個名字... 看見紙張白亮，圖書鮮紅，真覺可愛，就拿來貼在樓上壁間” —
吳敬梓，《儒林外史》

(Everyone had written a poem and four names were signed underneath... seeing the dazzling white paper and the brilliant red seals, [Kuang Chaoren] fancied them, and so pasted the scroll on the wall [for all to see.]”) —Wu Jingzi, *Lin Wai Shi (The Scholars)*

The Arrow and the Song

At the Chinese Embassy dinner in Boston, Anson Burlingame extolled a translation which “one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest scholar” of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs “made of our own Longfellow’s Psalm of Life.” The “first secular poem ever translated into the Chinese language,” the Chinese “Psalm of Life” was “placed... upon a fan [and] sent by hand to our great poet, that gift leading to a correspondence between these illustrious men”¹⁴² The “great poet” named by Burlingame was Dong Xun (aka Tung Ta-jen and Tungsien), China’s minister of foreign affairs at the time. Because of Dong Xun’s role in forging Sino-American relations, his gesture of

cultural commensuration was automatically given more weight. At the reception for the ratification of the Burlingame treaty, this fan-poem was cited as concrete evidence of successful literary-cultural transmission within a larger narrative of geopolitical convergence.

In light of the creation of the “Psalm of Life” fan, a poem that Longfellow wrote thirty years prior to the Boston Chinese embassy dinner can be seen as rather prophetic:

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.¹⁴³

“The Arrow and the Song” was composed in the early 1840s. “Long, long afterward” Longfellow found returned to him his song from beginning to end with an accompanying object that made possibly the longest of trajectories in the nineteenth century. Suddenly it was no longer “it fell to earth, I knew not where.” Dong Xun’s translation of “A Psalm of Life” would be entered into the books much later under the title, “人生颂” or “Ode to Life,” but, incidentally, the translator, Dong

Xun titled his poem “长友诗,” literally, “Long Fellow’s Poem.” The Chinese character for “long” denotes both height and duration. The pun in Longfellow’s own name would provide the happy coincidence of his poem coming back to him as both *his* poem and an old friend’s poem, as prophesized in “The Arrow and the Song.”

“The Arrow and the Song” is an *ars poetica* that, to use Mary Loeffelholz’s words, “establishes the idealized space of its production and reception: an autonomous and timeless space constituted by the perfect coincidence of production and reception.”¹⁴⁴ The poet releases an arrow into the world. It lodges in the symbolically-rich oak tree and endures. Later or simultaneously—we cannot know—he releases a song into that same, indeterminate world. Long afterward, he finds it repeated in a friend who seems simultaneously newfound and long-lost. This much seems self-evident: the poem offers up a ready-made model for kindred cross-culturalism in which the arrow and the song function as a composite metaphor for the marvelous durability of messages from the heart across time and space. But the poem has a glaring problem of economy that cannot be smoothed over by imagery or sentiment. Why do you need the arrow when you have already got the song? What additional information does the arrow provide about this leap-of-faith except to serve as an objective correlative for the song’s impossible preservation in another indeterminate place (“it fell to earth”) and another indeterminate time (“long, long afterward”)? One possibility is that the arrow literalizes the metempsychosis of the song by giving it a concrete, if not precise, trajectory: a literalization that occurs within a poem largely dependent on the principle of analogy. Staying literal-minded, we might say that perfect kindred relationships such as the one modeled in the song part of this poem require a leap-of-faith—that is abundantly clear—but the leap-of-faith requires for itself an analog object that does not have to be or do anything particularly extraordinary. Think about the arrow. The arrow that flies swiftly out of sight, hits an oak tree and remains “unbroke” seems miraculous, but no more so than the one that flies so slowly you can follow it with your eyes all the

way to where it hits an oak tree and cracks in half. The structural similarity between the arrow part of the poem and the song part of the poem coaxes us into believing that the logic of the arrow mirrors the logic of the song. This is not so. What happens in the transfer of the song defies explanation, even assuming an ideal physics. The arrow simply does what a well-made, if lucky, arrow would. If Longfellow's brand of universalism happens at an epiphenomenal level it also demands an awesome, but technically replicable material phenomenon for its comprehension and appreciation.

"The Arrow and the Song" supplies a parable for Dong Xun's translation of "A Psalm of Life," which was not really a translation per se but a mediation event. Its life as an object fueled the optimism over its cross-cultural significance because it gave incontrovertible proof that ideas were relocated. Optimisms for cross-cultural transmission can use signs of relocation—an object or a poem showing up in another place—as proof of transmission, despite the actual details not quite turning up the same logic. The behavior of objects bears no real relation to the narrative of kindred cross-culturalism that the objects would seem to reinforce. "The Arrow and the Song" and the way it invites misreading show us how easily the good *feelings* of cross-culturalism snow over these little details.

If Dong Xun's fan-poem survived into the modern archive, it was only on account of its never-fully-realized potential—what it suggested might happen, not what it caused to happen. In the mid 1860s, Dong traveled to America with the Chinese embassy and the American legation to negotiate the second Sino-American Treaty (the Burlingame Treaty) though he did not, as far as we know, meet Longfellow. Nor did the fan "lea[d] to a correspondence between these illustrious men," as Burlingame asserted. In the way Dong Xun translated "A Psalm of Life," by matching aphorism for aphorism, not much translation actually occurred. Moreover, Americans already knew of the existence of a "whisper down the lane" effect: "A Psalm of Life" was first rendered into Chinese by

Thomas Francis Wade, and then, from his version, into classical Chinese by Dong Xun. And as early as 1865 people would have had reason to doubt the faithfulness of the translation, as the Chinese was re-translated into English by one of Burlingame's staff members and given back to him. Commenting on the discrepancy between the original and the translation, one of Longfellow's contemporaries wrote, the "misconceptions of meaning and confounding of words... often provoke[ed] a smile, even causing one to hazard the suspicion that one or two more translation would place the Cambridge poet, as a transcendentalist, side by side with the sage of Concord,"¹⁴⁵ referring to Emerson. The comparison of the final product to Emerson's poetry by Burlingame's aide was intended to emphasize the severity of the mistranslation, but this remark also sneaks in the suggestion that it takes only a few steps to confuse one set of inspirational and uplifting rhetoric with another. Longfellow's verses and transcendentalist verses, although qualitatively and philosophically distinguishable to a local crowd, would become fodder for loose translation. And yet despite what should strike us as much uncertainty over how much literature was actually transmitted, the fan's celebrations continued. Because it can only shakily reflect that continuity of representational dynamics between passing exchange and ideal exchange, the fan-poem is a medium of optimism.

Optimism is a banal, but prevalent, affect associated with transcultural media (materials bearing writing); it is at once uncommitted to transculturalism's narrative and yet totally absorbed by it. Media-based optimisms are banal because they subscribe to a circular reasoning with which we are entirely familiar: the celebration of the artifacts (material residues) of exchange as exemplars of exchange at occasions like state officials' dinner parties and ambassadorial conventions. Insofar as this kind of rhetoric indulges in low-threshold optimism—cross-national relations are continually improving as evidenced by the mere gesture of naming its happening—it abbreviates a complex politics of paper media and legitimation in transnational domestic utopianisms into single literary

items. The last two chapters depicted transnationalisms that evolved the uses of literature (and its application elsewhere) into meta-problems only resolved by new forms of political imagining. The uses of literature between China and America in the nineteenth century took the form of the rhetorical conversion of the occasional into the momentous, and the momentous into occasions for counterfactual or utopian propositions—or least occasions that allowed such propositions to be articulated with the least amount of logical distension. Because this type of transnationalism accommodates disproportionate relationships and discontinuities between the amount of foreign provocation to thought, the thought experiments themselves, and their real-life application and duration, the gift of being able to think otherwise afforded by ad hoc transnationalism often ultimately assumes the form of a shrug: an elided sleep or trivial after-dinner remarks.

Not only because this type of transnationalism happens to be rhetorical but because it is tied up with the uses of literature, it allows for the minimal adjustment of political life towards otherness. Theorists of affect and political economy have recently begun to define the politics of minimal adjustment in transnational literary utopianisms, transactions that, when it comes down to the details, cannot quite bear the imposition of cross-cultural significance or really carry out cross-culturalism's operatives, but which nonetheless seem to do so anyway. Anahid Nersessian offers as an example the transnational realist-romance, which “traffics in an aspirational orientation towards progress as a way of maintaining an impoverished but no less trenchant fidelity towards the desire for utopia or, more simply, for better worlds and better ways of living in them.”¹⁴⁶ In these traffickings, the drama of “minimal adjustment” might refer to the use of communication as a citation of “shared feelings” rather than shared practices; transnational romances “circulate impressions of ideology rather than its pragmatic claims” (339). The transferability of liberal practices and volitions both inter- and intra-national sows the optimism of not having to go too much out of one's way, a substitution of affects and affective genres that enact political utopia for

the gritty implementation of trans-utopianisms on-the-ground. Literary forms adapt to transnationalism whose geopolitical distances they cross as easily as they fictionalize; thus the liberal drama of low-balance utopianism in which feelings are substituted for practices happens in step with the evolution of literary genres. My study does not center on transnational literary forms but on transnational attitudes towards the socio-political function of literature for its indexical quality; however, as a tweaked drama of relationality, transnational utopianisms in fiction solicit the same kind of otherwise-thinking at a local level that I have been studying in nineteenth-century Sino-American exchanges, as well as the disproportion between the ease with which such thought experiments can proliferate and the cross-cultural, cross-national weight they end up bearing. The developing argument in my dissertation—that nineteenth century Sino-American literary exchange is a form of minimal adjustment in an inward-turning utopianism rather than maximalist accommodation in an outward-turning internationalism—is, in this chapter, examined through the cognate of literary transnationalism: transnational media. Instead of building my argument around transnational literary forms (such as the romance or realist novel) I will take as my materials the literal forms of transnationalism and their solidly poetic groundings in nineteenth century Sino-American relations and explore the role of translation-objects in the minimalism of that adjustment.

A story about the ideological lightness of translated things, this chapter offers in tandem a brief history of the shift in the nature of literary-objects both in Qing China and nineteenth-century America, increasingly codified after Sino-American relations got underway. Brought together, the poem “A Psalm of Life” and Dong Xun’s Chinese version of it become a transnational object—transnational because it is translated and transferred (from America to England to China and back), a wedding of universal literature and specific cultural art form singularly suited for bilateral relations. But apart, each piece of literature courts an object-oriented ontology and optimism for the behaviors of media (things that make a difference, per Bruno Latour’s definition) that makes no internal claims

on bilateral relations or its time progressions, uses neither its markers nor its archival methods. The fan-poem quietly provokes an examination of the role of material attestation in literary transmissions between China and America in the nineteenth century, and how materiality produces a willing suspension of disbelief when we can never be sure what commensuration actually involves, or how deep it goes. We have to restore to literary transmission between China and America in the nineteenth century its fundamental interest in materiality, and consider the importance of the act of mediation—or putting text on objects—in cultures of poetry in China and America in the nineteenth century, and those poetics' transnational forms.

So, on one hand, this chapter tells a story about the tautological romance of translation, its unshakeable oversignification; on the other, it looks at how the things on which we put our translations unintentionally disrupt the tautologies of translation as a sign of a shared world. The hegemonies of ideological investments in translation on the world literary scale, which has been well covered in the scholarship, do not, I argue, ever occur in isolation of equal investments in the properties of media in that same scale. Scholarly discussions of what people thought translation can reflect/stimulate/bear have yet to consider their accompanying fantasies of media and paper media in particular. These fantasies project media doing what we expect them to do such as proliferating and thereby disseminating information, getting into people's hands, getting exchanged and valued and shown to others, and so forth, but also something magical, something beyond (and indifferent to) the logics of the texts that sit on them. The book-historical component of this chapter, which recovers outmoded genres of writing and recording in both China and the US in the nineteenth century, will provide a materialist etiology of the decline of *ex situ* forms of cross-cultural writing and translation, literary-objects that unravel its logics irrespective of its broader historical context or, more accurately, irrespective of context tout court. For Longfellow, these *ex situ* forms are manifested in the social practices embedded in the world of his poetry as well as his own poetic

activities that predicate surface reading as a lived art. For Dong Xun, these forms are built into the late-Qing practice of poetic bricolage as well as the everyday objects that bear poetic inscriptions, both prescribing their own heuristics of reform (i.e. change over time and the time sequencing of change). Both sets of poetic practices—whose meeting in an object we should not regard as coincidental—court political minimalism by expending only the low-threshold energies of borrowed optimism for utopian possibilities. Both sets of poetic practices also help us historically situate Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus’ concept of “surface reading” by exemplifying nineteenth century literature that prioritized linguistic and material surfaces, swapping literary sentiment for planes of encounter. In literary exchange that happens “at the surface,” a self-sufficiency of surfaceness to political timeliness helps us reunderstand the dominant ethos of literary exchange then as now—optimism for reform—and its tacit ambivalence towards progressive, historical time.

The Burden of Proof

As a piece of materialized translation, the Chinese “Psalm of Life” gave irrefutable proof to the commensurability of the Chinese and English languages, a sticking point for mid-century abolitionists such as Anson Burlingame, Charles Sumner and Richard Dana. Successful cultural transmission between China and America was increasingly taken up as a sign that US-Sino relations could repair a nation divided, and transpacific designers had to demonstrate to a local audience that Chinese was not entirely inscrutable, or entirely impervious to literary cross-influencing. The fan-poem testified to the assimilability of the Chinese people, which was in part premised on the assimilability of English into Chinese. Hence, Longfellow’s friend Robert Ferguson, after visiting Longfellow in this study in 1865, gave this description of Dong Xun’s fan as part of a portrait of the-translator-at-home: “The table is strewn with books and presentation copies in various languages, –ay , even in Chinese. But the ways of the Chinese are not as our ways; and this presentation copy was in the shape of a fan, on which a poet of the Flowery Land had written a

translation of the Psalm of Life.”¹⁴⁷ For Ferguson, the fan fills out Longfellow’s identity as a translator because it offers something tangible to translation’s cross-cultural imperatives. This explains why he calls the fan a “presentation book,” even though it is clearly not one at all, a “presentation book” being a recognizable print cultural and cross-cultural form in which one literature asks to be read and legitimated by another.

Dong Xun’s translation (see full version in the appendix) catches a paradigm shift in the history of translation in China. In the late 1860s, the Qing dynasty was poised at the brink of collapse, a delegitimization process sped along by the Western texts that would soon flood the country’s political discourse. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Zongli Yamen 总理衙门) over which Dong Xun presided and which in function replaced the Ministry of Rite (Li Bu 礼) and Court of Colonial Affairs (Li Fanyuan 理藩院) was comprised of scholar-bureaucrats expressly appointed by Prince Gong (Aisin Gioro Yixin 恭亲王) to cope with foreign intrusion and to urge a revival of Chinese literature amidst political interventionism. Like some prominent thinkers in his generation, such as the historian, linguist and etymologist Zhang Taiyan, Dong Xun believed that foreign literature could spark a culture of reading that would revisit ever more obscure Chinese texts, but not as dead and rote, but alive and immediate to political life. At the same time, however, Dong Xun was already negotiating the role of foreign texts in ways that would help foreclose this ideal political resurgence of Chinese literature. Aided by Thomas Francis Wade, the same person who provided him with a working translation of “A Psalm of Life”, Dong Xun oversaw W.A.P. Martin’s translation of Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* into Chinese, a text that, according to current postcolonial theorists of nineteenth century globalization, catalyzed China’s self-bargaining for entry into the world of nations by introducing the terminology by which it could assess its own belatedness. In the “promot[ion] of [its] publication,” Dong Xun had “taken a leading part” and it

was later recorded that “when the three mandarins sat for their photographs, Tung [Dong Xun] held in his hand a volume of the Chinese Wheaton, apparently ambitious of having his name associated with the work.”¹⁴⁸ During his ambassadorship to America, Dong Xun helped draft documents that, though unprecedentedly granted China political sovereignty, stipulated the opening of Chinese print culture to American texts, so that a process of calibration, adjustment and didactic instruction might begin. Aided by an act of Congress in 1867,¹⁴⁹ pressure came from the Smithsonian Institute for China to develop an apparatus for the publication of American books, chiefly the official documents published by the United States government. Prince Gong did eventually send in 130 cases 10 works of classics along with seed packets for native flowers, fruits and grains—housed in the *Orientalia* Collection of the Library of Congress—but deflected on requests for further interpenetration.¹⁵⁰ In the face of lukewarm response from China, Samuel Wells Williams, the *chargé d’affaires* of the American Legation in China, was charged with floating the idea of exchanging with Zongli Yamen’s most capable translator, “Dong Sun” (Dong Xun), the “presentation books” that we remember from Ferguson’s memories of Longfellow. Large scale translation, especially of missionary materials, would, it was believed, conduct the homogenizing politics which treaties only partially achieved. Robert Hart and W.A.P. Martin were “staunch all[ies] in the struggle to introduce Western law and learning to China,” the former getting the “Tsunqli Yamen [Zongli Yamen] to approve 500 taels from its tonnage dues for the publication of Martin’s translation of Wheaton—which was then widely distributed throughout China, though apparently seldomly used by C’hing officials.”¹⁵¹ In thirty years’ time, however, the translation of foreign texts would become a full-fledged national undertaking, with important structural hinges in policy-making and reform politics. What was more or less purely gestural, as symbolized by the fan-poem, would soon become enforced/procedural. A concomitant assumption was that the fan-poem’s opening of communicative channels would be as swift as it would be inevitable.

The fan itself embodied the felicitous conditions of a future exchange. Yet, that future exchange never occurred unless exchange is taken in its most basic sense of materials changing hands in a shared and shareable world. Celebratory acknowledgments of the fan from the nineteenth century up to the present day therefore either had to keep repeating what the fan ought to represent or had to limit themselves entirely to the fan's media form, which bears no direct relationship to those superimposed felicitous conditions. In 1993, Peking University law professor He Weifang 贺卫方 made a trip to Longfellow's archives at Harvard University to track down the fan, see it in person and solve "the mystery of the fan-poem (*shishan zhi mi* 诗扇之谜)," an exciting term which amounted to nothing more than sifting through the usual annoyances of the archive, such as misattributed dates of its production and sightings in the US, Ferguson's visit to Longfellow's home, the Chinese character Dong name transcribed as "Jung," etc. As for the fan itself, He only had this to report:

扇骨上有极精致的雕刻，其中一支靠近骨脚处已经折断。扇面为黄底纸饰以冷金。

〈人生颂〉诗文不著标题，楷体书录。上款处盖一闲章，印文难以辨认。下款所署时间为‘同治乙丑仲春之月’，署名‘扬州董恂’。名下有印章二，白文印‘董

’，朱文印为‘恂’...扇面上的书法法度精严，极具功力，那样如同雕版刻印似的楷书实在不多见。《〈人生颂〉诗扇亲见记》

There are extremely delicate carvings on the frame; one of backbones, near the rivet, is already snapped. The surface of the fan is a yellow paper, the color close to a cold gold. "A Psalm of Life" comes without the title and is transcribed in the "kai" font. At the start of the colophon there is imprinted a barely legible seal [from a casual, not

official, chop]. The colophon is dated “the year of Tong Zhi Yi Chou, at the start of spring” and is signed by “Dong Xun from Yangzhou.” Underneath the name there are two more seals: the one with the character debossed is “Dong”; the one with the character embossed is “Xun”... The calligraphy on the fan itself is meticulously rendered, and would require a lot of energy (and discipline). Characters written in the “kai” font that look no different than woodblock stamps are really not seen very often anymore.¹⁵²

He’s heightened attention to the fan’s media characteristics—paper, materials, calligraphic form—reveals how little could be said about the deep registration of cultural content. Praising the execution of the ink on paper, He ends up echoing Robert Ferguson’s conjecture that “if only the translation were only as good as the writing, assuredly the work was well done.”¹⁵³ But because He was actually able to assess the translation itself, he turns Ferguson’s conjecture into a back-handed compliment. Even the most authoritative discussion of the fan-poem by twentieth-century Chinese critic Qian Zhongshu would largely address the failures of deep transmission. Yet even in that case, as we will see, the failure of deep transmission could not dampen that writer’s optimism for the ideal exchange he felt was lodged in the fan itself.

With Dong Xun’s poem-fan, as in “the Arrow and the Song,” the promise of an idealized commensuration—that a stranger in a strange land can somehow reproduce the same sentiments because they were already there all along—is suspended in the corollary object. The fact of the fan’s physical movement over great distances, all the way from the “Flowery Land,” steps in as proof of cross-cultural communication even in light of the open secret that, here, cross-cultural communication didn’t involve assimilation at all, but only a form of aesthetic reciprocity.

On the fan itself, Dong Xun had neatly divided into the 30 ribs (slips) 36 heptameters (lines of seven characters each, divided into rhyming quatrains) for a total of 252 characters, his colophon, and two seals. In order to obtain an “exact fit” and produce the alternating pattern of long, 12-character line/short, 8-character line seen in Figure 1, Dong Xun had to break up the lineation of his own translation. For example, the first quatrain of seven-character lines 莫将烦恼著诗篇/ 百岁原如一觉眠/ 梦短梦长同是梦/独留真气满坤乾 is divided into: [莫将烦恼著诗篇百岁原如一], [觉眠梦短梦长同是], [梦独留真气满坤乾天地生材]—visually disrupting syntax, rhyme, and metrics. What we have now is an achievement of “zhang fa,” the calligraphic art of anticipating how to evenly and tastefully fill the space of the blank medium at hand. His organization of long/short/long/short reflected the simple need to have the eight-character portion of the colophon that gives the date (The fourth year of Tongzhi, the second month of the lunar calendar 同治乙丑仲春之月) neatly sitting at the end (next to last line on the far left), looking as if it belonged to the rest of the poem. (See Figure 1.)

I defer discussion of the substance of the translation and begin with what I will call its architectonics to emphasize the degree to which this translation was weighted toward the medium that had been selected for it. The medium which dictates the selection and compression of texts includes not only the paper fan but the Chinese characters themselves in the font of Dong Xun chose (*xiao kai* 小楷), each character taking up a certain amount of space and their placement delimiting the negative space. He Weifang would also approach the translation, as Dong Xun did, as a marvelous resolution to the mathematical problem of print-spacing, addressing the text of the poem-fan using a term specific to text-to-space ratio (*pian fu* 篇幅), and praising the characters in the *pian fu* as like those from woodblock printing (*diaoban keyin* 雕版刻印). Virtuosity in handling of the medium is at least as important as poetic content, which, incidentally, He side-steps entirely, in the

same way that the arrow and the song in Longfellow's poem move along parallel logical tracks, heightening each other's effects without making each other any more intelligible. But, against his own inclinations, He insists on yoking the object to the exchange of sentiment in meaningful ways, just as the reader of "The Arrow and the Song" is wont to do. He ends up troping the fan as a "matchmaker" (*shan wei mei* 扇为媒), implicitly one between China and America. While He undoubtedly came up with the phrase to project onto the whole episode the conceit of marriage (of cultures and ideas) the unintended double entendre in "shan wei mei" makes his coinage rather revealing in the vein we have been exploring. The character "*mei* 媒," which means intermediary, denotes both the person who facilitates an arranged marriage *and* the material conduit for information transfer; in today's parlance media is called *mei ti* 媒体, a lexical decision that honors the preexisting meaning of *mei* as connector and the acoustical logic of foreign loan words (*mei ti* sounds like *media*). The poem-fan is a "*mei*" but it is not a matchmaker. It is (just) the medium.

Dong Xun's creation masks its hybridity by leaving out Longfellow's name, allying itself instead with the Chinese tradition of writing verses on media that straddle the quotidian and the sublime—a fan, a slab of stone, a hand scroll, a hanging scroll, a plaque (or *pai bian*), the columns of a pavilion—media that record, in their thingness, the fact that inspiration had occurred at some point. As such, its motivation is not particularly different from the act of "putting it up for all to see" as in the poetic competition in *The Scholars* quoted at the beginning of this chapter, both the conversion of spontaneous talent into material display. Although things like subtlety of expression, creative analogical thinking and vividness of imagery were all encouraged and held as standards of poetic practice, much of this poetic practice involved people producing mediocre poetry for social occasions, invoking well-known sentiments or widely applicable aphorisms on objects that augment and decorate social relationships. Writing on aestheticized objects marked the ephemeral moment in which one was inspired to write down something down, and self-reflexively, what was being

commemorated was often the act of commemoration itself. While this poetics will seem gnomic to us, it must be restored to its cultural context. Political action was not something that came at the end when the content of poetry had been emptied out into discourse, but something that happened in the moment of mediation, the act of writing something ideal down so as to make it real. This kind of poetics does not view literature as suprastructural to human-object relationships, but manifested in them, undertaken always with certain subject-object encounters in mind, encounters that can take place at any time, any place.

In its readiness to live as an object, Dong Xun's translation helps restore to us a sense within Chinese language itself of translation as mediation and remediation. A translation, any translation, has to find a home in the available media. The translation of a foreign poem makes many technical demands and I mean "technical" not in the philological sense, though theorists of translation have overwhelmingly focused on lingual technical difficulties. After all, the translation of a single poem cannot very well just float around on a single sheet of paper. It has to be put into an anthology (Qian Zhongshu did exactly this in 1979 when collected excerpts of foreign poems was a popular genre), or copied in a journal, printed on a poster, inscribed on the pillars of a pavilion, or hung up as a piece of calligraphic composition in a scholar's studio. The "find" itself requires instant mediation—this is true of any poem but even more so for the foreign poem that arrives prior to the print cultural phenomenon of digests and anthologies of foreign literature. The latent poetic content, which comprises a large part of the desirability of a poem, is something that cannot exist outside of a network of objects that have not yet "caught up" to the novelty of the poem itself. Having no "new" place to put his translation of "A Psalm of Life," Dong Xian wrote it out on a fan and thus reintroduced the poem into the practice of everyday politics in China in which political poems (either pro or anti-statist) get "used" daily in their lives on objects.

In modern Chinese, the word or “*ci*” for translation is “*fan yi*.” Nowadays, the two characters are often used interchangeably to denote translation; but these two characters have very different logics for dealing with a foreign language. The etymology of the second character, “*Yi*,” is the one that anticipates the modern concept of *translatio imperii*. As recorded in the *Book of Rites*, a compilation of writings on rituals in the Zhou Dynasty collected during Warring States and Han Period, “*Yi*” was the language from the North to which the languages from the South, West and East would be configured:

東方曰寄，南方曰象，西方曰狄鞮，北方曰譯。” 贾公彦疏：“譯即易，謂換易言語使相解也。《周礼·秋官·序官》

[In the east they speak Ji, in the South, Xiang; in the West, Di Di; the North, Yi... Yi is the easiest; thus, the easiest should be used for the mutual decoding of the rest”] --
Book of Rites, 2nd century BC

The language *yi* enjoyed such hegemony that it eventually became naturalized as the word for translation itself. “*Yi*” then offers one of the earliest versions of the idea that one language would have to serve as the official template through which sense can be made of the others. “*Fan*,” on the other hand, literally meaning a turn or flip. It connotes materialization, instant remediation. Historically, “*fan*” served as the verb of transference between text/verse and their mimeses in physical reality:

1.) 舞學平陽態，歌翻《子夜》聲。” 唐·孟浩然《美人分香》□

Dance like the Pingyang Princess, who translated “*Zi Ye*” into song” – Meng Haoran, “The Perfume of Beauties,” Tang Dynasty

2.) 旋翻新譜聲初起，除却梨園未教人。” 唐·王建《霓裳》□

A sudden new adaptation/performative effect has appeared for this music; who but the opera clan could have rendered it? – Wang Jian, “Poem of Raiments,” Tang Dynasty

3.) 紅粉佳人翻麗唱，驚起鴛鴦，兩兩飛相向。”宋·欧阳修《蝶恋花》

(The falling of the petals is like) beauties who rollingly repeat their song; and the mandarin ducks fly up in pairs” – Ouyang Xiu, “Butterflies Over Flowers,” Song Dynasty

In these examples from Tang and Song dynasty poetry, we can see some of “*fan*”’s other connotations, such adapting text into musical performance, or reanimating lyrics, giving them movement. In denotations which are still used today, “*fan*” in these examples suggests handling text in physical ways: like flipping through a book (*fan shu* 翻书) or rummaging (*fan dongxi* 翻东西) or turning over (*fan guo lai* 翻过来.) “*Fan*” conveys to translation the act of going through texts as things, reorganizing them or switching them from one material to another. “*Fan*” can transpire in the absence of linguistic commensuration; “*fan*” occurs simply with a fresh configuration of texts and materials.

The “*fan*” part of “*fan yi*” has moved into a subordinate position in the collective consciousness of that term. Translation, like the poetic lyric, has become its own genre of writing, denatured and dematerialized in present-day scholarship, cut out from its original context. Once we identify something as a “translation,” it can never be anything else, and yet, translation, at least in the nineteenth-century Sino-American context, took a very porous form, often treating literature as things, and things as literature. If our definition of translation becomes limited to the domain of interlinguistic transfers, in the context of nineteenth century China-West relations translation will be site in which homogenizing global politics takes hold. Because translation is premised on

hypothetical equivalences, not only do the selected things have to precede the ideas presented in the host language but the translation itself becomes an assemblage of artifacts (the words in the guest language instantly made into artifacts of the alterity introduced by the host language.) Hence the commonplace that translation is inherently reifying. Within this critical frame, the outstanding interpretive approach to the fan then has to see it as a metonym of traumatic nineteenth century Sino-Anglo-American encounters sublated as the innocuous exchange of belletristic texts. The field under China-Studies that examines China's so-called "translational modernity" has focused on the ways that ideas, genres, forms, theories and historical templates slip in through the door of interlinguistic transmissions, which has to assume that languages are commensurable with one language always containing the larger set of concepts against which the other must be measured. China's bargain for national sovereignty would be waged across the nuances involved in calibrating Chinese to accommodate the immanence of the other, the practice of finding equivalences in the Chinese language for the axiomatic English ones turning into unwitting acts of self-betrayal. Lydia Liu refers to this as "the radical historicity of constructed—often contingent—linguistic equivalences"¹⁵⁴ compelled by acts of translation.. Attempting to effect change through translation also implied consent to a positivist temporality; that is, translation transmitted and legitimated the idea of different historical tracks converging into what was for Western powers an ideologically and politically expedient one. Texts such as Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* were the sites of such consents: gifts that are not gifts, these materials contained invitations that were at once compulsions to clock into the global timetable, materials that intervened in China's sense of historical progress by making it ashamed of its own lack of participation in history's unfolding.¹⁵⁵ Within this critical paradigm, which views interlinguistic/interliterary transfers as the sites of the traumatic politics of colonialism, where might we situate the translation whose main goal was to celebrate, with itself as physical evidence, the fact

that an act of translation had taken place? In other words, how do we account for translation that falls under a subset of public relations' acknowledged forms, a gesture of friendship, a token of reciprocity more than textual reciprocity itself?

The Adequacy of Tokens

In a gesture of what we might call transcultural middle-browism, Longfellow held a celebration of his own verses in the October of 1865—by now returned as a gift to him in material form. Guests at the dinner “in honor of the Chinese Fan sent me by a mandarin, with the ‘Psalm of Life’ written upon it” included Mr. and Mrs. Anson Burlingame, Richard Dana, John G. Palfrey, and Charles Sumner, “—all original Freesoilers.”¹⁵⁶ A non-sequitur, the fan-poem somehow became an erstwhile mascot for the abolition crowd. For however Sino-American gift exchange gladdened domestic reform efforts, the pleasure Longfellow took in it would be better described as the one of watching one's own ideas circulate back to oneself in material form (like the arrow) than, say, Orientalist fixations, though these have permeable differences. Whatever the celebration may have hinged on, Longfellow must have enjoyed from the fan something for which we literary scholars have no name, or at most a very embarrassing one: the simple satisfaction of seeing one's creations realized and materialized in the world at large.

When the twentieth century Chinese writer and literary critic Qian Zhongshu later commented on the fan-poem he took issue with the source text, remonstrating that: “what is temporary and mortal in a nation's literature is more likely to be among the nation's first exports together with its riff-raff,”¹⁵⁷ Taking a line of attack that was frequently used on Longfellow, Qian basically argues that the literary materials that populate cultural exchange tend to be mediocre goods which are exported and that churn out more mediocre products with non-durable, riff-raffish afterlives. That makes him only the second most unkind person to Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe

being the forerunner, of course, who once said this of his contemporary in the infamous “Little Longfellow War”:

There is, perhaps, no other country than our own, under the sun, in which it would have been possible for him to have attained his present eminence; and no other, certainly, in which, having attained it by accident or chicanery, he would not have been hurled from it in a very brief period.¹⁵⁸

Poe’s put down turns out to be ironically true in the case of the “A Psalm of Life” fan which stayed in China for half a year at the very most before it was gifted back to Longfellow. We can perhaps reclaim some critical potential from Qian and Poe’s disparaging comments and take seriously the idea that some kinds of literature already prep themselves for a life as things, that only asks to be circulated (or, to use Poe’s words, “hurled back”) and in thinghood fulfills its cross-national destiny. Qian is right in one aspect: Longfellow’s poems have enjoyed a lot of traveling, and often as things. But the thing-culture anticipated by his poetics cannot be wholly explained by mass consumer culture. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw such Longfellow paraphernalia as board games, dolls, placards, cross-stitch sampler kits, stationary, etc. To sift through these literary objects is to witness the evolution of a culture of poetry for the masses to mass consumer culture. In his own time, however, Longfellow’s poetry enjoyed a wide and fervent following not on account of the commoditization of literature, but on account of his modeling another form of human-object relations. Longfellow’s poetics and the persona he cultivated tied global human sympatico to the mediums to which any reader would have at hand.

There is no better place to see Longfellow’s belief in the accessibility of imagination through household goods than in his collection of China-themed poems in *Poems of Places*, especially in his own contribution, “King-te-tching: China Ware.” An exercise in envisioning a transnational poetic commons, “King-te-tching” belongs to a larger exercise of building a repository for the

literary artifacts of friends with China connections. In the China section of *Poems of Places* we are presented with the Irving phenomenon of Chapter 1, wherein quasi-Orientalist, quasi-empirical writings on China solidified political confraternity and its claim to geo-poetic space. However, unlike Washington Irving's China network in which American literati were thrown into the conditions of production and circulation necessitated by late eighteenth-century US-China trade, Longfellow's China network comprised of those who wrote poems about China as a byproduct of increasing diplomatic activities between the two nations. This second-generation China coterie was comprised of travel writers, poets and translators important to America's folklorist movement in the second half of the nineteenth century and its self-defining mythopoesis, further showing the constellation of interests that turned mid-century American sinology into the hypotext of diplomatic intertextuality. The collaboration for the China portion of *Poems of Places* could be said to have began the publication in 1847 of an early book of didactic poetry, *The Lesson of Life*, by Philadelphian playwright George Henry Boker. The reception of that volume, remarkably similar to Longfellow's early sonnet collections, led to his friendships with Bayard Taylor and Richard Henry Stoddard, the latter of whom together with Charles Godfrey Leland (Boker's childhood friend) contributed the majority of the China poems that Longfellow edited into his anthology. Richard Henry Stoddard was inspired by Bayard Taylor's *Poems of the Orient* (1854) and William Alger's *Poetry of the East* (1856), and perhaps Charles Godfrey Leland's *Pidgin English Sing-Song* (1876). Stoddard's own 1871 *The Book of the East* would include the poems "Guest of the State" and "Chinese Songs" that were selected for Longfellow's volume ("When I send you the volume of Poems of Places containing China," Longfellow later wrote to Stoddard, "I hope you will not think I have taken too many of your 'Chinese Songs'" ¹⁵⁹

For Longfellow, the unstated end of collecting "Chinese songs" from his friends and contemporaries was the opening of the world through everyday miscellanies, an everyman's

overcoming of scale. The totalizing format of *Poems of Places* levels the multiplicity of its references with the materials of which everyday life is composed. Precisely in Longfellow's own contribution to the volume, "King-te-tching," a poem about porcelain, we see this logic at work. Excerpted from the longer poem on ceramics across cultures, "Kéramos," "King-te-tching" is the Romanization of Jing Dezhèn 景德镇, a city in Southeast China and also its most famous porcelain production center whose delicate wares had enjoyed notoriety in the western world since the 18th century.¹⁶⁰ Despite its title, however, "King-te-tching" becomes increasingly more inclusive so that the porcelain that "filled us with wonder and delight, or haunted us in dreams at night" comes to include

[No] less the coarser household wares,
The willow pattern, that we knew
In childhood, with its bridge of blue
Leading to unknown thoroughfares.¹⁶¹

"King-te-tching," like its longer version "Kéramos," is most fascinated by the possibility of tapping an unbridled imagination via the things we would encounter in our daily lives, especially as children. That possibility produces the aesthetic charge that lets the poem move, through enjambment, from "coarser household wares" to "unknown thoroughfares." The poem in effect uses the concept of "King-te-tching porcelain" to point to the adequacy of ordinary, non-King-te-Tching goods for eliciting the frenzied imaginative wanderings and that give spiritual renewal. In another poem called "To a Child," the "willow patterns that we knew/ In childhood" is given further detail and primal significance. A baby gazes upon the painted tiles in his room and sees, "leaning idly o'er his gate,/ Beneath the imperial fan of state/ The Chinese mandarin." In that poem, the exotic tiles provide a low threshold for the baby's sudden gaining of a sense of scale. After his contemplation of the tiles, the baby begins to feel closed in by the immediate world of his nursery and he yearns for escape. It

isn't that the Chinoiserie tiles are worldly, but that they offer worldliness on a commonplace object. This makes them particularly effective as instruments orienting a child's mind toward the universal.

The perfect compatibility between the universal and the quotidian can be seen the opening poem to Longfellow's wildly popular 1865 collection *Household Poems*, called "Dedication":

If any thought of mind, or sung or told,
Has ever given delight or consolation,
Ye have repaid me back a thousand fold,
By every friendly sign and salutation.

Thanks for the sympathies that ye have shown!
Thanks for each kindly word, each silent token,
That teaches me, when seeming most alone,
Friends are around us, though no word be spoke.

Kind messages, that pass from land to land;
Kind letters, that betray the heart's deep history,
In which we feel the pressure of a hand,—
One touch of fire,—and all the rest is mystery!

The pleasant books, that silently among
Our household treasures take familiar places,
And are to us as if a living tongue
Spoke from the printed leaves or pictured faces!"¹⁶²

Written as a form of address that catalogs the wonderful transactions between poet and his readers, “Dedication” is curiously emptied of universalisms about friendship and understanding and also feels like it is about nothing but friendship and understanding. These themes do not have to make an appearance, but only ask to be confirmed and reconfirmed and reconfirmed again in ordinary tokens of receipt and expressions of enjoyment and the objects on which such expressions must live. Unlike a poem by Walt Whitman, which D.H. Lawrence called “a pipe open at both ends, so everything runs through,”¹⁶³ “Dedication” does not collect voices or dramatize metempsychosis (150). Instead, the connectedness of human beings is implicit in the ordinary interactions between the poet and his readers that are listed here. Such a poetics encouraged the belief that themes of the heart one has just read about reside in the material practices one wouldn’t have to go much out of one’s way to perform—pulling a treasured book from the shelf, writing one’s favorite poet a letter, stitching a sampler, requesting an autograph, sending a memento. The remediating practices of a populist reading culture can amply substitute actual human contact; thus “friends are around us, though no word be spoke.”

In what does Longfellow’s transnationalism obtain? Under an empirical model, we can say that Longfellow was a transnational poet because he was one of the most translated and most actively translating poets before World War II. Gruesz calls him “an avid consumer and (re)producer of the Hispanic cultural tradition.”¹⁶⁴ He translated literature in many languages and compiled poems about foreign locales in the twenty-five volume *Poems of Places*, had over 24 languages represented in his library, and published textbooks on foreign language education. I want to suggest in addition that Longfellow’s transnationalism also inheres in his ability to make already-existing material-literary practices make but some small adjustments to be able to proclaim itself as a celebration of cross-culturalism. At one point in his illustrious career Longfellow was said to have responded to so many requests for autographs that it nearly killed him (John Greenleaf Whittier

wrote that “My friend Longfellow was driven to death by these incessant demands”¹⁶⁵; the volume of letters and quasi-literary objects he received altogether probably weighed enough to crush him to death. Gruesz shows us that part of his worldwide popularity lay in the conventionality of his verses, a redundancy and repetitiveness that linked up to a still-pervasive practice in many parts of the world of poetry as oration. For Gruesz, Longfellow’s poetry “expressed a ‘universal sensibility’: one that beckoned the translator with the promise of near-transparency of meaning that could be accessed simply by delving into a common pool of meaning.”¹⁶⁶ To engage with Longfellow was to engage with rhetoric that “enlarge[s] the reader’s humanity without deconstructing his or her moral universe,”¹⁶⁷ as Dana Gioia famously said of Longfellow’s poetry. This tradeoff of maximal payoff for minimal distension accounts for Longfellow’s global reception. Even though he would seem to deal in universal themes, his poetics flowers on the notion that universal themes are within conceptual reach as long as one performs simple literary-material transfers. For Longfellow, remediation is proof of the transmissions of feelings and ideas. The poems do not require additional linguistic commensuration to be felt; thus when he received correspondences from around the world—India, China, Mexico—praising his poetry and testifying to the fact that they had been translated into the local language, nothing much is said about the translational choices that were made. Simply by bringing his poetry into one’s own world and sending it back again to show that it was there one validates the symmetries between human beings proclaimed in it.

Because Dong Xun’s translation was gifted back to the person who occasioned the translation, and because he did not record his translation anywhere else, at least not in anything he published, which included three major works and countless official documents, it viewed itself as a self-contained achievement, a complete transaction. If “A Psalm of Life” offers didactic lessons to China, the transcription only gives them back. It is not in translation, then, but in the two-step act of materializing inspiration, and sending it back as proof, that Dong Xun’s Chinese poem completes

the first step of answering Longfellow's poetics. Dong Xun's translation does in fact fulfill the model of cross-culturalism idealized in a poem like "The Arrow and the Song"—for that poem isn't concerned with authentic literary transmission, either, only a naked belief that universalism was always already there, borne out by an adjacent object which, simply by doing things that it would do anyway, testifies to that promise.

Translations of No Import

Translations of no import names a genre of exchange that does not need to communicate in any other way than in the unfalsifiable, obstinate language of aphorisms, one whose generic-ness precisely allows for the frictionless meeting of cultures in moments that were never meant to carry that much weight anyway. The notional difference between substantive and non-substantive translation can be rehabilitated in the *ad hoc* attitude towards translation and its functions in diplomatic occasions—that hotbed of translation activity which also gives to translation the highest degree of leniency. Consider, for example, the translation that Dong Xun made under the directions of Prince Kung at the send-off of the American legation at the Zong-li Yamen in March of 1865. W. A. P. Martin recounts “a poetical contest” between Dong Xun and another Manchurian official named Pan Yuen because “Prince Kung [had] his attention attracted by a book of engravings, was desirous of knowing their meaning; and when told that each one was the subject of an ode... he requested to hear the translation of one of these odes.”¹⁶⁸ The book in question could have been any one of many in the transatlantic *Language of Flowers* craze that began in the early 1800s, Robert Tyas' *The Sentiment of Flowers*, Thomas Miller's *The Poetical Language of Flowers*, Henry Adam's *The Language and Poetry of Flowers*, and C.M. Kirtland's *Poetry of the Flowers* as most popular iterations in mid-century America.¹⁶⁹ These works paired painted plates with poems mainly “cut-and-paste” from anthologies¹⁷⁰ and sometimes sentimental anecdotes to educate the general populace on what different flowers meant and, therefore, how they could be used in different social situations. As

books that assigned poems and poetic things to occasions, nineteenth century “language of flower” books would seem to lend themselves particularly well to the underspecified, yet over-signified gestures of Sino-American diplomacy. On the “Forget-Me-Not,” Dong’s abbreviated translation (re-translated into English) was: “For the true friend is only he/ Of deep and enduring sympathy”¹⁷¹ Keeping only the baseline sentiment of fidelity as a trait of the forget-me-not, Dong Xun’s “translation” not only ignores the likely original texts, which by and large play on the logics of forgetting and remembrance in romantic love,¹⁷² but also supplies its own visual in place of the original floral engraving: “Two girls on shipboard sing a parting song.” In citing Dong’s “Forget-me-not” and its English version as a translation of no import, I do not mean to delegitimize the genres of loose translation and acculturated translation that proliferate in the absence of commensurable cultural iconographies and ideographies, nor do I mean to neglect those whose looseness represents an act of subversion or deflection in situations of linguistic power asymmetries. In translations of no import, slightness is not tactical. Martin’s casual retranslation of Dong’s improvisation, “For the true friend is only he/ Of deep and enduring sympathy” does not care to get any closer to Dong’s version, whatever it was, than Dong’s version cared to get to the original. Dealing in platitudes here accomplishes the task of orienting the literary exchange and the text that happens to be on hand—*The Poetic Language of Flowers*—to the primacy of the occasion, which called for good feelings at parting. The logic of translation-for-occasion is reflected in the “outcome” of the contest. Like Dong, the other contestant Pan Yuen drastically re-interprets and abridges the ode that accompanies the engraving of the “Water Lily,” coming up with this rather heavy-handed analogy for amiable East-West relations: “We dwell together in a flowery clime; the Red Lotus and White Lily.”¹⁷³ Since both poems were written for the occasion of the departure of the American legation, and interpreting the book of flower engravings for Prince Gong was only an excuse to deliver ready-made sentiments, it would be on occasionality that they were ultimately judged. So

while W.A.P. Martin assessed the two flower poems to be equal in “poetic merit,” he deemed Pan Yuen’s as “not so appropriate for the occasion” (449), which called for the sentiment of fidelity in absence as opposed to symbiosis in cohabitation. At the parting with Anson Burlingame, Dong Xun reiterated the English retranslation of his own translation—“For the true friend is only he/ Of deep and enduring sympathy.” So what appears to be a “translation” should be assessed as a performance, which Hymes defined as the authoritative display of communicative competence.¹⁷⁴ Occasionality shifts the focus in translation studies from the semantics of translingual maneuvers to the illocutionary ends of communication.

Occasional poetry, and its implicit intermingling of the contingent with the intentional, has long been debated in literary criticism. In this debate, the occasionality of most poetry (brought into existence by the wedding/funeral/commemoration/accident/festival/public incident/meteorological event) remains that which it most needs to shed. Speaking descriptively as well as prescriptively, Hegel states that in order to overcome its “inferior value” occasional poetry or the *piece d’occasion* has to “strip away the accidents that play their part around them, and the indifferent accessories of what happened, the purely relative circumstances and traits of character, and put in their place things through which the inner substance of the thing at issue can clearly shine”¹⁷⁵ As the most prevalent and effective catalyst of poetry production in the first place, the mere “circumstance” becomes a source of embarrassment for the poetic enterprise which must transcend the occasion. To use the words of C.W. Bowra, “the distillation of an essential poetry from transitory occasions gains by the omission of a reference to the actual shape of the occasions themselves.”¹⁷⁶ In the Hegelian tradition, occasional poems have no true generic integrity: they must aim for depth despite the surfaceness that hailed their existence and must become self-commemorative despite being written to commemorate something else. The poem that goes the other route entirely, wholly embracing its occasioning as the only status that matters and moving on

to the next so fast that it skips essence and depth—it has no place of honor in the history of the lyric. And yet, the inability to see occasional poetry for what it is without attributing any additional imperative forms the basis of any study of nineteenth-century Sino-American exchange.

In the late Qing period (late to us, not to them), the forms Chinese travelers chose to meet the challenges of documenting difference and novelty were predominantly occasional. Dong Xun's contemporary, Qing statesman, scholar and poet Huang Zunxian, left hundreds of poems and the only two that address the US were occasional poems: one written on the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1882 (“Expelling the Visitor *Zhuke Pian* 逐客篇”) and another in reaction to the corrupt, anti-Chinese presidential election politics of 1884 (“The Election of 1884.”)¹⁷⁷ Zhi Gang, the other Qing official who traveled to the US with the Burlingame Commission in 1868, wrote poems commemorating his visit to Mount Vernon, as Kang Youwei would 30 years later.¹⁷⁸ In one of the first mixed-genre works of Sino-Anglo-American exchange, *Draft Notes on a Fine Trip to the Maritime Countries* (Haiguo Shengyou Cao 海国胜游草),¹⁷⁹ Bin Chun penned several occasional poems whose merits were later judged by Dong Xun in his preface to that work. Named the “Director of Western Studies” of the Tongwen Guan (an institution of translation), Bin Chun traveled with Robert Hart (chief officer of China's Imperial Maritime Customs) on what was called the “Pin Mission” to Europe and America after the Second Opium War. While Bin Chun was given the assignment of writing about the “hills and streams” of the countries he visit[ed]”¹⁸⁰, his traveling companions ungenerously suspected the “senile” Bin Chun to be “quite incapable of forming just appreciations of what he will see”¹⁸¹, only capable of “reading poems of his own composition to a captive audience.”¹⁸² To Bin, however, poetic merit came from the ability to offer the right expression in the right occasion—a demonstration of competence—not the ability to capture and “form just appreciations” of new experiences. Regarding the whole mission as a dreary round of sorts, Bin whetted his compositional skills by overlaying “exotic” experiences with stock tropes. One

erstwhile “poem,” if it could be so-called, commemorated his meeting with the prince and princess of Wales (Edward VII) at a State Ball. For this occasion he gushed that “[I] almost fancied I had been transported bodily to the Lake of Gems in heaven, that the crowd around me were the golden-armoured Gods, or the Immortals of fairy-land and that I had bidden farewell to the world below!”¹⁸³ His poetic usage would be praised as “ingeniously combin[ing] various oriental ideas of celestial magnificence in one picture,” thus revealing “his true guise of cultured gentleman and gifted poet.”¹⁸⁴ With such transcultural contributions that are hard to place, in the spirit of *why not* and evaluated for their performativity, *Draft Notes* unsatisfyingly satisfies literary historians Yi Dexiang and Ingemar Ottoson’s attribution of its having “positive value for Sino-Western cultural communication”¹⁸⁵ It was not upon that criterion of having “positive value for cultural communication” that Dong Xun would judge the literary merit of Bin Chun’s *Draft Notes*. Rather, Dong Xun praised “friend Bin’s” poems as propitious for the Qing in that they fully take advantage of oceanic space as poetic space, and lauded Bin’s output in *Drafts* as commensurate to the number of poems that the seas can accommodate (*Poetry* 67-68).

For Dong Xun himself, textual encounters with foreignness that do not last beyond the occasion must first be understood within his poetic practice independent of the context of the Zong-li Yamen, the Burlingame expedition, and Sino-American missions abroad. In his works written as a Qing statesman, his attitude toward the function of poetry in the management of territory reverses the gains made by his own diplomatic efforts in reshaping the country’s landscape into one of reform, with emphasis on coastal commerce, international jurisdiction, and linguistic exchange. They reveal a patient and long-laboring imperial functionary whose approach to progressive improvement is generally conservative and for whom bibliographic containment of China reflects its overall containment and ultimate manageability. Using a print format whose popularity reached its height in the Qing dynasty—the self-edited chapbook or daily almanac

(*shouding wenji/shiji* 手订文/诗集, *nian pu* 年谱)—Dong Xun consolidated his disparate writings on topics as far-ranging as hydraulics and poetry reviews in two works before he died: *The Old Man Upon Returning to My Books—an Almanac* and *Poetry and Prose of the Di Fen Library*. This mixed-genre format which distributes poetry amongst topographical charts is very important to our understanding of Qing uses of literature, specifically the political function of the bibliographer or compiler of texts (Dong Xun, above all, viewed himself as a bibliographic medium. He asks in *The Old Man upon Returning to My Books* “Who am I but the one who reads?”). “Each dynasty,” he writes in the preface to *Poetry and Prose of the Di Fen Library*, “garners its own representative textual form.” For the Qing dynasty, that preferred form is one of “consolidation.” Without adjusting for this view of what a book of poetry ought to accomplish, *Poetry and Prose of the Di Fen Library* will seem like a misnomer, putting as it does writings on canals, hydraulics, land surveys, and the international time zone on the same continuum as travel poetry (written either by himself or others) and other genres of civic writing (including 序/议/论/辨/记/说/跋/书后/祭文/启/箴/铭/教/赞/连珠/杂说 preface, cost-benefit analysis reports to the emperor/ argument/ debate/ recording/ discussion/ postface/ afterword/ address/ literary memorabilia/ persuasion/ epitaph/ report/ eulogy/ maxims/ essay). A passiveness undergirds Dong’s bibliographic approach to statesmanship. A preface to *Wheaton’s International Elements of Law* and an investigation into the first of several provocations over Japanese versus Chinese sovereignty in the East Sea islands merit no more emphasis than any other perfunctory writing. The fitting coordination and sequencing of vastly different rhetorical genres lies at the heart of civic and political self-identity for someone who had to apply his learnedness to disparate functions such as the administrative ins-and-outs of flood control and the more tedious tasks of diplomacy. The eponymous poems reinforce this profile. They mark the places in his administrative rounds which stretch from the capital of Beijing to the outermost edges of China: “Reflections on Traveling Through Tianjin,”¹⁸⁶ “Leaving Han Zhuang to Enter the

Grand Canal,”¹⁸⁷ “Reflections on Passing the City of the River Jiao (an ancient site in the Yamaz Valley, today part of the Uyghur Autonomous Region.)”¹⁸⁸ The themes tend to be 1.) passing through and 2.) waterways of the kind he visits and poeticizes and the kind that bears him to the next point on the circuit. These poems serve as a land survey of sorts because they prove that a stock set of images and expressions can still be affixed to the different parts of the country. As such, the poetry written in Di Fen Library sustains a dialogism with Dong Xun’s fixation with flood control and intranational water transportation—topics which, like his antagonism toward foreign-vested railway system, point to a generally conservative approach to reform.¹⁸⁹ In his own uses of literature, Dong Xun eschews poetry’s reorientational potential, preferring to regard poetry as a form of curatorship of preexisting civic and geopolitical space.

When literature serves as geographical census we witness the systematic leaving-taking that characterizes commemorative and travel poems written by Dong Xun and his contemporaries. Places and events, regardless of their novelty or distance from the capital, are seen as poetic opportunities (or, more accurately, opportunities for poetizing) as opposed to things that have personal or political resonances. His poem occasioned by a trip to Yuan Ming Yuan (Imperial Summer Palace in Beijing) reveals this attitude at work:

赴 圆明园

车马重经石路赊，五云楼阁起朝霞。
帝都别后风光换，扇子河旁藕已花。¹⁹⁰

[Toward Yuan Ming Yuan (the Imperial Summer Palace)]

Horse and carriage pass over the road which lies long ahead

Dawn rises above the Loft of Five Clouds

Bidding farewell to the capital, a change of scenery

On the banks of the River of Fans, the lotuses have already flowered]

At the time of writing (1890), the burning and sacking of the Imperial Summer Palace had already taken place. Dong Xun could not have not known the extent of the damage nor its significance, making the relaxed tone here rather shocking. The incident is logged as a change of scenery (“*feng guang huan* 风光换”), followed quickly with an assurance that the natural order, symbolized by the flowering lotus, remains intact. Keeping things “intact” also is the reference to the Loft of Five Clouds Graph, painted by multiple artists from the Southern Song to the Yuan Dynasty, which fixes the landscape of the poem by giving its readers a sizeable and familiar image to work. No less tropeable than before, the Imperial Summer Palace (or its absence) receives the same poetic treatment as the other places in his geographical census poems. A sign of Dong Xun’s increasingly resolute neo-traditionalism rather than any paradigm shift, “Toward Yuan Ming Yuan” represents the quintessential poem of no import. In the sense of nothing being brought in, “of no import” here suggests the complete containment of environment in this genre of Qing writing, a synoptic macropoetics that repatterns incoming data (like sites newly made historically significant and spaces in the world beyond national borders) with verses and images freely obtained from the annals. Such use is optimistic, with optimism not located in any particular expression or sentiment, but in the outlook of manageability and containability conveyed by the poems’ juxtapositions with their non-poetic peritexts.

Poems of no import are easily made as not made, as easily read as forgotten. This is not a value judgment but a very specific description of the poetics of detachment practiced by increasingly

cosmopolitan late Qing cohorts. In an effort to establish the viability of the classical tradition, Qing scholars often wrote poetry that was recombinatory and recapitulative, that reveled in *tao yong* 套用 (literally “stacked usage”). In *tao yong*, predecessors’ verses are applied indiscriminately with preexisting sentiments and descriptions recycled for fresh contexts. This does not so much artificially make the subjects of poetry *changeless* as to shore up a poetic system to extend equally well over time and distance. Consider the use of poetry as template in Dong Xun’s unapologetic cribbing of Tang dynasty poet Du Fu’s works for his three poems, “Song of Huang Jin Tai,” “On Leaving the Capital,” and “Sentiments on Forging the Jiao River.”

1. 《黄金台歌》（380页）：论士先论品，相马先相骨。

对比：杜甫《前出塞》：射人先射马，擒贼先擒王。

- “Huang Jin Altar (a historical monument left over from the Warring States Period in the Hebei Province): To evaluate a gentleman one must first evaluate his character, to judge a horse one must first judge his bone structure.
Cf. Du Fu’s “Previously Passing the Frontier”: To hit someone with an arrow you must first hit their horse, to catch a criminal you must first capture their leader.²

2. 《出都感赋》（382页）：正是公车好风景

² (the similarity between Dong Xun’s usage and Du Fu’s does not only obtain in the repetition “to do x you must first do y” but in the employment of these proverbial truths as a token of resolve in a poem about visiting a historically military site).

对比：杜甫《江南逢李龟年》：正是江南好风景

- “On Leaving the Capital”: It is just that public transportation yields the best scenery
Cf. Du Fu’s “(The Musician) Li Guinian in the Jiang Nan District”: It is just that Jiang Nan yields the best scenery

3. 《□交河有感》：月明□是故□多

□比：杜甫《月夜□舍弟》：月是故□明

- “Sentiments on Forging the Jiao River”: One’s hometown has the most bright moons
Cf. Du Fu’s “Remembering My Brother on a Moonlit Night”: One’s hometown produces the brightest moons

By using Du Fu’s expressions and verse-structures with only slight modifications such as obvious transpositions and substitutions, these poems establish the continuity of place and diminish the specificity of circumstance—a blanketing of territories with fool-proof lyrics. In stacked usage, tried-and-true lines take priority over novelty (the formalization of change-over-time) and writing poetry marks but one way of standing in relation to this hierarchy. For this reason, Qing dynasty poetry (understandably) gets short shrift in literary scholarship and canonization. Very few people memorize Qing poetry, for example, while reciting and citing classic and Tang and Song poems remains the norm. Known more for its poetics and literary criticism, the Qing dynasty produced poetry that has often been dismissed as stale and lacking in originality, a placeholder between Tang/Song/Yuan innovations and early Republican vernacularization. But this lacunae in scholarship of Qing poetry is ironic because Qing poetry regarded itself as not only *sui generis* but apogee.¹⁹¹ In contrast to what they perceived to be the Ming Dynasty’s misuse of the political-poetic nexus, and the resulting deterioration of ethical conduct amongst the literati, Qing reinvested in the

classical canon for its reeducative properties.¹⁹² The need for self-strengthening, which was an emergent Qing concept even prior to Western incursion, came not from literature's empirical testimony but from the perception of literature as an infinitely renewable resource.

Qing poetry and nineteenth-century American poetry share a similar fate as modern literary studies can fail to recognize that the majority of poetic activity before poetry became cryptically modernist treated poetry as a medium, as a conduit for ideas within most people's intellectual reach. Linguistic anthropology helps to give us frames for assessing nineteenth-century Qing and American poetry beyond the evaluative and interpretive, as cultural practices that reinforce ordinary socio-political participation. The writing, reading and circulation of poetry shape the bureaucratic activism of the one and the democratic populism of the other. Framing poetic practice thusly, we can begin to understand the relation between their tendency toward "plagiarism" and bricolage and their fundamental optimism. (I need to clarify here, as I have elsewhere, that optimism refers not to any particular affect or outlook but to the state of having a stake, however small or thoughtless, in the idea of a positive-reinforcement structure between literary output/intake and implementable reform). Drawing on bodies of conventional tropes/images to "lend aesthetic weight and dignity" to the matter at hand,¹⁹³ early to mid-nineteenth century poetic practices in the US collaborate in the construction of the social order. Longfellow, in his turn, championed the type of poetry that forms links "in a perfect chain of cultural transmission" by coalescing "culture's fragments/scraps and driftwood into coherence in the name of theme of interest".¹⁹⁴ In addition to being what Daniel Aaron calls the "household message-bringer,"¹⁹⁵ Longfellow took on the role of cultural bricoleur to infuse "poetry with a civic aim."¹⁹⁶ Poetry's potential for civic life came from its collection and circulation of common denominators as (*pace* Benjamin's formulation of the collector) the average nineteenth century collector of a Longfellow poem could lift it out of its milieu (in whole but usually in excerpts) and reintroduce it into a new, private organizational logic. It is this quality of his poems,

rather than their simplicity or complexity (as they were often both), that answers for Longfellow's celebrity status in nineteenth century Anglophone circuit. Each accessible to every man and customizable to individual outlooks on life, Longfellow's poems were circulated widely and fervently as part of a mass culture of *participation* in nineteenth century America that fizzled out with the yoking of poetics with high culture at the turn of the century. His was the poetry of mediocrity and the medium of the democratic socialization experience and their conventional tropes/images "reassembl[ed] and reanimate[ed] culture"¹⁹⁷ instead of producing it anew. That same reassembling and reanimation extended to its translation in a milieu that also prioritized the same functions. What Jiang Yin names as Qing poetry's prerogatives—the "restoration and reorganization of tradition 传统的修复和重整" and "retro-ism and the return to tradition 复古及回归传统"¹⁹⁸—were not launched on nostalgia, per se, but on the idea that radical intertextuality and conventionality constituted the most effective form of poetic intervention in civic life. There is no reason to expect that different impulses governed the translation of poetry which is why, just as we should not jump to categorize "Long Fellow's Poem" as a text before we consider the ways in which it is an object, we should also avoid regarding its textual component as translation before we consider the possibility that it might just be a more visible version of what Dong Xun and his contemporaries were practicing all the time. Translating "A Psalm of Life" furnished an occasion to pool together preexisting sentiments that occur frequently in poetic and political discourse. The translation reintroduced these literary snippets into a fresh relationship, a radical adjacency.

Almost every single line in Dong Xun's "Long Fellow's Poem" contains an allusion culled from the most quotable parts of the classics from prior dynasties—an exaggerated instance of what Jonathan Hay describes as a *deliberate* politics of belatedness amongst the Qing.¹⁹⁹ Amid shifting attitudes toward the function of a unified cultural symbolic, "self-consciousness with regard to the painting tradition and pervasive literary-historical allusionism—dominate[d] not only the visual

discourses of ... paintings but also the textual discourses of inscriptions, colophons, and contemporary critical comments”²⁰⁰ And translations too, we might add. Appeals of sound, rhyme and assonance, in the source text become so many opportunities for the translator to take inventory of familiar literary offerings. As a poetic device, the start of the second line, “one hundred years” (an expression for ‘through the ages’) cues the range of allusions that comprise the rest of the poem. The excursion through poetic history picks up quickly after that: the presentation of the “true spirit” in line 4 pervading the cosmos reworks Yuan Dynasty Wang Mian’s poem, “Inky Wax Blossom (墨梅 Mo Mei)” and Southern Song poet Wen Tianxiang’s “Song of the True Spirit (正气歌 Zheng Qi Ge)”; the assertion of human potential in line 5 reprises Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai’s “About to Toast (将进酒 Jiang Jin Jiu)”; the trope of the leopard skin in line 6 appears both in Song historian Ouyang Xiu’s *New History of the Five Epochs* (新五代传 Xin Wudai Zhuan) and Song poet Shao Yong’s “Plum Blossom (梅花诗 Meihua Shi)”; lines 8 combines Ming dynasty Zhang Sanfeng’s image of a single, enduring spirit “灵独存 Ling Du Cun” with “without termination 无绝期 *wu jue qi*,” an expression borrowed from Tang Dynasty Bai Juyi’s “Song of Song Sorrows (长恨歌 Chang Hen Ge),” and so on. Whatever else can be said of this kind of translation or “*fan*,” at some level it regarded the source text as a kind of infrastructure for coordinating deeply resonant, transformative sentiments that were already available, and not as point of delivery for deeply resonant, transformative concepts from the outside.

“Long Fellow’s Poem” is clearly an older form of fancified, non-literal translation which tends to be relegated to a form of native accommodation or something that catches only the antiquarian’s eye. This changes if we reconceptualize this kind of translation as a material act. The translator has the curator’s job of taking things out of one’s storehouses and see how they might be displayed together, knowing that the final product is a best shot, if not perfectly logical. Line-for-

line, trope-for-trope “Long Fellow’s Poem” mirrors Longfellow’s “Psalm” everywhere it can, using materials cast from a large net; the final product is, as with any forced collection of aphorisms, slightly incoherent. That “Long Fellow’s Poem” has its own habitus is accepted by its most strident critic, Qian Zhongshu, for whom Dong Xun’s poem “accords implicitly with Johann Gottfried Herder’s notion [that] the translator uses the original poem as a basis to create his own poem.”²⁰¹ The problem for Qian, however, was that Dong Xun’s poem drew from the medium, and not the source. Qian Zhongshu blames the poetically unfortunate parts of “Long Fellow’s Poem” on Thomas Francis Wade’s poor grasp of Chinese, which comes out in the working translation he made for the monolingual Dong Xun. Formulating his own version of translator/traitor, Qian writes,

媒介物反成障碍物，中间人变为离间人

[The medium has rather become an obstacle; the middle man, a malicious sower of dissension.]²⁰²

Viewing Wade’s imprecise literal translation as a wedge driven between the source text and Dong Xun’s efforts, Qian Zhongshu gives a long list of what he, borrowing an expression from Robert Frost, sees as “lost in translation.”²⁰³ His choice of language makes clear his election to see the relationship between “A Psalm of Life,” Wade’s translation of it, and Dong Xun’s “Long Fellow’s Poem” as poem: medium: poem’, with poem’ destabilized by a faulty medium. While there is nothing wrong with this perception—one that allows Qian to clarify many of the poem’s otherwise inexplicable deviations from the original—I have been suggesting that we might view the relationship between these three poems instead as medium: translation: medium. The source text pulls from its cultural milieu and the working translation provides a torque, an occasion for a second poem that also pulls from its own cultural milieu. Rather than see this episode as a meeting of two texts, then, we might see it as a meeting of two media phenomena. For Qian Zhongshu, non-literal translation is perfectly permissible as long as inaccuracies are brought to a minimum level. In other

words, non-literal translation works as good as literal translation if it can transmit the original despite the noise introduced by intermediaries. It is equally important, however, to recognize this now outdated translingual praxis as fundamentally different in the way it designates the function of poetry in a changing world, in the way it proceeds with an eye toward dispensation of others' poetry and dispensability of poetic products as its objectives. "Long Fellow's Poem" exemplifies how a translation can be maximally faithful and yet minimally transmissive, mobilizing units of language to achieve a mirroring effect rather than recalibrating language to create continuous realities.

Besides Longfellow's own interrelational logics and their correspondence in the late Qing poetics of dispensation, however, there is also something about "A Psalm of Life" itself that encourages its own non-translation and that replicates itself precisely as a series of gestures. "A Psalm of Life" models its own reception as a kind of cross-cultural minimalism. Minimalism does not describe the effort involved in making its translation or its fidelity, for the translation itself is maximally faithful as far as it understands, nor does it describe the attitude of the translator who, as far as we can tell, took seriously his roles as foreign minister, diplomat and purveyor of cultural exchange. Minimalism names the logics in the poem itself of giving over to mechanisms that allow one group of people to affect another group of people by meeting the fewest requirements and clearing the lowest hurdles possible, whether physical, geographical, political or lingual. Like "The Arrow and the Song," "A Psalm of Life" models an easily misattributed form of inspirationalism, one that finds a sender and a receiver—with no stipulations on the message itself—inspiring enough. We must arrive at this reading, as "A Psalm of Life" itself does, by exclusion. First, it vouches against any kind of ends-oriented philosophy of the individual human life that defers its meaning to a cumulative affect ("Not enjoyment, and not sorrow/ Is our destin'd end or way")²⁰⁴, being equally unsatisfied with the negative version of that consolation, the "life is but an empty dream" rhetoric. For all our readiness to belief that "Psalm" affirms the individual spirit—after all it

states that “the grave is not [the] goal” of Life, and that “Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not spoken of the soul”—it does not endorse that creed at all, caring very little for any particular individual (a common misreading of American poetry) far more interested in lyricizing an imagined community. There is no doubt in the poem that any one of us is headed straight for the grave, with “hearts, though stout and brave” beating like “funeral marches.” As Stephen Burt might say, this is one of Longfellow’s “unconsoling poems” as it offers “no resurrection, no credible belief in a life after death.”²⁰⁵ Given the source poem’s own coyness about the exact value of human labor and its lastingness, Dong Xun’s symmetrical approach achieves what no literal translation can: what feels like a pile up of *familiar* proselytizing about human potential somehow ends up underscoring its impotence. “A Psalm of Life”’s often unacknowledged anticlimax, which begins in stanza IV with the “heart beats as funeral marches” and ends in the muffled last word: “wait,” is unacknowledged precisely because we feel like we know the genre of motivational preaching and the language of *carpe diem*. “Long Fellow’s Poem” also lulls its readers with the rhyming repetition of 7-character quatrains consisting of adages that, even as early as late Qing, were considered clichéd. These assurances of the cosmic preservation of human endeavors so that no talent goes uncounted are seemingly followed up with literary “evidence”: dew on the chives on line 15, footprints in the snow on line 28. But the Han dynasty dirge “Dew on the Chives” is a suicidal poem that compares human effort to the evaporation of dew on the blades of shallot and finds it worse for the comparison as dew returns with the next sun while life does not. Su Shi’s metaphor of the geese’s imprints in the snow chastens the reader to the mere-ness of life, its inconsequence figured as the bird’s shallow tracks which disappear as the ground thaws.

On the other hand just because the poems do not console in the predictable ways—if one is reading carefully—does not mean they are not still fundamentally optimistic. “A Psalm of Life” endorses a particularly banal kind of secular inspiriting: the “pass it on” approach. It moves us by

assuring us that, in the only kind of accounting that matters, someone might be moved (emphasis on the word “might”) by the fact that we have moved things along. The poem’s subtitle—“what the heart of the young man said to the psalmist”—encapsulates this approach as it suggests that someone’s inner self can speak to another person who then turns whatever it is it “said” into generic motivation, never mind if the young man intended it or not or, indeed, physically said it or not. Misattributed as a poem of uplift, “A Psalm of Life” best exemplifies Longfellow’s unswerving commitment to the “cohort effect.” The meaningfulness of all our striving and achieving depends on another, unknown person acting as the recipient of our actions; hence, his optimism is by definition interrelational. You are enjoined to “Act! Act in the glorious Present” not for any immediate payoff for you but for the sliver of possibility that, in “making your life Sublime” you can leave “footsteps on the Sand of Time” that some other poor “forlorn and shipwreck’d brother” can see, and take heart. Pooling together dehistoricized scenarios, “Psalm” advocates a confidence in confraternity fueled by nothing but the assurance that others will come along and see what you have left behind. It says nothing about what you should leave behind, or what the next person who comes along ought to take from it, therefore in effect relieving all parties of the burden of precision and restrictions imposed by context.

As it happens, the conditions on the receiving end formally repeat the poem’s encoded mode of cultural reproduction and helps realize these experiential hypotheses “Long Fellow’s Poem” picks up where “A Psalm of Life” leaves off by repeating its logic in Chinese. Dong Xun has “gotten the message” as Longfellow’s efforts (in the form of a poem about effort) reached him in 1868, someway somehow. His version of it turns around and performs the same advocacy of decontextualized uplift, and from that draws reinforcement of its own instructions. At first glance, the fan-poem would seem to totalize the rhetoric of uplift and self-strengthening that so dominated China’s embarrassed sense of self in its “translational modernity.” But this rhetoric of uplift is also

here completely contained in the moment of its actuation, with no specific protocols for self-strengthening along any cross-national templates. The advisements posited as flat opportunities in the poem itself are, *prima facie*, customizable to any dehistoricized account of striving. Accordingly, its transcription on to the fan marks a rhetorical performance of inspiration which is customizable any situation—at once occasional and directed, public and private, for a reader and indifferent to his presence. As Angela Sorby has observed of “A Psalm of Life,” “the reading subject is... exhorted to ‘Be a hero in the strife!’ but it is unclear what heroes are supposed to do” (26). You are told to “act, Act!” without any specific protocols. Acting means suspending the energy of motivation. To *act*, you only need to enact the process of being inspired to act.²⁰⁶ Dong Xun’s translation catches on to this tautological rhetorical-material transfer, transforming the pronouncement of optimism into its very object. That is why the only line in it that looks like a “true” translation is the opening line, which announces a reversion from a particular kind of poetic conceit: “Tell me not in mournful numbers” becomes “*Mo dai fan nao zhu shi pian* 莫带烦恼著诗篇,” or “do not compose poetry with the stuff of worries and consternation.” The two poems then go off to give examples of what the substance of poem ought to be, each line simply one more instance of this enactment. Both poems perform this self-instantiation where one mode of lyricism is called out, rejected, and the correct mode is suggested as the poem itself.

If Chinese transnationalism of the late Qing period often turned texts from other nations into “teaching moments” whose assumptions about behind-ness, weakness, and other varieties of inferiority are then, unfortunately, internalized, “Long Fellow’s Poem” takes the pedagogical imperative at face value. It fully invests in a temporally dislocated compendium of stock phrases and stock poetics to enable the fantasy of national solidarity and dehistoricized common ground. In loosely refitting classical literature to match phrases like “But to act, that each tomorrow/ Find us farther than to-day” or “Be not like dumb, driven cattle! Be a hero in the strife” Dong Xun simply

continues the tradition wherein the Qing “recurrent[ly] exploit[s] [his] own cultural belatedness” to generate a “poetics of power around the authority of the past.”²⁰⁷ Even though “A Psalm of Life” in its repetitive entirety (repetitive from the standpoint of translation) gave Dong Xun an occasion to offer recommendation upon recommendation on self-strengthening, self-motivation, and the need to act, at the same time these injunctions will feel timely today, tomorrow, ten years from now. Timeliness inheres in the act of persuasion, in which change happens at a generational and not individual level. By flipping these injunctions on to a mobile object, Dong Xun cuts this rhetoric loose from other discourses of self-strengthening. By letting it remain as an object, which not only preserves the ephemerality of inspiration but which can also confront someone else at any time, Dong Xun takes self-strengthening and fits it to a different temporal schematic, one full of undifferentiated pastness and nostalgic anticipation for the future and also one which is unanxiously ahistorical, appealing to imagined cohorts and generational succession, and not the teleological time of a nation playing catch-up. It is simply an unfortunate coincidence that the heuristics of today and tomorrow, of yore of yonder sound so much like the accusation of time-stoppedness has haunted Chinese intellectuals since the eighteenth century. In reality, this form of cross-cultural uplift actually has no forward vector, that is, holds no interest in the time-sequences encoded in global literary production and elects to see global literary production as a timeless reserve of aggregate human experience. The fan-poem is a historical object, but when we historicize it we find that, in its objecthood, it woos the historicity of perpetual presentism.

“Long, Long After”

Dong Xun’s “thingifying” treatment of Longfellow’s verses and his redirection of Longfellow’s verses of uplift back to his own Chinese cohort present a case of optimism that cannot be mapped back onto received notions of false consciousness, creative misuse, subversion, exoticization, or imperialistic translanguing exchange. In Dong Xun’s fan we see what it might mean

to understand transcultural exchange squarely as an optimism about other people's texts—and an optimism about other people's optimism for one's own texts—evinced through the objects which testify to that double promise. Acquiring foreign literature as everyday objects in order to affirm one's own sense of “changes for the better”—a gesture usually construed as embarrassingly banal or lowbrow—actually offers up a radically different heuristics of transcultural exchange, one loosened from the official Progressive and positivistic historical time of East-West globalization. As shown in the previous chapter, transnational thinking about the uses of literature can be profoundly *timely*, something to which writers turned in the heat of political desperation as a measure that produces the results that nothing else might, and at the same time reject synchronicity as a cross-cultural paradigm. Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs' concept of *entextualization* gives name to the kinds of textual-temporal alliances things tend to preserve and value that halt historical referentiality in favor of a dehistoricized art of the possible. Entextualization explains the paradox of context-dependency and context-blindness that I suggest attends to most forms of cross-cultural textual exchange because it describes the phenomena wherein context-oriented texts with performative actions ultimately extract themselves from context, make themselves “resistant” to decentering practices such as historicism and recontextualization. Like a disappearing act, the performative text cries to be put into situational/political/historical/rhetorical context at the same time it objectifies itself, “rendering stretches of discourse *discontinuous* with their discursive surround” in order to make itself “coherent, effective, and memorable.”²⁰⁸ Entextualization therefore closes in on the slipperiness of the fan-poem, the reading of which has to be simultaneously sensitive to context—the context of Sino-American relations, the context of performative translation, and the context of late Qing poetics and statesmanship—and equally sensitive to the textual-object as something that “potentiates its [own] detachability.”²⁰⁹ The Chinese “Psalm of Life” epitomizes its multiple contexts to perform a rhetoric of up-and-doing that is suspended in the text-object itself,

cut from its historical referents. On account of this dynamic, the fan-poem will remain a tricky artifact for the literary history. As I tried to show in the last part of Chapter 2, a section that theorizes the archive in transnational crossings, the stories that pieces of literature in the archives can tell about the history of ideas' unfolding will inevitably look different than the unfolding itself. When words are written down and filed away—in transnational exchanges or otherwise—they can no longer express the spirit of “timeliness” in which they were undertaken and a poem's true expressivity becomes distorted. The archive attenuates the transitory optimism that actually drives much of cross-national/cross-cultural interest in other people's literary production. “Timeliness” preserved turns into cause into effect.

If, in the end, narratives of cross-cultural transmission develop and consolidate around the fan nonetheless, it is only because the act of mediation, which captures timeliness and optimism as a structure of affect, turns into objects that can do nothing else but sit there and corroborate the chronopolitics of cross-culturalism. The act of mediation becomes material attestation. Dong Xun's “Long Fellow Poem,” is still celebrated by cultural historians today as physical evidence of the fact that literary transmission between the two countries had occurred, and as early as 1860s, too. To quote Christoph Irmscher, “Dressed in foreign clothes, Longfellow's poem had traveled back to him in an America that had for too long been absorbed in its own internal problems—a reminder that translation, apart from serving to facilitate the traffic of ideas from one culture to another, also carries its purpose in itself, as an acknowledgement of the exciting diversity of the world at large.”²¹⁰ Irmscher's assessment of the fan as visible sign of the “traffic of ideas” between China and America echo the politicization of the fan during the ratification of the Burlingame Treaty, which the fan was repeatedly invoked in a triumphalist narrative of Sino-American exchange because it carried on it the only recognizable genre of literary transmission: a translation. Turned into a mascot for the Burlingame Treaty, the Chinese fan, absent in the first photographic commemoration of the

diplomatic event (Figure 2) starts to appear in subsequent reproductions for the masses—wood engravings for Harper’s and the Illustrated London News (Figures 3 &4) and a *carte de visite* by J. Gurney and Son (Figure 5). In the later images which are compositionally resonant of the first photograph, the fan appears tipped in, and eventually put into the hands of almost every Chinese subject in the photograph for effect. Of course the proliferated fans were not Dong Xun’s Longfellow fan, or even necessarily literary fans. Nonetheless, they do work that exceed the logic of cultural representation for if visual indications of Chineseness were needed, the photographers and print-makers already had the garbs, the braided queues and the persons. They show us that we need cross-culturalism shown to us. By a sleight of hand, the fan is artificially given what was probably considered its proper significance, lending cross-cultural exchange an ineffaceable visibility.

It is precisely the fact that Dong Xun’s fan-poem would seem to wear all the dressings of cross-culturalism but, upon closer inspection, execute none of its plans that bothered our twentieth century critic Qian Zhongshu, who took a positivist view of cultural exchange. For Qian Zhongshu, the “*shi shan* 诗扇” or “fan-poem” was an object of lost potential in the history of cross-culturalism. As the first piece of an English poem to be translated into Chinese, it ought to have signified the beginning of something, posits Qian, but the messiness around its translation and the resulting lack of cultural specificity in the final product, meant that not even the historical actors knew what exactly was being translated into what. Qian sighs over the misidentification of Longfellow as an “*ou-ba-ren* 欧巴人,” or “European” in Dong Xun’s protégé Fang Lingshi’s *Commonplace Book of the Palm Pavilion*, the only text where Dong Xun’s poem was recorded. The erroneous assignation of nationality is not all. As the only text that documented the episode, Fang Lingshi’s *Commonplace Book* itself fails to perpetuate the importance of this cross-cultural phenomenon by taking a print format that history will chose to leave behind. In this book, the translation is only collected as an item in a catalog amongst other curios and data and not threaded into a narrative about Sino-US relations.

Qian places part of the blame on “A Psalm of Life” itself for inviting these lost potentials, by provoking a translation stripped of its unique cultural features. Qian uses the word “*xian cheng* 现成” or “readily-available” to describe the stock local forms that “A Psalm of Life,” being the kind of poem it is, brings upon itself. Longfellow wrote many good poems, Qian writes, but “it was a cruel trick of history that ‘A Psalm’ was the one that got here... and our blueprints are foiled.” It’s the fact that the translation might as well have not happened that constitutes history’s joke on its participants, each with different ideas for how this inarguably significant object might change history, its forfeiture of historical specificity its greatest offense.

It is, however, the “might as well not have happened”-ness of the fan that should provoke our historical and philosophical reflection. The thingification of literary transmission allows us to understand cross-culturalism that takes as its primary interest cross-culturalism itself, and whose devotions to “crossings” begin when these energize self-expression and end when given satisfactory evidence that crossings have indeed transpired. As an alternative form of adjustment to self-betrayal or resistance, thingified cross-culturalism performs perfect understandings between cultures while trafficking in literary forms which allow it to excuse itself from cross-culturalism’s positivist temporalities and historicities. Literary exchange is typically regarded as the genre of interpollination, but, in the nineteenth century context, many literary “interpollinations” between China and America were minimally invested or completely disinvested in interpollination as theme, genre, cultural practice, or, in its most subtle form, an accession to shared historical time. As we have seen in the example of Longfellow’s fan, this kind of metatransnational form does not have to reject the possibility of interpollination—it can, in fact, willfully view interpollination and replication synonymously, can exist on both sides as a belief that one’s song has already existed elsewhere, from beginning to end. This kind of form does not have to live in the margins of the archive of cross-culturalism, but can appear in the very heart of its celebrations.

CHAPTER 4

Bibliotopias

“Works of art are thought things, but this does not prevent their being things”

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

The Flowers of May

Following the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* mania which had reached China's port cities in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the feminist nationalist Qiu Jin made her own tribute to Harriet Beecher Stowe—a tribute so latent that it is as if it never was. In the last three characters of one of her many patriotic poems, Qiu Jin embedded the title of Stowe's lesser-known novel, *The Mayflower*.

Feeling the Times (II)

感时（其二）

If stones are not properly smelted, [people] plead Nuwa
 炼石无方乞女媧，
 If time is felt as fleeing, [they exclaim] how beautiful the times are
 白驹过隙感韶华。
 The calamity of carving up the country presses near
 瓜分惨祸依眉睫，
 Calling for a response is just a waste of breath
 呼告徒劳费齿牙。
 People are to blame for our country's collapse
 祖国陆沉人有责，
 Going all over the four seas, I have become homeless
 天涯飘泊我无家。
 Full of hot-bloodedness, I turn back in sorrow
 一腔热血愁回首，
 Unable to be the **flowers of May**, my heart breaks.
 肠断难为五月花²¹¹

Three years prior, Lin Shu and Wei Yi's translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made its debut under the name, *Black Slaves Plea to the Heavens* 黑奴吁天记, a testament to print culture's facilitation of transnational sympathies. Lin and Wei's efforts to reinterpret the plight of American slaves as that of Chinese coolies, and both as failures of reading, to a certain extent, meant that their Chinese *Uncle Tom* soon became the *terminus a quo* of new transpacific solidarities and imaginations organized around translation and hermeneutics.²¹² But if Lin and Wei's *Black Slaves* represent, by early 20th century standards, transliterary nationalism in its most recognizable form, then "May flowers 五月花" in "Feeling the Times" catches it in its least. In the absence of context, the connection to Stowe's *Mayflower* is rather tenuous indeed.²¹³ The lack of direct attribution (brackets, italicization, or any indication that we are dealing with a proper noun) is customary of intertextualities in Chinese writings before digital print technology, but Qiu Jin does not even drop us a hint. Minus the allusion, 五月花—literally, May flowers—works just as well to underscore the speaker's own powerlessness in a country carved up by foreign interests with all its recourses exhausted. "Feeling the Times" is a poem that shifts the responsibility of national decline from cosmic maker to ordinary citizen at the

same time it presages the muffled tragedy of action-orientedness. In the last two lines of the poem, hot-bloodedness turns into a consternated backward glance, the speaker feeling extreme sorrow over failing to become like flowers in May (“断肠难为五月花”). Taken at face-value, “Feeling the Times” ends in the contrast between heroic impotence and the fervors of spring. Read for its surrogacies, however, the poem ends by pointing to a book the likes of which the speaker aspires to, but cannot, write. These two readings are related, for the Mayflower that hides in plain sight in Qiu Jin’s poem calls attention to the recessiveness that can attend transliterary influence. By not calling attention to its intertextuality, “Feeling the Times” calls attention to the never equitable nor logical relationship between the call to reading and the impetus to be up-and-doing.

Qiu Jin’s planting of Stowe’s novel in her poem reflects a broader response amongst the Chinese first introduced to the contours of Euro-American literary cultures, a response in which single books were seen as metaphysical solutions to political problems. In this case, of course, the book happened to be the wrong one. A series of mistakes gave Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novella on the descendants of New England pilgrims its iconic status in the Chinese public sphere in the first two years of the 20th century. The 1902 issue of Shanghai’s *Selected News* 选报 published an article on Stowe called “The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha,” its transliteration indicating a confusion of her maiden name (Beecher) with her surname.²¹⁴ As the names were confused, so was the title of Stowe’s magnum opus. The article rallied around *The Mayflower* instead of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* after relaying a false anecdote in which Stowe named her book after the way one’s heart flowers in May, a figure for the life force that led her to take up the pen and help overcome slavery in the transatlantic world. (Perhaps this was the anecdote that allowed the thematic resonance between the allusion to Stowe’s title and with the rest of Qiu Jin’s poem). Oblivious to the existence of *Mayflower* the ship and convinced of the aesthetics of its own anecdote, “The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha” urged “two hundred

thousand thousand (1.2 billion) women to take the example of Beecher as their own May flower and so fire up their own hearts 愿二万万女子以批茶之事为五月之花而发生其热心也。”²¹⁵ The invocation of that famous estimate for China’s female population, “two hundred thousand thousand,” indicates that the author of the article wished to fold “Pi Cha /Beecher” and *The Mayflower* into the rhetoric of early Republican women’s liberation movements. The article or some variant thereof was reprinted in multiple fledging newspapers. (*Dong Fang* 61-64). In 1904, the female writer Xu Wanlan 徐畹兰 published a poem on reversing the course of national decline that also incorporated *The Mayflower* in its final lines (unlike Qiu Jin, however, Xu Wanlan gave credit to Stowe): “Today the torrents can only be held back by the written text/the literary, and that is Pi Cha’s *Mayflower* 狂澜今日凭文挽/此是批茶五月花。”²¹⁶ A year later, a ditty called “Encouraging Education 励学歌” in Guangdong’s *Bulletin of the Light of the Women’s World* 女界灯学报 assumed that Beecher had already become a household name:

Do not give up on yourself—just look at Beecher and Jean-Marie [Roland], appearing in the world to make their miraculous achievements, vying with men for status. Female nationals, oh, female nationals, hurry hurry to read books and acquire literacy. Catch the learning fever; if you don’t you’ll never be able to compete with Beecher and Jean-Marie. The grand stage of the twentieth century is set for a new play by women. Haven’t you heard that today in America, women can affect political debate? Haven’t you heard that today in America, women can affect political debate?

毋自暴，毋自弃，汝看批茶同玛利。现身世界竖奇功，直与男儿争位置…
女国民兮女国民，快快读书求识字…

患无向学心，不患不能媲美批茶同玛利。二十世纪大舞台，任吾女儿演新戏。汝不闻今日美利坚，妇人亦参政治议。²¹⁷

In three years' time, Beecher had become a meme, organizing a set of associations in China's self-strengthening rhetoric. So it was that *The Mayflower* and Stowe's maiden name became watchwords for the inestimable power of women's writing during a national crisis. Qiu Jin, who no doubt followed the "Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha" article and its reprints also went with the *Mayflower*/Beecher discourse rather than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*/Stowe in her own feminist patriotic writings. The "Mayflower 五月花" in her poem refers to the novel that the article linked to sudden, unthinkable abolition and points to the appropriate response from Chinese women to the novel recommended in it.

"The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha" and *Mayflower* fanaticism occurred in the year that Liang Qichao famously dubbed "the height of the profession of translation 译术之业特盛" yet the event itself bespeaks a different mechanics for cultivating a transnational public sphere (*Dong Fang* 61). Instead of translation, it hypothesizes a readership that can bypass translation, and even reading, on the way to tapping a piece of foreign literature's most agential, quickening properties. Even with the mistake over the title of Stowe's most important work, which a cursory reading of any one of the two books would have resolved, this early reception of American literature solidifies the impression that a single, literary event can change what seems unchangeable where other rhetorical strategies have failed. Such a response in the first public discourse of Stowe in China redounds to the mythology of her legacy in general; Stowe was, after all, the "little lady who started a war"—an attribution whose dubious pedigree did not prevent its rapid circulation from "hardening into unqualified historical fact."²¹⁸ Stowe herself promoted the energy-transfer model of literature, calling the novel "nothing" if it remains "as mere cold art, unquickened by sympathy with the spirit of the

age.”²¹⁹ We think of Stowe when we think of the fantasy of literature’s absolute efficiency: books animate readers by channeling the spirit of the age and readers, in turn, animate books to go on to do their best work—travel, disseminate and impel others to action. This efficiency feedback loop explains why a book’s “sympathy with the spirit of the age” is nonlocalized and why the mere mention of Stowe’s abolitionist text focalized preexisting nationalist stirrings in other places in the world. But the Lincoln attribution of books starting wars and the popularity of its basic logic abroad also suggest that, when publically acknowledged as performed efficiently, the business of putting words into motion becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, becomes its own overriding logic. As early Republican Chinese newspapers celebrated the remarkable potency of *The Mayflower* in other countries in solving their problems, banking on a similar phenomenon at home, it simultaneously made a big draw on the principle of “good enough” in early transnational uses of literature. This is the principle wherein foreign literature, to which readers have little real access, can make more of an impact—and better model literature’s impact—because and not in spite of the slightness and superficiality of its appearance in the public sphere. Such an economy of letters, practiced ardently by Qiu Jin throughout her career, puts pressure on the model of influence studies to which scholars of transnationalism typically take recourse. To study it we must develop a vocabulary of “acquaintance” for the instances when other nations’ books become calls-to-arms, a vocabulary for bibliographic gesturing and its art of knowing just enough and not too much.

Indicators

Reading, and knowing that others read, contributes to the rise of nationalism. This explains why “The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha,” which is in the end a manifesto, seizes on the publication of *The Mayflower* as a catalytic event not only in America but worldwide, activating audiences who only needed the detonation of a touch. It gushes that *The Mayflower* has been “translated into nine

languages, everywhere distributed, with sales in the millions in less than a year

译成九国文字遍布各处未一年销流百余万部,” with translation, distribution, and sales as the key indicators of global participation.²²⁰ Indicators of reading grow in popularity at a time when foreign reading cultures, though only newly intimated, must instantly be shown as viable and robust. Because nation-building print culture is a system, not just a phenomenon, we must regard its presentiments of reading in other countries and its love of the indicators thereof as part of its autopoiesis. Print culture’s apotheosis of print culture—its efforts to prove that books moved around, self-replicated, and reached their audiences—constitutes the first order of business of imagined communities, that dodgy term that is now synonymous with our most unshakeable concept for understanding modern collectives: the nation.

We apprehend the nation by filing our heads with scenes of other people reading. This conversional process forms the core argument of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, though often neglected in derivative studies that tend to draw the standard, clichéd insight that vernacularization and press activity equal nation-building. Anderson’s theory of print capitalism and imagined communities informs any study of global literary flows as it in fact proves that cross-national literary imaginings precede and feed nationalism rather than arise out of it. Anderson’s even more understated intuition, and the one that applies to this chapter, shows not *how much* but *what little* one needs to do in the way of imagining reading in order to imagine not only our own but other sovereign nations moving forward in time. Incomplete verification describes the logic of print-cultural nationalism’s historical emergence: we become suddenly aware of linguistic diversity and in the same moment, aware of the impossibility of linguistic unification as capitalist print culture forges “monoglot mass reading publics”; thus “mutual incomprehensibility” becomes the norm that print culture both underscores and sets out to alleviate.²²¹ Through print-language people “come to

visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves.”²²² This is Anderson’s classic notion of horizontal comradeship: a nation is imagined because its members will never meet face to face and yet have to receive signs of others’ co-participation. The need to know that others read is satisfied by letting go, by acknowledging our inability to verify reading cultures, and by allowing presentiments and indicators to do that work for us. In Anderson’s own words, “documentary interchangeability... reinforced human interchangeability.”²²³ Therefore we have on one hand the arduousness of practicing nationalism—a nation is an abstract thing for which people kill and conquer, suffer and die—and on the other, the minimalism of its maintenance—we read on the subway, see others reading on the subway, keep extrapolating outwards, and feel assured that the national (and multi-national) lives another day.²²⁴ In terms of the politics of reading, Anderson’s theory of nationalism is perhaps the first to suggest the principle of “good enough,” as guesswork and intimations serve as assurances and generalized images of media (the newspaper, the book read in the subway, the publishing house) become metonyms of wider reading participation that we did to know about and yet can never, nor want to, fully ascertain.

Reading cultures that are cross-national, yet mostly hypothetical and citational, prove crucial to Qiu Jin’s transnationally-trained feminist nationalism. In Qiu Jin’s mind, Manchurian rule was hardly doing enough to stave off China’s pillaging by European nations, a state of emergency that she repeatedly analogized to the plight of women in China. Liberation would be spearheaded by a women’s movement that first articulates itself as a literacy movement. In association with Qiu Jin, books take on a kinetic energy, as evidenced in one of the only three photographic portraits we have of her. In this photograph, Qiu Jin is holding a book with her right hand, an act that directly transfers kinetic energy to her left hand, which we see curled into a fist (Figure 1).

Qiu Jin is often seen as spokesperson of China's first women's literacy movement. She piloted and edited the *Newspaper for Chinese Women* 中国女报, a periodical without precedence in Chinese publication. *Newspaper for Chinese Women* was a flashpoint in the rise of "literary feminism" at the end of the nineteenth century, a phenomenon marked by increased accessibility to colloquial fiction, the consolidation of female literary communities, and the rise of print forms for the public that all helped create the conditions for the fomentation of the radical nationalist feminisms and feminist nationalism of the first decade of the twentieth century. Tying her efforts in periodical reading culture to the women's rights movement, Qiu Jin advocated for a discerning literacy, the right to read, and the political protection of reading materials in such polemics as "On the First Issue of Chinese Women's Newspaper 《中国女报》发刊词," "Admonishment to (My) Sisters 敬告姊妹们" and "Admonishment to China's Twenty Million Women 敬告中国二万万女同胞."

Qiu Jin's literacy/women's rights campaign carried over into her fiction, in which women's agency is modeled as a utopian way of living with books. Books serve as instruments of mobilization but only by remaining unnamed: introduced to her readers with the intimacy of acquaintanceships, books coordinate relationships rather than actually change minds. This chapter will argue that Qiu Jin's women's movement fashioned a bibliotopia shielded against the possibility that books lose their attributed ideological potency when people really read them through, against the possibility that ideas borrowed from the writers of other nations sometimes wobble, against the possibility that reading communities sometimes lose their energies and disband. In this bibliotopia there can be no near-misses in the interaction order. Qiu Jin's social-utopian novel, *The Stones of the Jingwei Bird*, will become the grounds of our study of this kind of investment in reading, which I call "bibliographic activism." Bibliographic activism redefines the fundamental logics of Qiu Jin's literacy campaign and its sponsorship of Western learning in the early Republican period. Bibliographic

activism also clarifies Qiu Jin's transnational engagement with America, bookended by the mistakes over Stowe and her ultimate disavowal of America's authority in women's rights. Like Washington Irving's oblique engagement with China, Qiu Jin's uses of America and American literature in her writing compel meditations on choices not taken. By opting not to study abroad in America as she had originally intended in a last-minute and nearly inexplicable change of heart Qiu Jin let America remain bibliographic, only as real as its most effective book.

The historicist and book theoretical reading of Qiu Jin's works are related through an early Republican Chinese feminism that let in Euro-American literature in shouty, yet intentionally limited, ways. My readings raise two larger questions for both China studies and transnational studies: how bibliographic fantasies might alter the *grand récit* of China's transnational textual modernity, and how transnational studies of literary exchange can accommodate a sociology of literature that *comes from within* literature. My concept of the sociology of literature draws from the recent work on book history, print culture and media theory across the disciplines that have tried to find a more capacious theory of the book that can hold in the same thought the behavior of books as things, books as communicative containers, and books as placeholders for ideological fantasies. In China Studies, scholars have emphasized the vital and even fateful role of books and reading in China's modernization while recuperating a space for forgotten reading and book practices that implicitly demand alternative national heuristics and experiential horizons. Lydia Liu's work, for example, has the contestation of sovereignties in nineteenth and early twentieth century between China and the West come down to a handful of books—Wheatley's *International Law*, Arthur Smith's *Chinese Characteristics*, Lu Xun's *Ab Q*, etc.—and their problematic translingual and transnational work. On the other side, looking to punctuate the historical outcome of textual interactions between China and the West, scholars have tried claim a space for a history of the book and a history of reading in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century China isomorphic from influences from the

West. Joan Judge's work on everyday print media in the early Republican period and Cynthia Brokaw's recovery of Qing reading culture, book publishing and book collecting are examples of this type of intervention. Might the thinginess of literature and its role as mediator *within books* add an additional dimension to the discourse of China's translingual modernity? A similar thought experiment exists for the reader-inside-fiction versus the readers of fiction. Several literary historians have addressed the problem of the reader in turn-of-the-century Chinese novels, most of them dealing with reform.²²⁵ Amy Dooling, for example, observes the feminist utopian fantasy, "for all [its] high-minded rhetoric about the instructional value of the so-called new fiction" consistently reveals an ambivalence toward with the figure of the reader "whose political desires may be as easily diverted or dissipated as activated through their fictional wish-fulfillment."²²⁶ Because of the contingency of the reader to whom the novel has to appeal, the genre of the feminist utopian fantasy can be either subversive or conservative. This changes the way we approach the narratology of reform. But again, aside from the real reader, over whom the author has limited sway, how do we theorize the reader inside the fiction who can respond to the books inside that fiction in an entirely controlled fashion?

Amongst scholars of the book in comparative and theoretical frameworks, we have seen many efforts to puzzle out, both with and against the grain of history, the sociological *work* that books do, in being read out loud, translated, passed around, plumbed for significances or simply admired for their bindings. From D.F. Mackenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1984) and Roger Chartier's "Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader" (1992) to, more recently, Rita Felski's *The Uses of Literature* (2005) and Leah Price's "From the History of a Book to a 'History of the Book'" (2009), theory has tried to account for the undeniably magical technologies of the book in such a way that also does not collapse the unfathomable depths of the reader, and vice versa. The often mutually-contesting studies of book history, reading communities and fiction weigh

in differently on how to give dialectical and interpenetrative agencies to the reader and the book. Yet intertextuality theory (the study of books mentioned within books), reader response theory (the study of the agentic relationship between real readers and books), reception theory (the study of reading events and interpretive communities that surround books) and even new materialism (the study of books as things that demand their own logic of circulation) have yet to join forces to articulate the phenomenon wherein books make up their own reading communities and stage their own sequences for the appearance and uses of new books. What sociologies of transnational literature has yet to survey, in other words, is a book's own sociology of literature—its political investments in the existence of other books “out-there,” and its own stipulations for how that bigger set of books will act on a hypothetical reader. An assessment of Qiu Jin's works can address this absence, for in it, books do double duty: first as props (and just props) that propel the characters from inaction to action, and then as metonyms of other worlds that can only make cameo appearances as book objects because the novel that houses them must be worldly, yet ideologically intact.

Taking In Books

During the time Qiu Jin spent in Hunan, a few years before she decided to study in America, changed her mind and went to Japan instead, and a decade before she was executed by decapitation by the Qing state, she authored a seven character quatrain called “Du Shu Kou Hao (读书口号)” or “Motto for Reading” (~1894):

Rustling the foliage, the east wind ascends the stairs,
 东风吹绿上阶除,
 The garden is desolate and the night moon, pale
 花院萧疏夜月虚
 With an all-consuming wish to become the *mai wang*
 侬亦痴心成脉望,

I wait from the bower like a long bookworm waiting for a life of books
画楼长蠹等身书²²⁷

The poem “Motto for Reading” has no such motto in it, much less a rally to read (in *kou hao*’s 口号 stronger sense). The lines do not so much rile up their audience to take up reading as they narrate rather quietly the rhythms and aesthetics of waiting. The ultimate line, “画楼长蠹等身书,” literally “from the bower, the long bookworm waits for body/book,” deploys in its last two characters a parataxis extreme even by the standards of Chinese syntax. “*Shen shu* (身书),” body (and) book, functions as an intensely abbreviated noun that designates the state of total immersion, a state in which body (or life) is ontologically continuous with, and inconceivable without, books. The lyrical subject who waits (等) for body/book (身书) can already claim the status of “widely read” but desires an absorptive reading coextensive with the life of the body itself. It is for this state of bibliophication that the lyrical speaker of “Motto for Reading” bides her time, not as an elite lady or a student of literature, however, but as a mythical bookworm “*du* 蠹” called the “*mai wang* 脉望” (In 3). First recorded in Duan Chengshi’s *Scattered Records of the Setting Sun*, (段成式 • 西阳杂俎), the *mai wang* is a fabulous creature that chews through books specifically looking for the word “*xian*” (仙), or “spirit/deity,” with no interest in anything else.²²⁸ A library ravaged by a *mai wang* will have all the pages and writings intact with the exception of “*xian*.” The *mai wang* spends its entire life filling his body with this particular text so that it may achieve nirvana. According to a story from the *Jia Huangzhong Book of the Annals of Song* 宋史 • 贾黄中传, if a scholar taking the imperial examinations can be lucky enough to ingest one of these bookworms, literally fattened on text, he will bypass examinations and directly achieve the status of *zhuang yuan*, or highest honor. For the *mai wang* bookworm, then, the elite concept of “*shen/shu*” or “body/book” takes no loftier form than a purpose-driven intake, the benefits of which can pass from body to body.

The bookworm waiting for the body/book state constitutes a bibliophile's private fantasy. The bookworm does not know which books it will come across or which books will supply its need, indeed if they will come at all. It can only hope for this event, hope that it will ingest portions of these books, and then wait to transfer the tangible effects that come from ingesting books on to someone else. A stranger in the future—someone that in Chinese might be called a “*hou lai ren* 后来人”—will in his or her turn eat the *mai wang* who has taken from the books exactly what it searches for. Untrue to its title, “Motto for Reading” actually describes a deferred bibliographic “occasion” that has none of the immediacy and clearness of purpose that its self-identified genre of writing requires. Thus while the appearance of a poem called “Motto for Reading” by a writer who so frequently advocated feminist literacy in Chinese nationalism may not surprise, its premises give us pause. Written so early in Qiu Jin's career, this poem's internal inconsistencies press us to consider how she actually envisioned the feedback loop between a body of books that are yet-to-come and incorporative readers who get their reading second-hand, and who are themselves yet-to-arrive.

A decade later, “Motto for Reading” took its prose form in *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*, Qiu Jin's half-finished final work and most belletristic literacy campaign. A thinly veiled memoir, *Stones* (1906-1907) chronicles the life of Huang Jurui, an allegorical heroine who leaves the vicissitudes of home and travels to a faraway place where many unopened books await her. Only half a book itself, *Stones* narrates a life thrown into action halfway by books, a life that, by way of promoting reading culture, converts the energy from reading into private and public realities. Since the production of *Stones* ended when Qiu Jin died, scholars tend to regard it as a distillation of her deepest desires for feminist and nationalist reform. I want to disaggregate the novel from the biography to argue that, aside from the “obvious” work of political mobilization (envisioned in a distinctly transnational

setting in this novel) *Stones* doubles as a conspectus of China's bibliographic horizon at the beginning of the twentieth century. Political action is mediated through the availability of reading materials: books are chanced upon; books initiate and define friendships; books are yearned for and withheld. What is read (or will be read) defines a feminist revolution that vies not only against historical inertia but other bodies of reading materials that conspire to prevent such processes.

Originally intended as installments in *Newspapers for Chinese Women*, *Stones* came to an abrupt stop in the July of 1907 when Qiu Jin was arrested at Datong School for plotting an insurrection against the Qing government. She was tortured and, shortly after that, beheaded. She conceived of the idea for *Stones* during her stint in Japan, which ended with her falling out with Utako Shimoda, the founder of Jissen Women's College in Japan. Qiu Jin planned for twenty chapters and had them written out in rhymed verse (like the chapter titles that together form a poem in Cao Xueqin's *Story of the Stone*).²²⁹ From the chapter headings in *Stones*, we can see an arc of narrative from a country in the slumber of political injustice (睡国昏昏妇女痛埋黑暗狱) to the collaborative anarchy that will lead to the founding of a New Republic (同心革毙政大建共和).

An initial reading of the trajectory of the protagonist's political self-awareness will yield an all-too-familiar story of early Republican feminist activism: the narrator lambasts the "savage book collections 野蛮书籍" that are designed to "bind and oppress women 束缚女子" by those who "desire that women do not read 欲女子不读书."²³⁰ She then turns the complaint into a palindrome and makes the ends of male oppression into the original cause of oppression: "because women do not read books 只因女子不读书," they remain oblivious to nation's decline. Such outrages exaggerate the state of affairs for women through a fabrication: for bourgeois families like Huang Jurui's would not have denied their daughters access to books. Quite the opposite: she would have been groomed to be extremely well-read (as the depictions of our heroine prove.) This reductive

version of the state of affairs corroborates the novel's insistence on China's historically undifferentiated oppression of women. "Women have never participated in learning," Qiu Jin generalizes, "because reading has always been limited to men 女子从来不使学，读书专重是男身。"²³¹ Her China itself is a stereotype as well, allegorized in the novel as the nation of Hua Xu 华胥国.²³² Its characteristics are borrowed without modification from nineteenth century Anglo-American portrayals of China as sleeping and thus historically inactive, fallen out of history. *Stones* represents one of the earliest domestications of that discourse in these lines: "[Hua Xu Guo is] known domestically as the slumbering country, known abroad as the slumbering country 明间称为睡国，外国称为睡国。"²³³ Reading and waking from backwardness and insularity become the same act. For instance, the stirrings for freedom in Huang Jurui and (by extension, the reader) implode in chapter two, when her father Huang Gong inevitably makes his condescending question, "why should women even read? (女孩子又读什么书呢)"²³⁴ This piece of condescension becomes the challenge that sets off a rebellion in Huang Jurui that eventually sees her leaving her home and arranged marriage for study abroad, ostensibly to read the books that her father had written out of her experiential horizon. As she embarks on a self-prescribed exile from Hua Xu Guo, the omniscient narrator launches into an encomium of a philosophical wave from Europe and America: "Recently I've seen Europe and America; many books talk about right to freedom, as well as equality of men and women, natural born talents are not given based on interest or power 近日得观欧美国，许多书说自由权，并言男女皆平等，天赋无偏利与权。"²³⁵

Stones' open endorsement of Western texts and discourses supplements with a voice that is feminist, though no less compromised for that fact, the now-old story that China looked to the West for its ideological shortcomings at the turn of the twentieth century. This is exacerbated by two poems that Qiu Jin wrote back-to-back during the time she spent in Beijing that shortly followed her

Japan trip: “Sighing for China” (“叹中国”) and “I Envy Anglo-American Citizens”

(“我羨歐美人民啊”). These poems set up the two nations as a contrastive pair: China lacks what is abundantly present in Anglo-America (a deep tradition of freedom, upward mobility, pursuit of happiness, etc) because it has worn down its own spirit (把这神圣遗裔尽磨削.)²³⁶ Huang Jurui’s trajectory from oppressed reader of Chinese literature to hopeful purveyor of Western literature would seem to demonstrate the lop-sided transnationalism in the author’s plan for national reform, a line of thinking richly explored in Qingyun Wu’s reading of this novel in *Female Rule in Chinese and English Literary Utopias*. In Wu’s analysis of *Stones*, “Qiu Jin has Westernized traditional Chinese utopian discourse,” by “express[ing] a modern Chinese consciousness influenced by Western humanism and feminism.”²³⁷ Overreaching in his paraphrase, Wu strings together the novel’s plot points as follows: “By reading new novels, these... women learn that Westerners have observed the women of Hua Xu Guo being treated as toys for men. These women then turn to Europe and America for new ideas; they come to believe that individual freedom, sexual equality and human rights are endorsed by Heaven, indiscriminately to women and men.”²³⁸ The plot does not support Wu’s summary, which confuses the novel’s gestures with its completed actions. *Stones* suggests women should read “new novels,” never that they have read these new novels. It also urges women to look to Europe and America, but never indicates that what happens next in the novel has anything to do with their having looked in that direction. The grammatical tense of completion has no place in the book’s calls to reading. Wu fills in what is not there in the novel in order to bring *Stones* into a comparative utopias study that draws attention to the global imaginative uses of other’s people literature to undergird feminist utopianism. But this critical intervention on Wu’s part intended to equalize the playing field by asserting that China, too, had radically gendered spaces in its utopian fiction, runs the risk of totalizing the narrative of Western Literature as an enabler of Chinese utopian experimentation. His transnational reading of *Stones* converges with the discourse,

by now familiar to China-studies scholars, that the introduction of foreign reading materials precipitated national reform.

Because the evidence of Western-trained self-deprecation seems fairly conclusive in *Stones*, it is extremely difficult to resist over-reading bibliographic citation. Because *Stones* was composed in 1907 after Qiu Jin's return from Japan, after she rejected Japan's mediation of a Western discourse of Chinese inferiority, however, it cannot fall neatly within the paradigm of a Western-texts-inspired Chinese modernity. We must assess these citations differently. Under conventional reception theory models, Qiu Jin's admiration for Western books naturally could indicate a committed program of implementation—as if thinking about those works, even endorsing those works, meant direct use. Even new historicist arguments that China “transculturated” those texts or “subverted through misuse”—in short made Western texts their own political property and tool—still operate under the model of thinking-as-using. These historical and scholarly models do not consider other types of affect that one can have toward books, or the possibility that people promote books to energize themselves or their linguistic spaces and then promptly forget about them. Qiu Jin is irrefutably optimistic about foreign books, but as we saw in the last chapter, optimism in literary exchange is an affect that challenges the notion that we stay committed to the things we feel optimistic about, at least committed enough to use them in any substantive way. In order to discuss the deeply troubled paradigm of Western books in China's modernity, we must first acknowledge, and then deconstruct, the deep sense of optimism that Qiu Jin feels for other people's books.

Optimism, to use Lauren Berlant's definition, is “the force that moves you out of yourself and into the world in order to bring closer the satisfying something that you cannot generate on your own but sense in the wake of a person, a way of life, an object, project, concept, or scene.”²³⁹ The affect of optimism converges with expectation that “nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way.”²⁴⁰ Optimism is therefore a preemptive structure of

feeling: we orientate toward the thing or event that is about to become close, whose closeness we sense at this juncture will have made the orientation worthwhile. Optimism is also a deictic structure of feeling that shuns over-specification: we sense that “something”/”this thing” will make a “difference” in “just the right way.” Extolling other people’s books in settings where we have truly limited access to them shares in optimism’s emphasis on imminence and proximity, interobjectivity and imprecision. In the first decade of the twentieth century, very few books from the transatlantic world touching on women’s equality would have been made available through translation and reviews.²⁴¹ Their existence and influence would come from hearsay. And yet hearsay is exactly what sustains bookish optimisms as a collective practice. Foreign books in the abstract become things everyone can agree upon to signal one’s fluency in the language of reform. They are imaginary objects that reinforce programs of change that are already in place but that anticipate a broader circulation.

Bookish optimism’s temporal idiosyncrasies first help us better describe Qiu Jin’s transnationalism, marked by her near-encounter with the US and her disavowed encounter with Japan. For Qiu Jin, the instrumentalization of other people’s bodies of knowledge will produce the right kind of outcome, and, as one already knows what that outcome needs to be, the exposure becomes just a formality, a way of orienting oneself and holding oneself to account to the activism that was planned beforehand. Therefore *acquisition* can remain an unexercised option. Qiu Jin’s conversation with her mentor, Fanzi 繁子, on the eve of her departure for the US illustrates precisely this logic. Fanzi asked Qiu Jin “What do you want to study in America 秋瑾，你到美国留学想学什么啊?”²⁴² Upon hearing that her student wished to study law, Fanzi suggested she would be better off studying the issue of women (“还是好好地研究一下女性问题吧”), and especially economic independence, citing America as a country with a strong sense of rights

(“美国是一个人权意识非常强的国家”). Qiu Jin’s rebuttal offers one of the clearest visions of her sense of the limitations of reforming women’s rights through a transnational approach.

The problem of the household (which in the context is taken to mean a woman’s social and economic roles in it) is a complicated one, related to traditional morals and habits, etc., and entangled with many other factors. Even if I were to study it, there’s no way to begin to make improvements in reality and that’s why I believe there’s no point in my learning and studying it. In my country, one has to be wrinkled and gray to gain the respect of others. [In the time it takes to] study this problem and then call for its realization I will have become conservative myself. I am thinking of my present self. I only want to do something that will cause men to cry out and sigh.

家庭问题是个很复杂的问题，牵涉到传统观念、习惯等等许多互相纠缠在一起的因素。即使是对其进行了研究，但要具体地进行改善却在现实中家庭问题是个很复杂的问题，牵涉到传统观念、习惯等等许多互相纠缠在一起的因素。即使是对其进行了研究，但要具体地进行改善却在现实中无从入手，所以我觉得自己要去学习研究这一问题没什么意义。

在我的国家，只有成了满脸皱纹，一头白发的老人，才开始能受到人们的尊重。

研究完这个课题然后呼唤着要去实现它，到那个时候恐怕我自己也变成一个保守人物了。我考虑的只是现在的我，只想做能让男人们惊叫叹息的事。²⁴³

An embodied discourse, women’s rights has a temporal horizon that does not fit into a transnational course of reform. Going abroad might give her a thorough education on the matter—Qiu Jin never disputes Fanzi on that—but the process will in effect stop her from making an impact

as a young woman. Unlike law, women's issues and women's rights (in Qiu Jin's accounting) depend on an acting body that races against time and the inclination towards acquiescence that aging brings. Moreover, because the issue of women is imbricated in culturally-specific habits of mind and body, studying it abroad muddies the waters while setting an example makes the fastest impact. Therefore Qiu Jin idealizes herself a body thrown into action, a body will do *something*, and what exactly she wishes to do to surprise and show up the opposite gender remains unspecified. Presentist to the verge of obsession, Qiu Jin upends the whole teleology of the study abroad. The difference she thinks she can make cannot come at the completion of intellectual exposure, but has to be made now before the process of exposure deactivates her. Qiu Jin does not wish to study women's rights; she wishes to *be* women's rights. It is after this line of contemplation that Qiu Jin announces her decision to drop America and go to Japan instead (“以前我一直是想到美国去留学，就在不久前还是这样想的。但现在想法改变了，想到东京去留学了。”²⁴⁴ Although we can never know for sure what caused Qiu Jin's abrupt change-of-plans (this exchange says nothing of Japan as having better offerings for feminist education), this episode suggests that Qiu Jin went with whatever might get her quicker to the performance of something she had planned beforehand, a course that least depletes the energy of the present.

Later, Qiu Jin returns from Japan and announces that Japan didn't offer much on women's right and guesses that America wouldn't have either: “going to Japan was already so disappointing. I'm afraid going to America would have produced the same result 来到日本都这样让人失望，去美国怕也是同样的结果。”²⁴⁵ Haiping Yan explains Qiu Jin's final falling out with the Japanese Jissen Women's College as a lesson in the hard bargains of transnationalism. Qiu Jin leaves Japan after her disillusioning arguments with Hattori Unokochi who, to quote Haiping Yan, “troped the cognitive capital of Western modernity and the primary scene of its Chinese inscription authorized

by the imperial state as ‘Chinese’ and thereby, “prefigur[ing] the kind of ‘nationalist ideology’”... that became definable in the 1930s as the “passage to Chinese modernity,” at once “derivatively” Western and “indigenously” Chinese.”²⁴⁶ Within this version of Chinese textual modernity, triangulating Western knowledge through Japan becomes a coerced acknowledgment of a racialized “national essence,” and fidelities to other people’s texts become, ultimately, infidelities to one’s own understanding of what is “Chinese.”²⁴⁷ Qiu Jin’s backtracking is then clearly a case of what Berlant calls “cruel optimism,” in which fantasies of change turn into programs of self-deprecation. The simple act of admiring Western literature compels a series of painful negotiations that walk the fine line between political awakening and political self-defeatism, which has special resonance in the context of Sino-Japanese relations in the early 20th century and its politics of shame.

Qiu Jin’s inclusion of the US in her disappointment, however, indicates that disappointment was always going to figure in her transnationalisms, actual or projected. Like the instrumentalism of the mai wang bookworm, her activism that displaces its bodies of knowledge in other nations has little place in it for what happens *afterwards*. Its energy derives from acting on expectation, not having it met. (The Chinese word for “disappointment,” 失望, which literally means “the loss of expectation,” drives this point home). This kind of optimism is “cruel” in its more abstract sense as a description of the irreconcilable temporalities of social fantasy and social reality. Reality not only introduces us to the power differentials of bookish optimisms, it robs us of the ability to be optimistic for any extended period of time. In fiction, however, Qiu Jin can use books to create a bounded optimism, one that makes reference to better worlds and better ways of living in them without having to experience the inevitable anticlimax of verification.

Like Stones Dropt in the Sea

As its choice of title indicates, *The Stones of the Jingwei Bird* shuns the normative temporality of social change. In the myth of the Jingwei bird, the young daughter of the emperor Yandi is drowned

in the East Sea and comes back as a bird that ceaselessly drops stones into the sea in order to fill it up. The sea scoffs that she won't be able to accomplish this task. Jingwei retorts that she will. As a moralizing tale, the Jingwei bird filling the sea exemplifies a woman's long-suffering persistence in eliminating the overwhelming entity that silenced her. This fits with the polemics of Qiu Jin's novel. As a parable, however, the Jingwei bird encapsulates the novel's fascination with incremental changes that may not make a difference at all and its romantic investment in deferral. Despite all its indications that it is "going somewhere," and accruing energy for anarchy and reconstitution along the way, *Stones'* aesthetics and its unfinishedness (of course, purely a result of circumstance) privilege and dilate, like "Motto for Reading" and like the myth of the Jingwei bird, the rhythms and aesthetics of "getting there."

For all the elegiac pleas for reading and equality in the novel, reading has actually very little to show for itself in the way of change-over-time. Books merely adorn whatever social potential the characters had in the first place and so remain as things. The ontology of books is most clearly seen in the protagonist Huang Jurui, a character invented as a response to the type of reading that makes no difference. Her first appearance in the novel (discounting the allegorical account of her birth) is occasioned by her father Huang Gong receiving as a gift a case of new books from his son's teacher, Zhu Po (竹坡). Delighted by the newfangled books (新奇书) and poems (新诗句), which he has been collecting (搜罗) like curios, Huang Gong calls his young daughter into the library.²⁴⁸ This scene transforms Huang Jurui into a reading subject by activating her sense that there are more books for the having than her cloistered life has suggested. But it is not the case that the father regards books as toys (curios) while the daughter treats them as the stuff of life itself. Not quite a foil to her father's unearned and undeserved connoisseurship, Huang Jurui's own reading differs from his not in kind, but in merit. If he greedily gathers exciting new books into his repertoire, or uses books to decorate desirable social situations, so does she. Working outside of a depth model of

reading, Huang Jurui's relationship with books also contends itself with the "surface-level" practices of self-formation. After Zhu Po convinces Huang Gong to let her read a little, Huang Jurui, "filled with giddiness, ever after devoted her whole heart to reciting books, and time passed like her galloping heart 鞠瑞闻知喜气扬。此后用心勤诵读，惊心如驰是年光。"²⁴⁹ No sooner has her readership begun has it already complete: "In the blink of an eye she has turned fourteen. Her stomach filled with the gems of reading she produces writings like brocade 转眼已交十四岁，琳琅满腹锦成章。"²⁵⁰

The narrative itself is far more interested occasioning proximities between books and people and the changes to sociality this adjacency might produce, as evidenced in its scenes of therapeutic bonding that follow reading, rather than reading itself. The narrator stops in the middle of Huang Jurui attacking books (攻书史) to announce the arrival of the beautiful and accomplished Liang Xiaoyu 梁小玉, as if she arose out of Huang Jurui's bookish undertakings, instantiating them. Liang Xiaoyu is taken to Jurui's private study, the Pavilion of the Perching Phoenix 栖凤楼, where she sees "by the window a bookshelf filled with writing instruments, poetry and prose, and a number of chests of books on the side 窗前放一书架，满列文具诗书，傍侧数口书箱。"²⁵¹ There they share their life stories and common plight, readying themselves for rebirth, as suggested in the name of the library. Reading books together, rejecting books together, rejoicing over ideologically affirmative books together, and anticipating the arrival of more of such books together—these homosocial activities between Huang Jurui and Liang Xiaoyu in the novel far exceed in number any attestation to books' influences or revelations of their contents. *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* reads like a half-hearted bildungsroman and a half-hearted exposé of female illiteracy. The protagonists are simultaneously depicted as deprived of books, poised for the arc of self-development that reading brings, and consummately well-read, their specialness signaled by their bibliophilia. The

contradiction is never resolved because Qiu Jin uses books as narrative devices that bring the right kinds of people together; whether they have been read or not is beside the point in these repeated demonstrations of their social potential. The utopian island Huang Jurui and Liang Xiaoyu are bound for is pale reward compared to the utopian sociality of literature that consumes the plot before they ever get there.

Stones' granting of books roles that are prominent, but neither close nor deep, has to do with the logics of self-activation that Qiu Jin endorsed. Like her contemporary Liang Qichao, Qiu Jin saw the problem of books in China as a problem of activation. China has an unlimited source of texts; what is missing is a detonator. In the preface to *Stones*, Qiu Jin tips in this thesis of unrealized potential: “even though [we have] all kinds of book collections, various forms of rights and happiness, sadly [we] do not have the language to uncover their significances 虽有各种书籍，各种权利，各种幸福，苦文字不能索解。”²⁵² *Stones* is a catalog of these books. At least half of its main text containing allusions to Chinese classics, a short list of which includes *History of the Three Kingdoms* (三国志), *Annals* (史记), *Lao Zi* (老子), *Mencius* (孟子), *The Book of Han* (汉书), *Xun Zi* (荀子), *Zhuang Zi* (庄子), *Lie Zi* (列子), *The Companion to the Spring and Fall Annals* (左传), *A New Account of Tales of the World* (世说新语), *Han Fei Zi* (韩非子), and the lesser-known *Annals of the South* (南史), *The Ode to Higher Law* (天法颂), *Book of Hermeneutics* (索隐), *The Happenings of the Kai Yuan Period* (开元天宝遗世), *The Analects of Yi* (易传), *The Nine Books of Qu Yuan* (屈原九章), *Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom* (大智度论), and *Plum Blossom Hill* (梅花岭记),²⁵³ not to mention countless obscure poems. Far from lacking the books, rights and happiness that the rhetoric of *Stones* would seem to grant to the West, what China really wants for is a critical curatorship that turns into activism. Short in critical energy, “scholars [who would] study [the discourse of] freedom so as to spread women’s rights are few and far between

求学者，研究自由以扩张女权者，尚寥寥无几。”²⁵⁴ (Notice here the absence of a causal correlation between closely studying discourses freedom and promoting it, which is presented as a foregone conclusion. In the novel also the didactic message—women should read more to throw off the yoke of their bondage and create a new nation of gender equality—cannot be diluted by the books that the readers and the narrator have yet to crack open.) These premises ally Qiu Jin’s novel with Liang Qichao’s *An Introduction to Qing Scholarship* 梁启超 • 清代学术概论, which accommodates new works from Europe and America from the position of a longstanding promise to revive the rigor of critical work on obscure Chinese texts. In Liang’s proposal, cross-identification with Western texts is a highly contingent mode of acknowledgment—contingent because the appropriability and usability of any model of reform that comes from literature has to be gauged within a critical apparatus in the host literature.²⁵⁵

Name-dropping foreign books to stimulate all-around literariness makes a kind of intertextuality that no current theory of intertextuality addresses. Surprisingly, intertextuality studies have not considered cases in which other people’s books are enlisted in the creation of a *disposition*. Instead we might turn to cognitivist approaches to reading that happens within literature for an aerobic, rather than content-based, model of influence. Qiu Jin’s social investment in literature resonates with what Michael Tondre calls “diffusive reading.” Against indictments that literary characters’ acts of reading fail to make a difference in their choices, “diffusive reading” describes the “prodigal acts of reading could...give rise to more *roundabout* routes of influence in the future.”²⁵⁶ Something magical happens when people are paired with books, even if the content of the books they read gets them no closer to their own ethical or political goals. Instead of regarding the books in books as metonyms of specific philosophical orientations to which their readers must be held accountable, we abdicate our power to say how readers might use their readings toward their own ends. Qiu Jin’s unwillingness to name names in her laudation of “Anglo-American books” can also

be explained by a systems theory approach to narratology. David Wellbery, for example, argues that literature has to represent non-actualizable possibilities. In order to continue to operate as systems of meaning, narratives need things that point to an “outsideness” that could have entered fully, but did not. This narratological need to signal contingency does not come out of the technical demands of realism but rather out of the fact that narratives, like all systems, have to reduce the complexity of their environment in order to function—and, crucially, have to reflect on the fact that these choices were made. Books in *Stones* also represent experiential possibilities that have to remain underexploited, except insofar as the excitement over prospect of their existence can be exploited for other purposes. “Read Beecher (Harriet Beecher Stowe),” the narrator rallies, “and then rise up! Rise up! Women everywhere achieve a speedy victory!! 速振! 速振!! 女界其速振!!!”²⁵⁷ The political self-mobilization of women requires access to books, but it marches onward and forward regardless of what those books might contain. Even if her hypothetical readers have different reactions to and take different courses of action as a result of the books they are asked to encounter, the novel does not opt to narrate them, and therefore remains unperturbed by the introduction of new reading materials. Hence, reading materials appear as both outstanding and recessive. Finally, the inherent strangeness of idealizing equality can shed some light on Qiu Jin’s championship of the existence of an “equality corpus,” which she shares with many other twentieth-century Chinese writers, and her reluctance to say more about it. Referring to equality as a body of work is a rhetorical expedient that tends to mask the incoherence of equality itself. Far from a monolithic concept that one only has to learn about to understand and implement, equality in “Anglo-American” books of the kind that Qiu Jin was citing (Mill, Stowe, Bellamy) was proposed under wildly conflicting guises. But, even closer to the point, Qiu Jin monumentalizes “Anglo-American books” as sources of the discourse of equality while her added qualifier—[in these books] talent/human potential is a disinterested force 天赋无偏利与权—contradicts that very assertion.

In this accounting, which also serves as a recurring motif in the novel, natural talent, like God-given genius, can occupy anyone but not everyone, thus creating a fair—and perfectly acceptable—social inequality that can replace binaristic gender inequality. The extreme unevenness of discursive equality explains why Qiu Jin merely cited it as a vague body of work in a move that underscores but at the same time muffles the prescriptive authority of an exclusively Western discourse of women's rights. Bringing books in with too much specificity also means going too far along with them.

It bears repeating one last time that books appearing in books is tricky business in the context of East-West encounters. Even dropping a name is risky as books represent a choice, an allegiance, and a set of actions. Qiu Jin understood deeply the problems that can arise when books are advertised in books and *Stones* is a response to, rather than a symptom of, her anxieties. For all its unfinishedness and transparency of plot, *Stones* had another goal besides adding to the emergent genre of the feminist utopian novel. In rushing to finish it in time for the first anniversary of *Newspaper for Chinese Women*, Qiu Jin was making a very subtle calculus: how to write a book that empowers its heroines with new books without staging their deference to books newly available from the Euro-American world. Part of that subtlety lay in *Stones*' overwhelming similarity to the work it felt botched that calculus, the work to which it imagined itself as a rebuttal: Haitian Duxiaozi's 海天独嘯子1905 novella *The Stone of the Goddess Niüwa* 女娲石. Qiu Jin's work shares with Haitian Duxiaozi's (a male writer) the three-character "Stone" title (女娲石/精卫石) that makes reference to the more famous three-character Stone novel, Cao Xueqin's *Story of Stone* 石头记. The intertext to *The Story of the Stone*, picked up and analyzed by David Der-wei Wang in his study of fin de siècle Chinese literature, puts the two feminist "Stones" in conversation with the play on the limitations of change and agency in that novel's title.²⁵⁸ *The Story of the Stone* has since its publication raised questions about the openness and closedness of human endeavors, both internal to the plot and external to it (i.e. authorial power). Making reference to *The Story of the Stone* therefore

continues in this tradition of negotiating political intervention and the power of the writer within a more traditional cosmology in which things are pre-ordained. This is evidenced in both later Stone novels opening with heavenly deities plotting China's salvation. Other similarities abound. Still, while *Stones* borrowed the concept of a feminist bibliotopia from Haitian Duxiaozi, it jettisoned its orientation towards the use of literature. In the final argument of this chapter I want to show the divergences in narrating possible responses to Western books in early Republican reform literature, even amongst works of literature that practically look the same. The differences between the sociology of books *promoted within books* complicate the narrative of translingual modernity. Rather of the intellectual movement into which Chinese writers have to be situated, it is a phenomenon paradoxicalized by their very participation.

The Stones of the Goddess Niima, like its successor, conceived of feminist nationalism bibliographically and transnationally. The novel begins with a framing device that allegorizes Chinese feminism's transhistorical agency through the figure of a reader. "It is said that China had a female official named Qian Yifang 话说中国有个女史，性钱，名挹芳" who "in all her life loved reading books/histories 生平爱读些书史." Qian saw that her country was corrupt and weak and yet entirely unanxious, even though today, strong neighboring countries sing of carving it up and tomorrow, they will sing of conquest 见中国腐败危弱，好不担忧。旁边有强国，今日唱着瓜分，明日唱着压服." Qian also saw that "those with a patriotic sense have no real power, everyday talking of saving the country, all the times pushing for revolution, all empty chatter 虽有一般爱国志士，却毫没点儿实力。日日讲救国，时时倡革命，都是虚虚幌幌，造点风潮。"²⁵⁹ Frustrated and saddened, Qian makes a bibliographic intervention. One day, after casually reading "European histories," Qian pens a poem on women's role in self-strengthening as a tribute to the "Egyptian female ruler" she came across in her readings. The next day, the main ideas in the

poem are “published in *The Journal of Women*, becoming the stuff of international writing 做篇女子世界文，登载《女学报》上。”²⁶⁰ The article’s polemical argument that only women can save the nation angers the Empress who is subsequently convinced to erect an altar praying for such a woman savior to appear. On the third day of ritual invocations, the skies crack open with a boom and a large stone appears on the altar. No one can interpret its meaning until a female Daoist exclaims to the court, “the Nüwa stone has descended 女娲石下降。”²⁶¹

This quasi-mythological allegory of the powers of print culture frames the introduction of the heroine, Jin Yaose, the incarnation of this stone. Studying in the US after having studied in Japan, Jin Yaose is suddenly called back to her homeland out of a sudden sense that China’s state is daily declining, with extinction imminent (“见中国国势日非...灭亡祸害便在眼前。”)²⁶² After seeing the depravity and inanity of government officials, Jin hatches a plan to establish the Court of Heavenly Fragrance, a secret society whose members hijack the Confucian “three-obey” for a modern world. Instead of obeying the patriarchy, the women vow to 1.) educate themselves in modern political science, improve China’s science, arts and culture, and 2.) assert their independence from men. Their secret society narrative becomes science fiction as the women devise ways to procreate without relationships with men. An awkward mish-mash of novelistic genres and utopian thought-experiments, *Stones of the Goddess Nüwa* is only consistent in its optimism for reading and Western learning. In the final chapter, the true protagonist, Cui Dai, ponders the hard questions of East-West colonial confrontations: “why is it that humans prefer to war over peace and bliss? Why do those who already have a country wish to rob those of others? Why is it that killing and the robbing of countries can happen in the name of high civilization? And why is there no arbitrator in all this fighting and robbing? 为何世界的人，丢了太平安乐不享，定要寻战争？为何自己有了国，还要夺他人的国？为何能杀人、能夺国，便道是极文明？为何你争我夺

，全没一人判定曲直。”²⁶³ As if by divine intervention (again), a light appears in the sky prompting Cui Dai to reach for her shelf and grab two books: the Chinese 列女传 *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (~18th century BC) and the French *Histoire de Jeanne d'Arc* 法文《约翰亚尔德传》. Cui Dai tosses aside the Chinese book with a scoff—“Ach, ‘no need to read this’ 唉！这是用不着了”—and turns instead to the story of the “woman who saved her country 救国女子” in the French book.²⁶⁴ The example of Joan of Arc convinces Cui Dai to take on a more active role in reform.

Qiu Jin’s 1904 poem “Feeling the Times (II),” was not only her muted attribution to Stowe. It was also a condensed version of *Stones of the Goddess Nüwa*. “Feeling the Times” is the name of the opening chapter of *Stones of the Goddess Nüwa* (whose full title is “Feeling the Times: Calling for a Women Daoist Deity, Praying for a Female Hero to Contribute a Stone from the Heavens 感时势唤起女真人 祷英雌祭陨天空石”). The first line of Qiu Jin’s poem paraphrases the novel’s central conceit—asking Nüwa for another stone—and the third through fifth lines reprises the language of carving and imminent danger that appears in the first paragraph of the novel. In the way it summarizes the most recognizable features of Haitian Duxiaozi’s novel, “Feeling the Times” parodies Haitian Duxiaozi’s model for reform as other-dependent. Written as though from the perspective of his novel, the last line, “Unable to be the Mayflower, my heart breaks” takes on a less-than-generous implication: where Stowe’s novel succeeds in mobilizing its reading constituent, Haitian Duxiaozi’s fails. Less than two years later, Qiu Jin would proffer her counterexample in an outwardly similar and similar-sounding story. Haitian Duxiaozi’s novel features a heroine returned from a three-year stint in the US to found a feminist utopia; Qiu Jin’s novel, as we already know, features a heroine who does not exercise that option. Qiu Jin inverts the direction of Haitian Duxiaozi’s plot so that instead of women coming back to save the nation we have women who are about to light from it. The use of books in *Stones of the Goddess Nüwa* changes the relationship to

books from optimism to pedagogy and its dynamics of dominance/subordinance, superiority/inferiority. *Stones*, on the other hand, avoids any scenario in which admiration for Western books can become a preference over Chinese books or a lesson in their inadequacies. *Stones of the Goddess Numa* endorses the power of books but it hedges severely by supplementing the catalytic effects of reading with outright divine intervention. *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* rejects emplotments in the spiritual sphere and only begins that way as a form of genre-dressing.²⁶⁵ In the prologue, Wang Mu, the Empress Mother, witnesses the twin evils of gender inequality and anti-patriotic complacency in Hua Xu Guo and devises a plan to correct this. She assembles famous personages from Chinese history, spirits, heroes and heroines, and sends them forth into the world to be reincarnated for the overthrow of the “sleeping nation.” After they have dispersed, however, the narrator asks, “who has seen a deity ever save anyone 几曾见有个神仙佛救人?”²⁶⁶ After all “we all know that spirits, deities, and ghosts are all as insubstantial as wisps of clouds 明知道神仙佛鬼尽虚云.” The false start allows Qiu Jin to launch a diatribe against appealing to a higher power, citing its disastrous effects on women and the nation.²⁶⁷ Paring down the catalytic agents to nothing but citizens and their books, Qiu Jin reinstates the demographic dismissed in *Stones of the Goddess Numa*: the “persons with integrity and ideals 志士” who have been agitating for change. Instead of supernatural entities making wide-sweeping changes using newfangled ideas, Qiu Jin’s heroes make incremental contributions (per the logic of its title) by doing things that look exactly like reality.

In the way *Stones* stands in contrast to its peer, we can see that Qiu Jin objected to Haitian Duxiaozi’s economy of reform, one that simultaneously over-literalizes and undersells the power of the book, and understands utopia as infrastructure and not as potential. Qiu Jin fashions her own bibliotopia, but of course she does not pull off this off unproblematically or even elegantly. She, too, trips up on the unexpected antagonisms between reading and reform, namely the way reading

fires up revolutionary sentiments at the same time it suspends the body's obligations to the teleology of revolutionary time. In this novel for and about bibliophiles, the business of awakening a slumbering China and rising up against oppression feels tacked on in a story devoted to the exquisiteness (in manner and appearance) of young women who can appreciate a good book. The audience who look to them as role models must also read and take ownership of their reading, and then turn turn all that reading into a uniform action indifferent to variations in texts and readers.

The time that reading seems to open up does not include the alternate historical possibilities that such reading normally engenders; on the contrary, the better one reads the more quickly she fills the allegorical role for which she is intended. The female protagonists study abroad on a faraway island; they meet their male counterparts who initiate them into the “real revolutionary movement”; they agitate for change—all of these narrative developments that originally arise out of a wish to be next to the book inevitably supplant the open-endedness of reading with purpose and directionality. Haunting the novel is a traditional accounting in which well-read-ness and literary talent becomes capital in the marriage market and which must not be frittered away. The same bibliographic moments that amplify our characters become increasingly abbreviated in the novel until bookish sensibilities dwindle into epithets like “Peerlessly talented and erudite 高才博学人难及”²⁶⁸ that simply reinscribe them within a new typology of womanhood. So even while reading books and feeling optimistic about them occupies the delicious space of unclaimed time and experience, such activities must propel their actors toward the ends of womanly life where bookish optimism has no place. In the case of *Stones*, these activities must accrue to eventualities that, in the fullness of their logic, betray the tenuous fidelities between feminism and literacy. This is why the novel “resets” once Huang Jurui steels herself to study abroad and commence her revolutionary project. A new provocateur for literacy arrives on the scene—the servant Xiu Rong (秀荣)—and she repeats the plot of chapter two with an extended plea to her mistress Madame Bao to give her lady Liang

Xiaoyu (梁小玉) access to the books that matter. And Madam Bao response reiterates with slight modification Huang Gong's earlier dismissal: "Nonsense! Young ladies only need to know how to make poems and copy verses. Why do they need to study abroad?"

(“胡说！女儿家晓得吟诗作赋便了，还到什么外边留学?”)²⁶⁹ Returning to the scene of waiting for books restores to the novel a temporality that is not yet spoken for by the heuristics of revolution. We might even say that the novel uses the deferred and open-ended bibliographic fantasy of the poem “Motto of Reading” as a recurring plot point. However, such moments must, by definition, pass. Engagements with books that do not make any problematic changes can exist in the reform novel though only in the asymptotic trajectory of things that are about to happen.

Body/Book 身书

Martyrdom allowed Qiu Jin to stop waiting for the state of the body/book. In its incontrovertible political clarity, her execution swept clean all the contradictions of reading and agency, making her instantly synonymous with the books she was thought to have expounded. Qiu Jin's reputation has become international cultural knowledge, as evidenced in the contemporary painting in the Byzantine style by Greek artists Panagiota Koyvari and Gigas. *“The servant of Justice and student of History, the poet and teacher, Qiu Jin, beheaded by the barbarians”* is part of their modern update on the ecumenical tradition that commemorates famous personages or *prosopas* with their defining iconographies (Figure 7).

Complete with a saint's writing desk, two books, a scroll, discarded paper, as well as a book press, Gigas and Koyvari's hagiographic rendering of Qiu Jin reproduces her in the context of a medieval fascination with print using the visual iconography of St. John the Baptist.²⁷⁰ A few books and a book press adumbrate her “corpus”; a body of work becomes *her* body. Captured so succinctly in this painting, the hagiographic association of Qiu Jin with Western books (which we know they

are because the bindings, sizes, printing and writing instruments of Chinese books would look quite different than they do here) is ironic in light of what I have been arguing in this chapter.

And yet, upon second consideration, Koyvari and Gigas's portrait is a perfect *aperçu* to the bibliotopic politics Qiu Jin envisioned. As an overwriting of the hermeneutic, the prosopa shows the relations between Qiu Jin and her books as an *iconographic* one. The logic of iconography has a certain amount of explanatory power vis-à-vis Qiu Jin's sociology of literature in which recessively non-descript books represent quick, associative pathways to alternate discourses, economies and philosophies. They are thought things but they are also, and foremost, just things. Moreover, the proposa manages to achieve what Qiu Jin could not in her fiction: having the pregnant possibility of taking up reading and writing in the same instance as the heroic aftermath of reading and writing. By congealing the before and after in one timeless frame, the visual narration in this 21st century pseudo-icon bypasses the problems of teleology in reading-as-reform. Here, at long last, the aftereffects of reading exactly meet the requirements of activism, and nothing is left over.

Chapter 5

Bibliographic Habitats

“Reading does not keep what it acquires, or it does so poorly, and each of the places through which it passes is a repetition of the lost paradise”—Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

“American poetry is abhorrible”—Mr. Spring Fragrance

In her twin stories “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” and “The Inferior Woman,” Edith Maude Eaton (Sui Sin Far) measures cross-cultural communication in bibliographic terms. The already small Chinese-American world—a few pages populated by a handful of neighbors—is crammed with books—books on tables, books being written, books read out loud, books shipped from abroad—and materialized literature—literature recited, overhead, shared, telegrammed, given as advice. The world of the Spring Fragrance stories is so bibliographically small you cannot take a turn in it without running into a book or some form of materialized literature. If a poem is read, someone hears it. If someone hears it, a neighbor will be able to explain it. If a poem enters into someone’s mind it will be repeated and written down. If something interesting happens it has to be written

down. If it is written down it has to be shared. If a book exists it has to be seen, touched, brought up in conversation. The clash of cultures for which Eaton's stories are known manifests as a series of literary mediations. The *Odes of Chow* transmits Mrs. Spring Fragrance's opinions on love to her white friend Will Carman; a single line of Tennyson activates Mr. Spring Fragrance's most deep-seated fears about his wife's assimilation process; a monograph reveals to Mrs. Mary Carman the baselessness of her long-harbored disdain for working-class girls. Books and materialized literature do triple duty as the catalyst, medium and message of net change in one's opinion or prejudices about the other and thus provide the means by which cross-cultural communication can be differentiated by type and degree.

I want to conclude this dissertation by reflecting on the notion of literary contact, especially those moments of contact that we think occur in transnational contexts, through a new reading of the Mrs. Spring Fragrance stories, which have in the past been read in terms of transnationalism, but never for what it offers this interpretive paradigm. Rather than see in these two stories' metafictional elements simply an anxiety about authorship and readership in the way that literary historians often do when they discover that marginalized writers wrote about writing, or published books about books, we should see in them a contestation and paradoxicalization of the received wisdom that being near the literature of others is automatically to be transformed by it. "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" and "The Inferior Woman" offer rich grounds on which to ponder the dialectical relationship between subjects and the literature they come across, for probing the degree to which the distances between people and books are constructed, and for asking why cross-cultural communication may no longer be comprehensible without literary prostheses.

Simulations

According to Yoon Sun Lee, Asian American literary realism does not express itself as empiricism (e.g. in an argument such as “Eaton’s stories depict the real lives of Chinese immigrants in America”) but in the drive toward a dialectical simulation of a “closer world,” even in the absence of one. “Tak[ing] up the Lukácsian project of negating modernism’s negations,” the realism of Asian Americans exhibits itself as a “powerful longing for a totality: a world single though far-flung, intimate and complete, materially and meaningfully connected”.²⁷¹ To “recover the possibility of totality” against the disassociability and incommensurability of individual encounters that typify modernity, Asian American writers, Lee argues, restore to their fiction mediating connections and experiential continuities. In Eaton’s fiction, putting books and literature in people’s hands and across their paths achieves that kind of totality which pretends that subjects *cannot* encounter something without being affected by that encounter. By making her characters absolutely sensitive to the mediating powers of literature, by always having them do *something* with the literature they encounter—even if that “something” bears little resemblance to cultural understanding—Eaton would seem to model Lee’s (or, as Lee maintains, Lukács’) brand of realism. In “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” and “The Inferior Woman,” Eaton keeps fictional spaces “bibliographically tight,” as if to police against the possibility that a book might turn up and go unheeded, unnoticed, in short, not matter—in other words, against the possibility that someone might encounter a poem but make a partition around this encounter and simply carry on with life. Like any genre that aims to achieve totality through artificial (that is, literary) formal devices, these stories draw attention to those very artifices, asking whether books and people are actually closer together (in geographical and mental space alike) or whether bibliographic closeness is simply a generic trait in the fiction of cross-cultural experience.

“Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” first published in 1910, is known by literary scholars today for its belletristic opening conceit: a single line of English poetry activates a Chinese-American man’s most

deep-seated fears about his wife's assimilation process. But the meta-fiction does not end there. The entire story is premised on a misunderstanding that occurs between a husband and a wife when the husband overhears her quoting Tennyson's "In Memoriam"—"Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all"—to her neighbor, a Chinese-American girl in the throes of young forbidden love. This single line instantly animates the accidental eavesdropper, and Mr. Spring Fragrance becomes increasingly convinced that his wife may be considering adultery. Tennyson's line works as both proof and catalyst. While she is away on a trip, he telegrams her these same lines from "In Memoriam" in the hopes that they might dissuade her from acting on what he takes to be her adulterous desires. Only when she returns from her trip does he realize the extent of his mistake, a mistake which he makes moot not only by saying nothing about the Tennyson but also by disavowing, tout court, any involvement with "American poetry books."

"The Inferior Woman" takes as its subject the same family and the same leitmotifs. This time, however, it is a piece of Chinese poetry that initiates a chain of actions. Mrs. Spring Fragrance finds her young neighbor Will Carman woebegone in loving a girl who his mother objects to on the basis of class and she makes use of a stanza from the *Odes of Chow* to encrypt her progressive advice in love to the young man. Galvanized by this productive use of literature, Mrs. Spring Fragrance sets out to use the power of language to make things right. She records everything into a book that will show the prejudices upper-middle class women hold. Later on, Mrs. Spring Fragrance's book—an ethnographic study that has as its content the story that Eaton's readers just read for themselves—reveals to Mrs. Mary Carman the folly of her long-harbored disdain for working-class girls. In fact, Eaton risks an Orientalism to reveal Mrs. Spring Fragrance's belief in the mediational power of literature. She refers to the book she wants to write about Americans as "the immortal book." The obvious Orientalism of preferring to describe everything as "immortal" actually belies the fact that "immortal" is not used here synonymously with "undying" or "everlasting" but in the sense of being

commissioned by divine right, like an edict—a text guaranteed to produce an effect. Although Mrs. Spring Fragrance shrouds her book project with mysterious language, the document itself does not labor to subversively shift the assignation of inscrutability from the Chinese to the Americans, as one critic believes, but rather to make everything “scrutable” for her inscribed readers. Once it is read, the fictional reader will see the story as clearly as the literal reader. And indeed that is what happens at the end when Mary Carman listens to her flimsily disguised tale and concedes that she was wrong about Alice Winthrop and the rest of the “inferior women.” Books and literature make up the chief apparatus through which training for nationhood transpires; consequently, prejudice is cleared and understanding permitted to transpire because of their mediatory and triangulating powers.

The overmastering presence of scenes of writing, reading and misreading literature move the stories along, animating the protagonists by suddenly giving them purpose, reflection, offering a displaced forum in and through which their cultural anxieties can be articulated. In a kind of writing where most feelings are externalized (i.e. put into speech) for the reader, bookish moments open out to rare divulgences of psychological interiority. After Will Carman explains the Tennyson lines to Mr. Spring Fragrance, “more than a dozen young maidens ‘loved and lost’ were passing before [his] mind’s eye”.²⁷² Only when Mrs. Spring Fragrance enters into “book mode” does the reader know that she leaves the zone of stereotype. As she “think[s] about the books [she is] writing,” Mary Carman remarks to herself that “[h]itherto she had found the little Chinese woman sympathetic and consoling. Chinese ideas full of filial duty chimed in with her own. But today Mrs. Spring Fragrance seemed strangely uninterested and unresponsive.”²⁷³ The medium of the book (which will from now on serve as shorthand for all kinds of materialized literature in these stories) taps the incommunicable part of human relationships at the same time it facilitates the communicable. After Mrs. Spring Fragrance receives the telegram from her husband in which he impulsively (not to

mention cross-purposedly) asks her to “remember that ‘Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,” she muses excitedly, “Perhaps he had been reading her American poetry books since she had left him! She hoped so. They would lead him to understand her sympathy for her dear Laura and Kai Tzu. She need no longer keep him from her secret.”²⁷⁴ Even the relationship between husband and wife is represented as a necessarily mediated one (“he had fallen in love with her picture before ever he had seen her, just as she had fallen in love with his!”²⁷⁵ And in this mediated relationship, literature comes vested with magical communicative powers; neither knows exactly what each feels about the piece of literature in question but both believe that as long as each has access to it, they will be able to understand each other so perfectly that things can just remain “unsaid.” Literary contact becomes communication par excellence.

The perfect responsiveness of people to literature—literature that they don’t even have to thoroughly read, necessarily, but that just has to be “near”—also runs deep in Eaton’s fantasy of authorship. Months before the publication of the *Spring Fragrance* collection, Eaton dashed off a short piece for the *Boston Globe* in which she described her life as the long anticipation of a book that could “plan[t] a few Eurasian thoughts in Western literature.”²⁷⁶ The rhetorical metaphor used here is not one of accretion (her book adds to Western literature) but the open-endedness of inception and infiltration. Eaton’s lifetime of waiting suggests that the materiality of a published book (a book that circulates) is the necessary precondition of “planting ideas.” Proleptical book-driven fantasies—imagining into the future how a not-yet-existent book might act on problems of the now—squarely situates the primary of the book in contingent communication rather than representation. Through the publication fantasy we glimpse another one: a close, connected world full of random bookish encounters that will instantly and fundamentally change people’s minds, and in which writers will eventually reach someone, however convoluted the means. This type of world requires the bibliographication (i.e. making into books) of its inhabitants and the consignment of

agency to the logic of book objects. This fantasy can be seen in Eaton's 1909 essay, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian," in which she offers moving scenes from her assimilation experience as so many pages, or leaves, out of a loosely-bound book. Simplistic, perhaps, from the standpoint of rhetorical composition, Eaton's idea that her own message might be better delivered if delivered in book form tosses up some interesting implications. Aside from the provoking question of why are we more amenable to cross-cultural messages when they are packaged meta-textually, her essay shows how "bibliographic" packaging has a logic of its own. The "leaves" from the "mental portfolio" open up as a book would to random pages in the life of the author, but many of these pages only show more scenes of reading, like a recursion in a mirror: precocious reading, research reading, and voracious reading follow in order. In "Leaves," Eaton recalls how, as a child, she would go to the public library to read up about the Chinese and find out as much as she could about her "condition." Just being around these books afforded a kind of special assurance that epistemological and affective gaps could be bridged. Thus, the essay offers a sense of cross-cultural understanding, specifically a genre of cross-cultural understanding for writer and reader romanticized as proximity to books, or, more precisely, as the idea that books are "at hand."

Tweaking the scale

Traceable to the 1860s, there existed a Progressive Era rhetoric that believed that literary contact, at least for Sino-American relations, can achieve the kind of desirable results in cross-cultural mutuality that foreign policy could not. This belief coincided with other developments in American and cross-Atlantic cultures of reading, namely the popularization of sentimentalism, female literacy reform, and the rise of a magazine-reading public. Bookish contact simulated cross-cultural contact, as, according to Susan Mizruchi, many American readers processed "social multiplicity" by, literally, "reading differences."²⁷⁷ Under this ethos, many Americans saw failures in

Sino-American relations as a failure of reading. Jack London's "The Unparalleled Invasion" is an example of this line of thinking because it premises the series of escalating antagonisms between China and Anglo-America on the inaccessibility of each other's texts. For "the Chinese mind [that] could not thrill to short, Saxon words" the "material achievement and progress of the West was a closed book to her; nor could the West open the book."²⁷⁸ Clichéd though it might be, London's analogy of one nation being "like a closed book" to the other reveals a choice to constitute relationships between the two nations bibliographically. More than any other cross-cultural mishap, it is the inaccessibility of each other's "books," or what London says comes down to a problem of language, that engenders the intractable enmities between China and America that called for "the unparalleled invasion." London's controversial story allegorizes the causal relationship between the refusal or inability to read and mass scale geopolitical violence. Arguments for renewing friendly Sino-American relations—as seen in the revocation of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943—used the same reasoning as London's story: if they could just read each other's literature, China and America would find each other worthy of political closeness.

But what happens when we confuse the interconnectedness of books with the interconnectedness of people? As Eaton's stories reach for that totality of experience that guarantees the meaningfulness of all literary contact, they also quite readily show us what it takes to make this totality possible. To underscore the expediency of literary mediations, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" first has to exaggerate the prominence of Tennyson in Chinese-American circuits, and, in so doing, the story has to cast Chinese-American reading culture as a microcosm of nineteenth century transatlantic reform writing. Equating Americanization with mastery of English, Mrs. Spring Fragrance's cultural capital derives from her role as a *curator* of "American poetry" in her community: she uses it and demonstrates how it can be used. But of course the Tennyson that she curates isn't "American poetry" at all, as she says, but British poetry. Whatever it might reveal of

cultural faux pas, her misattribution signals the US domestication of Victorian literature, a literary movement that acculturated Tennyson to such an extent that he became an “American poet.” The lines from “In Memoriam,” far from a random choice, disclose Eaton’s own awareness of and participation in the uses of Tennyson in American reform literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Danniell Hack, Amanda Claybaugh, Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., James W. Hood, and other critics have observed, Tennyson’s poetry was the single most appropriated British literature in America, an unlikely cipher of revolution and resistance in the transatlantic world.²⁷⁹ From a historical standpoint, Eaton’s continued circulation of Tennyson indicates far less the degree to which Chinese-Americans read and talked about Tennyson and far more her own transatlantic politics and the politics of “literary recycling” (to use Andrew Piper’s term) in transnational literary production. As Mary Chapman has argued, Eaton’s espousal of “utterances that do not appear ‘original’ may explain her own strategic use of popular forms...[which] serve[d] as the unoriginal containers for the new ideas contained within.”²⁸⁰ I argue that recycling Tennyson, making him a staple of Chinese-American community, has less to do with how Eaton crafted her authorial presence and the exigencies of print culture and more to do with a conscious need on the part of Edith Eaton the Progressive reformer to bring other people’s literature close, *closer than possible if reading circles are left to form on their own*. The popularity of Tennyson in Chinatown, which this story takes for granted, may only simulate a political belief in the proximity of books and texts between peoples and cultures. Literary proximity allows for a political expediency that no other method of reform can achieve. After all, the central conceit of “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” is that the ubiquity of Tennyson forms a plane of coordination in cross-cultural communication that cannot be had by any other means.

In “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” and “The Inferior Woman,” the fantasy of bibliographic proximity takes shape in the exaggerated endowing of literature with mediatory powers and in the

manipulation of international literary circuits to small family dramas. In order to present the immigrant experience as a space that accommodates ambient literary texts in cross-cultural flow, both stories bend the “scale” of Chinese-American reading culture in ways not possible in real life. In one scene in “The Inferior Woman,” Mr. Spring Fragrance invites Will Carman into his house to share in the enjoyment of a shipment of “new books from Shanghai.”²⁸¹ Both described as aficionados of classic Chinese literature, Will and Mr. Spring Fragrance pore over the “Odes of Chow and the Sorrows of Han” (Chu Ci and Han Yue Pu) and thus act out an idealized scene of global literary exchange. Books from Shanghai are being read, discussed and digested in America (never mind the language barriers) and, furthermore, in a particularly Americanist twist on the fantasy of global literary exchange, the reading-out-loud of these books stages the sentimental education of the young journalist Will Carman. The discussion of books immediately turns into the discussion of his troubles in love, and Mrs. Spring Fragrance recites the following poem to urge him to act on his feelings:

The woodmen's blows responsive ring,
As on the trees they fall;
And when the birds their sweet notes sing,
They to each other call.
From the dark valley comes a bird,
And seeks the lofty tree.
Ying goes its voice, and thus it cries,
“Companion, come to me.”
The bird, although a creature small,
Upon its mates depends;

And shall we men, who rank o'er all,
Not seek to have our friends?²⁸²

The typical sequence of America's sentimental reading culture—in which reading enables love, and love overcomes prejudice—is here fascinatingly stretched out at both ends. Literature from China instructs matters of love in order to initiate a chain-linked series of overcomings: first, the overcoming of prejudice toward the working class girl (the Inferior Woman) who is the object of Will's love, and then, because this happened as a result of Mrs. Spring Fragrance's bookish interventions, the overcoming of prejudice against the Chinese. But there is something unnatural about this scene as well. The poem, "The Woodsmen's Blows," reprinted without its title in the story, is taken verbatim from James Legge's translation of Confucius's poem "Logging" ("伐木 Fa Mu") in the first book of the *Shiking* 《诗经》, the "Decade of Lu Ming." Legge's *The Book of Poetry* was the sole source of Chinese poetry in English translation in the transatlantic marketplace for most of the nineteenth century and no doubt Eaton owned a copy. The literary occasion is thus sponsored by an Anglophone translation of Confucius—one of few available Chinese literatures in English at the end of the nineteenth century. What this reveals is that "The Inferior Woman" tries to pass off a smaller literary circuit as a much larger one. The books from Shanghai are not from Shanghai at all and the bibliographic landscape is, to a certain extent, a forced one. Ironically, on account of the exigencies of print, the conscious decision to bring material artifacts of other people's literature closer will in retrospect seem like historical evidence of the fact that different cultures' literatures were in fact closer together, indeed, read together.

Simulated bibliographic proximity is also the cause of the translation malpractice and the orthographic doubleness at the heart of the story. I refer to the absurd name "Spring Fragrance." While every other character in the story has a phonetically transliterated name—the Chin Yuens,

Mai Gwi Far, Kai Tzu (even Eaton herself opts for the transliterated Sui Sin Far instead of the literal “Chinese Narcissus”)—the protagonists have as their shared appellation a literal translation of a Chinese name that, due to the customary practices of marriage and name-giving in China, could not possibly be shared between husband and wife. If “Spring Fragrance” is a female first name, it could not crossover to serve as the male spouse’s formal name. If “Spring Fragrance” is a male name (in certain permutations of Chinese characters this is thinkable) the same rules still apply: the female spouse would not take it as her formal name, and would, in fact, not take any part of the husband’s name at all. The literal translation of Chinese names, which invites unkind projections about the aesthetics and politics of name giving in China, does not come out of any of the conventions of Western sinology or translation in the nineteenth century.²⁸³ The choice of the name “Spring Fragrance” hails, instead, from translational decisions made by American transnational writers such as Pearl S. Buck whose characters “Peach” and “Lotus Blossom” speak to the gendered Orientalisms of the displaced American subject. Jade Spring Fragrance refers to herself using another gem from the stockpile of Oriental names: Plum Blossom. But if it is the case that Eaton lifts her names out of the romantic imaginaries of Eurasian and Ameriasian feminine spheres, why not do this for all of her characters? Why not translate the character Mai Gwi Far as “Rose”? By mixing different types of translation in the cast of characters—literal names, transliterated names, generic American names for Chinese immigrants such as “John,” Americanized Chinese names such as Laura, as well as plain made-up Chinese names—Eaton effectively overlays different systems of literary representation. Not only because we know “Spring Fragrance” to be an implausible name, but also because we know it to be an implausible name that points to the multitude of representational options, do we sense that we have on hand characters designed for the demands of different literary systems.

Another way of reading the significance of the translation malpractice come from critics who mention, but fear to probe too deeply for what it might reveal of Orientalism, Eaton's choice of the name "Spring Fragrance." In fact, no critic has touched the name save for Amy Ling, who sees the name as a direct borrowing from Eaton's own apostrophe to spring in a previous essay for *Dominion Illustrated* (290)²⁸⁴ and Annette White-Parks, who sees the conjunction of the Anglo-American title "Mrs." and the literal translation of Chun Xiang as Eaton's way of prepping us for the hybridity contained within the text. For White-Parks, the fake name, along with the story's paratextual trappings, including the Orientalizing book cover of the original edition, and Eaton's choice of "Sui Sin Far" (Chinese Narcissus) for herself, eases Eaton's contemporary readers into the cultural shock contained within the collection. In either explanation, though, the name "Spring Fragrance" has no intention of being a name at all, resembling much more a literary device culling its characters into a highly regulated fictional space that holds them answerable to internal referentiality (Ling) or the politics of representation itself (White-Parks). In these stories, being the actors in a story about bibliographic nearness is to become signifier of literary systems by contagion. Thus the stories can be better understood as molding the cultural form to which the fantasy of transatlantic reading gives rise. Their names look like translations but actually only simulate, parodically, how book-ish plots round up their own book-ish characters.

What are the ramifications of confusing the subject with the bibliographic subject? Of living in a space where you are only socially legible if literature makes you act and acts on you? The remainder of this section will address the problem of staying too long in a "bibliographic habitat"—insofar as that problem can even be represented in fiction. I will focus on the figure of Mr. Spring Fragrance, whose attitudinal relationship to literature turns into a signifier of his Asian-American subjectivity. His case ironically instantiates Latour's insistence on the power of literary rebuses to fashion and shape the stories we *can tell* (here now in a limiting sense) about ourselves in the system

of literary representation we live in. Inverting the relationship between people and books and assigning the latter more agency in determining the course of lives, we can remark that for the story “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” it is not the immigrant experience that summons forth Tennyson, but Tennyson’s line that makes possible the formula combining cultural misunderstanding and acts of familial redemption that are the bread and butter of a flatly stylized immigrant experience. If Mrs. Spring Fragrance recites “Tis better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all” enough times, she just might do it; and, hoping to change her mind during her trip away from home, he telegraphs her repeating the Tennyson line verbatim: “Tis better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all,” as if the built-in catalyst in the poem that weaponizes her intentions might be the same one that will restore her affection for him. Fearing what the ambiguous verses may cause his wife to do accidentally “Americanizes” him, and by this I do not mean that it blends his old beliefs with new ones but that it makes him *legibly* Chinese-American, the figure of deep-seated, stereotypical cultural commitments who has yielded to a culturally assimilative philosophy of marital love.

The quickening pace and increasing nearness of mediation in the story becomes a problem for Mr. Spring Fragrance. Cultural misunderstanding and acculturation progress not by a series of translations and mistranslations, per the usual wisdom, but in the process of training oneself to be literate in the media systems that shape English-speakers’ lives. Marjorie Pryse understands this as Eaton’s “reconstruct[ion of] the English language as a site of cultural encounter,”²⁸⁵ framing this strategy in a way that seems like an extension of the Mrs. Spring Fragrance/Mary Carman fantasy: “In her use of English,” writes Pryse, “[Eaton] attempted to reflect Chinese immigrant culture back to her American readers in such a way as to help those readers come to view themselves differently and to change their attitudes and behavior toward the Chinese.”²⁸⁶ But to me, the fitting of immigrant subjectivity to the grammar of English literature feels more oppressive than subversive

and I am reminded of Ken Warren's postulation of an often overlooked postcolonial romance that frames cultural assimilation as literary enablement. Warren reminds us that the scenes of cultural synthesis are more often than not scenes in which the figure of alterity becomes taken in by the hegemonic literature or in which the figure of alterity becomes available for literary exploitation. In "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," the romance of assimilation-as-literary education / assimilation-as-literacy is exploded by Mr. Spring Fragrance's final rejection of "American poetry." Repeatedly made to react to the animating demands of language, he overhears the Tennyson and hears it again. Mrs. Spring Fragrance sends him one effusive telegram, then another. When Mrs. Spring Fragrance returns from what was, for him, a nail-biting trip, she asks him "if he were not glad to hear that those who loved as did the young lovers whose secrets she had been keeping, were to be united."²⁸⁷ Realizing the extent of his misunderstanding, Mr. Spring Fragrance responds dutifully with a liberal notion of marriage that prompts her to reply, surprised, "you must have been reading my American poetry books!" When she tries finally to project the literary-reading-as-cultural-assimilation model (fantasy) on to him—"You must've been reading my American poetry books!"—he doesn't deny the claim but rejects bibliographic acculturation as inherently good: "American poetry is detestable, abhorrible!" The misspelling, "abhorrible," works to index the state of his English literacy and also orthographically captures the double direction of agency in the poetry-subject relationship. He *abhors* Poetry; Poetry is horr-able.

Mr. Spring Fragrance is the type of man who believes in, lives out, and ultimately walks away from the power of literature to mediate. In the end, he will make as though he never heard the Tennyson in the first place, choosing instead to win over his wife with a gesture, and "the only explanation which Mr. Spring Fragrance vouchsafed was a jadestone pendant."²⁸⁸ Mr. Spring Fragrance views as ultimately detachable the literary mechanism that originally gave the story its momentum; his reading no more from the book stands for the ultimate reticence in the face of the

bibliographication of the self. Critics do not forgive Mr. Spring Fragrance his turning away from literature, and have offered a variety of apologies for his behavior, ranging from chauvinism to poor reading skills to incapacity for dialectical thinking. It would seem that Mr. Spring Fragrance can detach from Tennyson but his choice to detach cannot be detached from representative significance.

Mr. Spring Fragrance is not the only person who tries to walk (cleanly) away from literature's transformative powers. There is a particularly drawn-out scene in "The Inferior Woman" in which Will Carman takes inventory of three books on his lover Alice Winthrop's desk. All of them are gifts from her other male admirers: one has an endearment "inscribed in a man's writing [on the flyleaf]," another "bore the inscription 'With the love of all the firm, including the boys,'" and the last was a "volume of poems dedicated to [her] with the high regards and staunch affection of some other masculine person."²⁸⁹ But Carman "pushed aside these evidences of his sweetheart's popularity with his own kind and leaned across the table."²⁹⁰ To the critic Wenxia Liu, Will Carman here fails to "read" Alice when she so deftly reads him. (192). We might say instead that, like Mr. Spring Fragrance, Will registers and then un-registers the literature that populates his partner's life, opting instead for something more visceral: in Mr. Spring Fragrance's case, a jade pendant, in Will's, the sheer power of physical proximity. Should we and, indeed, can we read this scene without overreading it as Will's stubborn disregard for the part of Alice's life which does not pertain to him? In real life we often read in ways that leave no trace and do not go out of our way to problematize a kind of noticing/unnoticing of text—can we do the same for fiction?

Bibliographically constituted cross-cultural spaces have a hard time with the notion of reading or literary contact that makes no difference and leaves no trace. The minute you imagine subjects as completely sensitive to the mediatory power of literature you also imagine their psychic space as a finite space in which books vie with other books for presence. In the scene in which Mr. Spring Fragrance overhears the Tennyson, "his eyes were engaged in scanning the pages of the

Chinese World,²⁹¹ [but] his ears could not help receiving the words which were borne to him through the open window.”²⁹² Mrs. Spring Fragrance later teases him in “The Inferior Woman,” “If you were a scholar (of Chinese literature) you would have no time to read American poetry and American newspapers.” Although cast in the positive by his wife, Mr. Spring Fragrance’s bibliographic psyche is so economically apportioned that one kind of literature can act a barrier to other forms of literature. “[T]hough well read in the Chinese Classics,” he did not reach that critical threshold that would close his mind to “American poetry and newspapers.”²⁹³ Subjectivity as literary subjectivity has a kind of unforgiving economy: exposure to literature takes up space in the mind, which is finite. If the amount of Chinese literature and reading materials inside hits tipping point, then the subject remains “Chinese”; however, if it is American literature and reading materials, the subject turns American. Such a simplistic accounting does not come from any failures of ethnographic representation on Eaton’s part as much as the fact that we tend to imagine literature exposure as transformative.

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In the study of Sino-American exchanges before the twentieth century, where archives are small and materials scarce, scholars depend on the re-presentation of historical space as a bibliographic space in which people traverse and negotiate differences via texts. For example, we say: Mark Twain and Liang Qichao visited Hawai’i and wrote about their visits around the same time—therefore they must have worked on each other’s imaginaries. Or, we say: the publication of the English translation of the Chinese classic *Hong Long Meng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) in 1896 had to have influenced the target audience of that publishing house. Such suppositions, depending as they do on the interchangeability of literature as representation and media of communication, of course apply to fields outside of nineteenth century Sino-American exchanges as well. But because

original reactions and voices are such rare commodities in transnational studies, it has become standard practice to gauge transnational and cross-cultural exchanges by textual traces.

Implicit and explicit Habermasian approaches in literary criticism account for this in part. For example, we often see new historicist readings that take for granted dialogic and discursive transformations between the totality of literatures available in the public sphere and the literature that was eventually written by the author in question. Any argument for influence, subversion, rejection, play—of the kind that we often get for cross-cultural literary contact—labors under the paradigm of seeing the literature of others as engines of continuous and politicized difference-making. Even newer methodological interventions in literary criticism coming out of actor-network and discourse-network theory, new materialism, and informative systems theory will tend to see literary production and reception as fundamentally change-oriented, something that produces a series of chain reactions across wide bands of authors and readers, or, if it does not do so, does not do so for pointedly political reasons.

The confusion of the subject with the bibliographical subject—the subject knowable/accountable only through tangible literary materials—also comes from institutional endeavors to come up with better models for cross-cultural contact than structuralist or impact/response paradigms. Interdisciplinary collaboration between sociolinguistics, thing theory and book history, that is to say, between studies in the social function of literature and its life as a thing that can and does move between people, have allowed us to re-envision cross-cultural contact as an inter-subjective network of reactions to being near books. Borrowing advancements from New Media theory, book history has been able to re-sell the non-substantive components of books as things that deeply impact how readers (and almost-readers) behave, think and conceptualize their lives. Doing this has in turn allowed historians to trace more of these book-catalyzed self-conceptualizations farther than before because it is easier to account for how books in their basic

material forms travel than it is to account for reactions to book's contents. Book history, by collaborating with sociolinguistics, can insist on the powerful social agency of books by breaking away both from the model of deep reading as the only thing that registers content. Literature has morphed into something more "thing-like"; it works on the subject who works on it, and thus we have parted ways from techno-determinism as well (e.g. the once often-heard argument that books published in this way produce this exact effect, etc.). Now, simply owning, holding on to or being near books can mediate, i.e. change, or reveal thoughts, dreams, actions. (We can see this in the example of Mr. Spring Fragrance; for him, the Tennyson lines come, as Dominika Ferens describes, "doubly decontextualized... detached from the rest of the poem... [and] interpret[ed] without reference."²⁹⁴ Knowing the literary text is not even a requirement for being drastically affected by it. The convergence of book theory, thing theory and sociolinguistics has also enabled critics to defer to literary contact loosely defined as the means by which communication occurs between parties who are otherwise not likely to communicate with one another, from whence we get the scholarly practice of tracking literature that "travels" to foreign locales, or vice-versa, paying out as it does the transversal politics and aesthetics that the sedentary physical bodies of the authors could not.

Tracing human relationships through books can, however, fail to remember some of the formal and structural constraints that this new kind of book history was created to overcome in the first place. For example, reception studies, a method which accounts for people through literary imaginaries, has shed its old habits of projecting what readers feel and think in favor of practices that more resemble materialist historiography. It now tends to follow a single text across space and time, as someone would tea or tobacco, to reveal its mediations without making too many assumptions about how it mediated each individual reader's consciousness. But reception studies, Leah Price reminds us, has to remember its kinship to the genre of the it-narrative; critics who prize the raw information that studying the circulation of a piece of text in many hands offers up forget

that this scholarly approach, like the it-narrative, has its own logic, such as a vehement emphasis on the changing-of-hands and unconcern for deep reading and possession. When we “conceptualize the dialectic of lived time and space in and around literature,” as Nirvana Tanouhki reminds comparativists studying world literature, we can forget that comparative studies and world literature operate within their own systems and their own self-actualizing logics.²⁹⁵ In the study of modern African literature in which methodological innovations such as “clusters, homologies, specificities, exchange and trails of influence” has “ma[d]e crossing possible,” Tanouhki advises us to look into the literature’s own “production of scale,” scale something like the disciplinary construction of, and conscious decision to labor under, the notion of measurable distances/proximities between peoples and literatures.

In cross-cultural literary studies, literary contact is routinely evoked as a fundamentally transformative event, so much so that “visible effects” have become the objective limit of transversal literary history. Books and the literature contained inside them—whether in debased or hyper-intelligent form—have an uncanny availability to be more “at hand” in transnational and non-transnational literature, to matter more deeply, to cause more disturbances, to have quicker pathways to other books and literature, and to mediate lives in a more efficacious manner. Under this logic, Piper envisions the new book history as a “translational humanism”: “In place of the lonely figure of the bookish humanist as an archivist... a translologist...multiply situated across linguistic, disciplinary, and communicative spaces.”²⁹⁶ The study of literature, Piper goes on to say, would be “reconceived as a linguistic performance across multiple media channels.” The job profile of the “translational humanist,” then, would appear to look something like this: the translational humanist goes from field site to field site to study the extent and means of mediations and his success depends on the ubiquity and efficiency of literary mediators. Translation as transnation works on the fantasy that the books of others and the books of otherness are constantly being read and reflected in

changes that one can see. In transnational studies, the remediation of book history as media studies would have to imply something like a routinized presumption of “attributability,” and a deep-seated commitment to seeing change you can believe in on the figures nearest to the books themselves.²⁹⁷ This critical proclivity in transnational studies remains under-theorized, indeed almost unobserved. The Spring Fragrance stories are fictions that allow us to theorize and observe transnationalism as a genre that cannot countenance space not-traversable by books, but a genre in which that conceptual limitation still takes the shape of analyzable literary forms

¹ See A. Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: the Presence of China in the American Enlightenment*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993); John Kuo-wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001); Caroline Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America: Chinese Commodities in Early America* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy, *America Views China: American Images of China, Then and Now* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991), Introduction by Hilary Conroy, 11 – 23.

² For early treatments, see Harold R. Isaacs, *Images of Asia: American Views of China and India* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958); Robert L. Irick, *American-Chinese Relations, 1784-1941; a Survey of Chinese-Language Materials at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Beongcheong Yu, *The Great Circle: American Writers and the Orient* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983).

³ See Najia Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848-82* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003); David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation and Gender 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Edlie Wong, “In a Future Tense: Immigration Law,

Counterfactual Histories, and Chinese Invasion Fiction,” *American Literary History*, 2014; Colleen Lye, *America’s Asia: Racial Form and American Literature 1893-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Hsuan Hsu, *Sitting in Darkness: Mark Twain, Asia, and Comparative Racialization*, under contract with NYU Press.

⁴ See Chi-yun Chen, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao’s Missionary Education: a case study of missionary influence on the Reformers* (Cambridge, M/a: Harvard Papers on China, XVI, 1962); Fred W. Drake, *China Charts the World: Hsu Chi-yü and His Geography of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University Press, 1975); Kevin Scott Wong, “The Transformation of Culture: Three Chinese Views of America,” *American Quarterly* 48.2 (1996), pp. 201-32; Xiao, Xiaoxui. *China encounters Western ideas (1895 - 1905): a rhetorical analysis of Yan Fu, Tan Sitong and Liang Qichao*, (Ann Arbor: UMI dissertation services, 1992); Shuang Sheng, *Cosmopolitan Publics: Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009; Yue Meng, *Shanghai and the Edges of Empires*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006; R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee, eds., *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989).

⁵ Yuefei Qin, “Imperial Students,” published by C.U.S.Y. (Chinese Undergraduate Students at Yale), <http://www.yale.edu/cusy/imperialstudents.htm>.

⁶ George Hans Boehmer, *History of the Smithsonian Exchanges* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1882): p. 48; Tsuen-hsui Tsien, *Collected Writings on Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011): pp. 205-215.

⁷ Adrian Arthur Bennett, *Missionary Journalist in China: Young J. Allen and his Magazines, 1860-1883* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

⁸ Also known as the School of Combined Learning

⁹ Rune Svarverud, “The Notions of ‘Power’ and ‘Rights’ in Chinese Political Discourse” in *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, eds. Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung, Joachim Kurtz (Boston: Brill Academic Publishing, 2001): 135.

¹⁰ The best treatments of this topic can be found in Lydia Liu’s “Rethinking Culture and National Essence” in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture and Translated Modernity, China 1900-1937* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1995) and Shumei Shih’s *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 2001). For the most comprehensive treatment, see Shouhua Qi’s *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Wolfgang Lippert, “Language in the Modernization Process: the Integration of Western Concepts and Terms into Chinese and Japanese in the Nineteenth Century” in *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*.

¹¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 2000). Potentiality theory has influenced Lee Edelman’s figuration of the queer subject as rejecting social and political futurism in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹² Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: the Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford UP, 2007).

¹³ F. S. C. Northrop, *Meeting of East and West: an Inquiry Concerning World Understanding* (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow Press, 1979); Ernest Fenollosa, “The Coming Fusion of East and West” in *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, eds. Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Alexander Hill Everett, *A discourse on the progress and limits of social improvement, including a general survey of the history of civilization* (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1834): p. 8.

¹⁵ Alexander Hill Everett, "Chinese Manners," *The North American Review* (April, 1828): p. 530.

¹⁶ Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁷ Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions & Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Lydia H. Liu, "Inventions of Printed English" in *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁹ R. John Williams, *Technology and the Meeting of East and West*, forthcoming from Yale University Press.

²⁰ Richard Jean So, *Pacific Community: the Rise and Fall of a US-China Literary Network*, forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

²¹ Formulated in various ways in *Clash of Empires: the Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2004) and *Translingual Practice*.

²² Haun Saussy, "No Time Like the Present: The Category of Contemporaneity in Chinese Studies" in *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2001). Saussy makes similar arguments about the problematic mythologies of Chinese language post-contact in the chapter "Always Multiple Translation: Or, How the Chinese Language Lost Its Grammar."

²³ Rey Chow, "How (the) Inscrutable Chinese Led to Globalized Theory," *PMLA* 116 (Jan 2001) 1: pp. 69; Zhang Longxi, *Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (Durham, NC: Duke

University Press, 1992); Q.S. Tong, "Inventing China: the Use of Orientalist Views on the Chinese Language," *interventions* 2 (2000) 1: 6-20.

²⁴ Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2008). Huang's intervention is guided by critical transpacific studies, a subfield spearheaded by Rob Wilson and Scott Lyons.

²⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

²⁶ Warner's critical history of reading communities, part of the larger discourse of the counterpublic that he spearheaded, aimed to first recognize and then award/concede ontological validity to patterns of reading and interpretation that fall outside the liberal tradition. Felski's cognitivist approach has moved the various uses of literature outside the debate over Habermasian liberalism, (i.e. who is participating and who is not) to a more universal, indeed, generic modality.

²⁷ From the standpoint of East/West studies, this approach can be seen as a culmination of various methodological trends since the poststructuralist turn in the 1980s. Such an approach simultaneously draws on the politics of translation and language semiotics as theorized by Liu, Saussy, Zhang, and Chow, among many others, and on the critical cultural histories of material circulation between East and West conducted by R. Owen Aldridge, Frank Dikötter and Caroline Frank. Richard Jean So and R. John Williams have treated literary relations between China and the US as mediation events, and not only lingual/conceptual exchanges. Approaching Sino-American exchanges in their mediatory versions contests the tendency within the subfield of hemispheric studies to limit the purview of literary exchange to the crises of representation and cooptation.

²⁸ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007). A similar argument about literature as an agent of action can be found in the chapter "Situating the Beings of Fiction" in

Inquiry into Modes of Existence: an Anthropology of the Moderns, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2013).

²⁹ The approach I'm endorsing in alternating chapters comes out of a development in Americanist literary criticism that we can say began with Myra Jehlen's thought-experiment essay in Kaplan and Pease's *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, grew through hemispheric studies, and into transnational studies with language expertise. Like Kirsten Silva Gruesz's *The Ambassadors of Culture* and Ralph Bauer's *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures*, this dissertation wants to take on a critically responsible way of talking about early "trans-" and "cross-cultural" phenomenon without relying on the discovery of the existence of transnational connections or oceanic inter-pollination to serve as the point of the study itself.

³⁰ The first Opium War took place between 1839 and 1842, and ended with the unequal Treaty of Nanjing and Treaty of the Bogue with the British Empire in 1842 and 1843. The Second Opium War (1856-1860) ended some time after the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin between the Qing government, the French empire, the British Empire, Prussia and the United States. The Treaty of Tientsin is considered the greatest impingement on China's sovereignty in the nineteenth century. The Convention of Peking, the name given to the signing of a package of unequal treaties between the Qing government and Britain, Russia and France, was in 1860. The year after marked the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin with Prussia and Germany.

³¹ The concept has been used by counterfactual historians to explore the politics of imagining, longing for or charting out territorial entities that could have been.

³² William Hickling Prescott, John Motley, and Francis Parkman often chose as their subjects the colonization of the New World and are frequently catalogued (perhaps erroneously) as Romantic Historians of the mid-nineteenth century, William Hickling Prescott, known as the first empirical American historian, wrote *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and *A History of the Conquest of*

Peru (1847). See John Ernest's "Reading the Romantic Past: William H. Prescott's History of the Conquest of Mexico" for a thoughtful explanation of Prescott's decision to write such a history of Mesoamerican conquest during the 1840s. Although Ernest finds unsatisfying claims that Irving "used Romantic literary conventions to advance an ethnocentric vision in which the US can be viewed as the culmination of providential history" (232), he still reads in *History of the Conquest of Mexico* an anti-US imperialism—the constant ties to the political present marking Prescott's "philosophy of history." John Motley chose to cover the history of the settlement of the Dutch in America, publishing works like *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856) and *History of the United Netherlands* (1860–67) that touch on while also justifying lost historical possibilities before lighting on US history in the early 1860s. Francis Parkman wrote *England and France in North America* (1867) two decades after his famous Oregon Trail (1847). The second volume of *England and France, The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* offers the persuasive suggestion that the failures and demise of Jesuit missionaries in New France providentially clear the path for an Anglican, pre-national enterprise.

³³ In fact, Shackford's criminally long title (*The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected from the Creation of the World to the Dissolution of the Assyrian Empire at the Death of Sardanapalus, and to the Declension of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Under the Reigns of Abaz and Pekab: including a Dissertation on the Creation and Fall of Man*) may have given Irving the idea for the title and conceit of his own book (*A history of New York: from the beginning of the world to the end of the Dutch dynasty. Containing, among many surprising and curious matters, the unutterable ponderings of Walter the Doubter, the disastrous projects of William the Testy, and the chivalric achievements of Peter the Headstrong, the three Dutch governors of New Amsterdam: being the only authentic history of the times that ever hath been published*).

³⁴ "Fohi" is the Western phoneticization of "Fu Xi," the mythological first emperor of China that Jesuits learned about from their survey of Chinese lore—information then transmitted to people like

Samuel Shackford. “Fo,” or China’s presumed spiritual figurehead, was a site of contention in the European proprietary debate over whether China can be fitted into Biblical history (Pocock 123-32).

³⁵ The sinologists/Orientalists who participated in this tradition—Jean-Baptiste du Halde, Barthélemy d’Herbelot, Edward Gibbons, and Joseph de Guignes—were all authors with whom Irving would have been familiar. The Chinese Noah theory would be idea entertained up to the very end of the nineteenth century.

³⁶ According to Grotius, Peru’s “first man,” Mancacapacus was “ a Chinese who, as he was a man of wonderful genius and spirit, learning that men of his own race were in possession of good lands across the sea, but were subject to no common rule, crossed over there, collected them, scattered as they were, into a body, and set up a Government for them and their posterity on the model of the Government of China” (*On the Origin* 18-19). For a discussion of Grotius’s methods and its impact on cultural and physical anthropology see Joan-Pau Rubiés, “Hugo Grotius’s Dissertation.”

³⁸ Outside of the discourse of sinology, producing knowledge about China was still a “text-heavy” undertaking. During his editorship of *The Analectic Magazine*, an eclectic periodical boasting “worldly knowledge,” Irving selected for publication motley China-related articles including: statistical indexes, geographical surveys, tea merchants’ op-eds, descriptions of Chinese musical instruments, selected passages from contemporary travelogues; and his own interjections of China-related information in reviews of foreign books.

³⁹ Although pretending to be Chinese for long stretches of time in the early Republican period can be understood as a frontrunner of the “yellowface” performances of the latter end of the nineteenth century, it should be more squarely situated within the tradition of cultural appropriation as delineated by Philip Deloria in *Playing Indian*. As a matter of fact the idea for *Salmagundi* started with an affectation of Chineseness that exemplifies the yoking together of fraternity, literary inspiration

and alterity that Deloria identifies in the chapter “Literary Indians and Ethnographic Objects.” In the July of 1806 Irving had written to Henry Ogden³⁹ who was bound for Canton on a buying trip, urgently reminding him to return with trinkets and to not “forget the Mandarin’s Dress.” The meaning behind this request is fully revealed in a follow-up letter to Ogden describing a “supper at the Kembles which followed, in true Chinese style, in which none were permitted to eat except with chopsticks” (P.M. Irving, 134-135). Shortly after this Chinese supper, Irving and James K. Paulding launch the *Salmagundi* project (both the text and the experimental lifestyle) and Irving all but forfeits his legal career. The Kemble in this letter to Ogden refers to the Gouverneur Kemble who would become one of the “Salmagundi Four” (self-styled the “Cocklofts”) and the same person who furnished the retreat house replete with a “Chinese Saloon” where the Salmagundi four carried on their self-dramatizations and drafted the preliminary papers for their lampoon (Mills). Washington’s brother Peter Irving fondly refers to this pastime in a letter to Washington in 1832. (P.M. Irving, 133). This paper is less interested in seeing Irving’s “playing Chinese” as the beginning of a tradition of playing Others, however, and more interested in placing it as the end of eighteenth-century sinological explorations.

⁴⁰ Irving would later praise the conceit of Lien Chi Altangi and the “man in black” in his preface to *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith* (1860) and even put an image of “The Man in Black” from *A Citizen of the World* next to the frontispiece to the 1808 edition of *Salmagundi*.

⁴¹ See Haun Saussy’s *Great Walls of Discourse* and David Mungello’s *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* for excellent coverage of the ways that coping with the impact of Jesuit and Chinese texts on philology forced the West to revise, and in some cases, to harden, its own historiographic practices. See also Giambattista Vico’s early eighteenth century work, *New Science*, for an example of how sinology and historiography can clash. Famous for being the father of historicism, Vico in *New Science* practices and theorizes reconstructing a historical period by

reconstructing, through philology, its social, cultural and lingual realities. Thus Vico collates texts to compare them, sifting for telling philological differences that would signal different points on a developmental trajectory. This historicist practice—teleological because fundamentally based on a developmental model of language—hits a wall when it has to account for Jesuits’ linguistic histories of China (such as Martini’s *Historica Sinica* or Trigaget’s *Historiana Christiana Apud Sinas*).

⁴² “Tea, A Poem” is originally anthologized in *Salmagundi* and later collected in *The Beauties of Washington Irving*, an American reprint of his select pieces that seemed to combine many previous China-related documents. *Beauties* include the vignette in *Salmagundi* describing Will Wizard’s experience at the ball, now simply titled “Will Wizard,” as well as “Tea-A Poem,” and the opening section from *A History of New York* that relays the “peopling of the world.”

⁴³ Tea has a longstanding role as the instigator of European cultural anxiety. See Roy Moxham’s *A Brief History of Tea*, (Running Press, 2009) and Laura C. Martin’s *Tea: the Drink that Changed the World*, (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2007).

⁴⁴ “Chinqua” and “Chonqua” refer to the local leaders who were elected by imperial edict to deal between American traders and the Qing government. Irving may have gotten these names from his associations with the China trade or took them from Edward Gray’s “Letters addressed to a Hong Merchant” (1809), house in the Gratz Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

⁴⁵ China’s social model was “viewed by the Enlightened as the continental alternative to Europe, perhaps the utopia in which metaphysics and revelation had never arisen to disturb the natural sociability of mankind; the agrarian and commercial *État policé* (civilized state)” (Pocock, 255). But even then the image of China as what Pocock calls a “self-subsisting galaxy of sociability” (257) was not looking so good.⁴⁵ Raynal *et al*’s *Historire des Deux Indes*—the most instructive text for early American sinological inquiries—was already toying with the idea of China’s natural sociability as a

liability. Pocock spells out for us the emergence of a structural incompatibility between autonomous History and the European construction of China: “The Chinese [were characterized as a] civilisation wholly self-contained and stable... If there was nothing worth telling about human history except the sociability natural to it, and if the history of the Chinese consisted in nothing but the preservation of that sociability, it was clear what paradoxes followed” (255).

⁴⁶ Toward these instances the preferred response of late has been to psychologize the West’s (and, by extension, America’s) deep antipathy and attraction toward China. But, to me, the perfunctory quality of China’s mention, its reliable signification, suggests that China-bashing was, by then, a stock rhetorical device as much as a shared psychological tick.

⁴⁷ Van Braam was a Dutch-American who had lived as a trader in Guangzhou and Macau during his stint with the VOC (Dutch East India Company) in the late 1700s. He paid his visit to the Qing court on behalf of the VOC long with Chrétien-Louis-Joseph de Guignes (the son of Joseph de Guignes, the French Jesuit sinologist) and Isaac Titsingh (senior official of the VOC and the Dutch republic’s functional ambassador to China).

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that the Yuen Min Yuan in Beijing was itself a theme park of sorts staging vignettes of European and traditional Jiang Nan scenery (watery landscapes of the Chinese Southeast).

⁴⁹ Saint-Méry documented his “American Journey” forty years before Tocqueville and would eventually settle in Philadelphia in 1794. In 1798 he published the journals and accounts of Van Braam’s Qianlong expedition.

⁵⁰ To borrow and also back date Lydia Liu’s reading of China/West relations, Irving here partakes in a positivist treatment of China also coming into vogue in the nineteenth century where China would be ratified by its Western counterparts into the world stage as a (somewhat inferior) political player (see Liu’s article, “The Desire for the Sovereign and the Logic of Reciprocity in the Family of

Nations”). It is noteworthy that his “awakening of China” predates the mainstream “awakening of China” discourse by at least sixty years. By the turn of the twentieth century—post-Boxer Rebellion—the “awakening dragon” rhetoric was in place and writers such as those featured in popular transatlantic journals such as *The Nation*, *The Fortnightly*, and *The Nineteenth Century*, went back in time to retroactively account for China’s awakening, over-determining certain historical events as Irving did. Picking out a particular moment or incident as the cause of China’s awakening helped to preserve the fallacy that pre-colonial China was nugatory because it was “asleep,” and to magnify its current threat because it was, after all, a sleeping giant awakened. For examples turn-of-century “China awakening” in public discourse, see the articles: “England at War” and “The Awakening of China.”

⁵¹ *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), *The Chronicles of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), *Astoria* (1836), and *Mahomet and His Successors* (1850) all represent a different permutation of the historical romance.

⁵² Irving uses the stadial model but also derides it for being a way for the West to force native Indians from their lands by showing “proof of their utter barbarism” (*A History of New York* 413-414).

⁵³ The town of the mouth of the Columbia River still bears the name of Astor’s empire: Astoria, Oregon.

⁵⁴ According to Kluger, America’s mid-nineteenth century transpacific commercial fantasy must be contextualized within a Henry Hudson narrative and as a part of an ongoing “contest between Britain and America for sustainable title to the Northwest [that] owed less to maritime problems than to overland treks from the east, starting in the 1790s when Alexander MacKenzie set out on behalf of the Montreal-based North West Company, fur traders, in quest of a western waterway from Hudson Bay to the Pacific” (Kluger, 327). Sifting out various forms of answers to Jefferson’s

“dreams of the United States.. as the new gravitational center of trade and civilization), Stephanson in his work would place Astor as a close relative of China-merchants and affiliates like Asa Whitney and William H. Seward who appealed to technological innovations to “recast territorial empire in a commercial, yet destinarian, register” (Stephanson, 58) (Though, it must be added, Stephanson takes care to differentiate this moment in history from geographical determinist destinarianism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century). Astor’s visions also recalls almost verbatim Thomas Hart Benton’s utopian project of a “republic on the Pacific shore of America,” a commercial empire *de facto* but a global liberal community in spirit that could turn “the valley of the Columbia” into the “granary of China and Japan” and that would transmit “science, liberal principle in government and the true religion” across the Pacific, and that this same “valley of Columbia” could host a portion of China’s “exuberant population” (Horsman, 91). Benton’s proposal, in turn, is nearly identical to John Floyd’s unsuccessful campaign in the 1820s to move the new America to the mouth of the Columbia River, Floyd being convinced, as Benton was, of the commercial prosperity promised by trade and interaction with China from this location. Whereas Reginald Horsman treats Thomas Hart Benton and John Floyd as quasi-utopian counterpoints to the eventual shape of America as fifty contiguous states—Americas that could have been, but weren’t—Thomas Hietala takes a more skeptical approach to transpacific “visionaries.” Reading manifest destiny designs during the Jacksonian period against those of the late nineteenth century, Hietala suggests a paradoxically intimate connection between “insularity and fervent nationalism” and “periodic international involvement” (ix). For Hietala, the “chimera of the China market was as instrumental in the expansionism of the late Jacksonian period as it was in the closing decades of the nineteenth century” (93), and he sees pushes for “Chinese-Americas” of the mid-century as a precursor of the economic imperialism of the Open Door Policy (211).

⁵⁵ Most likely selected by the first owner of *Shen Bao*, a British merchant named Ernest Major. For Patrick Hanan, “A Sleep of Seventy Years,” is a prime example of “transculturation,” a term Hanan uses to describe the strategic process of recoding foreign cultural products with local signifiers. One can hardly tell “A Sleep” apart from any other piece of Chinese lore, except that a few details and its publication timing feel *weird*. Another possibility is that “A Sleep of Seventy Years” is not a translation of “Rip” at all; after all, Irving’s name is nowhere to be found, nor do the names of any author or translator appear with the story. Moreover, the trope of a lazy scholar who falls asleep in the mountains only to wake up an epoch later is a popular one in China appearing as early as the sixth century story Ranka (爛柯山記). In the case that the two stories do not result from any transcultural exchange, the appearance of “A Sleep of Seventy Years” and similarity to “Rip” speaks to a kind of “unexpected affinity,” described by Zhang Longxi as coincidences in literary production attributable to similar historical contingencies.

⁵⁶ For more on Ernest Major’s founding of *Shen Bao* and his role in the formation of public opinion in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, please see the chapter “Networks of Newspapermen” in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image and City in Early Chinese Newspapers*, edited by Rudolf G. Wagner.

⁵⁷ A more literal translation of the ultimate line of the story in the original Chinese, “数日后入山去不知所终,” might be: “After some days, [he] went into the mountain [and none] knows how he ended up.”

⁵⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Speech at Banquet in Honor of the Chinese Embassy, Boston, 1860” *Miscellanies by Ralph Waldo Emerson in Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1875). This speech was first printed by the Boston City Council as *Reception and*

Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy by the City of Boston (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, City Printers, 1868). Hereafter *Reception*.

⁵⁹ Specifically, the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868 amended Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 and (theoretically) established friendly relations between America and China, recognized China's sovereign power over its domains, encouraged Chinese immigration, allowed privileged Chinese consuls into American ports, and guaranteed "liberty of conscience" to subjects of one nation in the other thus a kind of global citizenship—and religious freedom.

⁶⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Speech at Banquet in Honor of the Chinese Embassy, Boston, 1860," in *Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1875), 471.

⁶¹ "Ta-jin" is not a name, but the Romanization of the title of rank that followed the surnames of high-ranking officials in the Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁶² *Reception*, 50.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 54.

⁶⁴ *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 3, New York: Hearst's International Library Publishers, 1914, 526-527. Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949: 454.

⁶⁵ Jeanine Abboushi Dallal, "Emerson's 'Inquest' and Cultural Regeneration" *American Literature* 73 (March 2001) 1: 57.

⁶⁶ Tamara C. Emerson, *Relating Transcendentally: New England Transcendentalism, U.S. Evangelicalism, and the Antebellum Orientalization of China*. Dissertation. Wayne State University. 2008.

⁶⁷ From his essay "History" (1841). This deduction represents Emerson's basic claim that all forms contain within them preceding forms. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Brooks Atkinson, (New York: Modern Library, 2000).

⁶⁸ For books on Emerson/China synergies see K.V. Raghupathi, *Emerson's Orientalism* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2007); Frederic Ives Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*. New York: Haskell House, 1930; Richard Grossman, ed., *The Tao of Emerson* (New York, Modern Library, 2007); and Qian Mansu, *Ai Mo Sheng he Zhong Guo: Dui Ge Ren Zbu Yi de Fan Ying (Emerson and China: Reflections on Individualism)* (Beijing: SDX & Harvard-Yenching Academic Library, 1996). Books such as Arthur Christy's *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932) and *The Asian Legacy and American Life* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968) and Arthur Versluis's *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) have argued that the appropriation of Orientalism and Asian religions became the condition of possibility for a particular version of American transcendentalism,

⁶⁹ See Malini Johar Schueller, "‘Mine Asia’: Emerson's Erotics of Oriental Possession" in *U.S. Orientalism: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001) and Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature and Counterpoetics* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009).

⁷⁰ Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation, the Individual, the Nation and the Continent*, Cambridge, Ma: Harvard U P, 1986: 100.

⁷¹ John R. Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture*, Hanover: New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 2005, 35-36.

⁷² Wai-chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *American Literary History* 13. 4 (2001): 770.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 44.

⁷⁵ See Lawrence Buell's *Emerson* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003) in which he argues that Emerson "anticipates the globalizing age in which we increasingly live" (3). Ian Finseth's article

“Evolution, Cosmopolitanism and Emerson’s Anti-slavery Politics” *American Literature*, 77. 4 (2005), identifies a version of sociological cosmopolitanism in Emersonian thought as “quasi-mystical blending of identities” that explains his dabbling in scientific racism and racial pluralism during the 1850s (752). See also Jessica Schiff Berman’s location of Emerson’s ideational politics within the framework of Kantian world-citizenship in *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

⁷⁶ *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, ed. William H. Gilman et al, (Cambridge, Ma: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), 378, 393. 393. Part of this list from the bibliography of Emerson’s library in Kenneth Walter Cameron’s *Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Reading* Hartford, CT: Transcendental Book, 1962: 66, 85, 95

⁷⁷ *Late Lectures*, Ed. Bosco & Myerson, 324

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 389.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 58.

⁸⁰ Emerson was heavily influenced by Hegelian historiography, which played a key role in the shaping of the representation of China as a city that has fallen out of History. See Richardson’s *Mind on Fire* for Emerson’s involvement with the St. Louis Hegelians. For contemporary critical studies on the discursive rise of the notion of China as time-stopped see Jerome Ch’en’s *China and the West: Society and Culture 1815-1937* (Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1937) and Haun Saussy’s chapter “No Time Like the Present” in *Great Walls of Discourse* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002.)

⁸¹ These were either made available to him directly or as periodically published by the Dial. See *Journals*, Vol. 6, 360 for mention of translations by Collie and Legge published as “Ethnical Scriptures” in that serial. 5 from “Hea Mung,” 6 from “Shang Mung” (Book IV) and one from “Chung Yung” (Book II) from *The Chinese Classical Works* (Si Shu, Trans. Rev. David Collie).

(Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks: 1841-1843, Vol. 8, Ed. William Henry Gilman, p. 367).

Emerson revisits “Chung Yung” in *his Journals 1843-1847*.

⁸² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Tao of Emerson* (Random House Publishing Group, 2009).

⁸³ *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks: 1841-1843*, Vol. 8, Ed. William Henry Gilman, 367.

⁸⁴ Kerry Larson, “Illiberal Emerson,” *Nineteenth-century Prose* 33.1 (Spring 2006): 37.

⁸⁵ *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks: 1841-1843*, Vol. 8, Ed. William Henry Gilman

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, xii.

⁸⁷ David M. Robinson, “Emerson’s ‘American Civilization’: Emancipation and the National Destiny,” in *The Emerson Dilemma: Essays on Emerson and Social Reform*, ed. T. Gregory Garvey (Athens, Ga: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2001), 221.

⁸⁸ T. Gregory Garvey, Ed. *The Emerson Dilemma: Essays on Emerson and Social Reform*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001. “Discrepancy between thought and action” (p. xi).

⁸⁹ *Complete Works*, Vol. 6, 31.

⁹⁰ Judith Butler, “Performativity’s Social Magic” in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, Ed. Richard Shusterman (New York: Blackwell, 1998), 13-14.

⁹¹ Jason Frank, “Standing for Others: Reform and Representation in Emerson’s Political Thought,” in *Political Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Alan M. Levine and Daniel S. Malachuk, (Lexington, KY: U of Kentucky P, 2011), 384.

⁹² Johannes Voelz, *Transcendental Resistance: the New Americanists and Emerson’s Challenge*, Hanover, CT: U P of New England, 2010: 244.

⁹³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, and really long before that, China and the prospect of a “Chinese-America” discursively transformed the content, form and scope of American letters and literature. “China” offered up new ways to think and new ways to talk about “what could be thought.” For example, the methodological divides in transatlantic sinology shaped, to a certain

extent, the ideological divides in transatlantic anthropology (See Miranda Brown, “Neither ‘Primitive’ nor ‘Others,’ But Somehow Not Quite Like ‘Us’: The Fortunes of Psychic Unity and Essentialism in Chinese Studies,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 49.2 (2006): 219-252). As one of the oldest civilizations that always had to be accounted for in any genealogical survey, China presented endless problems for and generated all kinds of innovations in the taxonomic systems of natural history and medicine (See Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: a Short History of Racial Thinking*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011). China’s place in the history of the world and the notion of Chineseness as a racial category also evolved alongside and impacted the dialectics between unilineal evolutionism, which was adamant on the “psychic unity of mankind,” and cognitive relativism, which insisted on essential and not developmental differences between differences peoples and races. Chinese literature newly translated into English by mid-century and new literary genres that took advantage of the market for information on China together offered one of the few available “world literatures” at the time. As Cristanne Miller has recently asserted, the flood of “China literature” mid-century irreversibly changed the American literary market. Emerson, like Whitman, Dickinson and many other writers for whom the world opened only in the mind, had that opening made available to them by the barrage of print matter on the “far East” that began in the late 1840s. “Such reports,” argues Miller, “engaged in Orientalist description but also critically disrupted the popular imagination of a timeless, sensual, and spiritual East by describing events and people in a complex contemporary world” (italics mine) (See “Emily Dickinson’s “turbaned seas,”” in *Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, ed. Kerry Larson (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 251).

⁹⁴ See John C. Broderick, “Emerson and Moorfield Storey: A Lost Journal Found,” *American Literature* 38.2 (1966): 177-186, for Emerson’s correspondences with William Seward after Daniel

Webster's infamous "Seventh of March" speech and his critique of politicians who dismissed Seward's appeal to "higher law" for the abolition of slavery.

⁹⁵ "Massachusetts and Sumner," Speech delivered in the US House of Representative, June 21, 1856. *Defense of Massachusetts*, Cambridge: printed for private distribution, 9.

⁹⁶ Walter LaFeber, "Presidential Address: Technology and U.S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 24. 1 (2000): 3.

⁹⁷ William H. Seward, "Commerce in the Pacific Ocean" (Speech delivered the Senate of the United States, July 29, 1852) (Washington: Buell and Blanchard, 1852). For further reading on Seward and U.S. foreign policy, see Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of American Empire; William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy*. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973).

⁹⁸ After Seward's speech of the same name on the inevitability of war between free and slave-holding states: "Irrepressible Conflict" (Delivered at Rochester, NY, October 25, 1858) (Baltimore, MD: Birney Anti-Slavery Collection, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1860).

⁹⁹ Najia Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848-82* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ In Herman Melville's 1876 epic poem, *Clarel*, the ex-confederate Ungar scoffs that Reconstruction gilded age has devolved into an "Anglo-Saxon China" (*Selected Poems of Herman Melville*, ed. Robert Penn Warren (New York: Random House, 1970), 259).

¹⁰¹ Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants*, 110.

¹⁰² *Complete Works*, Vol. 7, "Success," 283.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 142.

¹⁰⁴ *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1820-1876, Vol. X.*, eds. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), 237,

¹⁰⁵ *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, 198.

¹⁰⁶ *Complete Works*, Vol. 6, 153.

¹⁰⁷ *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 3, London: George Bell and Sons, 1904: 508

¹⁰⁸ From the essay, "Works and Days," *Complete Works of Emerson*, Vol. 7, 166.

¹⁰⁹ Similar phrase also recorded in his journal, Oct. 20, 1864.

¹¹⁰ Leonard N. Neufeldt, "The Science of Power: Emerson's Views on Science and Technology in America." *The Journal of the History of Ideas*. UPenn: Vol. 38. 2. (June 1977): 332.

¹¹¹ *Complete Works*, Vol. 8

¹¹² BOSTON, Massachusetts City Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 1868, 42.

¹¹³ *Journals*, 228-229

¹¹⁴ Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 15.

BOSTON, Massachusetts City Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 1868, 15.

¹¹⁵ Gougeon, *Virtue's Hero*, 328

¹¹⁶ *Journals*, Vol. 6, [May 20, 1843], 403.

¹¹⁷ Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 54.

¹¹⁸ Ari Hoogenboom, "Thomas A. Jenckes and Civil Service Reform." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. 47. 4 (Mar., 1961): 636-658.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1907:345. Google Books.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 234.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 236.

¹²² Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 54.

¹²³ *Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Vol. XI Miscellanies*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1878), 637.

¹²⁴ *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, 98.

¹²⁵ He makes a similar move in “Social Aims,” which uses a quote from Confucius for its epigraph.

¹²⁶ Stanley Cavell, *Emerson’s Transcendental Etudes*. Stanford, Ca: Stanford U P, 2003. Cary Wolfe, “‘The Eye Is the First Circle’: Emerson’s ‘Romanticism,’ Cavell’s Skepticism, Luhmann’s Modernity,” *The Other Emerson*, Ed. Branka Arsić & Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2010: 274.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 282.

¹²⁸ Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, 248.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*.

¹³⁰ From the essay “Experience” in *Complete Works*, Vol. 11, 243

¹³¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson’s Complete Works* (Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895), 31.

¹³² So, the term “Self-Reliance” means *constantly* stepping out of the long shadow of the institution and getting back to the moment when the sparks flew; “Love” creates a rush that people assiduously try to replicate in form when their love relationships have inevitably cruised back into stasis and impersonality; “History” must be made immediately relevant and not distanced as factual information; “Circles” illustrates the strange and new discursive frameworks we enter to experience the heady source of creativity; “Art” has to recapture “the original soul, a jet of pure light” (*Complete Works*, Vol. 5, 333). And so on.

¹³³ T.S. McMillin, *Our Preposterous Use of Literature: Emerson and the Nature of Reading* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 87.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

¹³⁵ *Complete Works*, 85.

¹³⁶ *Complete Works*, Vol. 11, 414.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 415.

¹³⁸ Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 29.

¹³⁹ Emerson, *Emerson's Complete Works*, Vol 1. 159.

¹⁴⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Literary Ethics," in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Comprising His Essays, Lectures, Poems, and Orations* (Bell & Daldy, 1866), 206.

¹⁴¹ *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol, 3, 417.

¹⁴² Council, *Reception and Entertainment of the Chinese Embassy, by the City of Boston*, 22.

¹⁴³ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems and Other Writings* (Library of America, 2000), 53.

¹⁴⁴ Mary Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 188.

¹⁴⁵ Earl Marbly, "At the Old Craigie Mansion," *Appleton's Journal* 11 (n.d.): 594.

¹⁴⁶ "Romantic Liberalism and the Juridical Comedy: Robert Bage's Hermsprong," 639.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Ferguson, *America During and After the War* (Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1866), 28. Qian Zhongshu gives the date of the visit as 1864, which would have predated the existence of the fan (as recorded on the physical fan). The visit more likely occurred in 1865.

¹⁴⁸ Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 447–48.

Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 284.

¹⁴⁹ which stipulated that "fifty copies of all documents hereafter printed by order of either House of Congress, and fifty copies additional of all documents printed in excess of the usual number, together with fifty copies of each publication issued by any department or bureau of the government, be placed at the disposal of the Joint Committee on the Library, who shall exchange the same, through the agency of the Smithsonian Institution, for such works published in foreign countries, and especially by foreign governments, as may be deemed by said committee equivalent; said works to be deposited in the Library of Congress" (Boehmer 44)

¹⁵⁰ The metaphor of cross-pollination was literalized in the exchange as grain and vegetable seeds were often given alongside books (Tsien 205-215).

¹⁵¹ Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 284.

¹⁵² Weifang He, 人生颂诗扇亲见记." *Fa Bian Yu Mo* 《法边馀墨》 ("A Psalm of Life" A Record of My Direct Encounter with the Poetry Fan) (Fa Jing Chubanshe 法律出版, 1998).

¹⁵³ Ferguson, *America During and After the War*, 28.

¹⁵⁴ Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* (Stanford University Press, 1995), 259.

¹⁵⁵ One cannot but consider the actual power relations that dictate the degree and magnitude of sacrifice that one language must make in order to achieve some level of commensurability with the other (Lydia Liu)

¹⁵⁶ Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: With Extracts from His Journals and Correspondence* (Ticknor & co., 1886), 429.

¹⁵⁷ "An Early Chinese Version of Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life,'" published in *Philobiblon* in 1948, was Qian Zhongshu's own translation of his Chinese-language essay, *Qi Zhong Ji*. He published in English under the name C.S. Chi'en.

¹⁵⁸ Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Reviews* (Library of America, 1984), 761.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Harvard University Press, 1982), 359. The folklorist and humorist Charles Godfrey Leland's ties to China are even more convoluted. He was heavily influenced by the German Orientalist Karl Friedrich Neumann in ways that underscore the tie between nineteenth century German sinology and German influences on American historiography. Imagining himself to have inherited through his enamored of Karl Friedrich Neumann the Enlightenment's sinological loose-ends, Leland wrote in dedication to Neumann's

work the largely unread *Fusang, or the discovery of America by Chinese Buddhist Priests in the fifth century* (1875),¹⁵⁹ though he was much better known for his translation to English of the works of German romanticist Henrich Heine and Joseph Victor von Scheffel, as well as his works on neopaganism, *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (1849) and *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (1899). Marbling: idiosyncratic literary-historiographic endeavors into flurry of German translation and reinterpretation projects that held but the brief attention of late nineteenth century American print culture. Bundling of half-heartedly Orientalist, half-heartedly documentary poetry from who were sent to East Asia and Europe for brief stints as charge d'affaires and diplomatic ministers and who in the twilight of their lives tinkered away at largely unsuccessful literary genres as mediocre public intellectuals. Dabbling in a very striated : whims of popularity in his poem "Vox Populi," which uses a tale tangentially related to China in *The Arabian Night* to deliver a reflection about "So it happens with the poets;/ Every province hath its own:/ Camaralzaman is famous/ Where Badoura is unknown!" (*Poems of Places* 193). Acquisition of Oriental space to reflect on populism in the crowded world American letters, which saw him enjoying an ascendancy, of course, but which also bibliographic consolation as the only consolation for those left behind. Bayard Taylor, mostly known to posterity for his translation of *Faust* in 1890, wrote *Poems of the Orient* and mostly disparaging account in his travels to China—touching mostly on olfactory offenses—in *A visit to India, China and Japan in the year 1853*. In a dedicatory poem to Taylor written after his death after having failed at literary and diplomatic activities, Longfellow identified Taylor as a traveler and as a reader/keeper of books converge: "Dead he lay among his books!... / As the statues in the gloom/ Watch o'er Maximilian's tomb,/ So those volumes from their shelves/ Watched him, silent as themselves... Lying dead beyond the sea;/ Lying dead among thy books."

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Keenan speculates that Longfellow must have read the French Jesuit missionary François Xavier d'Entrecolles' letters on Chinese pottery and porcelain published in the mid-

eighteenth century (“The Origin of Kaolin or China Clay” 34, *Paper: a Weekly Technical Journal for Paper and Pulp Mills*, Vol. XIII, New York: Paper, Inc., 1914).

¹⁶¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems of Places: Asia* (J.R. Osgood and Company, 1878), 213.

¹⁶² Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Household Poems* (Ticknor and Fields, 1865), 6.

¹⁶³ D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 150.

¹⁶⁴ Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 399.

¹⁶⁵ John Greenleaf Whittier, “John Greenleaf Whittier to Edward L. Pierce, 12 April 1882,” in *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1975), 447–48.

¹⁶⁶ Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*, 401. For Gruesz, the poetics of conventionality fall subject to a progressive politics that retroactively applies to their translations into other languages as well: Longfellow’s canonic status fades as soon as Whitman assumes the role as the harbinger of originality, according to the Matheissenian narrative that prizes originality as the end goal of American literary nationalism. “If ‘originality’ describes, in his account, the founding moment of American literary consciousness—its separation from the maternal apron strings of tradition—then the ‘translations’ that come before it are allied to a prehistorical understanding” (405). Thus it was exactly his “Catholic universalism” that “doomed [Longfellow]—along with most of the Latin American poets who claimed him as a fellow traveler—to exile from the canon in both Americas” (403).

¹⁶⁷ Dana Gioia, *Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture* (Graywolf Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁸ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Part II* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1866), 448.

¹⁶⁹ Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (University of Virginia Press, 2012).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷¹ Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 449.

¹⁷² For example, Miller's "Forget Me Not" reads as follows:

Forget thee, love? – no, not whilst heaven

Spans its starred vault across the sky;

Oh, may I never be forgiven,

If e'er I cause that heart a sigh!

Sooner shall the Forget-me-not

Shun the fringed brook by which it grows,

And pine for some sequestered spot,

Where not a silver ripple flows.

By the blue heaving that bends above me,

Dearly and fondly do I love thee!

They fabled not in days of old

That Love neglected soon will perish,--

Throughout all time the truth doth hold

That what we love we ever cherish.

For when the Sun neglects the Flower,

And the sweet pearly dew forsake it,

It hangs its head, and from that hour

Prays only unto Death to take it.

So may I droop, by all above me,

If once this heart doth cease to love thee!

The Turtle-Dove that's lost its mate,
Hides in some gloomy greenwood shade,
And there along mourns o'er its fate,
With plumes for ever disarrayed:
Alone! alone! it there sits cooing:--
Deem'st thou, my love, what it doth seek?
'Tis Death the mournful bird is wooing,
In murmurs through its plaintive beak.
So will I mourn, but all above me,
If in this world I cease to love thee!

¹⁷³ In Henry Adam's *Language and Poetry of Flowers*, the poem that accompanies "The Water Lilies" reads as follows:

There's a spring in the woods by my sunny home,
Afar from the dark sea's tossing foam;
Oh! the fall of that fountain is sweet to hear,
As a song from the shore to the sailor's ear!
And the sparkle which up to the sun it throws
Through the feathery fern and the olive boughs
And the gleam in its path as its steals away [sic]
Into deeper shade from the sultry day;
And the large Water-lilies that o'er its bed,
Their pearly leaves to the soft light spread;
These haunt me; I dream of that bright spring's flow,

I thirst for its rills like a wounded roe. – Felicia Dorothea Hemans

¹⁷⁴ Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, “Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 77.

¹⁷⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art Volume II*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 994.

¹⁷⁶ C.M. Bowra, *Poetry and Politics, 1900-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 77.

¹⁷⁷ R. David Arkush and Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Present* (University of California Press, 1989), 61–70.

¹⁷⁸ Arkush and Lee, *Land Without Ghosts*.

¹⁷⁹ Translation of the title of 海国胜游草 provided by the editors of Robert Hart’s journal, who also mentions Dong Xun’s preface (Hart 349).

¹⁸⁰ Charles Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne: Being the Lives of Edward and Cecil Bowra* (London: Peter Dawnay Ltd., 1966), 135.

¹⁸¹ Gumpach, *The Burlingame Mission*, 349.

¹⁸² Drage, *Servants of the Dragon Throne: Being the Lives of Edward and Cecil Bowra*, 135.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁸⁵ Xun Dong, *Letters and Works*, n.d., 392.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 408.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹⁸⁹ Dong’s politics are conservative in general, as can be gathered from his writings on the expectations of women widowed before marriage takes place.

¹⁹⁰ Dong, *Letters and Works*, 238.

¹⁹¹ Jerry Dean Schmidt, *Harmony Garden: The Life, Literary Criticism, and Poetry of Yuan Mei (1716-1798)* (Psychology Press, 2003), viii.

¹⁹² Jin Jiang, “Revealed in the Interpretation and Reconstruction of Tradition: The Establishment of the Basic Concept of Poetics in the Early Qing,” *Chinese Social Sciences* 6 (2006): 158.

¹⁹³ Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon*, 98.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184, 188.

¹⁹⁵ qtd. in Stephen Burt, “Longfellow’s Ambivalence,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, ed. Kerry Larson (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 158.

¹⁹⁶ Matthew Gartner, “Becoming Longfellow: Work, Manhood, and Poetry,” *American Literature* 72, no. 1 (March 2000): 67.

¹⁹⁷ Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Jiang, “Revealed in the Interpretation and Reconstruction of Tradition: The Establishment of the Basic Concept of Poetics in the Early Qing,” 159.

¹⁹⁹ This is to be differentiated from the reifying treatments of the Qing and the discourse of cultural belatedness—as a nation in need of rescuing from the past and a latecomer to modernization—in both Western Marxian and Chinese nationalist historiography. See Lynn Struve, Introduction to *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*. Assessing a form of Qing belatedness separate from the externally and retrospectively imposed stereotype of Qing belatedness, Hay argues for its validity as an experiential reality (“[A]rtists filtered contemporary experience through a cultural prism of belatedness,” Hay writes (327)).

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- ²⁰⁰ Jonathan Hay, “The Diachronics of Early Qing Visual and Material Culture,” in *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, ed. Lynn A. Struve (Harvard University Asia Center ;, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004), 327.
- ²⁰¹ Zhongshu. 钱钟书 Qian, *Qi Zhong Ji 七缀集* (Beijing 北京: San Lian 三联书店, 2002), 146.
- ²⁰² Ibid., 147.
- ²⁰³ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁴ Longfellow, *Poems and Other Writings*, 3–4, ll. 9–10.
- ²⁰⁵ Burt, “Longfellow’s Ambivalence,” 169, 168.
- ²⁰⁶ I am grateful to Kerry Larson for this reading of the poem.
- ²⁰⁷ Hay, “The Diachronics of Early Qing Visual and Material Culture,” 328.
- ²⁰⁸ Bauman and Briggs, “Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life,” 73–74. Emphasis mine.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid., 73.
- ²¹⁰ Christoph Irmscher, *Public Poet, Private Man: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow at 200* (Univ of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 168.
- ²¹¹ Jin 秋瑾 Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin’s Complete Works 秋瑾全集笺注*, ed. Guo Changhai 郭长海 and Guo Junxi 郭君兮 (Jiling Wenshi Chubanshe 吉林文史出版社, 2003), 120. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- ²¹² See Michael Gibbs Hill’s *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern China*, Li Lu’s *Translation and Nation: Negotiating “China” in the Translations of Lin Shu, Yan Fu, and Liang Qichao*, and Wanlong Gao’s “Lin Shu’s Choice and Response in Translation from a Cultural Perspective” for examples of this argument.

213 For scholarship that supports the reading that the “flowers of May” in “Feeling the Times” does indeed refer to Stowe’s novel, see Guo Qingli’s 郭延礼 Explaining two questionable points in Qiu Jin’s poetry 秋瑾诗歌释疑二题” in *Reforms in Chinese Literature: from Classical to Modern* 中国文学的变革：由古典走向现代 and Guo Changhai’s 郭长海 Study of Circumstances Surrounding the Life of Qiu Jin 《秋瑾事迹研究》, p. 368.

²¹⁴ For more on the Stowe/Beecher confusion, see Xiao Xiaohong’s “《世界古今名妇鉴》与晚清外国女杰传” (p. 45), *Wanqing Nvxing yu Jindai Zhong Guo* 晚清女性与近代中国, and her talk “Mrs. Stowe and Mrs. Beecher 斯托夫女士与批茶女士” at the Hong Kong’s Chinese University’s conference on Early Modern Literary Translations, 1996.

²¹⁵ “The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha 批茶女士传奇,” *Shanghai Selected News* 上海选报, June 1902, Issue 18 edition, 4.

²¹⁶ Reprinted in Dan Zhengping’s 单正平 *Wanqing Mingzhu Zhuyi Yu Wenxue Zhuanxing* 晚清民族主义与文学转型, p. 120.

²¹⁷ Reprinted in Xia Xiaohong’s “Wanqing Nvbao Zhong de Lege 晚清女报中的乐歌.”

²¹⁸ Daniel R. Vollaro, “Lincoln, Stowe, and the ‘Little Woman/Great War’ Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 18.

²¹⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (S. Low, 1856), xiv.

²²⁰ “The Legend of Mrs. Pi Cha 批茶女士传奇,” 2.

²²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006), 43.

²²² *Ibid.*, 77.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 56.

²²⁴ Anderson himself of course understood that the claim “nation[s] [are] conceived in language, not in blood” pointed to an imbalance between provocation and response and set out to “explain the *attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations—or... why people are ready to die for those inventions” (145, 141). His book can be seen as an extended mediation on this oxymoron.

²²⁵ See David Der-wei Wang’s *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848-1911* and Xiaobing Tang’s *Chinese Modern: the Heroic and the Quotidian*.

²²⁶ Amy D. Dooling, *Women’s Literary Feminism in Twentieth Century China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 40–41.

²²⁷ Guo Changhai 郭长海, *Qiu Jin Shisu Yanjiu 《秋瑾事迹研究》* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1987), 93.

²²⁸ *Guji Dianjiao Yiwu Huilu 古籍点校疑误汇录* (The Unit on Formatting and Editing Antiquarian Books 古籍整理出版规划小组, n.d.), 70.

²²⁹ Cao Xueqin like Qiu Jin did not finish his work but we know from this “Table of Contents” poem the number of chapters he intended to write. The same applies to *Stones*.

²³⁰ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin’s Complete Works 秋瑾全集笺注*, 197.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

²³² a moniker for China derived from as the “Hua Xu people,”

²³³ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin’s Complete Works 秋瑾全集笺注*, 201.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 481.

²³⁵ Ibid., 245.

²³⁶ Guo Changhai 郭长海, *Qiu Jin Shisu Yanjiu 《秋瑾事迹研究》*, 555.

²³⁷ Qingyun Wu, *Female Rule in Chinese and English Literary Utopias* (Syracuse University Press, 1995), 155.

²³⁸ Ibid., 154.

²³⁹ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 1–2.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

²⁴¹ Which Euro-American books could Qiu Jin have seen or heard of prior to 1907? Works available in abridged translation include César Malan's *Le Pauvre Horloger de Genève* (translated by Justus Doolittle, 1855), Mary Martha Sherwood's *Little Henry and His Bearer* (Caroline P. Keith, 1852), Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (William Burns, 1865), Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Night and Morning* (Jiang Zhixiang, 1873-1875), Hannah More's *Parley the Porter* and Catherine Augusta Walton's *Christie's Old Organ, or 'Home Sweet Home,'* (Mary Harriet Porter, 1875 & 1882), *La Dame aux Camelias* (Lin Shu 1899), Kipling's *Jungle Books* (Wu Guangjian), Ellen Thorncroft Fowler's *The Double Thread* (by the Foreign Daily Press in 1903), Russell Bond's *The Scientific American Boy* (1905), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (Timothy Richard, 1891), Robert MacKenzie's *The 19th Century, A History* (Timothy Richard and Cai Erkang, 1895), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Lin Shu and Wei Yi, 1901), William Russell's *Biography of Madame Roland in Extraordinary Women*, Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* (Yan Fu, 1898), Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (Yan Fu, 1901), John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and Herbert Spencer's *Study of Sociology* (Yan Fu, 1903). Aside from this relatively short list, Qiu Jin had access to Liang Qichao's edited journals during her stint in Beijing. These offered summaries of Western literature and influences from John Fryer's translations of over 160 Western scientific texts at the Jiangnan Arsenal. In this bibliography, John Stuart Mill, Edward Bellamy, and

Harriet Beecher Stowe (who Qiu Jin directly invokes in *Stones*) are most likely responsible for a utopian fantasy that advocates women's writing and liberty and depicts China as stagnant.

²⁴² Fanzi. 繁子, *Remembering the Life of Qiu Jin, the Woman Revolutionary* 回忆妇女革命家王秋瑾, n.d., 43.

²⁴³ Ibid., 43–45. Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 48.

²⁴⁶ Haiping Yan, *Chinese Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination, 1905-1948* (Routledge, 2006), 39.

²⁴⁷ See also Yi Huili's "The Reasons Behind Qiu Jin's 1904 Enrollment and Withdrawal from Tokyo's Jissen's Women's College in Japan 秋瑾1904 入读和退学东京实践女学校之原因" for further, in depth discussion of Qiu Jin's disillusionment with Japanese education.

²⁴⁸ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin's Complete Works* 秋瑾全集笺注, 275.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 218.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 219.

²⁵² Ibid., 191.

²⁵³ Because many of these titles have not yet been translated into English, I've offered here my own translations based on my understanding of the content of these books.

²⁵⁴ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin's Complete Works* 秋瑾全集笺注, 191.

²⁵⁵ In *An Introduction to Qing Scholarship*, Liang expresses his wish that the reception of Western texts can generate "a style of learning neither wholly Chinese nor wholly Western (不中不西的新学派) (93). The key term in this phrase is "style of learning" (xue pai 学派) and not "neither Chinese nor Western" (*bu zhong bu xi* 不中不西), a coinage that has pinned Liang as a proponent of hybrid

literature. Whether hybridity features largely in Liang's mature political thought or not, in *An Introduction to Qing Scholarship* he was using hybridity to describe a systematic way of reviving literary criticism, not a collaborative theme or style of writing. Working, as Qiu Jin does, within an energy model, Liang envisions that optimism about new thoughts from outside (外来之新思想) will kinetically (and not ideologically) stimulate intellectual production within (汲而易渴; 其支绌火裂, 固宣然矣) (93).

²⁵⁶ Michael Tondre, "George Eliot's 'Fine Excess': Middlemarch, Energy and the Afterlife of Feeling," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 67, no. 2 (September 2012): 207. Emphasis mine.

²⁵⁷ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin's Complete Works* 秋瑾全集笺注, 192.

²⁵⁸ The title of Cao Xueqin's novel about the rise and fall of the Jia family in Ming China has two different meanings: the novel mythologizes its protagonist as an immortal stone accidentally dropped to earth to suffer its accidents and irrationalities and is thus a story of *that* stone; the novel also offers itself as a "found object" using a complicated framing device in which the real novel (*Dream of the Red Mansions* 红楼梦) is fortuitously discovered by the writer himself on a slab of stone in its textual entirety. It is therefore also a Story *on a Stone* (the Chinese grammar accommodates both ways of reading).

²⁵⁹ Duxiaozi Haitian, "Nuwa Shi 女娲石," in *Zhongguo Jindai Xiaoshuo Daxi* 中国近代小说大系, n.d., 443.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 444.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 449.

²⁶² Ibid., 450.

²⁶³ Ibid., 488.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 489.

²⁶⁵ After the fashion of tanci kaipian (弹词开篇), a regional practice of rhymed storytelling, *Stones* begins with a “bait.” Because the regional culture of tanci novels were public oral performances held in tea houses, the storytellers often used a short tale (in colloquial Chinese “*mao zi*” (帽子) or “*xie zi*” (楔子)) to pique the interests of a distracted crowd. These tales were often a parables for understanding the significances in the much longer, main tale, which were often adaptations of Scholar-Beauty Romances (*cai zi jia ren* 才子佳人) and which often lasted for days.)

²⁶⁶ Qiu, *Annotated Qiu Jin's Complete Works* 秋瑾全集笺注, 203.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 505.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 514.

²⁷⁰ There are clear similarities between this “prosopa” and historical proposas of St. John the Baptist. The figuration of Qiu Jin as a modern-era John the Baptist is underscored by the fate of beheading that met both of them in their stalwart championship and, one might say, radical interpretation of, the book.

²⁷¹ Yoon Sun Lee, “Type, Totality, and the Realism of Asian American Literature,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 01, 2012): 424, doi:10.1215/00267929-1631460.

²⁷² Sui Sin Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* (University of Illinois Press, 1995), 19.

²⁷³ Ibid., 38.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 288.

²⁷⁷ Susan Laura Mizruchi, *The Rise of Multicultural America: Economy and Print Culture, 1865-1915* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 33.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Tennyson turns up in James's anarchist novel, *The Princess Cassimassima*, Rebecca Davis Harding's *Life in the Iron Mills*, Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Dubois' writings on the Haitian revolution, and William Wells Brown's *Clotel*, etc.

²⁸⁰ Mary Chapman, "A 'Revolution in Ink': Sui Sin Far and Chinese Reform Discourse," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (December 2008): 990.

²⁸¹ Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, 29.

²⁸² Ibid., 30.

²⁸³ Although nineteenth century sinological translation tended to attribute to Chinese language "Maxims and problems; Excessively polite language; Figurative speech; and Adverbial and adjectival modifies" (St. Andre, 245-246) none directly translated Chinese names into their literal counterparts. The typing of Chinese female names as references to flowers and springtime also depart from the standard practices of nineteenth century translation of Chinese literature newly available to transatlantic audiences. As we learned in Chapter Two, the Ming dynasty scholar-beauty romance novel *Yu Jiao Li* (originally translated into French by Remusat as *Les Deux Cousines*) was available in English in snippets by the end of the century with transliterated characters' names (as such Hoing-yu and Pa-Hsuan). Fifty-two chapters of the early Qing classic *Hong Lou Meng, or Dream of the Red Chamber* was made available in English in 1893 by J. Bencraft Joly, but there again the translator went with the transliterated names "Pao-yu" and "Tai-yu" for the main characters instead of the literal alternatives, "Precious Jade" and "Black Jade."

²⁸⁴ The original passage from "Spring Impressions: A Medley of Poetry and Prose" published on June 7, 1890 is: "Man was not made to be always happy; but when the spring sun shines upon us; when the spring voices sound in our ears; when the spring fragrance and freshness fill the air; when all nature rejoices in returning life, then that elusive bird called 'Happiness,' which we are forever

pursuing, carries with us of its own sweet will and sings a song so loud and clear that our little home bird, 'Sorrow,' hides its head under its wing and appeareth as if dead" (358).

²⁸⁵ Marjorie Pryse, "Linguistic Regionalism and the Emergence of Chinese American Literature in Sui Sin Far's 'Mrs. Spring Fragrance,'" *Legacy* 27, no. 1 (2010): 85.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, 28.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 31–32.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 32.

²⁹¹ The Chinese World, or the Mon Hing Yat Bo (in circulation in America from 1891 to 1969) was a Chinese-language periodical "favored by Sui Sin Far... especially known for dedication to publication of creative writings" (Yin, 176).

²⁹² Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, 18.

²⁹³ Ibid., 33.

²⁹⁴ Dominika Ferens, *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances* (University of Illinois Press, 2002), 100.

²⁹⁵ Nirvana Tanouhki, "The Scale of World Literature," *New Literary History* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 613.

²⁹⁶ Andrew Piper, *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 236.

²⁹⁷ Implicit and explicit Habermasian assumptions in literary criticism account for this in part. Habermas made possible historicizations that take for granted literary-contact as cultural contact since he postulated that at one historical moment, the dialogism between persons, institutions and texts became the essence of culture and the engine of cultural legibility. His model of liberalism

relies on open-access media forms that constantly circulate, pick up, distribute and redistribute, psychic sentiments in the form of textual utterances. Amanda Anderson reworks the Habermassian model by looking at how liberal formations in the American context dispenses with such infrastructural requirements and relocates the cultural public sphere in literature and literary production. Under Anderson's accounting, literary imaginaries and literary contacts can take the place of concrete organs of liberal transaction. Her intervention, though generative, does again rely on the constriction of cross-cultural contact as bibliographic cross-pollination. Upgraded Habermassian models often make new historicist readings that take for granted dialogic and discursive transformations between the totality of literatures available in the public sphere and the literature that was eventually written by the author in question. Any argument for influence, subversion, rejection, play—of the kind that we often get for cross-cultural literary contact—labors under the paradigm of seeing the literature of others as engines of continuous and politicized difference-making.

APPENDIX A

Dong Xun's Translation, Retranslated into English

- | | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 Tell me not, in mournful numbers, | 莫将烦恼著诗篇 | Don't compose poetry with the stuff of worries |
| 2 "Life is but an empty dream!" | 百岁原如一觉眠 | A hundred years is like sleeping and waking |
| 3 For the soul is dead that slumbers, | 梦短梦长同是梦 | Long dreams and short dreams are dreams the same |
| 4 And things are not what they seem. | 独留真气满坤乾 | Only the true qi/spirit pervades the cosmos |
| 5 Life is real! Life is earnest! | 天地生材总不虛 | The heavens and earth do not produce talent in vain |
| 6 And the grave is not its goal; | 由来豹死尚留皮 | And leopards do not die and leave their skins |
| 7 "Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
(dirt) | 纵然出土仍归土 | Even if that which springs from earth returns to earth |
| 8 Was not spoken of the soul. | 灵性长存无绝期 | The spirit endures and has no expiration |
| 9 Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, | 无端忧乐日相循 | Carefree joy from day to day |
| 10 Is our destin'd end or way; | 天命斯人自有真 | Providence has its own truth for individuals |
| 11 But to act, that each to-morrow | 人法天行强不息 | Make your destiny your goal and never stop self-strengthening |
| 12 Find us farther than to-day. | 一时功业一时新 | A day of productivity a day of renewal |
| 13 Art is long, and time is fleeting, | 无术挥戈学鲁阳 | If you have no talents, emulate Lu Yang's wielding of the "ge" |
| 14 And our hearts, though stout and brave, | 枉谈肝胆异寻常 | Don't speak of the heart as unusual |
| 15 Still, like muffled drums, are beating | 一从薤露歌声起 | A row of storks rises like song |
| 16 Funeral marches to the grave. | 丘陇无人宿草荒 | The wild grass growing on lonely mounds |
| 17 In the world's broad field of battle, | 扰攘红尘听鼓鞞 | Hear the drums beating in the noise of life |
| 18 In the bivouac of Life, | 风吹大漠草萋萋 | The wind blows on the plains and the grass rustles |
| 19 Be not like dumb, driven cattle! | 驽骀甘待鞭笞下 | Inferior horses live under the whip |
| 20 Be a hero in the strife! | 骐骥谁能轡勒羈 | |
| 21 Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant! | 休道将来乐有时 | Don't speak of the future |
| 22 Let the dead Past bury its dead! | 可怜往事不堪思 | It is sad that we cannot bear to call up the past |
| 23 Act—act in the glorious Present! | 只今有力均须努 | If you have the energy just evenly put forth effort |
| 24 Heart within, and God o'er head! | 人力殫时天 之 | |
| 25 Lives of great men all remind us | 千秋万代远蜚声 | Reverberate through the ages |

- 26 We can make our lives sublime,
学步金鳌顶上行 Train your steps like the golden turtle that slowly moves
upwards
- 27 And, departing, leave behind us
已去冥鸿犹有迹 The ghostly geese leave their marks
- 28 Footsteps on the sands of time.
雪泥爪印认分明 Footprints in the snow are always identifiable
- 29 Footsteps, that, perhaps another,
茫茫尘世海中沓 Floating the sea of worldly matters
- 30 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
才过来舟又去舟 One ship approaches while another departs
- 31 A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother,
欲问失风谁挽救 I wish to ask who comes to the rescue when the wind
dies down
- 32 Seeing, shall take hear again.
沙洲遗迹可探求 We can investigate the prints in the sand
- 33 Let us then be up and doing,
一鞭从此跃征鞍 A crack of the whip and we leap forward in our saddles
- 34 With a heart for any fate;
不到峰头心不甘 The heart is not satisfied until it reaches the peak
- 35 Still achieving, still pursuing,
日进日高还日上 Moving forward and higher with each passing day
- 36 Learn to labor and to wait.
旨教中道偶停驂 Don't stop until you've reached the Tao.

APPENDIX B
FIGURES

第二

捕數人歸於州知州樓翰曰罪之則無可坐縱之則惑民編諫其爲首者而驅其徒出境民言乃已成讖之或配之所以輕重其典或置之或縱之所以撫定其民此之謂繩以法蓋不靜則昏昏則其法素靜則明明則其法平未有不鎮以靜而能繩以法者抑又聞之妖則有形詭則有聲妖詭相仍姦究其與鄭之亂也以蛇鬪秦之亡也以狐鳴誰得禁之又誰得誅之是以君子不恃法而修德存之誠行之信誠信立妖詭息彼造言者何恃而爲亂哉

一睡七十年

昔陳搏善睡每睡必數百年或千年不等又王質入山樵探遇二人對奕觀之忘返泊終局而所執之斧柯已爛此皆言神仙之事語殊荒誕不可考茲有友人談及一事似與此二事相類不知其真僞亦不知爲何時事也相傳有魏某者家僅中人居於鄉依山爲屋頗具園亭池沼之勝魏少好讀書不求甚解泊長又習技擊之術稍通其藝輒棄之以爲皆無足學而獨嗜道家言有乘家世世之想娶妻後生子女各一自此益無室礙獨居園中冥心物外每見庭鳥翔翔池魚游泳花開花落雲去空來覺觸境無非化機子是益酒然有悟一日獨行山中見一兔甚馴健因携火鎗逐之遂入山深處野花夾徑老樹參天適避行來都忘遠近忽遙見前山似有人影亟赴之乃龐眉皓首三老人也均席地坐而奕見魏來皆驚曰汝何得至此魏具以告一老人曰子來亦有前緣因罷奕起引魏至一洞口石門雙閉老人以手推之豁然洞開隨之入初極狹繞通入側身行數百步始見天日縱目四顧風景迥殊良田美疇綠槐修竹花紅似錦草碧如茵煙橫遠山橋通小徑繡繡碧水環繞村前所謂別有天地非復人間世矣于是導至一所屋宇精潔陳設雅麗魏至此身心俱適知老人非常人因叩以此爲何處老人但笑而不言須臾携酒一罇色紺碧嗅之香氣撲鼻與之飲魏量茶滿引而盡其味芳冽如饌瓊漿時已日夕魏欲求去甫起立便覺不支強行數武老人曰子醉矣曷在此下榻一宵乎魏諾之遂引入室魏隱几而睡及醒則日已向午向之屋宇均不見身蓋臥山中老松下也魏大異之自思昨日之事歷歷在目豈夢中所爲耶即覓所鎗火鎗則繡花斑駁物固依然而一觸手間輒已腐爛不可持矣惘惘不解取道而歸歸則城市如故人民已非至家叩門一老者出啟戶問客何來魏言我固某某此我家也汝何人斯而在於此老者譁曰某爲我祖於某年入山不返今已七十餘年矣汝何人斯乃敢來假冒乎魏乃具言其故老人疑信參半時村中聞有此事咸來問訊魏視之皆非舊識鄰村一老翁年八十餘兒時常來往魏家素識魏聞之杖而來見魏乃大驚曰幼時見君容色固如此今我已衰邁而君尙如故耶衆疑乃釋魏詳詢家事知其妻去世已久子亦於數年前卒孫年已五十餘矣因感嘆久之居數日復入山去不知所終

細譯鎮江西字信

鎮江來信云天主教頭目自揚州來船中載有數十小兒渡江進口後水淺船不能前進岸旁觀者見船中小兒過多遂齊聲吶喊云來來拿拐子拿拐子于是聚集多人蜂擁至船上將水手捆起所有小兒盡行驅之上岸傳教頭目潛身往領事官處求救旋又赴縣中訴說衆百姓亦聚衆擁入縣署勢甚洶洶縣官出來彈壓衆人不聽竟將書吏房屋搶掠一空全縣京口營兵始行少斂現在船戶尙被管押所有小兒皆安置育嬰堂云

會審公案

Figure 1: "A Sleep of Seventy Years"

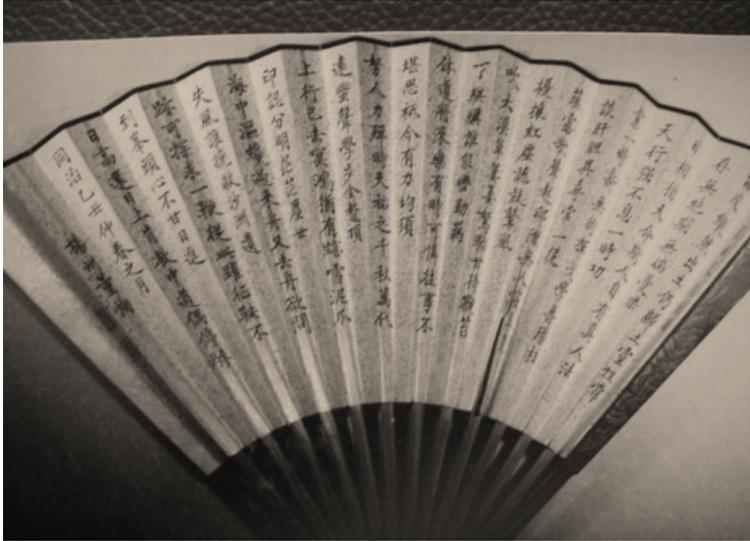


Figure 2. "Mandarin Fan," ca. 1865 LONG 23418 LNHS



Figure 3. "The Chinese embassy: Mr. Deschamps, Chih Kang, Mr. Burlingame, Sun Chia Ku, Mr. Brown [and interpreters]" Wood engraving. *Harpers New Monthly* June 13, 1868. NYPL Digital Gallery.



Figure 5: “The Hon. Anson Burlingame, Ambassador of the Chinese Empire, with the members of his legation” *The Illustrated London News*, Supplement, Oct. 3, 1868, pg. 325.*

*Compositionally, the published engravings and the cartes de visites remain faithful to the first portrait: in the center Anson Burlingame and his pork-chop sideburns are flanked by Chih Kang (Chin Tajin) and Sun Chia Ku (Sun Tajin); flanking them, we have Edward de Champs and J. Macleavy Brown (with positions changed). What has changed is, of course, the multiplication of fans from zero to four in the *Illustrated London News* which, copying the stylized carte de visite by J. Gurney and Sons featuring three open fans, could not even allow the closed fan at the far left of Gurney’s photograph to remain closed.



Figure 6. “Photographic Portrait of Qiu Jin” <http://www.hangzhoumemory.com/person/910>



Figure 7. “The servant of Justice and student of History, the poet and teacher, Qiu Jin, beheaded by the barbarians.” http://www.prosopa.eu/person_en.php?id=jin. Exhibited in the group *Prosopas* by the Port of Piraeus Organization at the 2004 Olympic Games.

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