

# INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

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### About the Editorial

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## Editorial Introduction

### Experiencing and Writing East Asian (Post)modernity

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The articles on China and Japan in this special issue deal with modernity and postmodernity as exemplified by modern Chinese writers, such as Yu Dafu (1896–1945) and Fei Ming (1901–1967); contemporary Chinese and Japanese writers, such as Can Xue and Sayaka Murata; and the connections between modern life and antiquarian book collections in Macau. These articles, hailing from the different perspectives provided by history, philosophy, and translation studies, collectively contribute to our understanding of the literary manifestation, reflection, and representation of modernity and postmodernity in twentieth-century China and Japan.

Yidan Wang's article, "Translingual, Transcultural, and Transboundary Scenes: Aesthetic Ideas and Discursive Practice in Yu Dafu's Landscape Writing," examines a representative writer of "New Literature." Previous research on Yu Dafu has largely focused on Yu's fiction (Denton 1992: 107-123; Levan 2012: 48-87). Wang's article switches the focus to Yu's travel writing and investigates his cross-cultural understanding of nature and landscape, arguing, "This paper aims to further explore the mechanism with which Yu began these works, selected multiple discourses, cooperated with authorities and commercial powers, and built a new imaginary of nature in modern China."<sup>i</sup> Yu's travel writing, such as "A Sentimental Journey," "The Trifles of a Fuzhou Journey," and "Travel Notes in Malacca," integrates Western culture, such as German *Baedekers*, with Chinese travel literature in a way that highlights lively personal experience and the narration of local lore. Yu's fusion creates a unique way of depicting beautiful natural scenery that surpasses the pedagogical approach of traditional travel guides.<sup>ii</sup>

A contemporary of Yu Dafu, Fei Ming is the focus of Candy Fan Wang's article, "The Poesis of Fei Ming: How Does the Classical Merge with the Modernist." This article investigates the characteristics of modern Chinese writer Fei Ming's literary writing, focusing on his free verse modern poetry, by placing it in the context of Chinese literature and philosophy and Western symbolism. This cross-cultural comparative approach lends itself to analyzing Fei Ming, who was influenced by both the traditional Chinese culture of Confucian classics, Daoist canons, and Buddhist sutras as well as Western and especially British literature and culture (Liu 2001: 30-71). Concerning how Fei Ming handled this commingled influence, Wang argues, "[Fei Ming's] ontological approach enabled him to treat classical Chinese poetry without prejudice and diminished the rupture between tradition and modern with the proposal that modern poetry should take the content of poetry and language of prose." Fei Ming's new literary concepts and practice made him a representative writer of the Peking Style.

Tingting Chen and Minhui Xu's article, "Foreignized Translation of Onomatopoeia in *The Last Lover*" moves us from modern Chinese literature to a contemporary Chinese writer, Can Xue. Chen and Xu categorize the strategies that Annelise Finegan Wasmoen adopted in translating onomatopoeia in Can Xue's novel *The Last Lover*. As a way of providing background for Wasmoen's foreignizing translation strategy, this article defines the term onomatopoeia and introduces different ways of translating onomatopoeia from other languages into English: "italicized transliteration with target onomatopoeia," "italicized transliteration with explanation," and "italicized transliteration with context." For these three approaches, this article investigates the possible reasons for the translator's choices, focusing on the background of the translator (in particular, her background in comparative literature) and Can Xue's engagement throughout the entire translation process. This article reveals the collaborative dynamic between the author and the translator: "The uncompromising author and the unwavering translator successfully delivered a difficult but interesting reading for target readers to experience a dreamlike irrational surrealism with the help of the exotic sound effects." The article supports its major arguments by examining the text itself, several dictionaries, and appropriate peer-reviewed scholarship. Translation plays an important role in promoting contemporary Chinese literature abroad.

With Chon Chit Tang's article, "Introduction to Antiquarian Chinese Book Collections in Contemporary Macau," the issue expands beyond mainland Chinese writers to investigate Macau, a cultural hub that has brought together Chinese and European civilization for centuries. Tang's article outlines the overall socio-political environment of Macau and then investigates the trajectory of antiquarian Chinese books in the context of Macau culture: their categorizations, preservation history, and contemporary usage and significance. The previous scholarship usually focuses on rare books in mainland China, but this article investigates the overlooked topic of antiquarian Chinese book collections in Macau and their interactions with contemporary Macau society. Government bureaus, educational institutions, religious sites, and individual bibliophiles have collected and preserved these antiquarian books. Based on his many years' academic experience with antiquarian Chinese books in Macau and mainland China, Tang states, "The study of Macau's antiquarian books will require an in-depth examination of the antiquarian books available to the public, including their editions, collations, prefaces and postscripts, the situations in which they were circulated, and so on. We should not only focus on enhancing the protection of antiquarian books but also learn to utilize and develop these resources." The development of digital humanities methods, the publication of studies of antiquarian books, and consistent support from the government of Macau will lead to further investigations of antiquarian Chinese book collections in Macau. These collections will become a window into Macau's rich local culture, a local culture with international heritage.

From China and Macau, we turn to contemporary Japanese literature with Jaseel P and Rashmi Gaur's article, "Precarity and Performativity in Post-Fordist Japanese Workplace: A Reading of Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*." This article adopts Judith Butler's theories of gender to interpret the Akutagawa Prize-winning novel. In specific, the authors examine "how anxiety-ridden precarious living conditions can also become a foundation for alternative performances troubling gender categories, thereby transcending the narrow social scripts rooted in exclusion and inequality." This article engages existing scholarship on Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman*, such as that of Ayako Kano, Machiko Osawa, Barbara E. Thornbury,

and Bryony White. A symbol of postmodernity, the convenience store epitomizes the fast rhythm of capitalist Japanese society. Murata draws on her own work experience in a convenience store to narrate the story and push its development. In order to survive and integrate into this utilitarian society, the leading female character, Keiko Furukura, has to abandon her personality and learn to imitate other people to become part of a homogeneous community. The authors actively apply Butler's theories to the novel's plot, providing new insights into the gender and identity issues of Japanese women working in precarity.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese writers actively studied Western technology and culture, and applied it to the task of revolutionizing, restoring, and renovating China. Yu Dafu and Fei Ming both blended Western culture, such as British and German literature, into traditional Chinese ways of depicting nature and articulating one's voice. They both attempted to improve Chinese literature and make it more lively and interesting with modern narrative methods. Can Xue actively participates in translating her novel into English and experiments with modern translation techniques, which demonstrates the author's engagement in shaping the reception of contemporary Chinese literature. Just as writers have experimented with different approaches, including those that drew on the past, for experiencing and writing modernity, Macau's antiquarian books have been digitalized, preserved and integrated into the contemporary life of the city. In postmodern Japan, Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* demonstrates how Keiko, a part-time worker in a precarious work situation, deals with anxieties and other people's expectations. These articles investigate many aspects of Chinese and Japanese literature, spanning multiple forms and genres. The authors, who are from mainland China, Macau, India, and Japan, bring a multidisciplinary approach to bear on modernity and postmodernity in China and Japan. Their different backgrounds contribute to the diversity of this special issue.

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Thanks go to my colleague and friend, Jeremy De Chavez, who provided me with this opportunity to co-edit this special issue. My speciality is premodern Chinese literary studies; so for this special issue on modern and contemporary literature, I sincerely appreciate the assistance of the reviewers, who helped me to select the articles through their reports and to improve their overall quality. This is sponsored by my MYRG project (MYRG2020-00018-FAH) at the University of Macau.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The direct quotes in this introduction all draw from the articles in this special issue, sometimes with slight modification, so the footnotes of these quotes are omitted. The sources for all quotes not from this special issue will be identified through footnotes.

<sup>ii</sup> Yu Dafu is not alone integrating the narration of lore with literary genres. It is a practice which has a long tradition in China. For the treatment of lore and literature in premodern China, see Zhang 2022.

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