

Canon Formation in the Study of the Environment in China and Taiwan

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Abstract: In his article "Canon Formation in the Study of the Environment in China and Taiwan" Peter I-min Huang discusses how the canon of ecocriticism taught in English studies in China and Taiwan is becoming increasingly of a local perspective by scholars who publish in Mandarin, address environmental issues specific to Mainland China and Taiwan, and thus engage with ecocriticism based on local perspectives rather than Western ones. The study and teaching of English-language literature in China and Taiwan inevitably encounters charges of neocolonialism or other argumentation that it is being used in ways that betray the legacy of past colonialist and imperialist projects. However, a growing number of ecocritics, animal studies scholars, environmental justice scholars, and ecofeminists are resisting using English for the promotion of social and political equality and they call for a middle ground between both human and other-than-human interests, capacities, and creativities.

Peter I-min HUANG

Canon Formation in the Study of the Environment in China and Taiwan

The impact of material environments on English Studies and the influence of local ecocriticism on English studies in Mainland China and Taiwan could not be addressed without making comments at the outset on the long history of Western colonialism and the shorter, but no less dark history of neocolonialist enterprises after World War II. These projects and enterprises poured and leached out from the Old World of Europe and the northern New World of the Americas and they reached to the most eastern and southern parts of the world—the Caribbean, Africa, India, and Asia. They spread, as butter on bread, English across the drier and soggy crusts of the Earth, to regions geographically far distant from where English was first written and spoken. The shaping of English Studies by and the steeping of English Studies in western-European colonialism and neocolonialism is addressed under areas of English language and literature teaching such as applied linguistics (namely linguistic imperialism studies), ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, race studies, and translation studies. Complementing and intersecting with this is the work of scholars who focus on the related colonialist and imperialist enterprises under which other than human species were conscripted into the service of the human species. Since the 1980s, scholars have been reading English literature and other world literature according to the anthropocentric, ecophobic, and speciesist projects that humans embarked upon in deadly earnest in the period of modernity beginning in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In one way or another, these projects funded (and were funded by) the belief that humans were superior to other planetary species and the corollary belief that human interests had precedence over those of other planetary species.

Scholars who question the kinds of beliefs and projects I refer to above teach and study English under one or more of the areas of inquiry of animal studies, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and posthumanism. They do so often under narrow, disciplinary-specific, critical terms and concepts, as well as under terms and concepts found in other areas of inquiry in the humanities and the social sciences and in areas of inquiry in the sciences. One of the most significant thinkers in the social sciences who had attracted attention from English Studies ecocritics is Sheila Jasanoff (Harvard University). In a 2004 collection of essays co-edited with Marybeth Long Martello entitled *Earthly Politics: Local and Global in Environmental Governance*, Jasanoff, and Martello emphasized the need for governments to respect "local" knowledges when addressing environmental problems, and, simultaneously, craft institutions "that seek to avoid the risks and errors of rampant localism" (3). Although they and others are careful to point out that local and non-scientific knowledges are in addition to and not at the expense of "global" and scientific environmental thinking, in their argumentation they defend the former: "Global governance in coming decades ... will have to accommodate profound differences of religion, culture, property, and aspiration even as it obliterates distances and enforces economic and social togetherness" (3) and it will be able to do so "realistically" if it allows "opportunities for local self-expression" (5). With respect to the environment, "international environmental regimes" must recognize that "local, traditional, and indigenous knowledges may serve as useful instruments for sustainable development and for connecting with 'on the ground' political constituencies" (Jasanoff and Martello 9). The "rediscovery of the local" (4) and the "turn to local knowledge" will complement if also complicate universal, global responses to environmental problems. "More fragmented and multiple visions of what is wrong with the environment" must be taken into account, for it is "the *situatedness*" of "environmental knowledge" that gives this knowledge "[its] force in decision making," whether this knowledge is "scientific or of any other kind" (13; Jasanoff and Martello cite the work of the posthumanist scholar and feminist historian of science Donna Haraway)

Yet, as Jasanoff and Martello point out, despite "the resurgence of local epistemologies and their associated politics" (14), there remains considerable disinterest in if not resistance to the local. Four reasons are given for this neglect. The first is that "the local and the global have tended to be investigated by different disciplines in isolation from one another, thereby overlooking the ways in which they are related" (14). The second is that "conventional approaches to globalization have tended to reinforce simple dualities, such as "modern" versus "traditional" and "Western" versus "non-Western" (14). In these contexts, the local is often equated falsely with "the pre-scientific" or "the traditional"

(14). Third, "since much of the academic literature on environment and development accepts globalization as inevitable, localization is not recognized as a phenomenon deserving attention" (14). Fourth, "much relevant work presents a static vision of local and global, as if the categories were fixed in meaning for all time rather than fluid and subject to strategic reinterpretation" (14). With regard to English Studies professionals in Mainland China and Taiwan who specialize in ecocriticism, the kinds of arguments represented and articulated by Jasanoff and Martello have been useful to those who are (or have remained) interested in the local despite considerable hostility to it. As Jasanoff and Martello recognize and as Ursula K. Heise elaborates in her *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet*, the local is not without pitfalls. In countless instances, local knowledges are racist, chauvinist, and speciesist (condoning, for example, horrific abuses of many species of animals). But the global is a sweet and sour dish too. Referring to Vandana Shiva's 1993 *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, Jasanoff and Martello point out that many global visions, those that go under such names as "science," are in fact "highly successful local vision[s] ... producing ... 'monocultures of the mind'" (Shiva qtd. in Jasanoff and Martello 17). Citing another writing by Shiva ("The Greening of the Global Reach"), Tim Forsyth argues that "the 'global' does not represent the universal human interest, it represents a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalized through the scope of its reach" (Shiva qtd. in Forsyth 199).

As Patrick Murphy also defends the local in his 2013 *Transversal Ecocritical Praxis*, although ontologically global environmental knowledges—such as might be found under projects of "ecocosmopolitanism" (Heise) and "deterritorialization" (Tomlinson)—speak for "the continuation of cultural difference as a foundational element," these "positive dimensions" of disseminated global knowledge "still unavoidably [posit] a hierarchy of abstract and general knowledge over concrete and specific knowledge" (Murphy 103). Murphy's arguments, as well as those of Jasanoff, Martello, and Shiva have steadily impacted English studies on Mainland China and in Taiwan with regard to the teaching of English language and literature in the context of ecocriticism. Its practitioners continue to embrace Western-based and science-based knowledges, but they are shifting these knowledges placing them adjacent to rather than hierarchically on top of knowledges specific to Mainland China and Taiwan. With regard to English Studies scholars in China who specialize in ecocriticism, more of these scholars are turning to local ecocriticism studies such as Shuyuan Lu's 2012 陶淵明的幽靈 (The Specter of Yuanming Tao), a study of the pastoral in Chinese literature in which Lu addresses China's growing disenchantment with industrialization. Lu's argument is that Tao's pastoral is different from the two most popular pastoral models, 金谷名士 (Golden Valley Gentry) and 蘭亭名士 (Orchid Pavilion), and that the difference of Tao's pastoral pertains to its discernible ecological arguments. As Lu summarizes, Tao's pastoral has four distinguishing characteristics. First, it represents borderline spaces and places, the peripheries of rural and urban environments that are neither manifestly anthropogenic nor manifestly ecogenic. Second, it celebrates agricultural living more than any other kind of rural or countryside environmental living. Third, it calls for the pastoral poet and other aesthetic producers of pastoral to actively, corporeally embody pastoral in their own lives. Fourth, it emphasizes the ordinariness yet uniqueness of life lived in the in-between space of the agricultural environment, neither predominantly anthropogenic nor predominantly ecogenic. Lu's study complements Western-based studies of ecocriticism that English Studies scholars in Mainland China and Taiwan have relied on until recently in their teaching and research (on ecocriticism in Taiwan, see also Huang <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2563>>; see also Estok and Sivaramakrishnan <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss4/>>).

Ecocritics in the West who teach the pastoral and where the term and concept "pastoral" refers to both a literary genre and a social practice, comment on the critical demise of it in the late decades of the last century. Its authors are accused of elitism on the one hand and provincialism on the other, of unsophisticated understandings of nature, and of bourgeois capitalism. Such critical assaults can be traced to Raymond Williams's 1973 *The Country and the City* where he affirmed the ecocentric values of the pastoral of Hesiod; however, Williams also identified ethically and politically questionable uses of the pastoral by many writers after Hesiod. If, as Williams argued, there were poets of the pastoral who followed the example of Hesiod's *Works and Days* by continuing a form that celebrates the values of "practical agriculture," "social justice," and "neighbourliness" (Williams 14), as well as a form that "authenticate[s] itself in observed nature" (Williams 22), there were others who produced a form

characterized by an "elaborate artifice," the mystification of actual agrarian practices, and the use of rural and natural imagery as mere backdrop or framing device (Williams 22). Another example of the negative perception of the pastoral is in Lawrence Buell's 1995 *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Analyzing US-American literature and the genre of nature writing and citing the work of Louise H. Westling, Buell points out that the "great tradition within American literary naturism" boils down to the "androcentric" and colonialist desire to escape from the city, town, garden, and pastoralized landscape—spaces constructed as feminine and enervating; and the androcentric and colonialist desire to restore the "wilderness"—spaces constructed as masculine and replenishing (25). Heise makes a similar argument, one that is supportive of the kinds of feminist (and postcolonialist) criticisms of the pastoral Westling posits. Heise notes that in many instances pastoral expression betrays a desire for older, "local" chauvinist traditions and antipathy towards younger, "global" human and animal rights practices (310). Under the latter practices, moral consideration is given to particular groups of human beings and nonhuman beings who had little or zero rights in the past. These groups include women, minority immigrant communities situated within older or majority immigrant communities, and animal species or certain groups of animals within a single species (for example, some groups of domestic pets). The pastoral expression that Heise singles out is writing that functions as the naïve rejection of the "city space" and the "urban" space, or the repudiation of kinds of spaces that historically speaking have been kinder to, offered refuge to, and even embraced minority human groups. This pastoral includes an environmental consciousness but in the limited sense of that of the white male human individual (312). Buell, in his 2005 *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, also comments on the questionable enlistments and functions of the pastoral and reflects on the critical turn towards the pastoral. Buell characterizes pastoral writing as appreciations of "rusticity" and "country ways" in the sense of committed eco-political responses to forces of "enclosure and/or urbanization" and as a genre and social practice that may continue to be viable today precisely because of the critical intervention of feminism, marxism, and postcolonialism (*The Future* 144). As he also notes, feminist and postcolonialist scholars underscore the reciprocity of nature and culture (145).

In his 2004 book *Ecocriticism* Greg Garrard devotes a chapter to the pastoral and comments on the negative influence Williams's study had on the understandings of the genre. Garrard recapitulates that the most common understanding of the pastoral is that it is an elegiac tradition characterized by nostalgia for what never existed or a utopic vision blind to political and economic conditions which impede the possibility of improved conditions for humans (and nonhumans), or, equally politically suspect, a presentist tradition that focuses on the fruits of the earth only the wealthiest human populations can afford. Critics who follow this understanding include scholars who specialize in British Romanticism. As Garrard summarizes, they accuse Wordsworth and his contemporaries of obscuring the exploitation of the English agrarian classes and depicting these classes in language that omits any "detailed socio-political diagnosis" (40). In English Romanticism the pastoral idealizes a harmonious rural English life and hides a "harsh world" in which laborers are "bought and sold at hiring fairs" and "customary tenure" keeps the rural classes "in a state of feudal vassalage to local aristocrats who are nevertheless equally adept at capitalist, wage-based forms of exploitation" (Garrard 40) and this is particularly relevant to studying the pastoral in the context of ecocriticism. As Garrard points out, the pastoral not only functioned to "distort or mystify social and environmental history," it also has provided and will continue to provide "a locus, legitimated by tradition, for the feeling of loss and alienation from nature" (39). Its "concern for nature" is not a "refuge from politics"; rather, it is a "potential form of political engagement" (Garrard 42). According to this ecocritical reprisal of the pastoral, the genre offers to the study and teaching of English literature the opportunity to address the present environmental concerns of species loss, climate change, and loss of areas of the earth that were once predominantly "pastoral" or more-or-less ontologically nonhuman, or not over-determined by human activities.

In the West, one of the most important ecocritics who defends the pastoral is Terry Gifford (see, e.g., his 1999 *Pastoral*). In his 2014 "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral" Gifford argues, as do Buell and Garrard, the pastoral persists and eludes efforts by scholars to reduce it entirely to androcentric- colonialist-, neocolonialist-, and classist-inflected definitions of "the countryside" as a "peaceful, nature-bound, and harmonious counterweight to the corruptions of urban life" (Heise 138). The

strongest forms of pastoral writing and its criticism are ones that Gifford calls "post-pastoral." By post-pastoral, Gifford does not mean only expression that evidences that the writer is self-consciously or explicitly addressing issues of ecological threat. This in effect would rule out much of the pastoral published before the eighteenth century and that does not show anxiety and concern for more-than-human beings treated badly by human beings. Rather, by post-pastoral Gifford means any expression situated in the pastoral tradition that implicitly or explicitly questions the conceptual and material boundaries between human and natural environments. Less than two millennia ago, the presence of the human species would have been barely noticeable from outer space. Today it is clearly visible from our space stations. For ecocritics, this immense planetary change is important to address, debate, and act upon in literary pedagogical and scholarly contexts. In Mainland China and Taiwan, scholars who specialize in English literature are confronting this change. For the vast majority, bilingual speakers of English and Mandarin, Lu's pastoral will be a necessary companion to Gifford's work because it is local pastoral.

While the pastoral is one of the most distinguished literary genres of Chinese literature, paradoxically an enormous amount of embarrassment is attached to it. After the second half of the twentieth century, when China industrialized and urbanized, pastoral became suspect and its poets, including Tao, were forgotten or outcast as elitist, reactionary, and worse, as an outdated "residue of feudalism" (Lu 272). As Kao-Zia Zhang (臧克家) and Zeng-Pu Zhou (周振甫) record, this view became official on 1 July 1959, the date of the publication of a poem by Mao Tse-tung commemorating the 38th anniversary of the founding of Chinese communism (37). Efforts to defend the pastoral and Tao's work continued to be met with criticism in the following decades including the Cultural Revolution. In 1961 a short story by Xiang-Ho Chen (陳翔鶴), "Tao Yuanming and His Elegy," appeared in the literary journal *People's Literature* (Lu 206). Chen praised Tao's genius and spoke in defense of Tao's return to the countryside in order to practice, as well as write, pastoral. He described Tao as "the people's hero" who knew rural poverty firsthand and did not underestimate the hardships of committing one's life to cultivating and working with nature (Chen qtd. in Lu 206). In 1964, Chen's novel was condemned as "anti-revolutionary" and he died "on the way" to a public trial in April 1969 (Lu 206).

China's transformation from a rural and agricultural to an urban and industrial economy has been nothing short of miraculous. However, as many people recognize and are experiencing first-hand, this transformation has been at a stupendous cost not only to the environment but also to China's population. As documented in Elizabeth Economou's 2004 *The River Runs Black*, countless rivers and estuaries do "run black" or else chartreuse-green from accumulated agricultural and industrial waste, sunlight is obliterated for many hours in the day by smog, droughts and floods are more frequent and intense as a direct consequence of unregulated industrialization and urbanization, and farmlands are heavily contaminated with toxic levels of industrial metals. Millions of people have been and are continuing to be forced off rural lands under aggressive land seizure policies and urbanization campaigns (Lu 272-74). Between 1976 and 2006, China's urban population increased from 17.92 to 43.9% (Lu 272). It is expected to increase to 72.9% by 2050 (Lu 272). In 2000, the country had 3.7 million villages and by 2010 this number had dropped to 2.6 million, which equates to a loss of about 300 villages a day (see Johnson). Many of the people moving to the cities are travelling thousands of miles from their homes in rural areas and are stigmatized as "foreign" or "migrant" workers. Another more recent epithet for them is "ant tribes." In the face of massive environmental degradation of China's seas, river highways, rice fields, and air quality, literary scholars are beginning to recognize the pastoral as worth reappraising and reviving not only as an aesthetic form, but also as a form of eco-political engagement that can be taught, reflected upon, and practiced under programs and projects that do not promote "intellectual sentimentalism" or naïve or otherwise exclusionary, chauvinist, anti-communist, anti-environmental, anti-Marxist, and anti-socialist agendas and thus Tao deserves particular attention (Lu 272).

Tao wrote and practiced pastoral according to a profoundly environmental, as well as communist, socialist, and non-classist thinking. His verse thus represents an important departure from the two main forms of pastoral writing in the Wei-Jin period (CE 265-420). The first of these two forms, Golden Valley Gentry pastoral, celebrated retreats for China's ruling classes in the feudal period: lavish country houses and elaborate gardens. The estates covered vast acreages of enclosed land filled in with human-made hills, rivers, lakes; cultivated trees; built small and large pagodas and pavilions;

planted and maintained exotic species of flora and fauna; and built huts and barns intended to resemble the dwellings of the peasant classes. In the Golden Valley Gentry pastoral verse that celebrates these aristocratic holdings, there are few or no human figures, least of all human figures that represent China's peasant classes. The verse serves mainly to entertain the aristocratic classes and support the poets who depend upon the patronage of this class (Lu 34). The Orchid Pavilion pastoral, similar to the Golden Valley Gentry pastoral, is equally classist: it celebrates an elite class of society, namely educated professional thinkers and scholars and it is no less anthropocentric than Golden Valley Gentry pastoral insofar as although it implies that the natural world has immense value, it understands this value only in terms of the one-way street of human interest. It is led by the talented and educated figures of Xizhi Wang (王羲之) and Lingyun Xie (謝靈運); nonetheless, it is a body of writing that reflects that the natural world is mainly understood and represented as an aesthetic site (in particular a site of the sublime) for only humans' appreciation and use. In *蘭亭集序* (Preface to Poems Composed at Orchid Pavilion) where the Orchid Pavilion pastoral tradition takes its name, Xizhi Wang wrote that "In the high mountains and steep wilderness, shaded by a grove of bamboos, surrounded by a creek, we are seated in a pavilion, playing the musical instruments and composing poetry to celebrate the beauty of nature" (Wang qtd. in Lu 34). The natural world that the poet celebrates is one that today would be recognized as so-called wilderness or uncultivated natural space where the presence of the human is hardly if at all registered: "high mountains, steep cliffs, bamboo thickets, clear rivers, bright skies, and consoling spring breezes" (Lu 34). However, as said, similar to the Golden Valley Gentry pastoral, the Orchid Pavilion pastoral serves to distinguish and privilege a politically and culturally elite class of humans. In *陶淵明的人境詩學* (The Human Poetics of Tao Yuan Ming), Yu Tsai (蔡瑜), a Taiwanese scholar who teaches Chinese literature at National Taiwan University, summarizes the two main forms of "nature poetry" of Golden Valley Gentry and Orchid Pavilion under the single term "Landscape Poetry" (山水詩). Similar to Lu, Tsai notes that although this poetry constitutes the most important body of literature produced in the Wei-Jin period, it contains little political or social critique (38-39). Golden Valley Gentry pastoral articulates the desire to "return to the field" (歸田), but "field" here is essentially an aesthetic construction and does not acknowledge the kinds of labor needed to sustain the land and Orchid Pavilion calls for the retreat of the artist and intellectual to (remote temples in) "the mountain" (歸山), but it does not recognize that this human is a privileged human let alone that this human might owe something in return to "the mountain" for what he/she gains or takes from it. And here is a similar example: in one of Tao's most famous poems, "飲酒其五" ("Drinking Wine No. 5") (Tao 60), a Chinese character that Tao frequently uses appears in it: 廬 (*lu*; the character translates approximately as a small home in a rural area). As Lu points out, with the exception of the anonymous author of the famous *詩經* (*Shih Ching; Book of Poetry*), Tao is the first writer in Chinese literature to distinguish this character in the sense it carries of environments in which neither the ecogenic nor the anthropogenic trumps the other (35). As Lu and other scholars also point out, Tao is one of a handful of poets who celebrates consciously and deliberately China's peasant classes (Lu 35; Chen, Yi-liang 80; Wang 100).

In Tao's "Returning to Pastoral No. 3" (歸園田居其三) (57), the poem's speaker plants beans at the foot of a mountain. He works from dawn to dusk, cutting back native lush grass to make space for the bean plants. He can barely grow enough crops to survive. The poem "Inspiration" is bleaker. It describes the experience of people who starve after the failure of their crops (203). The poems are based on Tao's own identity as a farmer-poet after he retired from a financially secure government position and returned to the countryside. Were Tao alive today, it is doubtful that he would advocate that humans return to a pre-industrial order. Such an argument, the need for humans to revert to a pre-industrial order, is one that critics hostile to ecocriticism and environmental work often claim: what Tao's poems ask its readers to consider is whether or not humans should attempt to control precisely and absolutely with machinery and technological knowledge the birth, growth, and death of crops and other agricultural produce and the birth, growth, and death of other than human beings. Tao records an agrarian world that was once extensive and today is disappearing, but that tomorrow might be restored according to fair sharing of labor and fair wages for labor. Tao's thought suggests that Chinese people in the twenty-first century ought to support environmental policies and initiatives whereby agricultural land is cultivated by different kinds of people and where agricultural land is extensive but covers relatively small areas of land on the edges of as well as within urban areas. Tsai

points out that the alleys, back streets, and small roads are an important feature of Tao's pastoral descriptions and that these refer to spaces that divide but also connect urban and rural environments and agrarian and wilderness spaces and places (84). In "歸園田居其一" ("Returning to Pastoral Home No. 1") (53-54), Tao describes such a place. He lives on land approximately ten acres of which are devoted to fields for growing crops. The main dwelling is shaded at the back by trees of willow and elm and lined in the front with plum trees. From one of the windows, Tao can see the glimpse of a distant village and hear the crowing of roosters perched on the tops of a nearby patch of mulberry bushes. As Lu argues, this poem characterizes Tao's literary output as a whole; it is difficult to discuss the presence of the human without discussing the presence of the nonhuman—fields, trees, sky, and other-than-human animals (35). In this particular natural space, culture and nature are absorbed into each other (35). This kind of rural space characterizes Tao's pastoral verse and sets Tao apart from his contemporaries. It also corresponds to one of the highest teachings of Taoism, the concept and principle of "knowing the white while sticking to the black" (*zi bai shuo hei*; 知白守黑) (Lu 35).

Lu characterizes *zi bai shuo hei* as "dark energy" (73) to emphasize that the pastoral that Tao advocates is neither something that is easily practiced or consumed nor something that is submitted to or controlled. Tao's pastoral is also a celebration of the most ordinary (and hence overlooked), "landscape space." In both of these senses, Tao's pastoral is analogous to Timothy Morton's concept and term "dark ecology" (188), which identifies the non-aesthetic or non-pure space and the refusal to "digest the object into an ideal form" (195). It rejects a kind of thinking (often associated with Heidegger and dialectical thinking) that seeks in effect to reconcile opposites or to find a positivist "nondualistic pot of gold at the end of a rainbow" (Morton 205). Dark ecology stands for compromise or for one's having to "hang out in what feels like dualism" (Morton 205). It is similar to Lu's "dark energy" and the Taoist concept of "Knowing the white while sticking to the black." It also is analogous to Tao's pastoral—an agricultural space not entirely aestheticized, not entirely unpeopled, but also not completely humanized or anthropomorphized. In "飲酒其五" ("Drinking Wine No. 5"), Tao's speaker notes that when he is picking chrysanthemums, he can see Southern Mountain. While the statement appears casual, this is the crux of the poem and would be recognizable to Tao's readers educated in the conventions of the pastoral as an obvious reference to the *locus classicus* of the Golden Valley Gentry and the Orchid Valley pastorals. Here, Tao critiques the poet who retreats to China's Southern Mountain in a disdainful act of holding himself either separate from the world—where the word "world" here means other humans—or apart from the humans who actually labor in the natural world. Such a poet, Tao's speaker intimates, can never be a pastoral poet. Pastoral, although it is "a fluid space bordering on the margins of the mountains or surrounded by the mountains" (Tsai 41), is neither an abstract or pure space nor a place of retreat that only an exclusive human minority can access. It also is not a "fairy land," a "mysterious land," or a "pure land" that one experiences purely aesthetically or "vacationally" (sojourn at leisure; *xiao yao yu*; 逍遙遊) (Tsai 11).

Today, Chinese people are increasingly aware of the problems of industrialization and are demanding greater accountability from their local and central government leaders, many of whom endorse global, Western- and science-based solutions to local environmental problems. In a recent news article, "With Pollution Rising, Chinese Fear for Their Soil and Food," Edward Wong reports on the findings of the Chinese Vice Minister of Land and Resources that 3.2 million hectares of land used for agriculture in China—an area equal to the size of the state of Maryland—have become so polluted that the land should not continue to be used for agricultural production. He also reports that one-sixth of China's arable land has toxic levels of soil pollution, and thirteen million tons of harvested crops per year are contaminated with heavy metals—including cadmium, a metal that causes bone loss and liver failure. Soil pollution is "especially acute" in the province of Hunan, the "rice bowl" of China (Wong). Hunan produces about seventeen million tons of rice annually, or about sixteen percent of the national total rice production. It also is one of China's "top producers of nonferrous metals" and "the leading polluter" of cadmium, chromium, lead and nonmetal arsenic (Wong 9). In 2011, 41% of China's cadmium pollution when measured by its presence in industrial wastewater was from Hunan. This figure has remained above 30% since 2004, the year that environmental agencies commenced measuring cadmium levels in land used for agriculture (Wong 9).

In conclusion, throughout China's cities, countryside, and towns, people can no longer breathe their air without a mask for many hours in the day or see the sky, so heavily compromised as it is by

industrial pollution. A return to agriculture and a rejection of non-intensive industrial farming does not mean a return to feudalism. An embrace of industrialism and "a monoculture of the mind" (Shiva 17) is leading to and already manifesting a system of division of labor and profits that is analogous to pre-modern forms of feudalism. To restore the air and sky in the east to what it was in the time of Hesiod or Laozi is the wish of a vocal minority of ecocritics and, as I believe, the wish of a non-vocal majority of people in the East. The study and teaching of English-language literature in China and Taiwan inevitably encounters charges of neocolonialism or other argumentation that it is being used in ways that betray the legacy of past colonialist and imperialist projects. However, a growing number of ecocritics, animal studies scholars, environmental justice scholars, and ecofeminists are resisting using English to for the promotion of social and political equality and they call for a middle ground between both human and other-than-human interests, capacities, and creativities.

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