



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# South as a Sight ‘南方’, from a branch to a necessity to World Literature

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## INTRODUCTION

In the discussion and debates on world literature system, methodologies and methods is a topic that valued. Moretti and Apter have obvious different opinions on the adoption of digital or abstract data outside texts and contexts. The way Moretti viewing world literature system is highly based on historiography and studies of the Annal School's influence and Immanuel Wallerstein's World System, so the western centric academic genes was inherited in some degrees. However, world system inspired Chinese Characters writing worlds and help formed the Sinophone Literature, which gives a possible response to Apter's questioning. Among the system, 'South' or South Sight is a different way to deal with inter-cultural contexts. The article attempts to explain where the dialogue may happen and its reason from different academic traditions. Furthermore, try to methodize the South Sight as a supplement of world literature approach.

### World Literature: The Genealogy of 'History of ideas Based on worldwide literature.

One of the 1990s' legacies for this century in terms of ideas is a set of deconstruction methods against state-based nationalism triggered by its political climate. Moretti's work was the typical product of great innovativeness from that period. Comparative Literature theory to Moretti is not simply an end-in-itself field, but an essential approach to his concern on the world system, academically initiated by earlier thinkers.

Moretti's Atlas of the European novel: 1800 – 1900, as an early preparation of the comment in his graphs, maps trees - Abstract Models for Literary History, embodied an advocacy resulted from that it is hard to figure the contextual network among the worldwide texts, due to the gap between researchers' limited lifespan and massive writings in history. He introduced the approach from the

historians of Annales School, like Fernand Braudel. Comparing with Braudel's work The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, they both featured with Data-based trends and charts, as well as the coordinates and trajectories of important events and people on the map.

Wallerstein, who is between Moretti and Braudel, conceptualized the term 'world system', as a theory that challenges that from nationalism by examining 'mutual forces' rather than fragmented nation-states in historical events. Shu-mei Shih, Ng Kim Chew and David Wang's effort on Sinophone literature is a practice inspired by world literature, spotlighting on the terroir, customs and witchcraft or myths faced by writers of Chinese character in non-China natural and social environments, to fill the lack of 'Chinese literature' in the narrow sense. Which is the environment of South Sight.

From a perspective of 20th-century knowledge genealogy, the world system is a background from Annales School historians, directly influenced comparative literature theory. The theorists on this lineage absorb nutrition from and believe in the decentralized culture field, which equipped them to use the natural and social landscape diffused outside the text and the author to analyse the 'influential forces' in the climate of worldwide texts.

### From the internal lens of South Sight

Southern methods and spirit exist in the classical Chinese academic tradition. First of all, 'Anthology' valued as an important cause. Of course, this anthology does not only exist in the literary tradition in Chinese, but its status and frequency of appearance are very noteworthy, because the same text will be collected and classified many times by different editors. Compilation of anthologies involves genealogy and taxonomy, that is, how to classify previous texts, which requires textual research, interpretation, and debates with previous orders; Their own standards and constructed order are their point of view. Such work have no lower status than creators in China. This is indeed somewhat ironic, because ancient China's almost unshakable cult of 'classic texts', such as Zhuangzi, the Analects or the Spring and Autumn Annals, challenged the views expressed in the texts themselves, which were hardly accepted by the public, so most of the heated discussions occurred on the understanding of these texts, and compiling anthologies is an important form of

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expressing this point of view. The practice of a South Sight exists in the compilation of new literary genealogies.

Inheriting this ambiguous attitude with the classic texts, most of the editors' ideas exist in the textual research on the environment in which the creators live and put themselves into the environment to feel their personality and emotions. This is a combination of literature critic and history studies, like the study of modern intellectual history. Its training requires researchers to face the creator's possible complex personality with as delicate and accepting a mentality as possible, because they cannot challenge the classics texts. An important dimension of competition among literary critics in the tradition. The above two parts are the Chinese blood of the integration of the method and spirit of the southern perspective in the world literature system.

### **Attitude of the 'south theory', and its possible dialogue with Apter's critic**

Moretti cast a micro lens on the interactivity between the target literature and the source literature, which he uses the term 'loan'. His focus, at the concept of loan adopted, on similar metaphors in geographically different texts. This in-between-textual pattern evidently need to response to the questioning from translation field. Apter's concept Untranslatability is a such challenge. Her long-term formation of work on contexts' interregional translation gradually draws a conclusion, that is, Untranslatability itself is also a universally existing system including the layers of international relations, domestic policies, and cross-border socio-economic movements. To be concluded, they are much more beyond the linguistics, but also a language politic, which means a set of deliberate actions to exert power but not to understand the writings from other languages. Afterwards, Apter directly comments on Moretti's world literature system has not achieved his claimed goals on decentralization but promotes the paradigm of a Eurocentric or Western-centric literary perspective behind his adopted systems-theoretic approach. Apter mercilessly points out that in Moretti's critical approach, only when dealing with the genre 'novel', there was no way of determining whether these short stories in the taxonomies of different literary traditions could be taken for granted as a similar genre to English 'novel'.

However, world literature is not necessary a subject of system theory. Although China and its competing with surrounding areas in Asia is as well as a concerning of Apter, but within the Chinese writing world, the world literature theory has a different emerge, especially the South Sight, which is a term born from studies of Nan Yang literature system. Nan Yang used to be a classic Chinese description of Southeast Asia, which means the southern maritime frontier of the mainland. However, it has never been different from the literary ecology of the mainland, but the multiple humanistic worlds of open sea water, island land and ocean monsoons. As the fulcrum of islands and peninsulas, the ocean is the linkage network between island plates, and it is also the outward extension of the land view, the crossing and connection of boundaries. Therefore, due to the different trajectory (with China) of encountering Chinese character culture, Chinese character writers there have different situations in identifying themselves and others. Hundreds of years' trade and immigration activities of Chinese, along with transoceanic trade of modernizing Europe and World War II, collectively reshape Nan Yang's culture topography. Ko Chia-cian and

Ng Kim Chew later use the term 'South Sight' to conclude the de-frontieration and decentralization in this regional world system. Later, the southern vision has been widely used within the Sinophone literature system, not just Nanyang. The related research of Shu-mei Shih and David Wang tried to use the critical method of world literature to analyse the world landscape within the writing of Chinese characters, including Nan Yang Chinese, students in Europe and the United States, scattered refugee communities and their next generation, and non-Chinese Chinese character literature.

South Sight's possible dialogue with Apter's critic lies in its difference with Moretti's theory. Walkowitz's view on Apter's critic worth noting, which is that one of Apter's objections to world literature is that it does not review the tradition of Eurocentric historical studies. There is no limit to the pursuit of comprehensiveness and digitization of materials. The historical method used in Sought Sight, especially the integration of different writings, is just different from Moretti's attempt. It has very complex and ancient Chinese historiography genes and needs to be emotionally close to marginalized ethnic groups. Many of the researchers mentioned just now have an ambiguous background between the fringe and the mainstream. They are Chinese in blood, but they have all experienced the dispersal of their family lineage to other ecology under different time and space backgrounds. These scholars' focus on diaspora or migration is different from Moretti's perspective of geographic data, but they try to use the texts themselves about these experiences, such as the expeditionary forces abandoned in Myanmar due to the demise of the Kuomintang regime, or the overseas students who experienced the dilemma of identity. David Wang frankly said that 'South' itself is an embrace and empathy for a heterogeneous cultural environment. South Sight is de-othering, and it is rebelling the 'discrimination between Han-Chinese and outside Barbarians' of Chinese nationalism.

### **A Methodization of the South Sight**

Although the 'South Sight' always viewed as an attitude of tolerance or emotional willingness on heterogeneity in world system, but still possibly can be methodized according to the experience it based on still can be concluded listed in the discussion followed:

#### **1. Stratification of centrality**

This is an old tradition in Chinese historical tradition to avoid and deconstruct the empire power. Ng Kim-Chew performs the method in his work, to identify and re-picture the nationalism of Malaysian Chinese writers inherited the isomorphic pathology produced by the creative nationalism movement in modern China. It involves many thinking concepts in Chinese writing that were conspired by those in power and rebels in the 1890s, such as the linear historical imagination and Han-ruled ideology.

#### **2. Literary Genealogy**

The local consciousness or nationalism composed of many texts is often a state of internal disorder before being deconstructed, thus forming a 'sacredness' or 'classicalness'. But the theories of world literature will

make such chaos 'stretch' the interaction between texts in the order of time and space, and their sequence can be more clarified. The difference from Moretti's theory is that South Sight is more sensitive to time, because the Chinese groups or Chinese writings from the centrifugal of 'geographic China' and have a history of nearly a hundred years, and their memory when they leave the Chinese ecology will freeze into their and their following generations 'wrote the "central" imagination of Chinese-ness. Like David Wang's Harvard's New History of Modern Chinese Literature, which includes such a time genealogy, it is like a "drawer" of the text, which is used to trace back the starting point of separation and divergence of diaspora in different period.

### 3. the Ethnography of Writing

South sight's concerning for the individuality in the region comes from the difference from the data-oriented and graphic-oriented Moretti or Annal School's world literature system that focuses on texts. Moretti's preference more on the 'edge points' on journeys of the novel Atlas but the scholars forming South sight give more space on the writings from the 'centrifugal dynamic, namely, the texts born with journeys. The term journey or centrifugal dynamic could be geographic, history even psychological. The typical work is an anthology, *The Man Who Longed For A Faraway Home*, which exhibits the nostalgia of authors who occasionally leave their hometown but cannot return in fictional and non-fictional texts. As a main clue, nostalgia often has a huge conflict with the new ecology in reality and the emotion and identity of the people who left home. Topics include ecological refugees, political heretics, and landless farmers. Chinese character writing is not only a way for them to express their nostalgia, but its heterogeneity with the environment itself means that their nostalgia cannot be appeased. This strong emotional conflict gives other systems that do not have the same discrete experience the opportunity to accept and identify differences. This is a possible supplement to the neglect of specific humanistic emotions in world literature from the perspective of the South.

### Conclusion

South sight has the dual attributes of world literature and Chinese academic tradition. From the original world literature, it attaches great importance to maps and the movement of literary texts in geographical space. But because of its another origin, it is historically and emotionally sensitive. History is a necessary means for it to deconstruct centralization, while emotion comes from the writing tradition under cultural power, but under the world literature system, it is also a necessary means for embracing 'others' and cancelling the dichotomy between center and periphery. It accepts different writers and theorists from the common end point and the starting point of branches; it is a possible supplement to Moretti's abstract critical method. But this perspective has not been systematically methodized and still has a lot of potential beyond my collation.

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