

INTRODUCTION

Issue 1 of Volume 18 of *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture* brings together six insightful academic investigations, each offering a deep dive into distinct literary and cultural traditions—Indian, English, German, American, and Philippine. Through these contributions, the issue not only enriches literary history but also highlights the intersections of cultural and thematic perspectives across different traditions. For instance, Tsu-Chung Su’s paper on Jerzy Grotowski’s production of *Śakuntalā* explores the director’s engagement with Indian mythology, offering a window into how cross-cultural influences shaped his dramaturgy. Similarly, other papers in this volume examine the intersections between narrative techniques and cultural significances, contributing to a broader understanding of the literary traditions and cultural phenomena under rigorous scrutiny.

Tsu-Chung Su’s paper titled “A Preliminary Study of Jerzy Grotowski’s Early Thoughts about Dramaturgy, Directing, and Acting—Using the Production of *Śakuntalā* as A Case Study” delves into the early development of Jerzy Grotowski’s theatrical concepts through the analysis of his 1960-61 production of the ancient Sanskrit play *Śakuntalā*. The production took place at the Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, Poland, where Grotowski served as the director and co-founder. Grotowski chose Kālidāsa’s *Śakuntalā*, a story derived from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, which tells the romantic and tumultuous tale of *Śakuntalā* and King Dushyanta. This selection reflected Grotowski’s deep engagement with Indian religious and philosophical traditions, which he began exploring in his youth. Grotowski did not merely reproduce the original work; instead, he dramatically altered it by incorporating passages from the *Manusmṛiti* and *Kama Sutra* and introducing innovative stage designs, including provocative phallic symbols, to express the play’s themes in a new light.

The paper explores Grotowski’s creative process and intentions, particularly focusing on how *Śakuntalā* served as a significant early example of his dramaturgical experimentation. Grotowski’s approach to this production was not a mere adaptation of a classical text but a radical transformation that emphasized the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis. By altering the script, incorporating new textual elements, and using unconventional stage designs,

Grotowski sought to explore deeper human and divine conflicts. His innovative production was an experimental arena where he tested his emerging ideas about actor training and performance theory, which later evolved into his concept of “Poor Theatre.” The paper also discusses the symbolic importance of Shiva’s cosmic dance in Grotowski’s work, representing the fusion of performance and spirituality, a recurring theme in his career. Su critically examines how Grotowski’s engagement with Indian mythology and spirituality shaped his theatrical philosophy and actor training methods.

Finally, the paper provides a critical assessment of Grotowski’s production of *Śakuntalā*, evaluating its impact on the development of his theatrical ideas. Grotowski’s adaptation was not just an artistic endeavor but also a profound exploration of the relationship between actor and audience, and the potential of theatre to serve as a transformative ritual. The production’s innovative use of space, its rejection of conventional theatrical boundaries, and its emphasis on the actor’s physical and spiritual discipline marked a significant step in Grotowski’s journey toward a theatre that transcended mere entertainment. Su’s analysis highlights how *Śakuntalā* became a touchstone for Grotowski’s later work, influencing his concepts of theatre as a laboratory for exploring human consciousness and the actor as a shamanic figure capable of leading audiences to spiritual awakening. Through this case study, Su underscores the lasting legacy of Grotowski’s early experiments in reshaping the boundaries of modern theatre.

In “In Our Image But Not Quite: Desire, Capital, and Flawed Simulation in Twentieth-Century Western Writing on Manila,” Tom Sykes explores how Western writers from the early 1900s to the late 1990s have depicted Manila as a flawed imitation of American cities. This paper argues that these representations are not just mere observations but are deeply embedded in the Orientalist framework that views Manila’s attempts to emulate Western urbanity as inferior and deficient. Sykes traces this notion through various literary genres, including memoirs, travelogues, and novels, showing how these texts, influenced by the geopolitical context, particularly the Philippines’ colonial and post-colonial relationship with the United States, have perpetuated a view of Manila as a kitschy and crude simulation of American urban spaces. These representations, often tinged with disdain, reflect the Philippines’ subordinate position in the global power structure, with Manila being portrayed

as a city that cannot fully grasp the sophistication and modernity of its Western counterparts.

The paper delves into the role of American colonialism in shaping Manila's urban landscape and how early twentieth-century Western writers lauded the city's Americanization while simultaneously highlighting its inadequacies. Writers like William Gilbert Irwin and Mary H. Fee celebrated Manila's transformation under American rule, noting the influx of consumer goods and the adoption of American customs. However, these writers also emphasized that despite these changes, Manila remained a poor imitation of American cities, with its attempts at modernity marred by a lack of authenticity and quality. This flawed simulation trope persisted through the mid-twentieth century, with Western writers during World War II and the post-war period continuing to depict Manila as a city struggling to maintain its Americanized identity amidst the chaos of war and economic instability. The Marcos dictatorship further complicated these representations, as Western writers in the 1970s and 1980s depicted Manila as a city caught between First World aspirations and Third World realities, with its glamorous façade masking deep social and economic inequalities.

By the late twentieth century, this flawed simulation narrative had evolved to include Manila's role as a site of Western sexual exploitation, with Western writers like Timothy Mo and Pico Iyer portraying the city as a playground for Western desires. These depictions, while still rooted in Orientalist perceptions of Manila as an inadequate imitation of the West, also reflected the changing dynamics of global capitalism and the Philippines' position within it. Sykes concludes by contrasting these Orientalist portrayals with the work of Filipino writers like Nick Joaquin, who offer a more nuanced and hybrid understanding of Manila's identity. Joaquin's vision of Manila as a unique fusion of various cultural influences challenges the flawed simulation narrative, suggesting that the city's identity should be seen as a product of its complex history rather than a failed attempt to mimic the West. Through this analysis, Sykes highlights the limitations of Western representations of Manila and calls for a reevaluation of how the city's identity is understood within the broader context of postcolonial discourse.

The paper "Seeing/Scene-ing Imagination in Virginia Woolf's 'Nurse Lugton's Curtain'" by Chia-Chen Kuo explores the intricate layers of Virginia Woolf's seemingly playful children's story, positing that it is deeply interwoven

with themes of life, death, wakefulness, and sleep. Drawing on the influence of seventeenth-century physician and essayist Sir Thomas Browne, the paper argues that Woolf's narrative, often dismissed as a simple tale, actually reflects Browne's meditations on these profound dichotomies. In the story, the lifeless animals on Nurse Lugton's curtain, which come alive only when she sleeps, symbolize the fleeting and elusive nature of imagination—a force that is often dormant or constrained by the waking, conscious mind. Woolf's use of free indirect discourse allows the story to transcend a human-centered perspective, immersing readers in a narrative that oscillates between the conscious and unconscious, the real and the imagined, much like Browne's own reflections.

The author further delves into how Woolf uses Browne's "Brownian paradox," which juxtaposes life and death, wakefulness and sleep, without resolution, to enrich the narrative complexity of "Nurse Lugton's Curtain." The paradoxical nature of the story is mirrored in the dual identity of Nurse Lugton, who both creates life (through her imagination) and stifles it (through her lack of awareness). This unresolved tension is depicted in the recurring cycle of the animals' animation and dormancy, representing the perpetual struggle to capture and maintain the vitality of imagination in art. The story thus serves as a meditation on the artist's role, reflecting Woolf's own anxieties about the creative process and the challenges of bringing one's inner visions to life.

In its conclusion, the paper argues that Woolf's narrative technique—particularly her scene-making and the use of free indirect discourse—effectively captures the transient nature of imagination. By minimizing the direct human perspective and allowing the text itself to guide the reader through a series of vivid scenes, Woolf creates a space where imagination is both present and elusive, reflecting the inherent difficulty of fully realizing artistic visions. The half-finished curtain in the story symbolizes the ongoing, unfinished nature of artistic creation, always striving toward completion but never fully attaining it. This analysis broadens the understanding of "Nurse Lugton's Curtain," positioning it not just as a children's story, but as a complex, layered reflection on the nature of creativity and the perpetual tension between life, death, and the artist's imagination.

I-Tsun Wan's paper, "The Accelerated World and the Disorientation in Eichendorff's *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*," delves into the effects of the "Great Acceleration" of the nineteenth century on European society and its literary representations. The study focuses on Joseph von Eichendorff's novel

Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts (*From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing*), exploring how the rapid changes in time, space, and societal structures influenced the narrative and the protagonist's experience of the world. The concept of the "Great Acceleration" refers to the period of explosive growth in production, communication, and technology during the long nineteenth century, a time when human senses and perceptions of the world underwent significant transformations due to these changes. Wan begins by situating Eichendorff's novel within this historical context, arguing that the novel reflects the disorientation and loss of stability experienced by individuals as traditional cyclical time gave way to linear, accelerated time. This shift is seen as a major theme in the novel, with the protagonist's journey symbolizing the broader societal struggle to adapt to the new, fast-paced world.

Wan outlines how the protagonist, initially embedded in a rural, cyclical time system, is thrust into a linear, accelerated trajectory as he leaves his village. This departure from the cyclical, predictable rhythms of agrarian life represents a break from the stability and security of the past. The novel's title, *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*, which translates into *From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing*, already signals the protagonist's status as someone who does not fit into the traditional productive system of his community. His journey is not just a physical one, but also a metaphorical escape from the constraints of an outdated mode of life. The novel opens with the protagonist being expelled from his home, labeled a "good-for-nothing" by his father for failing to keep pace with the agricultural demands of the farm. This act of expulsion symbolizes the conflict between the old, cyclical time associated with agrarian life and the new, linear time associated with newly developed modernity of the nineteenth century. As the protagonist embarks on his journey, he enters a world of rapid movement and constant change, where traditional markers of time and space seem to abruptly lose their abiding significances.

Wan highlights the significance of movement in the novel, particularly the protagonist's experiences of accelerated travel. Each journey in the novel is marked by a sense of disorientation and a loss of connection to the past, as the protagonist is carried from one place to another at increasing speeds. This acceleration is not just a physical phenomenon but also a psychological one, as the protagonist's sense of self becomes increasingly fragmented with each new destination. For example, the protagonist's first major journey takes him from his village to Vienna, where he experiences his first taste of accelerated

movement. The description of this journey is filled with imagery of flying, with landscapes rapidly disappearing behind him and new ones appearing just as quickly. This sense of speed and dislocation is further heightened by the protagonist's frequent lapses into sleep during these journeys, only to wake up in a completely new environment, unsure of where he is or how he got there. This pattern of movement, sleep, and disorientation repeats throughout the novel, symbolizing the loss of control and coherence in the protagonist's life.

Wan argues that this portrayal of movement reflects the broader societal experience of acceleration during the nineteenth century. As the pace of life increased, traditional structures and ways of life were destabilized, leading to a sense of disorientation and existential anxiety. The protagonist's inability to find a stable place or identity in this rapidly changing world mirrors the experience of countless individuals during this period of transformation. The theme of dislocation is further explored through the novel's depiction of space and place. Wan notes that the protagonist's journey is marked by a series of spatial displacements, as he moves from one location to another without ever finding a place where he truly belongs. This sense of placelessness is a key feature of the accelerated world, where the rapid movement of people and goods undermines traditional notions of home and belonging. In addition to physical displacement, the novel also explores the psychological impact of acceleration on the protagonist. Wan discusses how the protagonist's sense of self becomes increasingly fragmented as he moves through different spaces and encounters new people. This fragmentation is reflected in the novel's narrative structure, which is composed of a series of episodic adventures rather than a cohesive, linear plot. Each episode represents a new attempt by the protagonist to find meaning and stability in a world that is constantly shifting beneath his feet.

The paper also delves into the novel's exploration of time, particularly the conflict between cyclical and linear time. Wan argues that the protagonist's journey represents a break from the cyclical time of agrarian life, where each day, season, and year followed a predictable pattern. In contrast, the linear time of modernity is characterized by progress, movement, and change, but also by uncertainty and a loss of control. The protagonist's struggle to adapt to this new conception of time is a central theme of the novel, as he is constantly caught between the desire for stability and the pressure to move forward. One of the most significant insights of Wan's paper is the role of love as a stabilizing force in the protagonist's life. In a world where everything is in flux, love represents

a fixed point, a source of meaning and identity. The protagonist's love for the female character in the novel becomes his anchor, giving him a sense of purpose and direction in an otherwise chaotic world. Wan suggests that this focus on love reflects a broader trend in nineteenth-century literature, where romantic relationships were often depicted as a refuge from the disorienting effects of modernity.

However, Wan also points out that love in the novel is not an unambiguous source of stability. The protagonist's love is often marked by uncertainty and confusion, reflecting the instability of the world around him. Yet, it is this very uncertainty that drives the protagonist forward, pushing him to continue his journey in search of a place where he can finally feel at home. The novel's conclusion, with its depiction of a marriage that promises but does not deliver stability, underscores the ambivalence of love as both a source of comfort and a catalyst for further dislocation, if not disorientation. Wan concludes by emphasizing the significance of Eichendorff's novel as a reflection of the challenges of the nineteenth century, while also offering insights into the broader human condition in the face of relentless acceleration and bewilderment. The novel's depiction of the protagonist's journey through an accelerated, unpredictable world resonates with contemporary concerns about the pace of alteration and its impact on individual identity and well-being. In this sense, the German novel *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* can be seen as both a product of its time and a timeless exploration of the human struggle to find meaning and stability in a world that is constantly in motion and modification.

Chi-min Chang's paper "The City as Art' in Colum McCann's *Let the Great World Spin*" explores how McCann uses Philippe Petit's 1974 high-wire walk between the World Trade Center Towers as a central motif to address the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. McCann's novel, while set in the 1970s, reflects on the Vietnam War and subtly connects to the trauma of 9/11, using the art performance as a metaphor for resilience and recovery. Chang argues that McCann presents the city of New York not just as a backdrop but as an active participant in the narrative, transforming it into a piece of art that captures the socio-historical complexities of both the past and present. Through this lens, McCann redefines urban space, making it a stage where history and memory intertwine, allowing for a deeper reflection on the human condition and the possibility of redemption through art.

In the context of post-9/11 literature, Chang positions McCann alongside other writers like Don DeLillo and Jonathan Safran Foer, who grapple with the task of depicting New York in the wake of the attacks. However, unlike his contemporaries who focus directly on the event's aftermath, McCann takes a more oblique approach by revisiting the past, using Petit's performance to draw connections between different historical moments. Chang highlights how the high-wire walk, as an art performance, disrupts conventional perceptions of time and space, challenging the audience to engage with the city in new ways. This reconfiguration of urban space through art allows McCann to explore themes of vulnerability, resilience, and the enduring impact of historical events on the collective psyche of the city's inhabitants.

Chang further discusses how McCann's depiction of New York as a work of art underscores the transformative power of artistic practice in shaping our understanding of history and identity. The novel's intricate narrative structure, interweaving multiple storylines across time and space, reflects the complexities of urban life and the inescapable presence of the past in the present. Through characters like the Irish Catholic monk Corrigan and the black prostitute Jazzlyn, McCann delves into the socio-historical entanglements that serve to define, if not redefine, New York, revealing how personal and collective histories are inextricably linked. Chang concludes that McCann's novel not only challenges traditional notions of historical narrative but also offers a unique vision of the city as a site of artistic creation and historical reflection, where the boundaries between life and art are blurred, and where the possibility of redemption through beauty remains ever-present.

Li-ching Ma's paper titled "A Time of Terror: The Spectacle of Fears in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Falling Man*" explores the pervasive theme of fear in the context of late modernity, particularly through the lens of Don DeLillo's novels *White Noise* and *Falling Man*. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity," Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulacra and hyperreality, and Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle, Ma delves into how these novels reflect the unsettling landscape of contemporary life, marked by a pervasive sense of fear and uncertainty. Bauman's concept of liquid modernity underscores how modern life, characterized by rapid change and instability, gives rise to "liquid fears"—anxieties that seep through the cracks of daily life, fueled by an overarching uncertainty about the future. This paper argues that DeLillo's portrayal of fear

in these novels is not just about individual anxieties but reflects a broader societal spectacle where fears are both manufactured and consumed.

In *White Noise*, DeLillo presents a world dominated by consumerism, media saturation, and technological advances, all of which contribute to a landscape of pervasive and ambient fear. The novel's protagonist, Jack Gladney, navigates a world where the fear of death is omnipresent, yet paradoxically mediated through the very systems that create a false sense of security—consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, and media. Ma highlights how DeLillo's narrative demonstrates the intrusion of a hyperreal world where the boundary between reality and simulation blurs, leaving individuals disoriented and disconnected from authentic experiences. The novel's infamous "Airborne Toxic Event" serves as a critical moment where the spectacle of fear becomes literal, as the characters are forced to confront the tangible consequences of their abstract fears. This event, Ma suggests, symbolizes the inevitable implosion of a society overly reliant on simulacra—a society where reality is often a mere backdrop to the dominant spectacle. As such, DeLillo's counter-narrative in *White Noise* challenges the reader to see beyond the superficial and to question the underlying structures that perpetuate these fears and frights, advocating for a return to a more grounded and authentic mode of human existence.

Falling Man, written in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, continues DeLillo's exploration of fear, but in a context where the spectacle of terror is much more immediate and visceral. The novel traces the lives of survivors and witnesses of the 9/11 attacks, focusing on the deep psychological scars left by the event. Ma interprets the novel as a meditation on the intersection of personal trauma and collective memory, where the spectacle of 9/11 is not just a historical event but a recurring image that haunts the American collective consciousness. Through the character of Keith, a survivor of the attacks, DeLillo examines the fragmented nature of post-9/11 existence, where individuals struggle to reconcile the past with the present. The recurring image of the "falling man," a performance artist who re-enacts the jumpers from the Twin Towers, serves as a powerful metaphor for the inescapable presence of trauma in the public psyche. Ma argues that this image, like the white noise in DeLillo's earlier novel, symbolizes the persistent and pervasive nature of fear in a society that is both witness and partaker in the haunting spectacle known as terror, if not terrorism. Ultimately, Ma's paper suggests that DeLillo's works

offer a profound critique of the ways in which modern societies create, manage, and consume fear, urging readers to confront the underlying causes of their anxieties and to seek out more authentic ways of living in a world dominated by relentless spectacles.

In conclusion, Issue 1 of Volume 18 of *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture* offers a diverse and thought-provoking collection of scholarly works that bridge different literary traditions and cultural contexts. By examining the intricacies of Indian, English, German, American, and Philippine literatures and cultures through a range of theoretical and historical lenses, this issue underscores the importance of cross-cultural dialogue in expanding our understanding of literary history and contemporary interpretation. The articles collectively highlight how literature, as a reflection of its time and space, continues to inform and be informed by the ever-changing dynamics of culture and society. As readers engage with these insightful investigations, they are invited to consider the broader implications of literature as a transformative tool in the global exchange of ideas and identities.

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