

## Arizona State University NEH Summer Institute 2024

### Translation and Traveling Texts: East Asian National Literatures in an Era Without Borders

**NB: This is a tentative schedule, and the structure of the Institute might change, depending on participant interests. This is a group creation, and we'd like to have as much input from everyone as possible!**

#### Academic Schedule: June 17th – June 28th, 2024

In general, sessions will consist of approximately 5-6 contact hours per day, divided into morning and afternoon sessions of 2.5-3 hours each. Mornings will primarily center on discussion of readings, and afternoons will focus on an activity that incorporates insights from the readings and discussion. The daily schedule will vary depending on the topic in question and participant interests, but an approximate breakdown is provided below.

8:30 – 9:30	Reading, writing, and reflection
9:30 – 12:00	Morning session (discussion of readings, includes 15-minute coffee break)
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 3:30	Afternoon session (activity, includes 15-minute coffee break)
3:30 – 4:30	Dr. Hedberg and Dr. Tuck's office hours / "spillover" time for discussions, if necessary

Unless otherwise noted, all readings will be made available as PDFs on the Institute Website.

## SCHEDULE

### DAY 1 (Monday, June 17th)

#### Framing a Debate, Pt. 1: "Free" and "Faithful" Translation

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- At the outset of our Institute, how might we provisionally define the term “translation”? What is translation, and in what ways is translation similar to and different from other types of writing?
- What is meant by “free” and “literal” translation, in both theory and practice? When do these ideals come into conflict? If you have translated something before, do you think of yourself as more of a “free” or “literal” translator?

Readings:

- 1) Vladimir Nabokov, “Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English”
- 2) Edward Seidensticker, “Free Vs. Literal Translation”
- 3) Hiroaki Sato, ed., *100 Frogs*

Activity:

Choose one of the translations of the Japanese haiku poet Bashō in the collection by Hiroaki Sato and be ready to discuss its features. Next, prepare your own translation of the poem based on the word-by-word guide provided by the instructors.

### DAY 2 (Tuesday, June 18th)

#### Framing a Debate, Pt. 2: Invisible Translators and Moving Beyond "Fidelity"

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What do the readings by Venuti and Polizzotti add to our earlier discussion of “free” vs. “literal” translation? What are some of the other criteria we might use to evaluate a translation?
- What does Lawrence Venuti mean that translators are “invisible”? Do you agree with Venuti that this is a bad thing? Should translators strive to make their

work more visible?

- What is Mark Polizzotti's objection to Venuti's approach to translation? Are Polizzotti's and Venuti's respective approaches irreconcilable, or can we potentially incorporate insights from both into our own translations?

Readings:

- 1) Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (introduction)
- 2) Mark Polizzotti, *Sympathy for the Traitor*, Chapter 4, "Beautifully Unfaithful"
- 3) Wang Wei (8th c.) and Eliot Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*

Activity:

As we did yesterday, come to class prepared to briefly discuss one of the translations of Wang Wei that interested you. Next, use the character-by-character gloss on p. 6 of the Weinberger to prepare your own provisional translation of the Wang Wei. As you are translating, think about how the experience of translating a Chinese "regulated verse" (*lüshi*) differs from translating a Japanese *haiku*.

### **DAY 3 (Wednesday, June 19th)**

#### **Lost (and Gained) in Translation: Language, Culture, and the World's Most Complicated Poem Explained in Twenty Minutes!**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What are the formal features of Japanese *waka* poetry, and as a translator, what are some of your starting considerations? Of all the many features of the poem that could be conveyed in translation (the literal meaning, cultural references, wordplay, etc.), what is most important to convey in translation? Finally, how do translators such as Laurel Rasplica Rodd, Mary Catherine Henkenius, and Joshua Mostow confront these issues?
- What does George Steiner mean by "understanding as translation," and what might a Steiner-esque reading of the *Hyakunin isshu* look like? Do we necessarily need the background cultural information Steiner presents before undertaking a translation?

## Readings:

- 1) Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius, *Kokinshu: A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern* (selections)
- 2) George Steiner, *After Babel*, Chapter 1 “Understanding as Translation”
- 3) Joshua Mostow, “Waka in Translation”

## Activity:

Prepare a translation of one of the selected waka poems from *Hyakunin isshu* using the glosses and guides provided by the instructors, and the sample translations. How do features such as “pillow words” (*makurakotoba*), “pivot words” (*kakekotoba*), and culture-specific references complicate the process of translation into English? Be prepared to explain to the group how you tried to convey these features and—equally important—where you were unable to arrive at a satisfactory solution (these are the moments that teach us the most!). Were there any aspects of the poems that were simply untranslatable?

## DAY 4 (Thursday, June 20th)

### "Abusive" Subtitling and Avant-Garde Translation

#### Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What does Markus Nornes mean by “abusive” translation? How is this similar to or different from Lawrence Venuti’s advocacy of “foreignizing” translation? Is an “abusive” translation desirable when subtitling film?
- What does Barbara Cassin mean by “untranslatable”? Are certain words, concepts, and behaviors truly “untranslatable”?

## Readings:

- 1) Markus Nornes, “For An Abusive Subtitling”
- 2) Barbara Cassin, Introduction to *Dictionary of Untranslatables*
- 3) Ozu Yasujirō, *Tokyo Story* (film)

Activity:

Using both the subtitling software in the Learning Support Services workshop and the translated scripts provided by the instructors, provide subtitles for a short video clip from Ozu Yasujirō's landmark film, *Tokyo Story* (1950). As you will immediately notice, the language in our short selection is extremely brief and simple. Most of the information we are being given about the characters and their relationships to each other are being provided by non-verbal clues such as gesture, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc. Be prepared to think about how these non-verbal clues are being reflected in your translation.

## **DAY 5 (Friday, June 21st)**

### **Translation and "World Literature"**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What do Emily Apter and David Damrosch mean by “world literature,” and how do their understandings lead to different opinions about the role of translations in the larger literary ecosystem?
- What was the “scandal” surrounding the publication of the English translation of the South Korean writer Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, and what were some of the issues raised in the resulting discussions? What were some of the objections to (and defenses of) Deborah Smith's translation?
- How would you describe Han Kang's relationship to her translator, Deborah Smith? What questions does their partnership raise about the respective statuses of author and translator?
- Is it possible to translate from a language in which you are not fluent? To put things bluntly, how “good” do you have to be at a language to translate from it?

Readings:

- 1) David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, introduction
- 2) Emily Apter, *Against World Literature*, introduction
- 3) Han Kang, *The Vegetarian* (recommended)
- 4) Reviews of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* from *The Atlantic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Harper's*, etc.

Activity:

Find a review of a translated work of fiction and evaluate it with respect to the ideas discussed in Venuti, Apter, Damrosch, etc. To what extent does the reviewer acknowledge the labor of the translator (if at all), and how does the fact that the work is a translation factor into the reviewer's evaluation of the novel in question?

### **DAY 6 (Saturday, June 22nd)**

FIELD TRIP TO PHOENIX ART MUSEUM

### **DAY 7 (Sunday, June 23rd)**

NO MEETING

### **DAY 8 (Monday, June 24th)**

#### **A Brief Introduction to the “Sinosphere”: Sinitic Writing and Its Local Adaptations**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- Without worrying too much about technical specifics, what are some of the ways in which Chinese writing was adapted and used in Japan and Korea? What are some of the strategies Japanese and Korean readers used to read and write vernacular languages in Sinitic (Chinese) script?
- Keeping in mind our ever-expanding definitions of “translation” from the previous week, would you describe reading techniques such as Korean *kugyŏl* and Japanese *kundoku* as “translation”? Put another way, how does our study of these reading techniques help us to expand our understanding of what translation is?

## Readings:

- 1) Peter Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, Chapters 1 & 2, “Sinitic in a Global Perspective,” and “Scripts and Writing”
- 2) Young-Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer* (selections)
- 3) Wiebke Denecke, “Worlds Without Translation: Premodern East Asia and the Power of Character Scripts”
- 4) Zev Handel, *Sinographies*, “Introduction”

## Activity:

In the morning, we will have our first guest lecturer, Professor Young Kyun Oh, speak on the history of writing in East Asia and local adaptations of Chinese script in premodern Korea and Japan.

The afternoon’s activity takes inspiration from a brilliant exercise designed by Professor Zev Handel of the U. of Washington. Using the list of 100 Chinese characters distributed by the instructors, devise a strategy for reading a simple sentence in English (for example, “I would like to go to the movies.”). You may use the characters for their pronunciation, for their semantic content, or using the “rebus principle,” but the sentence should be comprehensible as an English-language utterance for any reader equipped with the character list.

## **DAY 9 (Tuesday, June 25th)**

### **World Literature Revisited**

#### Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- As a parallel to the questions we asked about translation, how do the specific case studies of China, Japan, and Korea (such as the *Nihon gaishi* and its international reception) complicate our understanding of “world literature” as elucidated by thinkers like Emily Apter and David Damrosch? In turn, how do these specific case studies help us *expand* and contribute to the definition (and re-definition) of this term?
- What are some of the factors that led to the *Tale of Genji* becoming an

internationally recognized “classic of Japanese literature,” while the *Nihon gaishi* has had a much more complex and uneven reception? What do these case studies potentially reveal about the process by which certain texts become “classics”?

- What is Stephen Owen’s anxiety about “world literature,” and how does his definition of this term differ from that offered by Apter, Damrosch, and others?

Readings:

- 1) Robert Tuck, “The *Nihon Gaishi* Goes Global: A Translation History of a Bakumatsu Blockbuster”
- 2) Stephen Owen, “What is World Poetry?”
- 3) Michael Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*, Conclusion: “Turning to Translation, Returning to Translation”

Activity:

Go to Hayden Library and find one anthology of East Asian literature (it can be any region, any time period, and any particular focus: if you’re having trouble finding one, speak to Dr. Hedberg and Dr. Tuck). Next, perform a “deep reading” of the anthology’s contents, with the themes introduced by Tuck, Owen, and Emmerich in mind. As best you can tell, what were some of the selection criteria behind the anthologizer’s selections? What important texts were included, and what was left out? Finally, what is the effect of these inclusions and exclusions on a potential reader’s understanding of “modern Chinese literature,” “premodern Korean literature,” etc.? What would you have followed or done differently if you were compiling your own anthology?

**DAY 10 (Wednesday, June 26th)**

**Reading Between the Lines: Commentary, Text, and Paratext**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What is “*pingdian*” commentary, and what is the relationship between premodern



East Asian literature and this commentarial tradition? Are there any examples in Western literary history to which this commentarial tradition might be compared?

- What recurring arguments do we find in the writing of premodern Chinese critics like Jin Shengtian, Zhang Zhupo, and Mao Zonggang (as well as the Japanese and Korean critics who, in turn, commented on their writing)? Do any shared principles of aesthetic theory emerge from reading their work in tandem?

Readings:

- 1) David Rolston, *Traditional Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines*, “Introduction”
- 2) David Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (selections)
- 3) Xiaoqiao Ling and Young Kyun Oh, “Imagined Orality: Mun Hanmyōng’s Late 19th-Century Approach to Sinitic Literacy”
- 4) William C. Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction*, Chapter 2, “Histories of Reading and Non-Reading”

Activity:

In the morning session, we will have our second guest lecturer, Professor Xiaoqiao Ling, who will speak on the topic of *pingdian* commentary and its role in the dissemination of literary aesthetics in East Asia.

For the afternoon, please look over one of the commentaries included in the Rolston and come to our session prepared to summarize its main points. Next, working in groups, try to identify major points of convergence or divergence between two different commentaries.

## **DAY 11 (Thursday, June 27th)**

### **(National) Identity and Literary Canon**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- What effect do literary canons have on the formation of national identity? What is

the historical process by which literature came to be studied largely within the framework of the nation-state? What are the advantages and limitations of this emphasis on the nation-state, and what other frameworks are available to us as scholars and teachers? What is the role of the “premodern” in the construction of modern national identity?

- What is at stake in Terry Eagleton’s deconstruction of “the canon” and Harold Bloom’s (infamous) defense of it? Should readings emphasize balance and variety (Eagleton), or do we want to emphasize “the best” (Bloom)? If the former, how do we do that in a thoughtful and responsible way? If the latter, how in the world do we define quality? And come to think of it, do these two things have to be in conflict with each other, or can they be somehow reconciled?
- Without getting too bogged down in specifics, what do the “stories” of the formation of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean literature add to discussions about literary canonization and national identity?

#### *Readings:*

- 1) Lucas Klein, *The Organization of Distance: Poetry, Translation, Chineseness* (selections)
- 2) Gergana Ivanova, *Unbinding the Pillow Book: The Many Lives of a Japanese Classic*, introduction
- 3) Peter H. Lee, *The Story of Traditional Korean Literature* (selections)
- 4) Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, introduction
- 5) Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, introduction

#### *Activity:*

In the morning, we will have our final guest lecture by Dr. Lucas Klein on the topic of modern Chinese poetry and its role in the formation of various discourses of “Chineseness” in the 20th and 21st centuries.

With an eye toward transitioning to questions of pedagogy, and keeping in mind the profound effects that the processes of canonization and anthologization have on the preservation of both particular texts and particular ideas about “Chineseness,” “Japaneseness,” “Koreanness,” etc., create a sample syllabus for a hypothetical 3-week course on “East Asian Literature.” The title of this hypothetical course is intentionally vague: you will be responsible for creating a subtitle and determining

the specific arguments you will make over the three weeks through the selection (and rejection) of particular texts.

## **DAY 12 (Friday, June 28th)**

### **Final Reflections on Teaching and Pedagogy**

Central Questions / Issues for Consideration:

- Today's discussion will be an entirely open format, centering on the syllabi participants prepared the previous night.

*Readings:* No readings.

Activity:

Morning discussion will center around the syllabi we have created, as well as ideas for incorporating our insights from the Institute into future courses. In the afternoon we will take a group excursion to the ASU Art Museum, to view ASU's extensive collection of Japanese woodblock prints.