

**TEACHING MODERN CHINESE LITERATURE TO NON-
CHINESE WESTERN READERS:
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF NOBEL PRIZE WINNER
GAO XINGJIAN'S NOVEL
SOUL MOUNTAIN**

By

Lin Gu
B.A., East China Normal University, 2001

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APPROVAL

NAME Lin Gu
DEGREE Master of Arts
TITLE Teaching Modern Chinese Literature to Non-Chinese
Western Readers: A Critical Review of Nobel Prize Winner
Gao Xingjian's Novel Soul Mountain

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chair Geoff Madoc-Jones

Gloria Sampson, Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

David Chariandy, Assistant Professor, Department of English
Member

Ian Andrews, Director, International Education, Faculty of
Education
Examiner

Date August 4, 2004

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ABSTRACT

Teaching modern Chinese literature to those raised outside of Chinese culture presents an arduous challenge to educators dedicated to this cause.

In this research paper I will examine the standing of modern Chinese literature in the context of world literature by approaching and presenting modern Chinese literature as a heterogeneous complexity with various cultural traditions and literary trends existing within it. I propose to bring the awareness of this dynamic literary diversity within modern Chinese literature to its Western readers in order to facilitate cross-cultural China-West literary communication and understanding by applying a reader-response approach in a cross-cultural context to teaching Gao Xingjian's novel Soul Mountain.

Two theoretical positions underlying cross-cultural studies, the Universalist and the Relativist, are reviewed, and theories behind a stage beyond the strict bifurcation of the previous two positions are discussed and recommended for the purpose of this paper. A literary analysis is performed on the novel Soul Mountain in terms of the five universal themes and three local Chinese cultural characteristics embedded within the novel, and a wide range of literary devices employed, including plot, character and setting. A reader-response approach to teaching literature is proposed and evaluated in a cross-cultural context. Based on this theoretical discussion, a six-step instructional model is designed for teaching the novel Soul Mountain in a cross-cultural classroom. Five units of sample lessons are provided at the end for demonstrating my proposed teaching methodology and instructional procedures in real classroom applications.

The thesis is concluded with the statement that Soul Mountain is indeed a piece of world literature with Chinese characteristics, and it can certainly be incorporated into the curriculum of teaching modern Chinese language and literature to the West successfully.

DEDICATION

给我亲爱的父亲顾生根和母亲卓志华

To my dear father, Gu Shenggen,
and my mother, Zhuo Zhihua

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE Introduction.....	1
Personal Reflection	1
Statement of Thesis and Proposition	3
Theoretical Foundations	3
Organization of the Thesis.....	5
CHAPTER TWO Literature Review	8
Universalism and New Criticism.....	8
Relativism and Post-Structuralism.....	15
A Stage Beyond	24
CHAPTER THREE Universal and Chinese Characteristics of Soul Mountain.....	29
Introduction.....	29
Part One: Universal Elements of Soul Mountain.....	31
Universal Element One: The Journey	31
Universal Element Two: Discovering Multiple Voices within a Human Being.....	34
Universal Element Three: Nature-Orientation.....	37
Universal Element Four: Hostility towards Civilization	39
Universal Element Five: Spirit of Skepticism	41
Part Two: Chinese Characteristics of Soul Mountain.....	43
Chinese Characteristic One: Confucianism and Anti-Confucianism.....	43
Chinese Characteristic Two: Seeking a Pure Asian Spirit.....	46
Chinese Characteristic Three: Multi-Ethnicity and Cultural Diversity	49
Chapter Conclusion.....	51
CHAPTER FOUR Literary Analysis of Soul Mountain.....	53
Introduction.....	53
Plot Structure and Method of Narration	54
Character Development and Point of View	60
Story Setting	63
Chapter Conclusion.....	67
CHAPTER FIVE Teaching Methodology	68
Introduction.....	68
Definition of a Reader-Response Approach to Teaching Literature	69

Application of a Reader-Response Approach in a Cross-Cultural Context.....	70
Theoretical Assumption One	71
Theoretical Assumption Two.....	74
Theoretical Assumption Three.....	78
Six-Step Instructional Model	81
Step One: Activate the Reader’s Prior Knowledge of Literature in General.....	82
Step Two: Teach Culture-Related Knowledge in the Text.....	83
Step Three: Develop the Reader’s Personal Response to Culture-Related Features of the Text.	83
Step Four: Have Learners Share Learning Experiences.	84
Step Five: Teach Critical Textual Analysis.	84
Step Six: Have Learners Relate the Text to Their Own Cultural Background.....	85
CHAPTER SIX Classroom Application	87
Introduction.....	87
Unit One.....	89
Outline.....	89
Unit One Lesson One.....	90
Glossary (Unit One Lesson One).....	91
Unit One Lesson Two	92
Unit One Lesson Three	93
Glossary (Unit One Lesson Three)	94
Unit One Lesson Four	96
Unit One Lesson Five	97
Unit Two	98
Outline.....	98
Unit Two Lesson One	99
Glossary (Unit Two Lesson One)	100
Unit Two Lesson Two	101
Unit Two Lesson Three	102
Unit Two Lesson Four	103
Unit Two Lesson Five.....	104
Unit Three	105
Outline.....	105
Unit Three Lesson One	106
Glossary (Unit Three Lesson One)	107
Unit Three Lesson Two	108
Supplementary materials (Unit Three Lesson Two).....	109
Unit Three Lesson Three.....	110
Glossary (Unit Three Lesson Three).....	111
Unit Three Lesson Four	112
Unit Three Lesson Five.....	113
Unit Four	114
Outline.....	114
Unit Four Lesson One	115
Glossary (Unit Four Lesson One)	116
Unit Four Lesson Two	117

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Personal Reflection

“In the boundless world, there are all sorts of mysteries external to you and me. In other words, they are all projections of my back which I can’t get rid of. If I can’t get rid of them, why try?”

--- Gao Xingjian, Soul Mountain, 313,
Translated by Mabel Lee

This passage from Gao Xingjian captures most obviously the projection of an individual onto the world, but we do not project only as individuals, but also as groups, nations, cultures. When we attempt to approach cultural others who hold a different value system because of different linguistic, historical and social backgrounds, we necessarily confront their projections of what they see as our culture, and of course our projections of what we see as their culture. As I prepare to teach modern Chinese literature internationally, it is these cultural projections that concern me the most. As with any attempt at cross-cultural communication, teaching modern Chinese literature to those raised outside of Chinese culture presents an arduous challenge.

When I left China and came to Canada, I brought with me a strong sense of Chineseness and my academic background in Chinese language and literature. Constantly and extensively confronted with both cultural differences and similarities, I found that Chineseness and Westernness were both much broader and more complex than I had previously imagined. Chineseness is not one thing, but many things and it can be seen in many ways.

When we struggle with the Self-Other difference, like the apparent difference between China and the West, this struggle can only be transcended by being aware of the same Self-Other struggle within each of the cultures. Coming to terms with the diversity and complexity of Chinese culture gave me insight into how to confront the projections of others onto my culture. These projections often appeared to be based on a monolithic understanding of what “being Chinese” is. Sadly, many Chinese share this monolithic understanding and it is a barrier to both cross-cultural communication and self-understanding. We Chinese should realize that only through understanding our own Chinese culture in its full dimensions and complexities can we facilitate true and effective communication with the Western cultural Others.

With regard to literary communication, the gap between Western and Chinese literary traditions and conventions can seem enormous. However, the task of teaching Chinese literature to Westerners becomes less intimidating and more approachable when we present the body of Chinese literature as a heterogeneous composite of various literary trends. Great literature, in its cumulative body if not in each work, conveys the diversity of a culture, its internal Self-Other confrontations that invite a complex and layered understanding. Chinese literature is strongly influenced by Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist understandings that at times cohere and other times conflict. Chinese literature portrays the conflicts between the elite and the masses, the ruler and the ruled, the Han nationality and the national minorities, and so on. As China found itself wrenched open by the expansion of the West in the modern period, the portrayal of China’s internal complexities became hidden by the struggle between China and the West. Gradually

these complexities have been re-emerging, however, with Western influence as just one element among many in China's rich and diverse cultural and literary heritage.

I chose teaching modern Chinese literature to its Western readers as the central topic for this research paper fully aware that modern Chinese literature has not been well recognized and accepted in the West yet. Like China itself, though, modern Chinese literature is diverse and complex: changing, growing, improving and involving an increasingly diverse group of writers and readers. It is far from perfect but it is alive and vital, and I am anxious to help bring it to the attention of world literary culture.

Statement of Thesis and Proposition

In this research paper I will examine the standing of modern Chinese literature in the context of world literature by approaching and presenting modern Chinese literature as a heterogeneous complexity with various cultural traditions and literary trends existing within it. As an educator dedicated to the cause of introducing and teaching modern Chinese literature to the West, I propose to bring the awareness of this dynamic literary diversity within modern Chinese literature to its Western readers in order to facilitate cross-cultural China-West literary communication and understanding by applying a reader-response approach in a cross-cultural context to teaching Gao Xingjian's novel Soul Mountain.

Theoretical Foundations

In cross-cultural literary studies, there is no shortage of debates between scholars who hold a Universalist position and those who support a Relativist stand (Boening 154; Buck 29; Denton 4; Dev 21).

The Universalist position assumes there is some universal set of principles or rules which should be applied across all cultures (Buck 30). The Universalists in literary studies have faith in the “‘universalizing’, or ‘totalizing’ power of intellectual discourse” (Boening 154). They believe in the underlying unity of standards and criteria in the world of literature. The notion of the universal nature of literature often implies a view which denies the value of the diversity of human literary traditions, and eliminates the similarities and differences in literary creation between the Western world and the Non-Western world.

The Relativist position assumes that there are no absolute standards by which one can select the value of one culture over another in terms of superiority-inferiority (Buck 29). It counters cultural Universalism by acknowledging the “ultimate ‘incommensurability’ of the world’s cultures” (Boening 154). Interpreted with respect to literary theory, there should be no universal rules for literary creation and criticism. From the cross-cultural perspective, it is commonly expressed in the view that meaning of texts is not fixed and it is legitimate to interpret and understand literature in the way the readers’ own culture can accept.

Recently we witness a growing number of theories emerging, featuring the efforts of scholars in a variety of academic areas who have been trying to move beyond the strict bifurcation of the Universalist and Relativist positions. How to reach the cultural Other who holds a different value system from the cultural Self because of the different linguistic, historical and social backgrounds without blurring each other’s cultural identities becomes the focal point in this discourse. From an anthropology background Clifford Geertz proposes “imagining difference” as the way to reach the realization that

“how it is that other people’s creations can be so utterly their own and so deeply part of us” (810). One of the core concepts in traditional Chinese philosophy, the Principle of Harmony in Difference, is also considered by Chinese scholar Yue Daiyun to provide us with a positive resource to cope with the relativity of cultures in culturally pluralistic modern societies (50). Following Richard Bernstein’s proposal of a dialectical approach, Kirk Denton, a prestigious sinologist, defines the ultimate aim of this dialectic as to “incorporate the Other within the Self’s horizon of understanding”, and proposes to teach modern Chinese literature to the West by seeing it not as a monolithic Other but a complex rife with internal Self-Other tensions (12).

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two develops my discussion above about the theoretical foundations to a greater extent. It begins with a comprehensive literature review on the two fundamental theoretical positions taken by scholars in Asian Studies which underlie cross-cultural literary communication and understanding between China and the West, the Universalist and Relativist. Then it moves on to present an emerging body of theories attempting to synthesize what is valuable in each and move beyond these two positions. A variety of views held by scholars on the nature and destiny of modern Chinese literature is discussed and evaluated in detail.

Chapter Three narrows my discussion in the previous chapter down to a single modern Chinese writer, Nobel Prize Winner Gao Xingjian, and one of his novels Soul Mountain. I see the novel Soul Mountain as a piece of “world literature with Chinese characteristics” (Lodén 257). In the first part of the chapter, I demonstrate how the novel transcends its Chinese cultural boundary and appeals to an international audience insofar

as it presents five universally-appealing qualities. In the second part, I focus on discussing Chinese cultural diversity and Chinese Self-Other confrontations within the novel from three distinctive and interactive perspectives. When I prepare to teach modern Chinese literature internationally based on the novel Soul Mountain, I certainly can take full advantage of these universal and local Chinese elements embedded within this novel which have been demonstrated and discussed in the chapter.

Chapter Four continues my review of the novel Soul Mountain from a teacher's perspective. An analysis of all essential literary devices employed within this fictional work is performed. I sort out literary information in the novel into three categories: plot, character, and setting. I analyze the novel's plot together with the various methods of narration employed within the plot structure. Character analysis is carried out through a study of the novel's frequent shifts in point of view. Setting is examined in terms of its physical, historical, social and literary dimensions. The discussion of these literary devices employed and applied in the novel gives us a concrete view of how such a comprehensive literary work is composed piece by piece, and how each piece is integrated into a coherent whole.

Chapter Five starts the second part of my thesis in which I bring modern educational perspectives to my enthusiasm for cross-cultural China-West literary studies. This chapter is focused on a theoretical discussion of methodology for teaching literature in a cross-cultural context. I propose a reader-response approach in the context of teaching modern Chinese literature to the West, and design a six-step instructional model based on teaching the novel Soul Mountain.

Chapter Six contains five units of sample lessons for teaching selected chapters from the novel. Each unit has one of the universal themes I have identified in Chapter Three of this paper, and covers the learning of various literary devices employed in the novel discussed in Chapter Four. This model can be followed and adapted to teaching the rest of the novel in a cross-cultural literary classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In cross-cultural literary studies, there is no shortage of debates between scholars who hold a Universalist position and those who support a Relativist stand (Boening 154; Buck 29; Denton 4; Dev 21). In this chapter, these two theoretical positions are reviewed, and theories which go beyond the strict bifurcation of the previous two positions are discussed and recommended for the purpose of this paper.

Universalism and New Criticism

The Universalist position assumes there is some universal set of principles or rules which should be applied across genetically and areally unrelated traditions (Buck 30). The Universalists in literary studies have faith in the “‘universalizing’, or ‘totalizing’ power of intellectual discourse”(Boening 154). They believe in the underlying unity of standards and criteria in the world of literature.

Universalism upholds the transcendence and the universality of truth, which does not automatically deny the value of cultural particularity. According to Lalita Pandia’s distinction between “hegemonic” and “empathic” universals, the former imply the imposition of local preference on the entire world while the latter try to embrace the cultural particularizations into a broader dimension of understanding of the human world by seeking to discover the common components in various cultural practices (qtd. in Hogan 2).

Universalists in literary studies have a belief in the unity of literary practices across cultures. They intend to uncover and articulate the common features of literatures

from different cultural traditions, which are what Pandia calls “empathetic” universals (qtd. in Hogan 2). However, in cross-cultural studies about China and the West, the standards and criteria they adopt to evaluate literary works consider literature as an aesthetic autonomy. The way they approach literature is to examine a text scientifically, paying little attention to its particular social and historical context. This method has a close affinity with the New Criticism literary tradition.

The New Criticism literary avant-garde dominated the Western literary world in the 1940s and 1950s, a literary criticism tradition traceable to Matthew Arnold and carried on and developed later by T.S.Eliot, Lionel Trilling and F.R.Leavis, to name just a few. What seems central to this line of literary criticism is “a profound, almost reverential regard for literary works themselves” (Seldon, Widdowon and Borrker 13). Underlying this literary criticism avant-garde is the idea that text can stand on its own and speak itself, and should be mainly approached through close, scientific and disinterested textual analysis. It shows a concern with text itself and looks closely at how the language is used and organized to achieve an internal order and harmony within a text. Those follow this approach pay little attention to the literary context —the historical, social and cultural milieu at large within which a text is born. Studies of contextual knowledge are considered as mere aids but not real contents of literary criticism. Divorcing literature from its specific historical and social backgrounds, New Critics focus on the text itself and emphasize on its aesthetic excellence and robust manifestation of human life in its immediacy, complexity and fullness.

Universalism echoes with New Criticism in their shared ahistorical view of literature as a totally autonomous and aesthetic entity. Both approaches uphold the notion

of universality and transcendence across linguistic and cultural borders and beyond periods of human history. Critics of this approach claim that the approach devaluates the diversity of literary traditions born within different social, historical and cultural contexts, and eliminate the similarities and differences in literatures, especially those between the Western world and the non-Western world as we recognize today the most striking and contentious in cross-cultural studies. Instead of being “universal”, Western Universalists marginalize literatures from non-Western traditions and exclude them from the canon of world literature (Denton 5).

C.T. Hsia, the leading authority of modern Chinese literature in the United States, is a determined protagonist of the Universalist line of thought. He argues that literature should be understood, interpreted and evaluated on the basis of unified aesthetic standards in any social and cultural context and in any period of time (The Lyrical and the Epic 236). With his widely circulated canon-defining book A History of Modern Chinese Fiction, Hsia is the father of the establishment of modern Chinese literature as a Western academic discipline, and by doing so, he attempts to fulfill the most daunting and ambitious enterprise of all scholars of modern Chinese literature outside of China, which is defined incisively by Leo Ou-fan Lee: “how to make this very ‘Chinese’ body of literature comprehensible to non-Chinese readers” (The Lyrical and the Epic xi)?

The major claim of Hsia is that “[t]he literary historian’s first task is always the discovery and appraisal of excellence” (History xlvi). The significance of modern literary texts mainly lies in exploring the mind of individual human being in the modern world and exposing the “illness of modern civilization” (History 536). Hsia believes that this theme has universal appeal and should be manifested through exquisite linguistic

arrangement and ingenious rhetorical organization which, according to him, are also universal in nature and applicable across cultures.

Hsia clearly shows his disdain for the literature created to satisfy extrinsic political and religious standards and argues for “disinterested moral exploration” (The Lyrical and the Epic 235). As a literary critic, he condemns viewing literature as mere social documents and evaluating literature on the basis of its social significance instead of its intrinsic aesthetic achievement. He asserts that literature should be viewed as pure art and judged by its actual performance empirically. To evaluate a literary text is to examine how the language itself explores and penetrates instead of how valuable it is to give a picture of its social and historical context and how noble the intention of the author behind is.

Hsia has adopted certain Western literary standards for defining literary “excellence” and applies these criteria in his survey of modern Chinese literature. In Denton’s words, Hsia is trying to “use Western literary discourse to make modern Chinese literature meaningful to the Western reader” (3). Hsia blames the general mediocre quality of modern Chinese literature on its “burden of moral contemplation” and “obsessive concern with China” (History 533). According to Hsia, the moral obligation and the obsessive patriotism sharply narrow the vision of modern Chinese writers, and gravely impede their abilities to deal with broad and universal literary themes. It is these two most striking characteristics of modern Chinese literature that determine its own marginalized position in world literature, even though Hsia also perceives the general body of modern Chinese literature lags behind its Western counterparts in textual artistry and aesthetic expertise.

My understanding of Hsia's argument is that the over-insistence on social functions of literary texts puts modern Chinese literature at a position against his Western New Criticism literary ideal of what great literature ought to look like, which he confidently assumes should be universally applicable in evaluating literatures from all cultures. Idealistic and humanistic as he is, Hsia believes in the universality of literary creation and urges modern Chinese writers to improve by adopting and employing the universal literary criteria defined in the Western tradition in order to move beyond China to be accepted in the canon of world literature.

In the introduction he wrote for Hsia's book, David Der-Wei Wang gives a high appraisal of the book and clearly declares his own Universalist standing in the cause of modern Chinese literary criticism. Nourished and informed by a range of literary critical and theoretical trends emerging after Hsia's book was first published in the 1960s, Wang still places a high value on Hsia's ambition "to prove the theoreticians' claims to historical universality in an ostensibly different and difficult context" (x).

Wang makes explicit the connection between Hsia's Universalist position and his New Criticism literary approach. He puts it forward that Hsia adopts the newest and most radical New Critic perspectives to work against the danger of "ghettoism and tokenism" (xxxvi). Wang goes further to state that Hsia has never been just content with the strict adherence to textual autonomy and ahistorical analysis. It seems to Wang that Hsia's concern is how the social context of an age is "fictionalized" in a way that the literary work can still stand on its own for pure literary enjoyment and appreciation. Wang perceives in Hsia's emphasis on the "morality of form" a strong affinity with the theories of a leading figure of New Criticism, F.R. Leavis. Following Leavis' lead, Hsia argues to

fulfill the “enlightening function” of literature by capturing and presenting the vicissitudes of human society in the concrete forms of the actual living experiences of individual human beings (xii).

Wang’s interpretation of Hsia’s argument is the following one. For a writer working in the highly political environment in modern Chinese history to hold a balanced position between aesthetic detachment and moral engagement requires a profound understanding of the relation between the fate of an individual human being and the destiny of a collective. Hsia urges modern Chinese writers to capture the spirit of the Chinese nation in its modern history by probing into the life experiences of ordinary people in their richness and complexities. It is Hsia’s sociological and historical concern that inspires Wang to distinguish Hsia from the more abstract or aesthetic formalist New Critics. To Wang, what Hsia does is courageous and crucial. Hsia’s lament on the “obsession with China” and his harsh criticism of the general quality of modern Chinese literature are deeply rooted in his anticipation and ambition of bringing modern Chinese literature to the attention of the Western world.

As a follower of Hsia in terms of their shared view on literary standards and criticism, Joseph S.M. Lau’s observation of modern Chinese poetry in his article called “Text and Context: Toward a Commonwealth of Modern Chinese Literature” is quite relevant to Hsia’s study which is only focused on the genre of the novel.

Lau agrees with Hsia on the basic view of literature as an aesthetic art and elaborates further on the intricate relation between a text and its context. He claims that a good piece of literary work should be essentially self-contained in its language (15). It might contain contextual references or external connotations. However, even divorced

from its context, it can still inspire our imagination, touch the very deep of our hearts and cling to our memories because language speaks itself. Lau appraises the ancient Chinese poet Li Shangyin highly for his literary achievement of employing language exquisitely and intelligently to successfully express the poetic imagination and ambiguity (15). He also refers to another ancient Chinese literary master Han Yu for his concern of literary rhetoric, and maintains that “what Han Yu said no longer matters; only how it is said is remembered” (21).

Concerning modern Chinese poetry, Lau argues that due to its heavy moral burden and social responsibility, the text depends heavily on its immediate context for meaning (14). What he implies is that because of the lack of artistic distinction and rhetorical excellence, modern Chinese poetry is mostly read for its extrinsic connotations instead of its intrinsic artistry. His argument is in line with Hsia’s view of a literary critic’s responsibility. They both agree that literary works should be evaluated on the basis of artistic excellence, rather than social relevance.

Lau also touches on some thorny issues regarding modern Chinese literature in English translation. According to his understanding, Western readers, reading for pure literary enjoyment, would rarely take the trouble to fill in the contextual gap to get the essential meanings of the text which are of concern to Chinese readers. The social context, however, may only alienate most Western readers (15).

Lau concludes that the heavy contextual reference of modern Chinese literature discourages Western readers from approaching it and the artistic deficiency disappoints them when they do read it. However, can we say that Lau totally adopts Western literary standards in his evaluation of Chinese literature? In his article he speaks highly of some

ancient Chinese poets for their literary achievement of artistic excellence, and evaluates them on a par with their modern Western counterparts. By presenting literary contrasts not only between China and the West but also between modern China and ancient China, is he trying to convince us that literary universality does exist, across national boundaries and time periods?

Relativism and Post-Structuralism

The Relativist position assumes that there are no absolute standards by which one can select the value of one culture over another in terms of superiority-inferiority (Buck 29). It counters Universalism by acknowledging the autonomy and incommensurability of cultures (Boening 154). When applied to literary theory, the Relativist position is that there are no universal rules underlying literary creation and criticism, since each literature is bound to its own tradition.

Cultural Relativism came at a time when Universalism was still the order of the day. It therefore strongly resonated with Post-structuralists' ambitions of demystifying the transcendental truth. It also echoes with Post-structuralists' claim for contextualizing human beings and human activities (Denton 6).

Post-structuralist thought can be traced back to the Bakhtin School within the Russian Formalist tradition, and was born out of the Structuralist theory (Seldon, Widdowon and Borrker 150-152). To a certain degree, it disagrees with the previous New Criticism on the timelessness, independence and universality in literature. Generally speaking, Post-structuralists in the literary area tend to establish and emphasize the interconnection between literature and culture in a specific historical period of time. They attempt to locate literature in its immediate cultural context and understand it in its

inextricable relations to language, history, social foundations and other cultural phenomena.

With Roland Barthes' famous announcement of "The Death of the Author" (Seldon, Widdowon and Borrker 156), Post-structuralists reject the traditional view of an author's totally authoritative control over the textual meaning. The meaning of a text is open and not fixed. A literary critic's attention is shifted from solely examining the intrinsic textual meaning to interpreting a text based on the communication and interaction between the text and its reader.

Situating and contextualizing literature in its linguistic, historical and social milieu is probably the most noticeable common characteristic shared by both cultural Relativists and Post-structuralists. Relativism embraces the diversity of human literary and cultural traditions. It recognizes that each literary culture has its own reason for existence. Literature should be understood through the standards and logic of each specific culture.

Cultural Relativists' pluralistic view of world literature puts them in a position confronted most directly and sharply with the issues arising from cross-cultural literary communication and understanding. Deeply rooted in Post-structuralist belief in textual instability and literary uncertainty, reading for cultural Relativists is a process which engages readers in a free and creative interplay with the text itself and invites different but equally acceptable interpretations from readers whose linguistic and aesthetic tastes have been shaped by their own cultural and literary heritages.

There runs a line of skepticism among conservative Relativists about the possibility of true communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In the context

of cross-culture reception and interpretation of texts, Edward Said indicates his doubt of the objectivity of representation in his book Orientalism:

...the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institution, and political, ambience of the representer. (272-73)

From a cross-cultural perspective, his doubt can be interpreted as follows: if a literature represents a world which cannot be disentangled from its cultural environment, will it be possible to get literary meaning across cultural borders to readers from other cultural spheres? Moreover, if the fluidity and flexibility of text comprehension allows readers to interpret the foreign texts in the way their own literary backgrounds have prepared them for and will tolerate, will it often be the case that understanding differently ultimately leads to misunderstanding instead of truly understanding each other?

Radical Relativists confront themselves with this cross-cultural communication dilemma through a “deafness to the appeal of other values” approach recommended by Levi-Strauss (qtd. in Geertz 108). According to Clifford Geertz, this “relax-and- enjoy-it” approach indicates a great degree of intoxication with one’s own culture and implies a profound indifference to other cultures. Geertz also attacks on Strauss’s belief in “we-are-we and they-are-they impermeability” because this radical Relativist position upholds a fixed and never-changing view of the cultural Self and the culture Other, denies the possibility of self-transformation, and ultimately precludes any kind of true understanding between cultures (108). According to my understanding, it implies to us that we are disabled at any kind of cross-cultural judgments and evaluations simply because we are so bound to our own history and institution and we should not expect

others to be disentangled from theirs. Why should we bother to understand the Other if a true understanding will probably never be reached? This radical Relativist approach has tremendous appeal for it unburdens us from being guilty of misunderstanding the cultural Other. It avoids facing the implied cultural incommensurability by simplifying the two-way process of cross-cultural understanding to a one-way understanding the Other on our own. It gives us the permission to manipulate the vision of the Other within the limits of our world view. In a literary sense, it allows us to make the literature from an alien culture our own by filtering the texts for whatever fits into our own literary values, and sometimes even worse, by altering and manipulating the original meanings to make them mean whatever we intend them to mean. Just as Denton perceives, “the celebration of misreading of the third world by the West ends up silencing the third world, stealing their voice by making it our own” (8).

As a cultural Relativist, Jaroslav Průšek, a most distinguished sinologist in Europe, launches an attack on Hsia’s Eurocentrism, claiming that not a single literature in the world should be read and understood outside its historical and social milieu (195). Adopting the methodology of Post-structuralism in his academic research of literary studies, he seeks to obtain a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the nature of literature by contextualizing it within its cultural phenomena at large.

There is a difference between being Eurocentric and being Western. When one is Eurocentric, one simply evaluates everything from the perspective of culture-specific European values, often without even realizing that these are culture-specific European values. When one is “Western” on the other hand, one is simply a reasonable exemplar of one or several of the many and varied ways of thinking, behaving and valuing that are

commonly found in a Western context. Opposed to applying the typical Western literary standards to criticizing non-Western literary works, he stands firmly against the Universalist and Eurocentric standings, and by doing so clearly announces his cultural Relativist position.

Průšek puts a strong emphasis on the social functions of literature. According to his understanding, considering literature only as an aesthetic art to fulfill readers' pure literary enjoyment is far from sufficient. Literature serves the people and society by taking its historical and social roles in transforming the world for the better. In different societies and during different given historical periods, the mission of literature might vary. Therefore the value of literature can only be justly evaluated based on its own immediate situation.

Průšek's basic view of literary creation and criticism differs sharply from that of most of the New Critics. While the New Critics like Leavis are still concerned with humanity and relate literary canon formation to promoting the "values of 'life'" (Seldon, Widdowon and Borrker 25), Průšek sees literature carrying much more weight and significance in the historical process of development of human society than the New Critics do.

Průšek has devoted most of his academic career to Chinese literary studies. In his review of Hsia's History, he brings out the fact repeatedly that compared to its Western counterparts, literature from modern China is more historically situated and socially engaged in order to fulfill its social functions of helping the nation fight against first-world imperialism and regaining national liberation and freedom. When this body of literature is evaluated, not only should its aesthetic merits be taken into account, but also

the literature's social functions and influences, the writers' motivations and responsibilities, and the expectations from the majority of Chinese population of the time. It is all these added up that determines the nature and development of modern Chinese literature. While the Western literary critics might blame modern Chinese literature for its artistic deficiency and exclude it from the world literature canon, from a cultural Relativist perspective, Průšek recognizes its meaningful existence on its own and gives it a high evaluation in terms of its historical and social significance.

What is implied in Průšek's argument against Hsia is that as Westerners informed by their own aesthetic and literary tastes, they should approach modern Chinese literature not by blindly imposing the Western standards on it but by seeking to understand it in relation to its own immediate situation and Chinese cultural background, a fundamental cultural Relativist conviction.

From a Chinese perspective, H.R.Lan stands side by side with Průšek sharing the same fundamental understanding of the nature of modern Chinese literature and fighting against applying the Eurocentric presumptions and predilections in cross-cultural literary criticism (34). While what Průšek mostly does is to defend modern Chinese literature against Western literary standards, Lan courageously goes a step further in order to deal with the problematic process of bringing this literature beyond its linguistic and cultural boundaries to the attention of international readers.

In his article "Working Toward a New Canon", Lan notices that recently there is a major ideological and methodological shift in literary studies from emphasizing a text's aesthetic autonomy to contextualizing it in relation to its historical and cultural environments. He gives us a picture of the status quo of world literature increasingly

populated with diverse literary traditions, which challenge the monolithic authoritative literary canon conceived by the West and require a variety of approaches for reading and understanding them (33).

In his study of modern Chinese literature, he strongly identifies with the Post-structuralist view of literary criticism by investigating the economic, political, social and historical grounds within a culture. He does not try to deny Hsia's perception of modern Chinese literature, which is characterized by its strong sense of social responsibility and heavy moral obligation. What he opposes is the unification of literary criticism standards based a monolithic Western literature tradition which contributes to the peripheralized and marginalized position of modern Chinese literature in the international literary context.

Lan proposes an extended canon of modern Chinese literature in the West by inviting a multiplicity of voices from those “‘peripheral’, ‘marginal,’ or ‘uncanonized’” modern Chinese writers in order to challenge the extant one formed by Hsia's selection in his History and shaped by his Eurocentric aesthetics. Those writers include women writers, popular writers, minority writers, overseas Chinese writers and writers of communist literature, and even some writers working in the English language but from a Chinese or Chinese-American background (40). However, Lan disappoints us when he avoids confronting some thorny issues embedded in this cross-cultural literary communication, like the few he mentions at the end of his article. How can we expect Western readers who are informed by their own aesthetic and literary standards to truly appreciate modern Chinese literature within this expanded canon? How can we bring the cross-cultural understanding to our literature classes pedagogically? He does not seem to

be intimidated by the cultural incompatibilities and still holds the hope for a true cross-cultural understanding between China and the West. However, he leaves these concerns to be dealt with in the future, just as most of the cultural Relativists have done.

Stephen Owen's discussion on the standing of modern Chinese poetry in the context of world poetry in his article "What is World Poetry?" gives us many incisive insights into the confusion and frustration inherent in cross-cultural literary communication via translation. According to Michael Duke's major argument in his article "The Problematic Nature of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Fiction in English Translation", "the international reputation of modern and contemporary fiction written in Chinese anywhere in the world is chiefly dependent upon English-language translations of that fiction" (200). Owen also says in his article that the more successfully a poet's work is translated into the English language, the closer he can get to being awarded the Nobel Prize, a prize that plays a decisive role in shaping "world poetry" (28). However, Owen does not share the same optimism with Duke on the function translation performs in transcultural communication. According to Owen, celebrated international poetry on one hand enjoys the international fame and recognition simply because the international readership sympathetically imagines "what it might be if the poetry has not been lost in translation"; on the other hand, an audience who can read the poetry in its original language appraises it by blindly assuming "how much it is appreciated internationally, in translation" (32). Owen leads us into an exploration of the imagined Others from both sides of this cross-cultural reception and interpretation. However, in his article, Owen was not able to advise us a way out of this lost-in-translation dilemma.

Though in his article he images himself as part of the international audience trying to enjoy world poetry, he states his Relativist position clearly by saying that within world poetry “the poet must still find an acceptable means to declare his or her nationality”. According to Owen, a successful international poet should still be responsible for his own language, literary tradition and national characteristics. He also satirizes claims of the Universalists, illustrating how they inevitably assume the local Anglo-European tradition as a source of universal value (28). Holding a deep belief in poetry’s undeniable relation to its literary history and tradition, he believes that saying a poetry is free of history is a lie. He puts forward the following question ironically that if the poetry does not have a history, is it still capable of “leaving a trace that might constitute a history” (32)? What he means by this is that poetry, as one of the means of literary creations is tied inextricably into the contingencies of historical background and literary tradition and can only be meaningfully located in its relations to them.

His Relativist’s skepticism leads us to a pessimistic vision of world poetry. In order to be accepted and recognized as a member of this international poetry community, a local poet has to either sacrifice the truly national, original and indigenous poetic characteristics to make the poetry readily translatable, or “color” and “package” his poetry to satisfy its international readership’s desire for “cozy ethnicity” or “exotic religious tradition or political struggle” (29). While focusing on modern Chinese poets and their poetry, he singles out Bei Dao as one poet who, in order to reach out beyond China, writes with his western readers in mind and therefore sacrifices his poetry’s weight and richness in Chinese language and literary tradition. He also observes a strong

political trend running within contemporary Chinese poetry simply because for its international readers “[t]he struggle for democracy in China is in fashion” (29).

Owen’s point is that when the cross-cultural exchange goes in only one direction, from the politically and economically stronger to the politically and economically weaker, in this case from the West to China, not only is the Western world inclined to see itself as a giver and controller, but also Chinese writers are in danger of bowing to Western pressure and not expressing themselves authentically. It is perhaps the biggest tragedy a cultural Relativist can see which unfortunately can not be solved within his own limited vision of the cross-cultural Self-Other understanding.

A Stage Beyond

Universalism and Relativism occupies two extreme positions along the continuum of cross-cultural reception and understanding. While the Universalists perform an idealist role attempting to create a unified “world culture” which is Eurocentric in nature in most cases, the Relativists dare to confront the reality of the differences among cultures. The Relativists oppose indiscriminately applying a Western Eurocentric framework to appropriate or assimilate the texts of any other non-Western cultures.

In a world where the value of pluralism is being increasingly more recognized and appreciated, Cultural Relativism is clearly a big step forward from Western cultural Centrism. However, Relativism disappoints when it comes to advising us how to bridge the cultural gaps and reach the cultural Other. The position leads us to either being locked into our own cultural values, stereotyping the cultural Other and simply making the Other our own, or giving up on the mission of cross-cultural understanding due to the assumed

cultural incommensurability without even trying to obtain an empathetic understanding of the Other.

Indiscriminately imposing Western literary standards on the others to achieve a unified world literature is doomed to be a failure. Allowing cultural differences to preclude any true cross-cultural communication also leads us to a pessimistic vision of the future of human society split by differences without harmony.

Fortunately we have been recently witnessing a growing number of theories emerging, featuring the efforts of scholars from a wide range of academic areas trying to move beyond the strict bifurcation of the Universalist and Relativist positions. How to reach the cultural Other and facilitate a true and meaningful dialogue without blurring each other's cultural identities becomes the focal point in this discourse.

From an anthropology background Clifford Geertz proposes "imagining difference" as the way to reach the realization that "how it is that other people's creations can be so utterly their own and so deeply part of us" (810). The subjective Self is where we start to know the Other and the subject Self can only be located in its relation to the Other. Geertz' argues that acknowledging the cultural Other "makes us visible to ourselves" (120). It is the interaction with the Other that renders the Self capable of becoming, changing and expanding. To "grasp what we cannot embrace" (122) is to understand the Other in the horizons of this enlarged Self.

The insight we get from Geertz is that understanding the Self and the Other is not understanding them in the sense of absoluteness but relativity. There is not a fixed notion of the Self, nor of the Other, which makes the communication between the Self and the Other possible in the first place. Both the Self and the Other constantly change

under the influence of one another and exhibit variations of themselves during the course of Self-Other communication. By looking into the Other and “imagining difference”, the self-perception is challenged and enlarged which makes it all the possible for the Self to confront the different Other, and at last to incorporate it.

One of the core concepts in traditional Chinese philosophy, the Principle of Harmony in Difference, has been considered by Chinese scholar Yue Daiyun to provide us with a positive resource to cope with the relativity of cultures in culturally pluralistic modern societies (50).

The theory of Harmony in Difference has its origin in a story recorded in the historical record Zuo Zhuan more than two thousand years ago. In a major discourse from Yan Zi, he explained this philosophical concept in a very concrete and earthly manner:

Difference was the most basic condition for material composition and development. For example, when cooking food the oil, salt, sauce and vinegar have to be different before they can constitute a cooked dish. Similarly with music, there must be difference between long and short, quick and slow, strong and weak, so that they can come together in concord. (qtd. in Yue 50)

I can see an affinity between Geertz’s anthropological view and this ancient Chinese philosophical idea of how to deal with the Self-Other difference and coexistence. Geertz opposes a changeless world view by putting a high value on the Self’s openness and readiness for changing and being changed through the interaction with the Other. What this traditional Chinese idea opposes is a monolithic notion of the world by recognizing differences in the basic condition upon which things are composed and harmony can be maintained. Insofar so culture is concerned, there are diverse elements contained in each of the human cultures which cannot be grasped through a monolithic

understanding by the Other. Each culture should be understood in its full dimensions and complexities. The Principle of Harmony in Difference enlightens us by acknowledging that it is not the sameness but the differences that bring things together in concord upon which harmony can finally be achieved.

Following Richard Bernstein's proposal of a dialectical approach, Kirk Denton, a prestigious Western sinologist, defines the ultimate aim of this dialectic as aiming to "incorporate the Other within the Self's horizon of understanding". In his article "Teaching Modern Chinese Literature in the Post-Modern Era", Denton advises us to facilitating the literary dialogue between China and the West by seeing Chinese literature as something original and different instead of a mere imitation and invention of the West, something alive and fresh instead of an ossified and outmoded version of the Western literature, something complex and diverse instead of "a monolithic Other" (12).

What I infer from Denton's argument is that presenting modern Chinese literature as a heterogeneous composite of various literary, social and ideological traditions enables its Western readers to find this once elusive and distant body of literature as being friendly and approachable. Provided with diverse images of modern Chinese literature, Western readers are more likely to recognize and appreciate the shared features in modern Chinese and Western literatures, as the Universalists are inclined to do. At the same time, Westerners may also be more willing to explore and approach the differences between them—an approach the cultural Relativists would recommend. By recognizing the variation, renewal and progress within the Chinese literary world itself and the obvious Western influences on its progress of modernization and internalization, Western readers can transform and enlarge their literary horizons to understand and incorporate

not only something conforming to their own literary expectations but also something that might have been irrelevant to their prior literary experiences or even in conflict with them. The core message Denton tries to convey to both educators of modern Chinese literature in the West and its Western readers is that to fully understand modern Chinese literature is to understand it in its both internal complexities and external interplays with the cultural Other. It is this very comprehensive and inclusive vision of modern Chinese literature that will effectively and truly facilitate the cross-cultural literary communication between China and the West.

Inspired by Denton's invention of how to teach modern Chinese literature to the West, in the rest of this paper, I will pursue the goal of approaching and presenting modern Chinese literature as a heterogeneous complexity with various Self-Other relationships existing within it based on a review of Nobel Prize Winner Gao Xingjian's novel Soul Mountain. As an educator dedicated to the cause of introducing and teaching modern Chinese literature to the West, I propose to bring the awareness of this dynamic literary diversity within modern Chinese literature to its Western readers in order to facilitate cross-cultural China-West literary communication and understanding

CHAPTER THREE

Universal and Chinese Characteristics of Soul Mountain

Introduction

Gao Xingjian was awarded the 2000 Nobel Prize for Literature for his “universal validity, bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity” (Malmqvist, Swedish Academy) and became the first Nobel Literature Laureate working in the Chinese language. Besides his well-acclaimed modern and post-modern plays and works of literary criticism, his two novels were singled out by the Nobel committee as his major contributions to world literature, especially his largely autobiographical novel Soul Mountain, which he started to write in 1982 in Beijing and finished in 1989 in Paris.

Having been highly appraised by the canon-shaping Swedish Nobel institution, I suggest that this appraisal indicates that Gao Xingjian has been accepted as a universal writer and his novel Soul Mountain has been meaningfully located in world literature.

According to Torbjörn Lodén’s definition, world literature is a kind of literature that “integrates elements from different cultures into an organic whole which transcends the sum-total of its constituent parts” (258). By defining Soul Mountain as a piece of “world literature with Chinese characteristics” in the title of his article, he observes that this novel has universal appeal while still enabling Chinese literary and cultural tradition to function within it. The book’s English translator, Mabel Lee, also sees the novel as transcending the age-old East-West dichotomy and claims that the tension between Eastern literature and its Western readership does not exist in this novel (Soul of Chaos 29). So too, Jeffrey Kinkley says, the novel “appeals to an international readership” (32).

Culturally and linguistically situated both in the East and the West, the novel itself as well as its author generates controversies. Gao rejects any fixed parameters a culture or a nation may set for a definition of literature (Nobel Lecture). What he has been trying to achieve in his literary creation are intrinsic artistic qualities which can transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries universally and can reach the deepest of the soul of a modern human being. Drawing on his Chinese literary and cultural heritage, Gao expresses his artistic vision, which is to “produce modern literature imbued with an Asian spirit” (Wenxue yu Xuanxue, qtd. in Lodén 269). Yet, his unremitting searches for an Asian spirit and an authentic Chinese identity demonstrate how strong his links still are to his cultural roots.

I see the novel Soul Mountain as a piece of literature which cannot be understood only in the Western modern and post-modern literary traditions because of its deep roots in Chinese literary and cultural tradition. Neither can it be read only in a Chinese social and literary context because of the various literary elements of universal appeal embedded in it. The novel possesses a strong sense of modernity and universality while its apparent Chineseness gives the novel depth in cultural and historical dimensions.

In order to introduce this novel to Western readers and help them cross its linguistic and cultural boundaries, teachers have to first recognize that it is a novel composed of both universally-appealing elements and components with distinctive local Chinese characteristics. It is also created out of a series of Self-Other tensions within Chinese culture itself. Acknowledging these allows us to meaningfully locate the novel in the context of world literature, and to facilitate the cross-cultural literary communication between the novel and its Western readers.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part One, I demonstrate how the novel transcends its Chinese cultural boundary and appeals to an international audience by presenting and discussing five universally-appealing elements of the novel. In Part Two, I focus on discussing Chinese cultural diversity and Chinese Self-Other confrontations within the novel from three distinctive and interactive perspectives. I have discovered a variety of Chinese characteristics embedded within this novel, which demonstrates its deep roots in Chinese literary and cultural tradition. My arguments are based on a wide range of reviews from other literary critics, textual evidence cited from the novel, and my own interpretation and understanding of the novel.

Part One: Universal Elements of Soul Mountain

Universal Element One: The Journey

This is a novel about a person going on a journey—an age-old literary theme which appears in literature from different cultures and of different time periods. It is relevant to every single human being because it bears the testimony to a man's biological mandate which is to be born, to journey through time and to die. Its universal appeal also lies in the fact that literature of journey extends our life experience confined by the time period and place we live in and connects the life journey of an individual to journeys made by others. It enriches our individual lives by allowing us to vicariously experience a life beyond our present physical one, by making it possible for us to communicate with the past and the future, and to stretch out our imagination into territories and human relationships that are not available in the real life.

The journey in the novel Soul Mountain is told in a beautiful and refreshing way. It is a journey with a two-fold structure—a physical journey in the real world along side a

spiritual one in the realm of the imagination .While the narrator travels mostly in the southern and southwestern hinterland of China, he also carries out a psychological journey within his inner world, seeking the symbolic and elusive goal of reaching the place called Soul Mountain. (Kinkley 49; Lodén 267; Moran 210; Tam 13).

The novel begins with the narrator “You” setting off on a journey for Soul Mountain as the ultimate destination. Soul Mountain is also called Lingshan in Chinese. Surprisingly the second chapter continues with the story being told by an “I” narrator. In Chapter Two, it says “while you search for the route to Soul Mountain, I wander along the Yangtze River looking for this sort of reality” (11). As the novel unfolds itself and more singular pronouns are introduced, we gradually come to a realization that there is a dual framework behind the seemingly unorganized and rambling narrative.

The narrator “I” travels in reality. The “I” chapters in the novel develop the autobiographical dimension of the novel based on Gao’s personal experience of a five-month journey from the source of the Yangtze River along down to the sea coast taking place in the early 1980s (Lee, Introduction vi). The trip in the “I” chapters takes us into the heart of rural areas in southern China where many national minorities have been living for centuries at the margins of Han civilization. It provides us with a large amount of geographical and ecological information about the southern part of China. It also presents a lively vision of the ancient customs and traditions of various national minorities and of Han Chinese as well.

Along the journey, the “I” narrator talks with people from all stripes in the society and from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, with the curiosities of a sociologist, an ethnographer, an ethnologist, a journalist and an adventurer. There are encounters with

scientists trying to save the vanishing species the Giant Panda in (Chapter 6), with a Yi minority religious priest and a folk song singer (Chapter 20), with a ranger living a reclusive life (Chapter 33), with Miao minority young girls searching for love (Chapter 39), with a Buddhist recluse (Chapter 47), with a Daoist ritual performer (Chapter 49), with prostitutes (Chapter 67), with a homosexual woman (Chapter 73), with old childhood friends (Chapter 79) and etc. Some chapters also demonstrate the “I” narrator’s rigorous investigations into the natural environment as an ecologist and a biologist (Chapter 18 and Chapter 59), and into the Chinese cultural and historical heritage as an anthropologist and archaeologist as he attempts to do research on the history of the Yi minority (Chapter 20), and as he shows his interest in the historical changes of a legendary site, Wu Shan (Chapter 51).

On the other hand, the narrator “You” goes on a spiritual journey, a journey into the inner world of a human being. The “You” chapters are always associated with a “She” as the companion of the “You” narrator on the journey. It is unclear whether the destination, Soul Mountain, exists in the imagination or in reality. The author gives us a hint about this ambiguous world at the very beginning of the book when he cites historical references pertaining to Shamanistic and Buddhist classics with regard to the actual existence of the place called Lingshan. In Chapter 2, it reads, “...in the histories and classics, Lingshan appears in works dating back to the ancient shamanistic work Classic of the Mountain and Seas and the old geographical gazetteer Annotated Water Classic. It was also at Lingshan that Buddha enlightened the Venerable Mahakashyapa” (5). Here the author is obviously playing on the ambiguity of the existence and non-existence of Lingshan, a very Buddhist approach to what we call reality and imagination.

In Chapter 25 “You” asks an older lady for the road to Lingshan and is told that Lingshan is merely a place women go in order to pray for a son. Toward the end of the novel in Chapter 76, the symbolic meaning and unrealistic nature of the place called Lingshan become more obvious when the narrator asks an elder for the way to Lingshan and feels totally lost and uncertain of his own experience, memory and purpose of searching.

The “You” chapters are full of intensive conversations and story telling between “You” and “She”. By connecting the selves with their own past memories and with each other, the journey leads us to a deep exploration of the rich and complex inner world of human being. There are also numerous historical and legendary stories being told in these chapters, which allows us an extended examination of various forms of human relationships in historical and cultural contexts. It is a journey searching for meaning of life and purpose of living, for truth and ideals, and for love and companionship which are what Soul Mountain represents symbolically.

The journey in reality made by the narrator “I” and the journey in the imagination carried out by the narrator “You” overlap with each other and occupy almost alternative chapters within the novel. They are woven together in such a way that the reader is moved to deconstruct the barrier between internal and external reality. As everyone is walking through a life journey, both physically and mentally, readers from any cultural background will be able to find a way to identify with the novel’s theme and feel personally connected to it to a certain degree.

Universal Element Two: Discovering Multiple Voices within a Human Being

Soul Mountain is a novel of a person exploring a rich and complex inner world of the self. Lee claims that one of the major achievements of this novel is that it performs a

“rigorous and critical analysis of the self of one man” (Introduction ix). As I perceive it, Gao has accomplished this daunting task by discovering multiple voices within the self of a human being. The novel demonstrates its universal appeal in that it involves readers at an individual, personal and psychological level by sharpening their insights into human nature and furthering their understanding of their own internal selves.

The shifting of narratives in the voices of different singular pronouns has been singled out as the most salient textual feature of Gao’s literary creation. In this specific novel Soul Mountain, it has been diagnosed as Gao’s unique and creative literary device to achieve a fuller understanding of the composite and complex self by dissecting the self into separate manageable components, confronting the fragmented selves with each other, exploring the relationship of these different aspects within the self and at last synthesizing them to restore the completeness of the self (Lee, Introduction ix; Lovell 21; Tam 14).

After a lengthy discussion of the birth of “I” “You” and the third person “He” and how they differentiate from and influence each other in Chapter 51 (307-8), the narrator “I” continues in the next chapter to elucidate the usage of pronouns and their functions of analyzing the self in this novel. The “I” narrator displays the rational and realistic aspect of the self who looks critically at the historical and current reality of China, who actively engages with people living there, and who rigorously investigates the self’s relations to human world and natural environment. The “You” narrator represents the self as a creative and romantic dreamer who wanders aimlessly in the imagination and tells self-invented legendary stories. The “You” usually talks with a female “She” and this “She” voices the self’s desire for love, companionship and understanding. When “She”

converses passively with “You” about her miserable experience in the past and her suffering in the relationship with “You”, “She” is gradually entangled and incorporated into the I-You internal relationship as “she” shows the fragile, vulnerable, pessimistic and feminine side of the masculine authorial self. Later there is a “He” who makes his first appearance in Chapter 62. Therefore all the four singular pronouns mingle together to present a composite self. As the narrator “I” explains in Chapter 52, “they are all projections of my back” (313).

The psychological dimension of the novel has been greatly developed in this exploration into the floating and fragmented nature of human being. The author’s searching for the internal conflicts and multiple voices within the self probes deep into the interior realm of the unconscious, the instinctive, and the uncontrollable inside a human mind. Tam claims that by discovering the hidden drives and conflicts within the self, Gao has adopted Freud’s psychological interpretation of world (8). Gao himself also expresses this psychological understanding when he says in his literary criticism collection On Fiction and the Techniques of Fiction:

...psychological activities of human beings do not always accord with what can be logically deduced. Thinking, feelings, the conscious and subconscious, volition and impulse, lust, memory, etc. are like a dark river flowing endlessly from birth to death... (qtd. in Lee, Soul of Chaos 248)

In Soul Mountain, this dark river appears both in Chapter 23 and 66 where the narrator’s shady and subversive dreams, desires, and fears are given full expression. The narrator tries to awaken the dark, evil and hidden sides of the self all through the novel. He comes to a conclusion that “the self is the source of mankind’s misery” (152). In face

of this dilemma, he questions both himself and his modern readership: whether “the awakened self should therefore be killed” (152)?

Based on the discussion above, Soul Mountain can be read as a novel that touches on the dimension of the individual and the psychological, and relates to its readers at the most personal level no matter what linguistic and cultural backgrounds they come from.

Universal Element Three: Nature-Orientation

Soul Mountain takes an ecological orientation towards nature. The author demonstrates his strong concern with the ecosystem in modern China, and presents a concrete and detailed discourse on nature (Moran 207). Moran also perceives within the novel a tension between the Western reliance on science for taking control of nature and the Eastern philosophy of achieving harmony with nature (216). With regards to my discussion of this novel’s universal features, it seems to me that even though Soul Mountain is squarely situated in China, the environmental issues raised in the novel deserve international recognition and attention. Furthermore, the conflict between the Western scientific approach and the Eastern holistic approach to nature brings this discussion beyond its national borders and include it into a broader West-East discourse.

The narrator shows a strong obsession with exploring the degraded natural environment in modern China. During the journey which covers both human-dominated cities and more nature-friendly rural areas, the impact of human interference with nature is widely observed and severely criticized by the people encountered by the narrator or through the voice of the narrator. In Chapter 6, scientists’ efforts to save the vanishing animal species the Giant Panda is recorded in detail by the narrator. Later on the irony is pointed out by an old botanist that while people are saving a species with no capacity for

survival, people have no awareness of saving the environment for the survival of the human species itself, referring to the threat posed by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam over the Yangtze River in Chapter 8 (48). Species are diminishing while their habitats are also disappearing. Deforestation in Shennong Jia is chronicled in detail in Chapter 59 (363). Even though environmental concerns have been raised and a nature reserve has been built up in Shengnong Jia, the original ecosystem in that area can hardly be restored. The narrator also sees that rivers are polluted and lakes are silted, across the whole range of the Yangtze Valley, from Cao Hai at the upper reach, to Dongting Lake in the middle, and to Huangpu River in Shanghai near the sea coast (Chapter 18, 53 and 75).

How to solve the disharmony in the relationship between humankind and nature is not addressed directly. However, I can still see that the solution is implied in the language used and the philosophical outlook adopted by the author. When nature becomes the focus in the novel, the author writes in a language of science with precision. For example, the specific names of birds and plants are provided when the narrator explores a nature reserve area in Chapter 10. A description of the degraded ecological environment of Cao Hai is presented vividly in detail in Chapter 18. While the narrator uses Western scientific knowledge to dissect and analyze nature, he also tries to apply his Eastern philosophical outlook to comprehending nature as a whole. The conflict between those two outlooks does not allow him to succeed in solving the environment dilemma, between controlling the nature and seeking harmony with the nature. He either feels lost in the mountains (59) or feels the loneliness near the water (112).

Gao's writing succeeds in raising the issue of environmental degradation, evoking concern in readers from any country.

Universal Element Four: Hostility towards Civilization

Soul Mountain is a novel with hostility towards civilization embedded in it. For this reason, I classify it as modern. According to Lionel Trilling, literature is modern not because it stands for industrialization or evolution but because it expresses human beings' experiences of living in the modern environment and ponders the perils of modernity (10). The antipathy towards modern human civilization runs all through the novel (Tam 14; Zhao 104). I comprehend this novel as a piece of literature stamped with a sign of literary modernity because it fights against modernity and it calls urgently for a return to the primitive.

The novel starts with the narrator's leaving the "contaminated surroundings" and searching for an authentic life in nature (11). The impersonal city life sets the narrator off on a journey to forests and mountains in rural areas where the primitive practices of living an original life are still preserved and minimally contaminated by modern civilization. The narrator witnesses the reverence for nature in the age-old Daoist practices in Chapter 49, the superstitious totem worship of animals among the Yi minority people in Chapter 20, the primitive instincts seeking sexual impulse and love in the Miao minority's mating practices in Chapter 39, and the uncontaminated language in folk songs in Chapter 59.

Vestiges of the primitive in contrast to modernity are observed as discussed above. However, what the novel shows us more is the impact of human civilization on history and how human nature has been distorted in the process of modernization. I continue to discuss some examples of this distortion below.

People become ignorant of their own historical heritage and show no respect for ancestral tradition. The narrator makes a critical comment in Chapter 7 that people who

don't know the history of the place they live in don't know about themselves (42). The narrator finds out that even though the traditional practices are still performed in some areas, the original meanings have been lost (120). Indeed, in most cases, people have abandoned the cultural traditions of their ancestors. For instance, in Chapter 41, the last surviving Master of Sacrifice of the Miao people cries out the author's own lament over the lost tradition when the Master sighs, "(t)he good days are over" (240). The dying Master further warns that forgetting one's ancestors is considered a crime and will bring retribution (243). It is also not uncommon that superstitious practices are despised and banned by the authorities. The remaining performers constantly face the danger of being persecuted. The narrator tells us a story of this kind when he encounters a performer of Daoist rituals in Chapter 49. The unique artistry performance is stopped and forbidden by the performer's own son who works as a government Communist cadre.

Human nature has been distorted by civilization or modernization in the way that genuine companionship among people disappears. People live in isolation and alienation in the modern environment and build their relationships on political or utilitarian purposes as are described in Chapter 79. Modern technical inventions do help make human interaction convenient. However, the narrator finds true communication is lacking in the modern impersonal environment in Chapter 55. Lee gives us insights into this modern existential dilemma and applies it beyond the book itself when she poses the question like the one "when deprived of human communication, will not the individual be condemned to the existence of the Wild Man in the forests in Shennong Jia, the Big Foot of America or the Yeti of the Himalayas" (Introduction ix)?

When confronting Ba Da's sublime artistic achievement in painting with his madness in real life, Gao beautifully writes in Chapter 70:

--Or one could say he viewed the world with a strange pair of eyes and the sight of the world made him go mad.
 --Or one could say the world cannot tolerate rationality and it is only with madness that the world becomes rational. (445)

Does Gao imply to us that only by being mad can we endure this insane modern environment while still being able to remain true to ourselves? Gao poses this question not uniquely to people from a particular culture, but to every individual living in the era of modernity. He succeeds in using his Chinese language to "express the experiences of modern people" (Gao, *Wenxue yu Xuanxue*, qtd. in Moran 216).

Universal Element Five: Spirit of Skepticism

Soul Mountain is a novel imbued with a spirit of skepticism. The Nobel committee calls Gao "a perspicacious sceptic" (The Swedish Academy). I perceive that this spirit of skepticism in Gao's literary creation is based on his theoretical and critical stance of No-ism (Meiyou Zhuyi) which is defined by Lovell as "an individual stance of positively engaging in doubt" (16). Also according to Tam, the novel appeals to its modern Western readership because it evinces a detachment from the ancient Western Aristotelian tradition which prizes a rational and logical philosophy (8). From a Chinese perspective, this novel also demonstrates a breaking away from the Chinese people's optimistic view of human nature and realistic attitude toward life. This optimistic view and realistic attitude in modern Chinese literature has been diagnosed and discussed by Hsia (A History 504).

Skepticism permeates the novel. It is in this mysterious and skeptical atmosphere that the author queries into the nature of history, memory, reality, and human being and makes no claim to be capable of explaining anything.

History is disputable. What has been written into historical records varies and develops into different versions of stories depending on how and from whose perspective the story is told. In Chapter 48, according to the narrator, a tale of the Jin Dynasty can be interpreted as a political warning, a morality tale, a religious tale, or a philosophy, and numerous theories can be derived from it. Later in Chapter 71 the narrator concludes that “history can be anything so history is merely a riddle” (448).

Memory is vague and subject to doubt about its accuracy. It does not represent something concrete and familiar but something intangible and afar. After her leaving in Chapter 50, even the most recent memory of “She” becomes blurred and indistinct, and the boundary between memory and what is wished for is doubted by the narrator (304). The narrators in the novel display a strong obsession with searching for childhood memories. However, the obsession becomes an illusion when in Chapter 54 the narrator starts to doubt whether the so-called hometown has a “definite location” (328). In Chapter 76, the narrator’s dreamlike memories finally make the journey to Soul Mountain impossible to carry on further because there emerges confusion about where the journey started and how it has led to the place the narrator is currently located. The narrator gets lost in his own memories.

Reality is covered by layers of true or false appearances. The meaning of life is subject to variations in its numerous manifestations. In a discussion of life in its relation to literature in Chapter 2, the narrator feels alienated from real life therefore has doubts of

obtaining access to the truth of life and achieving the authenticity of literary creation (2). The searching for a true life becomes a metaphysical query when the narrator asks, “[t]he problem is whether or not the present really exists and how the criteria are established” (246).

The nature of human beings is unstable and uncertain, as I have discussed in the previous section. The doubt about the nature of the self influences the self’s relationships with the others. In Chapter 26 the narrator comes to the realization that the world is actually the projection of the self, and therefore is merely the illusion the self creates to delude itself (151).

The world in Soul Mountain is basically seen as non-logical and non-rational. Analytical thinking and reasoning is despised and logic is discarded. A question is posed by the narrator: “[l]ife had no logic, so why does there have to be logic to explain what it means” (50)? This clearly shows Gao’s skeptical stance in writing. This philosophical outlook grants the novel a sense of modernity, and therefore makes it appealing to a wide range of modern readership.

Part Two: Chinese Characteristics of Soul Mountain

Chinese Characteristic One: Confucianism and Anti-Confucianism

Confucianism and anti-Confucianism both exist in the novel Soul Mountain. Gao shows a strong antipathy toward the over-rational and over-civilized Confucian culture with its autocratic ideology and stifling hierarchy of authorities (Lee, Introduction vii; Lodén 261; Zhao105). However, as Lovell points out, what Gao has achieved is not disinterested criticism but a dissident version of breaking away from the mainstream Confucian culture (23). Lee also proclaims that Gao’s vacillating stance between the

recluse and the worldly betrays his desire for staying within human society and locating himself in human relationships (Introduction vii). My understanding of this dilemma is that Gao's rejection of Confucianism deeply bears the imprint of that tradition.

There is an obvious anti-Confucian tendency running all through the novel. The narrator sets off on his journey in order to flee the physically and culturally contaminated urban surroundings. The stifling customs, instructions, rituals and teachings are abundant in the culturally-Confucian society of China which he wants to get rid of in order to be able to hear his own voice (418). Bearing a mixed feeling of being rejected, alienated and relieved, he brings both his insider and outsider insights to his investigations into history, people and society on the journey. In Chapter 25, the historical story of a village Confucian scholar and his Memorial Arch exposes to us how insane and ridiculous the official Confucian hierarchical system is and how powerfully it drives people to become greedy, utilitarian, impersonal, and at last hopeless. When citing the ancient Confucian scholar Liu Zongyuan's writing on warning the harsh government not to be as savage as a deadly kind of snake in Chapter 30, the narrator contrasts Liu's concern about the world to his concern only of his own life. Liu devoted himself to fighting against the darkness from within. In contrast, the narrator denies his social engagement and announces his personal detachment from the fundamentally Confucian idea of worrying about the concerns of the world first (170). The narrator refuses to be the conscience of the society. He claims very clearly that he only speaks through his own voice and for his own purpose (498).

What I understand about the narrator's endeavor is that he tries to break away from the dominant Confucian cultural sphere by denying the Confucian self within

himself. This existential conflict echoes with the narrator's paradoxical understanding of the conflicting characters within the composite self in general. The awakened self is not killed therefore the Confucian self still resides within the narrator.

The narrator seeks communication and relationship with people. A Chinese Confucian self relies on the relationships between parent and child, between the ruler and the ruled, between the elder and the younger, and between friend and friend. In the novel, even though the narrator claims his self-detachment from the outside world, he still sees himself more meaningfully defined and located within his social relationships through communication. He accepts individual insignificance when he pictures himself as only a "spoonful of green seawater" in the "vast ocean of humanity" (Chapter 54, 328). He cannot endure the solitary life a recluse lives because of its lack of interaction with people (Chapter 8, 50). He admits he can never understand the ranger's desire to live an isolated life away from human communication, just as he can never understand the silent mountains standing alone for centuries (Chapter 33, 190). What I understand about the dilemma is that the narrator is trying to keep his voice totally his own when he also seeks to hear himself through communications and negotiations with others. His soul is still restless. Therefore the self-struggling never ends in the novel.

The narrator's unextinguished soul tells him what he really desires. He wants a normal, stable, peaceful and even mediocre life. His craving for the human world is heard both through the voice of "I" and "She". In Chapter 50, "She" turns away and leaves the narrator "You" because "She" wants to return to a normal life, a life ordinary people have and enjoy. For the narrator "I", the warmth of the human world is best represented by the smoke and fire rising from stoves where Chinese people cook food. This image of smoke

and fire recurs several times in the novel (Chapter 28, 39 and 63), which shows us how strongly the narrator is tempted by and obsessed with the idea of returning to the human world. With all its complexities and anxieties, the world he tries to run away from is the place he is meant to stay.

What the narrator fails to achieve in order to solve this Confucianism and anti-Confucianism dilemma is self-transcendence. The narrator admires the ancient poet Qu Yuan but he doesn't dare to make a suicide announcement of leaving the contaminated world forever like Qu Yuan. He understands the painter Ba Da's unique way of being vulgar and mad in order to stay within the conventional world and retain a complete self, but the narrator has no idea how to do that. He appreciates the painter Gong Xian's self-transcendence, however he sees himself as self-activated and not capable of doing that. The narrator does not manage to transcend himself, his Confucian and conventional self. That is why the dilemma of Confucianism and anti-Confucianism can be perceived all through the novel, from the beginning of the journey toward the end. It is this paradoxical character of the novel that makes the reading compelling and evocative, full of controversies.

Chinese Characteristic Two: Seeking a Pure Asian Spirit

The way to Soul Mountain in the novel is the way seeking a pure Asian spirit. This spirit is portrayed as a mixture of indigenous cultural components from philosophy, ideology, religion and superstitious belief (Zhao104). China is one tremendously influential nation in Asia. It has been largely setting the cultural agenda of Asia for thousands of years. What is Chinese and what is Asian can be reasonably distinguished, though much overlap can be expected as well.

I interpret this spirit in contrast, at least partially, to Western civilization and to China's modernization. It is pure in the sense that it is so comprehensive and diverse that the spirit itself constitutes a self-contained and self-structured system of directing both people's worldly practices and spiritual pursuits.

The novel presents a full vision of history, people and society with this pure Asian spirit embedded. Among its various origins, the influences from indigenous Chinese natural Daoist philosophy and Buddhism, especially Chinese adapted Chan-Buddhism, are the most noticeable.

Buddhist and Daoist classics are frequently referred in the novel. Soul Mountain is imagined as the place where the Buddha enlightened the Venerable Mahakashyapa (Chapter 1, 5). The narrator's interpretation of cycles of life is based on Buddhist teachings on transmigration. When the narrator is told that it takes a full sixty years for the Cold Arrow Bamboo, the only food of the vanishing species the Giant Panda, to go through the cycle from flowering to reflowering, he immediately realizes that sixty years is exactly one Kalpa which is a Buddhist concept of time period for transmigration (Chapter 8, 47-8). A dramatic piece of Gao's real life experience is narrated in the voice of "I" in Chapter 12. When the narrator "I" finds out that the previously diagnosed lung cancer he supposedly had does not exist at all and he is perfectly healthy, his immediate psychological reaction is to relate to a Buddhist expression of sheer joy and elation: "Buddha said rejoice" (72). In many places in the novel the narrator laments people's acting against the character of nature. In his laments, he cites lines from a Daoist Classic Dao De Jing, which deserve a lengthy quote here:

The Way gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to the myriad things.

Man follows earth, earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Way, the Way follows Nature. (Chapter 63, 402)

The true spirit of Buddhism and Daoism is also sought by the narrator during his trips to Buddhist temples and Daoist resorts on the journey. His meeting with the possibly last Daoist of the Purity Unity Sect of Daoism in Chapter 65 signals to him that it is a closed world with its own ways of practicing life, and is beyond a normal human being's understanding of what a society is (Chapter 65, 415). He observes the rituals and ceremonies of Tiantai Sect of Chinese Buddhism at Guoqing Temple, but comes to the realization that he does not belong there either because of his own unextinguished passion and human desires (Chapter 69, 443).

The vitality and liveliness of this pure Eastern spirit lies in its dialectic and paradoxical nature. Attempting to understand this spirit as a whole exposes to me the conflicts embedded within. There are conflicts between the active and the contemplative, between the engaged and the detached, between the absent and the existing, and between the useful and useless. It is these conflicts that give full expression to the true nature of the Asian spirit the novel seeks.

It is mentioned in Chapter 20 that, according to Daoist documents, Zhuangzi, one of the major founders of the Daoist School, treated the mourning ceremony for his wife as a joyous event (120). My understanding is that the seeming incompatibility between the intention and the action actually breaks down the conventional barrier between life and death. In Chapter 26, what Buddha says about absence and phenomena is cited: "the myriad phenomena are vanity, the absence of phenomena is also vanity" (152). Based on a Buddhist understanding of existence and non-existence, the conflict can be solved in the way that neither absence nor phenomena matters because truth does not reside in either

one of them. The essential meaning of Daoism is explored by a Daoist recluse in Chapter 63. His interpretation enlightens us on the dialectical relationships between existence and non-existence, between action and non-action, and between self and absence of self (403). It gives us the insight that a life of truth is a life full of paradoxes and conflicts which cannot be avoided but have to be lived with and carried on.

The pure Asian spirit sought in the novel is not based on only one source, but is made up of various traditions within Chinese culture. Exploring a series of binary oppositions within it allows us to comprehend the total truth of that spirit and gives us insight into the complexities within the Chinese spiritual world.

Chinese Characteristic Three: Multi-Ethnicity and Cultural Diversity

Within the book Soul Mountain, cultural diversity and vitality is discovered in various national ethnic groups in the southern frontier of China in contrast to the Han-dominated official-mainstream Chinese civilization in northern China. Along the Yangtze River, the south and southwest part of China is a mixed homeland for a variety of national minorities and the Han Chinese as well. The novel also proves, in a convincing manner, that the aboriginal and authentic Chinese folk culture is best preserved among this multi-ethnic society (Kinkley 132-33; Zhao 105). In order to comprehend Chinese culture in its full complexity, this multi-ethnic southern society and its unofficial non-mainstream folk cultural traditions should not be considered as something alien, exotic, and other, but an intrinsic and familiar component of Chinese cultural as a whole.

The novel presents a lively vision of the customs and traditions preserved by national minorities, most of which have been lost among the Han people. Chapter 20

gives us a detailed introduction to the Yi minority's history and investigates its relationship with the Han Chinese and other national minorities in history. Common customs and traditions are sought and investigated, such as marriage and funeral ceremonial practices, totem worship of tiger, and rigid clan classifications. When the narrator tries to make connections and trace them back to the same origin, he is implying that no matter how different people are from each other now, we might all share a common ancestry long time ago (120-21). The narrator participates in a Miao minority's dragon boat festival and witnesses the passion in their way of searching for love. The meaning of love has not been distorted among those people. The purity and authenticity of this love inspires but also intimidates the narrator who has for long lost this instinctive and youthful love (Chapter 39, 228-29). Among national minority people the narrator also discovers a kind of genuine folk song. The uncontaminated language, the unconstrained style, and the worldly message conveyed all arouse the narrator's desires for the imaginative, the primitive and the spontaneous (Chapter 59, 358).

Superstitious and religious practices become the focus in this search for the original Chinese folk culture because they are the ones which have been most seriously damaged among the Han Chinese. In a museum the narrator finds a set of Nuo exorcist masks which were used to be worn for performance on occasions of superstitious rituals. They have been collected from a region inhabited by a mixture of Han, Miao, Tong and Tujia nationalities where the vestige of this folk culture tradition can still be observed (Chapter 24, 141-42). Other superstitious practices combined with age-old Daoist wisdom are also mentioned in the book, like Yin-Yang and geomancy, the Five Thunder Finger techniques, the Constellation Dances, physiognomy and etc (Chapter 49, 289).

Gao never hides his enthusiasm and fascination for non-mainstream Chinese folk art in real life. He expresses his passion as follows:

What I love are the more 'primitive' performances: tilt dancing, dragon-lamp dancing, roadside shows, conjurers, love-songs, Luo opera with masks, and the very 'ancient' Tibetan opera. There is a *joie de vivre* that I always find invigorating. I also love folk-songs and ballads that have not been 'refined' by pedantic recorders. (Jinhua Yetan, qtd. in Zhao 105)

In Soul Mountain, it is in multi-ethnic and culturally diverse southern China that this folk culture finds its tenacity to persevere and gets its nutrition to grow. The novel portrays the diversity within Chinese culture and invites a complex and layered understanding of what Chineseness means, not only from its international readers but also from its Chinese readers as well.

Chapter Conclusion

When I prepare to teach modern Chinese literature to international students using the novel Soul Mountain, I certainly can take full advantage of these universal and local Chinese elements embedded within the novel which have been fully demonstrated and discussed in this chapter. The universal qualities relate this novel to its international readers who might have no sufficient background knowledge of Chinese culture, and open the door for them towards modern Chinese literature as a whole without making them feel alienated and disconnected. The novel's immediate appeal to its international readers lies in its universality and cultural transcendence. While the gap between literary and cultural traditions still exists, the task of teaching this piece of modern Chinese literature to Westerners becomes less intimidating and more approachable when we present Chinese culture behind this novel as a heterogeneous composite instead of a

monolith one. The novel conveys the diversity and self-other confrontations within Chinese culture. These are seen in a variety of local Chinese cultural elements identified within the novel, which at times cohere and other times conflict. Based on my review of this novel in terms of its universal and local Chinese features, I would like to say that Soul Mountain is indeed a piece of “world literature with Chinese characteristics”. I will demonstrate later in this paper how the novel can also be incorporated into the curriculum of teaching modern Chinese language and literature to the West pedagogically.

CHAPTER FOUR

Literary Analysis of Soul Mountain

Introduction

In the previous chapter I analyzed the book Soul Mountain based on the universal and local Chinese themes I have found. The five universal themes and three local Chinese themes influence and interact with one another. These themes function as unifying forces to connect different literary aspects within the novel and incorporate them into an overall literary dynamism. As I continue to take a critical approach to interpret the novel Soul Mountain in the present chapter, an analysis of all the essential literary devices employed within this fictional work becomes a necessity.

In this chapter I sort out literary information in the novel into three categories: plot, character, and setting. I analyze the novel's plot together with various methods of narration employed within the plot structure. Character analysis is carried out through a study of the novel's frequent shifts in point of view. Setting is examined in its physical, historical, social and literary dimensions. In each section, literary components are defined, applied to this specific novel, analyzed within the novel's context, and evaluated for their effectiveness in conveying the novel's overall themes to the reader. I discuss and analyze these components not in isolation but in close relation to each other. Each of them is an integral part of the novel and they work all together to give the novel a unifying spirit.

In order to prepare for teaching the novel in a real classroom setting, I adopt a teacher's approach to my discussion of the above literary components of the novel in this chapter. My review is based on Turner's literary analysis and its educational application because they have proved to work effectively in classroom teaching.

Plot Structure and Method of Narration

Plot refers to the sequence or the pattern of events that comprises a novel.

According to Turner's interpretation, if plot structure is a dominating literary device in the fictional work, it usually develops in a relatively chronological sequence and consists of a series of conflicts following a certain pattern of progress. A six-fold division is applied in her analysis which has the introduction, the inciting force, the rising action, the climax, the falling action and the denouement. In other types of fictional works in which character portrayal or psychological description is the main focus, plot takes a minor role in literary development. It then usually slips into the background and provides an implicit framework behind the narrative (31-32).

As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, the novel Soul Mountain is composed of a two-fold plot structure. One of the storylines is based on a physical journey taken by the author along the Yangtze River in the southern part of China. This dimension of plot structure develops almost chronologically and in the sequence of the places the narrator visits on the journey. It starts somewhere in the border areas of the Qinghai-Tibetan highlands and the Sichuan basin as mentioned in Chapter 2 (10). It leads us into the areas which are mostly inhabited by Chinese national minority groups in the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River. It goes all the way down to the sea coast in the southeast and then up to the north. On this journey, we are exposed to various conflicts between the human world and the nature, between the established and the marginal, and between the individual and the collective. If we follow closely every stop the narrator makes, we will actually be able to roughly draw a line of the route on a contemporary Chinese map. Also in the novel, the journey pursued by the narrator to the

destination of Soul Mountain, as indicated in the novel's title, leaves no trace in reality. The dual plot structure allows the narrator to travel both in reality and in imagination in the same novel. The physical journey is richly overlaid with a psychological one carried out by the narrator to seek a symbolic place called Soul Mountain. On this journey within a human's inner world, the narrator's internal struggles become major forces for plot development, mainly through the narrator's conversations with people speaking in different voices of pronouns who actually represent various aspects of the same authorial ego. The whole novel is divided into 81 episodes which are sequenced according to the development of this dual plot structure. The overall plot of this novel is a mixture of myth and fact, memory and lived experience, and imagination and reality.

Each chapter stands as a relatively independent unit, connected to others based on the implicit framework discussed above. A major conflict, either an external or an internal one, arises and grows, accompanied by some minor conflicts within each chapter. However, it is rarely the case that the content of a chapter can be diagrammed based on the traditionally-defined plot structure. In most cases there is no clearly-identified plot structure but only variations from standard requirements. For instance, the plot diagrams are usually flat, without ups and downs in the chapters where the narrator searches for childhood memories, as in Chapters 37 and 54. In other cases there is no solution after the conflict develops to its highest point of intensity and the conflict remains unresolved. For example, in Chapter 10, the narrator goes on an adventure into some ancient forest areas and loses contact with his guide on the trip. At this point, the narrator suddenly stops telling the rest of the story, and starts to reflect upon his life, saying at the end of the chapter: "it will take a miracle to change my fate. But haven't I been waiting for this or

that sort of miracle all of my life” (64)? Also in Chapter 18, the narrator gets stuck in Cao Hai and is at risk of sinking into the muck. Again no information is provided to readers about how this crisis is solved. The story ends with the narrator’s self-meditation “[c]an this possibly be the primitive loneliness devoid of all meaning that I seek” (112)? My interpretation of the narrator’s intention at those points is that the significance of understanding life itself outweighs the urgency to provide the story with an immediate solution. Life goes on without following a fixed pattern, neither in a perfect circle nor along a straight line. It is this non-plot element of life that the narrator attempts to capture and comprehend.

Generally speaking, plot structure in this novel mostly stays in the background and provides a stage for character portrayal and theme development. But still technical devices for developing actions are widely used to create mood in the novel. The technique of foreshadowing is employed in Chapter 36 to hint at what might happen to the Buddhist monastery after the Venerable Buddhist Master passes away. The monastery got burned and vanished into the void, which was predicted by the Buddhist Master’ last few unheard words “go begging” (207). Through the plot development of the journey searching for Soul Mountain, the symbolic meaning and the non-existence of the place called Soul Mountain is hinted in both Chapter 25 and 76, before the reader finally comes to the realization that Soul Mountain is a place that only exists in the imagination and cannot be reached in reality.

Mystery also plays a major role in developing the overall mood of the novel. A series of mystical characters are introduced, like Zhu Hua Po in Chapter 13, the woman

performing the ritual for redemption in Chapter 14, and the nun in a tale who cleansed her own intestines in Chapter 48.

The novel is also full of binary oppositions which create various dilemmas faced by narrators. In both Chapter 44 and 50, the narrator “She” vacillates between the options of choosing adventure and ordinary life. After her leaving, a mixed feeling of joy from achieving total liberation and hollowness from being deprived of responsibility put the narrator “You” in a dilemma.

Foreshadowing, mystery and dilemma are most influential in creating the general mood of the novel, while other plot devices like chance, coincidence and surprise can also be observed but take more minor roles in this regard.

The two-fold plot structure is developed through a wide range of methods of narration employed in the novel. Lee claims that the novel as a whole presents a new form of narration without following a fixed narrative pattern or any established fictional form (Pronouns 250). The Swedish Academy makes the announcement that the novel is distinguished in its “blend of genres” and “tapestry of narratives” (Swedish Academy). Gao himself also introduces a voice to examine and mock his own fictional achievements regarding the narrative forms used in Soul Mountain. In Chapter 72 during a conversation discussing the definition of fiction, one of the voices queries: “[y]ou have slapped together travel notes, moralistic ramblings, feelings, notes, jottings, untheoretical discussions, unfable-like fables, copied out some folk songs, added some legend-like nonsense of your own invention, and are calling it FICTION” (452). By introducing a contradictory voice responding to the previous comment, Gao expresses his view on this

issue that fictional art should not be stifled and suffocated by any fixed model of narration (Lee, Soul of Chaos 244).

I think Gao succeeds in his experimenting in this liberated form of narration in Soul Mountain. According to my observation and analysis, the narration takes on various forms in the novel, among which dialogue and stream of consciousness are the two performing the most significant functions.

Dialogue is used widely all through the novel. It provides opportunities for discussing the meaning of life and the meaning of being as the narrator encounters Buddhist monks and Daoist recluses (Chapter 47). It expresses internal conflicts and struggles as the narrator “You” and “She” argue and finally depart (Chapter 50). It allows the oppressed and the marginal to speak out loudly and make their voices heard (Chapter 59). It gives the narrator opportunity to engage in discussion about literary criticism, and to express his unique viewpoint on literary creation (Chapter 72).

Based on Turner’s explanation, the stream of consciousness as a narrative form enables mental adventure to be carried out freely in fictional works. Trivial incidents are considered to be more suitable and powerful in revealing the nature of life than big events. It is believed that life itself mainly consists of trivialities and details, of incomplete and never-ending stories, of minor characters coming and going without leaving any trace of significance. However, the unity lies in the mental makeup behind the seemingly rambling narrative. With the traditional plots links thrown into chaos, a more complex structure is built upon an analysis of mental and psychological perceptions (35-36).

Lee understands that Gao is well aware of this modern narrative method, the stream of consciousness, and its close relation to the development of psychological

research (Soul of Chaos 248). My reading of Soul Mountain also suggests to me that Gao has made successful use of this modern narrative form to achieve his unique literary creation in this novel. Stream of consciousness is most often used in chapters devoted to the narrator's searching for memories of childhood and earlier life experience (Chapter 3, 22, 35 and 54). His state of mind goes back to the past when similar situations or images occur. This brings up a large amount of detail which tends to bury the narrative and creates a jerky and disconnected effect. As Gao says, "[t]his sort of narrative language is not concerned with time sequence, can mix memory and reality, the past, and imagination" (Xiandai 26, qtd. in Lee, Soul of Chaos 249). Stream of consciousness is also frequently used in chapters occupied by dreams. Both in Chapter 19 and 66, the narrator steps into darkness. He is filled with anxiety, fear and uncertainty. Psychological activities of the narrator are most fully described and analyzed in these cases. The power of this stream-of-consciousness language in expressing a person's inner world lies in the fact that this is a language unbounded by logic and rules. Human subjective perceptions and psychological activities do not always follow logic or rules either. Therefore the stream-of-consciousness technique allows the human mind to soar freely in mental imagination and psychological exploration.

The story ends when the narrator sees God through the eyes of a frog. The journey ends in this world of three--a human, a frog and God. Snow falls, tending to blurring and erasing the memories of the narrator. The narrator admits at last that nothing has been achieved and comprehended by him. As readers, shall we close the book identifying with the narrator that there is nothing in the world that can be comprehended at all?

Character Development and Point of View

“The greatest reward in reading prose lies in our opportunity to identify with characters and undergo an emotional catharsis” (Turner 29). Characters are people and forces that physically or spiritually get involved with plot development within fictional works. Characterization or character development includes depictions of characters’ physical appearances, their thoughts, feelings and attitudes, their manners, behaviors and actions in order to reveal characters’ essential personality traits (Turner 13).

Characterization or character development has a dominating role in the novel Soul Mountain. It is closely related to and strongly influenced by the novel’s shifting points of view. According to Turner’s definition, point of view refers to the consistent perception from which characters and events are presented in a novel. The author can choose one of the four points of view or use a combination of them. They are omniscient, limited omniscient, first person and objective points of view (17-18, 44). In the novel Soul Mountain, all four of them are used by the author to attain his unique literary achievement.

In chapters about the physical journey, the first person point of view is consistently used all through the novel. Stories are told only from the first person singular perspective, which restricts the novel’s outlook to the authorial character “I”. What is told by the personal pronoun “I” is largely autobiographical based on the author’s real life experience as mentioned before. The “I” character without a specific name is the only main character in developing this dimension of plot structure. Therefore “I” is the protagonist in literary terminology. The most salient personality traits of the “I” character are directly revealed through the protagonist’s internal confrontations with his own

emotional and psychological conflicts. Those opposing forces are called antagonists. The “I” character is usually developed by means of direct description, exposition, interpretation and commentary in these cases.

There are chapters completely devoted to this searching for self-affirmation and self-exploration by the “I” character. The lengthy psychological monologue in Chapter 26 is full of a spirit of self-skepticism and self-examination when the protagonist becomes keenly aware of the underground nature of human being. The awakened self of the “I” narrator sees the darkness, the evil and the uncontrollable deeply rooted in human nature. The philosophical discussion in Chapter 52 reveals the lonely character of “I” and his inclinations towards individualism and narcissism. While he still craves human communication with others, he certainly places himself in the position of center by perceiving others as merely projections of the self.

Also on this journey in reality, indirect characterization of the “I” character is developed through the protagonist’s encounters with nature, society and people on the journey. There are numerous anonymous people encountered by the protagonist on the trip. They are often addressed as a man, a woman, a girl, a recluse, a ritual performer, a monk, or a stranger, all without specific names. Their characters are usually not fully developed. They perform supporting roles in portraying the protagonist “I”. Therefore, the “I” character is further developed through what he communicates with them, what he thinks and feels about them, and what he does with them. His experience of visiting religious resorts betrays his craving for human society. When he attends various social and cultural events held by minority groups, he shows sympathy for the marginal and a strong antipathy towards the established and the over-civilized. The protagonist’s

equanimous attitude towards death and his unyielding belief in fate are also revealed in chapters when he takes adventures into nature.

On the other hand, a shifting point of view is the most salient literary feature employed by the author to present the spiritual journey taking place in the imagination. Stories are told from perspectives of the singular pronouns of “You”, “She” and “He”. However, it should not be understood that the omniscient point of view is being used which gives the author unlimited powers and allows him to see into minds of all his characters. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, these three singular pronouns speak in different voices but from the same ego. They are utilized to reveal a layered and composite human ego by dissecting the ego into its different aspects. They present the ego as a dreamer “You”, a feminine character “She”, and a stranger “He” respectively. Again they are narrators without names. These three narrators together with the “I” narrator appearing on the journey in reality are unified to achieve the completeness of the authorial self and to represent the self in its full dimensions. There are other minor characters appearing as well. Nevertheless, the focus is mainly placed on the internal character development within one person’s mind and memories, in the inner world of that human being.

Gao shows confidence in his experimental and avant-garde application of these two literary devices in this novel. The voice introduced in Chapter 72 pokes fun on the novel’s lack of character portrayal and inappropriate usage of point of view. What I have seen is that there is a protagonist and his personalities are fully developed and presented. The protagonist, the authorial self, speaks through the voices of different singular pronouns “I”, “You”, “He” and “She”. They reveal different aspects of the protagonist’s

character and they work together to achieve and restore the completeness of his being. The protagonist is characterized with little physical description, but with rich psychological description. The clear image of the protagonist is successfully built, most psychologically.

Story Setting

“Setting is an important integral part of any novel” (Turner 31). Turner’s definition of setting is that setting tells us where and when the story takes place and fills in the historical, social, and spiritual background in the novel (8). She also identifies two sub-concepts related to setting: general setting and immediate setting. Immediate setting refers to the particular time and place of the story taking place. General setting locates the story in its broad historical and social context (165).

According to the information Lee wrote into her Introduction to the novel, we are well informed of the fact that the physical journey in Soul Mountain is based on a five-month real life traveling experience of the author taking place in the early 1980s. This immediate location is indicated in many places in the novel. The journey is mostly situated in the southern and southwestern hinterland of China. It goes along the Yangtze River, from its upper reaches to the sea coast, covering almost the whole Yangtze region. It mostly takes place in rural or mountain areas and places mainly inhabited by Chinese national minorities.

The general social setting of the novel is portrayed vividly on the journey. Plenty of touches of local color and texture are woven into the narration. There is rich description of the geographical features of that area, the scenery and the topography. The novel presents us with a vision of the habits, customs, occupations and daily manners of

the local people. It also leads into an investigation into the religious, moral, social and emotional climates of the society in that area of China. This is the setting that provides the narrator with abundant resources in his search for authentic Chinese folk culture and cultural diversity within Chinese civilization.

The atmosphere and mood permeating the novel hint at the aspects of the historical period of time reflected in Soul Mountain. It has not been long since the Chinese Cultural Revolution ended in the late 1970s. Memories of that ten-year disaster were still lingering. The novel is situated against the historical background when Chinese people started to reflect on and examine the past decade of disconnection from our own cultural tradition, when we endeavored to rediscover and re-evaluate an authentic Chinese culture, when we struggled with reconstructing and redefining a strong Chinese identity in an international context. Soul Mountain has been identified by many critics as a typical piece of Roots-Searching literature. Roots-Searching is a literary movement dominating mainland Chinese artistic and literary circles from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. It developed as a response to the environmental, spiritual and cultural consequences caused by the Cultural Revolution, and aimed at developing a strong Chinese identity and authentic cultural memories (Kinkley 36; Lovell 22; Zhao 106).

There is plenty of evidence in the novel showing its strong inclination to seeking an authentic Chinese cultural heritage. In many places in the novel the narrator responds enthusiastically to the echoes of the ancient Chinese literary legacy and to the remnants of original Chinese folk culture. Moran claims that the novel makes a strong connection between the places visited on the journey and the age-old Chinese cultural heritage behind the landscape. Land is always read like a text with cultural and literary meaning

embedded by the narrator in his search for cultural memories. This has been called “inscribed landscape” by Moran (211). When the narrator brings the gorgeous landscape of the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River to our vision, his actual intention is to remind us of the rich and distinguished Chinese literary legacy by referring to a celebrated Tang poet Li Bai and the Chinese folk story characters Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei (Chapter 51). According to Moran, the integration of landscape and humanscape is one of the major characteristics of the Chinese literary heritage. By carrying this literary feature, Soul Mountain locates itself solidly within the Chinese literary tradition and connects to a wider Chinese literary discourse (211).

Besides the findings above, what I have newly discovered in this current discussion is that Soul Mountain combines the efforts of searching for cultural memories with the narrator’s searching for personal childhood memories. It relates the life of an individual to the destiny of a whole generation of people in Chinese history. Gao witnesses the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his youth and so he is able to address specifically the needs of that lost generation he himself belongs to in the novel. Chapters dedicated to searching childhood memory generate a mixed feeling of isolation, disconnection, doubt and uncertainty, which influences the general atmosphere and mood of the whole novel. Memories of the past in the novel are usually unrelated and dislocated. Locations change frequently and people emerge randomly. Things don’t happen following time or logical sequence (Chapter 35). In some cases memories get mysterious and become a mixture of reality, fantasy and dream (Chapter 37). While the narrator often gets lost in his searching for personal childhood memories, the feeling of being lost is projected onto the whole generation of Chinese people growing up during the Cultural

Revolution who feel it is daunting and painful to connect themselves back again to the Chinese cultural selves at a larger social and historical scale.

Setting is a dominant feature in Soul Mountain when it is read as a novel of adventure in reality. It does not only provide immediate story context but also conveys historical and social meanings. It is highly influential in developing the storyline which is built upon events with strong local relevance and connections. However, it should also be recognized that setting takes double roles of different degrees of significance in developing the novel's two-fold plot structure.

Along the other line of plot development when the journey is carried out mainly in imagination, the novel is developed into a psychological one of inner conflicts and personal human relationships. On this journey, the setting becomes unspecific and moves into the background. Even the destination Soul Mountain only carries symbolic meanings and does not really exist. Setting plays a minor role in this dimension because a novel of psychology develops without temporal and spatial limitations. Plot moves freely in time and place in the novel with the help of "one single gesture or word" which is a technique borrowed from traditional Chinese opera (Swedish Academy). Universal elements become dominant and overlay local aspects. The psychological exploration of the inner world of human being can be applied across cultural boundaries and time periods.

In Turner's discussion of setting as a literary device, she says that "[a] good novel includes both universal and localized aspects" (31). As a piece of genuine art, Soul Mountain responds timely to calls from the era of that historical period, and constructs the significance of the novel against its cultural background.

Chapter Conclusion

So far in this chapter I have identified the essential literary elements in the novel Soul Mountain and analyzed them in relation to each other. They are story plot structure, method of narration, character development, point of view, immediate story setting, and general historical and social setting. I have divided the literary analysis into three sections. The development of plot structure is discussed in close relation to the various methods of narration used in the novel. Characterization is seen to be strongly associated with the shifting points of view employed. Setting is identified in terms of an immediate one and a general one, the latter of which conveys the novel's historical and social significance. The discussion of these literary devices employed and applied in the novel gives us a concrete view of how such a comprehensive literary work is composed piece by piece and how each piece is integrated into a coherent whole. Literary devices are also tools we should provide our learners of this novel with in order for them to open the door to this master-piece of literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

Teaching Methodology

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have identified both universally-appealing and local Chinese literary themes emerging from the novel Soul Mountain. I have also analyzed the novel in terms of the technical literary devices employed within the novel. This chapter deals with theoretical discussion of methodology for teaching literature cross-culturally. I propose a reader-response approach in cross-cultural literary teaching and learning. A reader-response approach allows readers to discover what has already been within themselves, and apply this knowledge to their communication with texts in the process of reading. However, in a cross-cultural context, a foreign culture embedded in a foreign text cannot obviously reside within oneself, and on the contrary it is always outside oneself. My argument in this chapter is focused on how a reader-response teaching methodology, a subjective approach to teaching reading, is consistent with regard to my focus on approaching literary and cultural Others, and suitable for understanding foreign texts. Three theoretical assumptions underlying the reader-response methodology are examined and applied in a cross-cultural context, and evaluated for their effectiveness in facilitating cross-cultural literary communication. Following this theoretical justification, a six-step instructional model for implementing the proposed methodology in the class of teaching the modern Chinese novel Soul Mountain to its Western learners is demonstrated.

Definition of a Reader-Response Approach to Teaching Literature

There has been a theoretical shift in the methodology for teaching literature in recent decades. Wolfgang Iser and Louise Rosenblatt have been considered as two major theorists in this movement, proposing a reader-centered approach instead of a text-centered approach for teaching literature (Harris 47). In other words, the traditional critical interpretative method based on the New Criticism theory have been gradually replaced by a reader-response based methodology attending to readers' personal interpretations of the text and the transaction between the text and the reader (Flood and Lapp 61).

In the New Criticism theory, it is thought that the text itself is a complete entity. Its literary meaning solely resides within the text. To read is to discover what has already been sealed in the text. What makes a reader-response based methodology a fundamental shift from the New-Criticism based approach is that a reader-response methodology is based on the premise of literary openness. From a reader-response perspective, a text is not a closed entity. Its literary meaning is open to each individual reader's different response and interpretation. As Iser states:

The significance of the work, then, doesn't lie in the meaning sealed within the text, but in the fact that that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us. (qtd. by Flood and Lapp 62)

According to Iser, reading is not solely determined by textual information but largely affected by factors outside the text each individual reader brings in. Readers construct their own literary meanings from the text. It should be the readers but not the author who take the primary role in controlling the process of reading. Reading becomes

the creation of meaning based on readers' discovery of what has already been contained within themselves.

Rosenblatt also contends that reading is "a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances" (269). What Rosenblatt informs us of here is that in order to fully capture the process of reading we ought to place the activity of text-reading in a specific context and relate it to a specific person. She also places emphasis on the role of the reader in literary meaning-making. She perceives literary interpretation as an engaging, dynamic and creative process, involving frequently transactions or interrogations between the reader and the text.

Both Rosenblatt and Iser still see the process of reading as controlled by the text and its author to a certain extent (Harris 50). However the focus of a reader-response approach is placed on the process of reading rather than on the ultimate interpretation, and on the reader rather on the text.

Application of a Reader-Response Approach in a Cross-Cultural Context

A reader-response methodology has been widely accepted as a pedagogically sound approach of teaching literature (Flood and Lapp 61; Harris 57). For the purpose of this paper, I argue that this approach can also been successfully adapted and implemented in a cross-cultural literary teaching and learning context.

As I have stated as my thesis proposition in Chapter One, I propose to present modern Chinese literature as a heterogeneous complexity with various literary traditions and trends existing within it. As an educator dedicated to the cause of introducing and teaching modern Chinese literature to the West, I propose to bring the awareness of this

dynamic literary diversity within modern Chinese literature to its Western readers in order to facilitate cross-cultural literary teaching and learning from a teacher's perspective. A reader-response approach is congruent with my overall understanding and philosophy of cross-cultural communication. It serves my need of teaching modern Chinese literature in a China-West cross-cultural classroom context.

In the following passages I will justify the above proposition by evaluating the effectiveness of adapting and applying a reader-response approach in a cross-cultural literary teaching context. Based on my review of this methodology and its application, I maintain that there are three basic assumptions underlying a response-based approach which are widely shared among reader-response theorists (Duke 277-280; Flood and Lapp 63; Harris 48-50). I will discuss each of the theoretical assumptions in its relevance to teaching literature in a cross-cultural context. I will then demonstrate how to apply a reader-response approach in the specific context of teaching modern Chinese literature to the West by presenting a six-step instructional model based on teaching the novel Soul Mountain to its Western learners.

Theoretical Assumption One

The first key assumption underlying a response-based approach is that literary interpretation is perceived as a transaction between the reader and the text.

A reader-response methodology places an emphasis on the development of a structured act of reading proposed by Iser, or in other words, the two-way process of reading argued by Rosenblatt. In Harris's comparison of Iser's and Rosenblatt's paradigms of the reading process, he concludes that both of them perceive reading as a dynamic process in which the literary meaning is generated through constant negotiations

and interactions between the reader and the text. According to Iser, the gaps between the old information previously possessed by the reader and the new information currently provided by the text invite the reader to go through the process of anticipation and retrospection. It is crucial for reading to be interrupted by these gaps so that the reader's response can be simulated and elicited. For a reader, to read is to confront his or her expectations with those gaps until the coherence and consistency in the text is achieved. Rosenblatt's diagnosis of the reading process is very similar to Iser's. She suggests that each reader brings a tentative framework or set of organizing principles as his or her initial guide to the reading process. These expectations are determined by his or her personal experiences, physical and psychological conditions, and a unique world view. They can also be influenced by the reader's immediate reading environment, and the historical and social situation at large. The reader's expectations are either fulfilled or challenged. New expectations are constantly generated during the reading until the text is decoded and the final synthesis is achieved under a revised organizing framework (Harris 48-50).

Both Iser and Rosenblatt, in their proposals for a reader-response methodology, advocate fostering the transaction between a text and a reader in order to make the reading activity a coherent, genuine and rewarding experience. Fundamental to their philosophy of a reader-response approach is that reading is both controlled by the text and completed by a reader's active engagement and honest responses. What makes reading both a unique and shared experience for us is that we are all to a certain degree bound to the text while the transaction between each reader and the text varies from

person to person. The whole point of reading is to reach a convergence between an individual reader and the text at the end.

In the context of cross-cultural literary teaching and learning, a question might be raised as to whether the transaction between a reader and a text, an essential element to a reader-response methodology, can be broken down by the differences between the reader's culture and the culture where the text comes from. My answer to this potential doubt of applying this approach in a cross-cultural context is that while cultural differences might challenge the meaningful transaction between the reader and the text, those differences can certainly be accommodated and even transformed into advantages the reader can take in a reader-response paradigm.

In a cross-cultural literary context, I argue that reader-text transaction should be understood to take place at two levels, the universal level and the local level.

First of all, a reader-response approach provides readers with opportunities of connecting literature from another cultural background to their own literary and cultural backgrounds at the universal level based on universal qualities presented within texts. It allows learners to draw upon their previous literary experience and common knowledge of literature. According to Lodén's definition of world literature discussed in Chapter Three, every good piece of world literature should possess literary qualities of universal appeal in order to transcend its cultural boundary and receive international recognition. Within a reader-response paradigm, the universal elements grant a text immediate attraction to its foreign readers and facilitate the initial transaction between the text and a reader who is from a different cultural background.

Furthermore, at the local level, a reader-response approach also encourages readers to enhance their transaction with literature of foreign characteristics to its fullness. A text from a different culture must contain foreign elements that a reader may or may not have sufficient background knowledge to comprehend. By using a reader-response methodology readers will not be discouraged but encouraged to explore the cultural differences because the central idea of a reader-response approach is to inspire readers to respond to literature in a personal way. Literary interpretation of foreign elements embedded in the text still needs to be controlled by textual information to a certain degree. However, a reader-response approach gives each reader the most freedom to choose a personalized angle to approach the foreign text, and to establish the cross-cultural connection to the text on a personal level. This is the very foundation on which further reader-text transaction should be based.

Based on the above argument, I conclude that the idea of reader-text transaction on which a reader-response approach is based, is true to the nature of cross-cultural communication, and can surely be applied to facilitate literary teaching and learning in a cross-cultural educational context.

Theoretical Assumption Two

The second shared idea behind a reader-response approach is that literary meaning is not solely contained and stabilized in an autonomous text. From this perspective, I perceive that a reader-response pedagogical approach has its theoretical origins in one of the most avant-garde literary and cultural theories in the twentieth century, the one called Intertextuality.

Graham Allen gives the term Intertextuality the following definition, which precisely captures the most essential ideas the theory of Intertextuality embodies:

Works of literature, after all, are built from system, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The system, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature. Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. (Introduction 1)

According to Allen, there are several fundamental characteristics that make the theory of Intertextuality a noticeable milestone in the history of literary criticism.

In the theory of Intertextuality, a text does not stand as an independent entity but only exists in a network of relations to the other texts. The birth of a text is not an invention of something totally new. Every text is assembled by what has already been written and what has already been read. A text is born with its intertextual nature so its meaning must be understood in its relations to the other texts to which it relates and refers. From this point of view, reading becomes a dynamic process of searching for connections and transactions between a text and the literary system, or between one text and another text. Therefore literary meaning cannot be seen to be sealed and stabilized within the original piece of text. Since the originality of a text loses its importance in determining the literary meaning, the traditional power of the figure of the author decreases. The relational nature of meaning and thus of texts challenges the authority of the author by leading readers to various textual relations and inviting multiple interpretations beyond the author's original intention.

What deserves our attention here is that, by emphasizing the intertextual nature of literature, the theory of Intertextuality also gives the role of reader full recognition. In

my opinion, this is exactly what connects this modern literary theory to a reader-response based teaching methodology. In the actual process of reading comprehension, it is the reader who brings in “what had preciously been sealed within us”, in which the “system, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature” resides. Each reader is shaped by his or her previous reading experiences and influenced by the literary tradition preserved within his or her culture. When the reader initially engages in the reading activity, he or she automatically takes the role in activating the intertextual relations of the text within his or her own horizons. When the reading goes on further, the reader, through his or her transactions with the text, is able to explore and develop more new intertextual relations to achieve a fuller understanding of the text. While the text itself does possess the intertextual quality, it relies on the reader to activate and develop these potential textual relations through interactions and transaction between the reader and the text. A reader- response approach provides readers with opportunities to build up a literary network of intertextual knowledge around the text. The theory of Intertextuality goes hand in hand with a reader-response teaching approach. Both of them are based on the belief that reading is reading between texts, and between a text and its readers.

The term “intertextual knowledge” is specifically mentioned by Charles Duke in his design of a series of classroom procedures based on a reader-response methodology (280). With regard to my concern regarding its educational implementation in a cross-cultural context, I maintain that activating and developing intertextual relations of texts by using a reader-response approach contributes greatly to cross-cultural literary communication and understanding. I propose to incorporate intertextual knowledge at three sequential stages within a reader-response paradigm.

At the first stage, what readers need to activate and bring into a cross-cultural literary situation is the intertextual knowledge of literature at the universal level. By placing a text in a broad world literature context, readers are enabled to connect the text to texts from other cultural backgrounds based on the universal literary elements shared among them. Reading texts from different cultures certainly requires different decoding skills and different strategies of building up intertextual networks. However, at this initial stage, in order for the reader and the text to be connected immediately, these differences can be put aside and left to be dealt with later. Activating and developing a reader's universal intertextual knowledge of a text is the first step to engage both the reader and the text into the same reading process.

The intertextual relationality we need to build at the second stage is the one existing within the cultural and literary tradition where a text is produced. In order to understand the text fully, we need to investigate its historical and social backgrounds, its culture-specific references to other literary texts, and any other relevant cultural phenomena to which the text relates. Developing intertextual knowledge in this domain requires great efforts of a reader who is from a different cultural background. However, I believe, with the initial universal associations being established at the first place, and with informative instructions from experts, cultural obstacles can be overcome and the text can be meaningfully connected to its own literary and cultural tradition. Acquiring this intertextual knowledge allows reader to gain great insights into a foreign text and the culture behind.

The last but not the least important stage of establishing intertextual relations of a text in a cross-cultural context is for readers to reflect upon their own literary traditions

and to accommodate the foreign text within the intertextual relations of their own cultures. This might not be a successful case in every cross-cultural situation. However, if the reader can discover the intertextual relation between the foreign text and his or her own literary mindset and cultural background, this connection will definitely bring the reader and the text to merge at both the universal and local levels.

To sum it up, a reader-response methodology with its emphasis on developing intertextual knowledge in different domains can surely engage a reader with understanding and appreciating a foreign text in a cross-cultural context.

Theoretical Assumption Three

The third assumption a reader-response theorist supports is that reading involves a reader's personal response in both the affective and cognitive dimensions.

A reader-response approach recognizes the importance of a reader's personal reaction towards a text. It values subjectivity. According to Iser, each individual's different disposition greatly influences the manner a reader responds to a literary text (Harris 50). Bleich proposes "subjective paradigm" for reading in which a reader's response is essentially inspired by personal perceptions, emotions and other affective factors (Flood and Lapp 62). This is also what Rosenblatt calls "an aesthetic stance" a reader adopts while reading, in which reading is more subjective than objective, more concerned with emotional experiencing than rational knowing (Harris 49).

What these reader-response theorists all have belief in is that personal feelings are involved in the reading process. Reading is gaining self-knowledge and understanding one's own experiences, thoughts, feelings and values. Reading is to experience a range of sensations which a reader can identify with. A reader-response approach allows a reader

to respond to a text in a most spontaneous, subjective and personal way. It ultimately takes the reader to go on a journey of developing aesthetic awareness and artistic appreciation.

On the other hand, as many reader-response theorists have pointed out, reading also gets involved with intellect. Each reading is individual but a reader's response is controlled by the text to a certain degree. Rosenblatt proposes, besides an aesthetic stance, a reader might also adopt an efferent stance in which the primary concern is about obtaining information from reading (Harris 49). Iser also maintains that literary interpretations are subjective but still bound to textual information obtained from literary analysis (Harris 50). Other theorists, like Fish and Culler, also argue that reader response method only works for "informed" readers who are "informed" about devices for literary analysis and so able to fully appreciate the literature (Flood and Lapp 62).

These above statements demonstrate that critical analysis has a place in literature teaching in general and in a reader-response teaching methodology specifically. Generally speaking, a reader first needs to acquire a critical understanding of literary concepts and conventions. Then the reader should apply this knowledge to text analysis at an appropriate level of thinking through guidance and training. A reader-response approach foregrounds the idea that the convergence between a text and a reader has to be achieved to make the reading complete and rewarding. A reasonable amount of attention needs to be paid to formal elements such as narratives, techniques, and various other devices of rhetoric and style. In this way, readers' attention is constantly directed back to the text which their responses are based on. They are enabled to investigate and evaluate

the text in a scientific and rational way to find out what caused them to have the reactions they had, and so become serious readers of literature.

In the affective dimension a reader-response approach tends to be personal, emotional and subjective. On the other hand, the cognitive dimension requires this approach also to be scientific, rational and objective. A reader-response methodology recognizes the importance of subjectivity and of readers' emotional responses. It also enables readers to monitor their feelings during the reading by referring them to a formal rational scrutiny of the text.

In a cross-cultural context, a reader-response approach gives reader the most freedom to establish an affective connection with a foreign text. It invites and values individual and subjective responses from readers no matter what cultural backgrounds they come from. It enables readers to understand themselves by responding to foreign texts in a most personal way. The emotional and aesthetic attachment can be immediate and can have great positive impact on the cross-cultural literary communication.

A rigorous and scientific study of textual features of a foreign text prevents a reader from making a relativist mistake, which is to interpret a text in whatever the way the reader wants. A reader's imagination and feelings need to be checked by logic and reasoning so cross-cultural misinterpretation can be reduced to its lowest level. A rational analysis of the text helps to establish a solid common ground a cross-cultural communication can rely on. The foreign text is incorporated into the reader's literary mindset in a structured way. Therefore the text will be fairly treated and the reader will least likely feel threatened by the cultural differences. Based on this mutual understanding at the textual level, a reader can certainly enhance and expand his or her

literary horizons by developing connections to the text in a more creative and personal way.

In conclusion, a reader-response approach encourages a reader to interact with a text both analytically and affectively. The two dimensions of this methodology make it applicable in a cross-cultural context and helpful in facilitating the communication.

Six-Step Instructional Model

In the previous discussion, I have attempted to justify my teaching strategy of incorporating a reader-response approach to teaching literature in a cross-cultural context. I have examined each of the three theoretical assumptions underlying a reader-response methodology, applied them in the context of teaching literature cross-culturally, and evaluated their potential effectiveness in facilitating cross-cultural communication. Based on my evaluation and justification above, I conclude that a reader-response approach is a pedagogically sound one to teaching literature, and a valid approach relevant to cross-cultural literary teaching and learning.

In harmony with the pedagogical features of a reader-response approach, I propose a six-step instructional model for implementing this methodology in my class of teaching the modern Chinese novel Soul Mountain to its Western learners. This six-step teaching plan not only values learners' personal responses to the novel but also recognizes the roles the text and teacher play in the learning process. It focuses on developing reader-text transaction at both the universal and the local levels. It allows and encourages learners to apply intertextual knowledge in different domains at three different stages of learning. It pays attention to learners' full understanding of the text by developing their knowledge of the text in both the emotional and intellectual dimensions.

It also creates a collaborative learning environment by encouraging learners to share their learning experiences with one another in the classroom.

In the following passages, the six steps of this teaching model will be demonstrated one by one in sequence in the context of teaching the novel Soul Mountain to its Western readers. My imaginary class will be composed of a group of English-speaking North-American university students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds but with a common interest in modern Chinese literature.

**Step One:
Activate the Reader's Prior Knowledge of Literature in General.**

At this initial stage, an appropriate universal context for this piece of literature needs to be established. Learners are encouraged to draw upon their previous literary experiences but only the intertextual knowledge at the universal level needs to be activated. The reader-text transaction is based on the universal elements embedded within the novel. As I have demonstrated, there are five universally appealing literary themes running all through the novel Soul Mountain which I can certainly take advantage of at this stage of teaching. The literary themes of universal appeal ensure us that learners can immediately relate to the novel no matter what cultural backgrounds they come from. By identifying with these themes, learners are enabled to connect the novel to their prior knowledge of literature without being alienated or threatened by the potential cultural differences. After this first connection being established, learners will feel comfortable and eager to learn more about this foreign text.

**Step Two:
Teach Culture-Related Knowledge in the Text.**

With the help of the teacher's instructions, a general Chinese cultural atmosphere is build up for learners from non-Chinese cultural backgrounds at this stage. As I have proposed before, as teachers of modern Chinese literature to the West, we want to present Chinese culture behind literature as a heterogeneous composite instead of a monolith one. The novel Soul Mountain conveys the diversity and self-other confrontations within Chinese culture itself as I have discovered a variety of Chinese cultural and literary elements in the novel, which at times cohere and other times conflict. Learners of this novel should be introduced to this variety of forces and guided to discover various self-other conflicts represented by the novel within a Chinese context. We can expect some learners have already had varying degrees of knowledge of some aspects of Chinese culture. In this case, this relevant previous knowledge should be activated and incorporated into the classroom. However, since we are dealing with a foreign population, it still depends on the teacher to present a vision of the aspects of Chinese culture conveyed by the novel. We should provide our learners with explanations of allusions and references loaded with cultural meanings, and historical and social backgrounds of the novel as well, when and where necessary. By doing do, we are able to assist our learners in developing their intertextual knowledge in the specific Chinese literary and cultural tradition.

**Step Three:
Develop the Reader's Personal Response
to Culture-Related Features of the Text.**

After learners' cross-cultural knowledge of this Chinese novel has been activated, developing their personal response to the text becomes the focal point of learning process

at this stage. Since they have been exposed to a variety of cultural elements within the novel, they are now well prepared to choose a personalized angle to approach this foreign text, and to establish the cross-cultural connection to the text on a personal level. Each learner is encouraged to relate to certain Chinese element(s) the learner has acquired the most sufficient background knowledge about, or the one(s) the learner can most identify with, or the one(s) the learner finds most interesting. Learners' subjective, individual and affective reactions are encouraged so that they have the freedom to respond to this foreign text in a personal way.

**Step Four:
Have Learners Share Learning Experiences.**

Creating a collaborative learning environment is the next step to take to further extend learners' understanding of the text. Learners should be encouraged to share their responses openly with each other in pairs or in small groups. The teacher can let learners inform one another about their personal responses to certain features of the text. The teacher can also introduce learners to responses of more sophisticated readers in the class. In this way, learners can assist one another in broadening their understanding or exploring new perspectives that might otherwise remain untouched or undeveloped. Their knowledge of this Chinese novel can be enhanced and developed to its fullness. While individual response still plays the leading role in stimulating this collaborative learning, learners also experience the development of a communal meaning of the text.

**Step Five:
Teach Critical Textual Analysis.**

While we are helping students to build up personal and emotional connections to the text, we also want to develop their knowledge of the novel in the analytical dimension.

A rigorous and critical study needs to be led by the teacher into the textual features of the novel, which should be integrated with the above four steps of learning. The teacher should provide explicit instructions on literary analysis to promote well-grounded analytical responses in learners. The teacher is responsible for developing students' critical sense of literary conceptions, and their ability to analyze these concepts in the novel context. Focus should be placed on the technical textual features, such as various aspects of the narrative and vocabulary. Concerning teaching this specific novel Soul Mountain, based on my critical analysis of the textural features, the interactions between different literary elements deserve special attention. The novel's plot needs to be analyzed together with various methods of narration employed within the plot structure. Setting should be examined in terms of its physical, historical, social and literary dimensions. Character analysis must be carried out through a study of the novel's frequent shifts in point of view. In addition, thinking skills at higher levels, such as the levels of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, are also intended to be achieved through this critical study.

Step Six:

Have Learners Relate the Text to Their Own Cultural Background.

Learners are now encouraged to reflect upon their own literary traditions and try to connect this foreign text to their own cultural and social life experiences. Each culture has a unique literary system on which the intertextual network is based. As I have explained before, accommodating a foreign text in a reader's own literary world can not always be achieved without generating cultural confrontations or misinterpretations. However, there are still some methods we can try to facilitate this communication across

cultural borders. Comparison and contrast can be used to discover the similarities and differences between the cultural and literary traditions represented by the reader and the text respectively. Learners can be instructed to apply a literary scenario of the novel in their own cultural contexts and search for possible solutions and endings other than the one provided by the text originally. Learners can also be guided to critique certain aspects of the novel by taking the roles of both a cultural insider and outsider. More methods in this regard need to be discovered and developed to facilitate the cross-cultural interaction at this stage, which ultimately brings the reader and the text to merge at both the universal and local levels.

In the next chapter, I will apply this six-step instructional plan in my units of sample lessons for teaching the novel Soul Mountain in a cross-cultural classroom.

CHAPTER SIX

Classroom Application

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have proposed a reader-response methodology with an emphasis on incorporating intertextual knowledge for teaching literature in a cross-cultural context. I have also applied this approach to teaching the novel Soul Mountain to its Western readers by using a six-step instructional process in my imaginary classroom. This last chapter contains five units of sample lessons for teaching selected chapters from the novel Soul Mountain. These units serve as examples for classroom application of my proposed teaching methodology and instructional procedures. This model can be followed and adapted to teaching the rest of the novel with adjustment to the specific content of each different chapter.

Each unit has one of the universal themes I have identified in Chapter Three of this paper, and covers the content of a series of chapters selected from the book. The theme is used as a unifying force to relate all the chapters in the same unit to each other in the way that they all represent certain aspects of the theme and build upon each other to make the literary theme meaningful and comprehensible to readers. Choosing a theme of universal appeal as a basis for teaching is also congruent with my overall methodology of teaching literature cross-culturally. As discussed before, connecting readers and a foreign text at the universal level is the initial and crucial stage within my six-step instructional procedure. A broad unit goal is identified for each of the units in terms of the literary and language skills students are expected to acquire after learning the unit. A rationale is also given for the sequence and selection of the chapters in the unit. An outline

at the beginning of each unit includes the above three items: unit theme, unit goal and rationale for selection and sequence of the chapters in the unit.

There are five lessons in each unit of teaching. The lessons are designed and arranged in conformity with my proposed instructional procedures. A lesson plan is provided for each of the lessons, including: learning outcome, content of the lesson and glossary provided by the teacher when necessary.

My imaginary class is composed of a group of North American university students taking a course in modern Chinese literature. I use the novel Soul Mountain as a center piece for teaching over the whole course. Below is the common prior knowledge expected from the students before they start their learning in this class:

- Students have intermediate to advanced levels of Chinese language proficiency.
- Students have previous reading experience of literature with common universal themes.
- Student may have varying degrees of knowledge of certain aspects of Chinese culture.
- Students have sufficient literary knowledge in their own cultural traditions.
- Students are familiar with a reader-response teaching methodology and a collaborative learning environment.

Unit One

Outline

Unit Theme:

Traveling not only broadens our knowledge of the world but also deepens our understanding of ourselves.

Unit Goal:

Students will be able to identify with the literary theme of journey, both in its literal and non-literal meanings, and will be able to acquire insights into the overall organization of the novel based on an analysis of its two-fold plot structure.

Rationale for Selection and Sequence of the Chapters in Unit One:

Unit one is based on the first two chapters of the novel. Chapter One is written from a “You” point of view. In this chapter, the narrator sets off on his journey to the place called Soul Mountain. The trip taken to Soul Mountain is situated in the inner psychological world of the narrator. Chapter Two is told from an “I” narrative perspective. This chapter introduces students to the narrator’s trip taken in the reality in the southern part of China. This trip should be read in its real modern Chinese context. Teaching the first two chapters together gives students a sense of the two-fold plot structure of the novel. By recognizing there are two journeys taken in different contexts in the same novel, we can lead students to discover both the literary and non-literary meanings of journey. Through the learning of this unit, we expect students to be able to establish their first connections to this foreign novel from a cross-cultural perspective.

Unit One Lesson One

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to draw upon their prior reading experience of literature in general, identify with the universal literary theme of journey in this novel, and develop their initial interests in the journey taken place on a foreign land after reading the title and the first chapter.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Ask questions about the title or the cover illustration to generate student's interest in reading and introduce the novel's theme of journey or traveling.

Sample questions: What does the title mean to you? Have you ever heard about a place called Soul Mountain? Does that sound like a real place? Do you think the place will look like the landscape illustrated on the cover? What do you wonder about the journey taken towards Soul Mountain? Do you predict the journey is taken by one person alone or by a group of people together? What makes you think this way?

(2) Classroom discussion about literature with the universal theme of journey and adventure in general. Identify common features shared among this kind of literature.

Common literary features: symbolic meaning of the destination place; obstacles on the journey overcome by the protagonist; unexpected and exotic experiences; new and fresh insights gained into life; a mixture of reality with imagination.

(3) Use the dialogue between "You" and "He" on page 3 to teach a set of new Chinese vocabulary describing professions (see glossary provided).

Task: Students participate in small group discussions about what they expect to learn about the trip from each of the professional perspectives.

Glossary (Unit One Lesson One)

生态学家: Ecologist

生物学家: Biologist.

人类学家: Anthropologist.

考古学家: Archaeologist.

社会学家: Sociologist.

民族学家: Ethnographer.

人种学家: Ethnologist.

记者: Journalist.

冒险家: Adventurer.

Unit One Lesson Two

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to recognize the two-fold plot structure of the novel, differentiate between the two trips which are told from an “I” and a “You” viewpoint respectively, and acquire insights into both literary and non-literary meanings of the journeys taken after reading both Chapter One and Chapter Two.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Ask students to compare and differentiate the two trips taken respectively in Chapter One and Chapter Two in order to understand the two-fold plot structure of the novel.

Items for comparison: the point of view from which the trip is narrated; the reason for taking the trip; the starting place of the trip; the destination place of the trip; the scenery the narrator sees on the trip.

(2) Develop students’ understanding of the two-fold structure and the symbolic meaning of the trip taken in imagination.

Task: Write about how you understand the sentence on page 11 in Chapter Two: “While you search for the route to Lingshan, I wander along the Yangtze River looking for this sort of reality.” Answer the following questions in your analysis: If the author is looking for reality on the trip along Yangtze River in the southern part of China, does that mean the trip to Soul Mountain is taken in imagination in contrast? Do you think Soul Mountain is a real place or an imaginary one? What will be the possible symbolic meaning(s) of the destination place called Soul Mountain? What unifies these two trips in the same novel? Can you get any clue of this unifying spirit from what the narrator sees, thinks and feels on the two trips?

Unit One Lesson Three

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to initiate their understanding of Chinese cultural influences in the narrative, and develop personal responses to the local features of the text by writing a journal of their imaginary traveling experiences in southern China from a chosen professional perspective.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Introduce local Chinese cultural elements in the narrative.

Sample questions: Why has the name Lingshan been mentioned in the Shamanistic and Buddhist classics? What is the “I” narrator actually interested in on his trip when he mentions the worship of fire in early human civilization, the folk songs of the Qiang national minority, incantations, mountain black magic or hexes, the wood statue of longevity, and the legendary story of Grandpa Stone in Chapter Two?

(2) Teach new sets of vocabulary related to the daily lives of people living in the southern area of China. Words are divided into the following categories: language and dialects, transportation, accommodation, food, tourist industry, natural and historical scenery, and names of real places (see glossary provided).

(3) Develop students’ personal responses to local Chinese features of the text.

Task: Let students suppose that they belong to one of the professions discussed in Lesson One. From that chosen perspective, each student writes a journal entry reporting on what they have observed based on the information from the text, and what they expect to see by using their imagination. The content of their journals should be focused on the local aspects presented in the text.

Glossary (Unit One Lesson Three)**Language and dialect:**

媳妇 : Daughter-in-law in southern dialects; wife in northern dialects.

老公 : Husband in southern dialects.

同文同种 : Descendants of the same cultural and race.

语调 : Intonation.

Transportation:

长途公共汽车 : Coach; bus.

候车室 : Waiting room in a bus station.

颠簸 : Shake on vehicles.

小卧车 : Small car.

大轿车 : Limousine; big luxurious car.

Accommodation:

旅店 : Hostel; inn.

铺板 : Plank bed.

贴街的老房子 : Old buildings closely standing on both sides of the road.

晾晒的衣服 : Clothes hung out to dry.

竹席子 : Bamboo mat.

Food:

小吃摊子 : Food stall.

豆腐脑 : Bean curd.

葱油烧饼 : Shallot pancake.

酒酿元宵 : Dumplings broiled in rice wine.

葵花籽 : Sunflower seed.

Tourist industry:

广告招牌 : Billboard.

名人题字: Plaque with calligraphy by the celebrities.

亭台楼阁 : Pavilions and terraces.

Natural scenery:

原始森林 : Ancient forest.

稻田: Paddy field.

竹林 : Clusters of bamboos.

Historical scenery:

寺庙: Temple.

古迹 : Historical site.

Names of real places in China:

青藏高原 : Qinghai-Tibetan highlands.

四川盆地 : Sichuan basin.

长江流域: Yangtze River region.

羌族地区: Region inhabited by Qiang national minority people.

Unit One Lesson Four

Learning Outcome:

In small groups, students will be able to share their personal responses from the previous lesson in order to acquire new perspectives of exploring the text and expand their knowledge of traveling in China through various collaborative activities.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) In small groups, students read and share their journals among the group members to broaden their knowledge of local Chinese cultural elements in the text, and to acquire new perspectives of exploring the text.

(2) Re-group students according to the profession they have chosen. Students writing their journals from the same professional angle are grouped together this time. Students in the same group gather relevant information from all the group members and collectively write a new journal entry, which presents a vision of local Chinese culture from that specific professional perspective. One student from each group is selected to give an oral presentation of the collectively written journal in front of the whole class.

Unit One Lesson Five

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to apply cross-cultural awareness they have acquired from this unit of learning to writing about one of their real traveling experiences outside their own countries or regions, and will be able to learn from and appreciate cultural similarities and differences.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Task: Write about your previous traveling experience in a foreign place.

Identify local characteristics of that foreign place.

Recognize your emotional reactions to these characteristics from your own cultural perspective.

Categorize these local characteristics into two categories based on your reactions: Some are familiar and understandable ones while others are alien and frustrating.

Tell us how you responded to these cross-cultural similarities and differences in your real traveling experience.

Tell us whether there will be any difference in your way of interacting with the place or the people living there between then and now. If you have changed, please explain what happened in your life that made you change this way?

(2) Story telling.

Students, as a whole class, are encouraged to share their stories and give responses to other students' stories from their own cultural perspectives.

Unit Two

Outline

Unit Theme:

Self can be understood in its relation to others but also in the inner relations among different aspects of the composite self.

Unit Goal:

Students will be able to relate to the approach of searching for childhood memories taken by the author to achieve the purpose of understanding the self in the novel, understand that the shifting voices in the novel represent different aspects of the same authorial ego, and contextualize the novel in the Roots-Searching literary movement.

Rational for Selection and Sequence of the Chapters in Unit Two:

Unit Two starts with Chapter 3 and covers the content of Chapter 35, 52 and 54. The most distinctive common feature of Chapters 3, 35 and 54 is the narrators' searching for childhood memories. These similar searching efforts are told in different narrative voices. This provides students with a specific angle to study and analyze the unique usage of shifting viewpoint and character development in the novel. In Chapter 52 the author gives us an explicit explanation about his using these voices to represent different aspects of the self. Furthermore, the searching for childhood memory should not only be understood at a personal level but also studied in the novel's literary and social context. By connecting personal childhood memory searching to seeking for cultural memory and Chinese identity, this piece of literature is squarely situated in the Roots-Searching literary movement in the era of post Cultural Revolution in China's history.

Unit Two Lesson One

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to learn more about local landscape and life style in southern China and identify with the narrator's effort of searching for childhood memory.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Ask students to find ten places the narrator visits or sees in Chapter Three in the town of Wuyi. Use one sentence to describe each of the places. Sentences should capture the most prominent characteristics of these places in their eyes (see glossary provided).
- (2) Ask students to make a list of all the things or scenes in the town of Wuyi that remind the narrator his childhood. For example: the black cobblestone street with its deep single-wheel rut, the damp courtyard, weeds, piles of rubble (see glossary provided).
- (3) Ask students to use their own words to describe the place in the narrator's memories of childhood based on the description of the Town of Wuyi and other relevant textual information in Chapter Three.
- (4) Ask students to describe one of the places they used to live in their childhood. The following information should be included: the location, the natural landscape, the customs and life style of people living there (give one or two examples), how old you were when you lived there, describe yourself in terms of personality traits and needs at that age, tell us whether you have changed in these regards since then, and if you have changed, how?
- (5) Encourage a classroom discussion with the topic: Does looking back at your childhood time help you understand yourself better now?

Glossary (Unit Two Lesson One)

青石板的小街: Black cobblestone street.

山乡小镇: Mountain town.

独轮车辙: Single-wheel rut.

摊贩: Hawker.

南货铺: Shop with products of the South.

屋檐: Awning.

潮湿的天井: Damp courtyard.

成堆的瓦砾: Piles of rubble.

围墙倒塌的后院: Back courtyard with the crumbling wall.

枯井: Dry well.

石凳: Stone bench.

歌谣: Ditty.

赤脚: Bare feet.

瓦楞草: Weeds growing in the roof-tiles.

百货公司: Department store.

照相馆: Photographer's shop.

Unit Two Lesson Two

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to contextualize the novel in the Roots-Searching literary movement by connecting personal childhood memory searching to seeking for cultural memory and Chinese identity by a generation of Chinese people.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Provide background information on the Root-Searching Literature, a literary trend prevailing in 1980 and 1990 in China. Discuss stories in which there was a search for a strong authentic Chinese identity and memories of the past. Explain that Soul Mountain was written during that time period and has been considered as a typical piece of “Root-Searching” Literature.

(2) Guide students to achieve the goal of contextualizing the novel in its social, historical and literary settings based on textual analysis. Sample questions: What kind of atmosphere does this searching for childhood memory create in the novel? Do you get the feelings of isolation, doubt, and being lost? Can you cite textual evidence to support your claim? Since these are the common feelings expressed in Roots-searching literature, do you think this piece of literature therefore fits in the category of Roots-searching literature? What other connections does this novel have to this trend of literary movement?

(3) Do an Internet research on the author’s personal biography and literary background.

Answer the following questions: In what way is the life of the author connected to the fate of Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution? Can the author’s personal searching for buried childhood memories be projected onto a large scale of searching for cultural memories by Chinese people who experienced the Cultural Revolution?

Unit Two Lesson Three

Learning Outcome:

Based on a study of various efforts in search of childhood memory made by different narrative voices, students will be able to understand that the shifting voices in the novel actually represent different aspects of the same authorial ego.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Direct students' attention to the searching for childhood memories in Chapter 35 and 54 by the narrative voices of "I" and "You" respectively. Together with Chapter 3, ask students to find all the similar images occurring in both the "You" and "I" chapters.
- (2) Teach the use of shifting point of view for character development by asking the following questions: Since both the "I" and "You" narrators are obsessed with childhood memory searching and there are lots of overlaps of images and things having happened in their searching, do you think the two narrators are trying to approach the same memory? If they have the same memory, is it possible that the two narrative voices are actually from the same person? How does this shifting narrative viewpoint relate to the novel's two-fold plot structure?
- (3) Let students read the beginning part of Chapter 52 on page 312 where the author gives his reason for his using different voices to represent the same ego, namely to alleviate his loneliness. Encourage a classroom discussion with the following questions: Do you think the author's explanation reasonable and acceptable? What other reasons can you come up with to justify the author's usage of shifting narrative viewpoints? Does this in any way relate to the character development of the protagonist? If so, how does using different voices from the same protagonist help with the character development in the novel?

Unit Two Lesson Four

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to apply the shifting viewpoint of narration to understanding the character development in the novel, and will be able to perform a character analysis identifying various aspects represented by difference voices residing within the same composite ego.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Help students to understand that the “I” narrator and the “You” narrator represent different personality aspects of the same protagonist, and help to develop the character.

Task: Do a comparative character analysis on the narrator “I” and “You”. Make a list of major personality traits of each of them based on the text evidence concerning the following items: places the narrator is interested in exploring; people the narrator cares about; things the narrator pays attention to; the way the narrator interacts with other people; the way the narrator presents the self and etc. Compare the two lists and find out how many items from each of the lists are in contrast and how many are compatible with each other.

(2) Classroom discussion about the narrator “She”. Both the “I” and the “You” narrators are masculine. In chapter 5, the “You” narrator encounters a “She”. Do you think the author intend to use this feminine voice to present some different aspects of the same ego “I” and “You” belong to? Is “She” also doing the same childhood searching (Chapter 27)? What kind of personality aspects can you find from reading about the “She” narrator’s childhood memory searching? Give your opinions on whether we shall assign these personality traits of “She” to the masculine protagonist.

Unit Two Lesson Five

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to perform a self-diagnosis task by discovering multi-voices within themselves and writing a dialogue between two of the voices.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Help students to apply the idea of a composite self to understanding themselves.

Task: Discover different voices within yourself. You can use the items you have used to analyze the story protagonist in the previous lessons and can add more items if applicable.

Based on the above information, you can find a list of personality traits of yourself. Then you need to group compatible traits together to present one voice of yourself. Try to discover more than one voice within yourself if you can.

(2) Teach students to use different voices to express themselves through writing.

Task: Choose a topic which you are concerned about and which can invite arguments between different voices within yourself. Write a debate to express yourself through two different voices on that topic.

(3) Due to the cultural differences, there might be the case that, for some Western students, especially those from a Christian religious background who strongly believe in an autonomous self, there is no more than one voice found within themselves. In this situation, a classroom discussion about cultural and religious differences can be encouraged by the teacher who must have sufficient knowledge in both Western and Eastern religious and cultural traditions in this regard.

Unit Three

Outline

Unit Theme:

Preserving the natural environment is an urgent call for all the human beings in the world.

Unit Goal:

Students will be able to identify with the concerns of environmental degradation in modern China, and also be able to relate the degenerated natural landscape to the phenomena of vanishing cultural humscape in China's social and historical context.

Rational for Selection and Sequence of the Chapters in Unit Three:

Unit Three consists of the teaching of Chapter 8, 51 and 59. In all the three chapters the author shows his environmental awareness of modern China. Chapter 8 is wholly devoted to a variety of issues concerning the severe natural environmental degradation. Chapter 51 treats one of the most spectacular natural landscapes doomed to be destroyed, the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River, as a one heavily loaded with cultural memory and meanings. In Chapter 59 the author makes the parallel between natural degradation and cultural degeneration more explicit by lamenting on the deforestation in the Shengnongjia reserve area and the vanishing folk culture in the same region. While environmental issues of protecting the Chinese ecological system have already caught international attention, the exposure of disappearing Chinese folk culture in the novel gives us readers sharp and shocking insights into the cultural degeneration, and raises an urgent call for preserving cultural heritage. These are also topics of universal appeal and application.

Unit Three Lesson One

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to achieve a concrete image of the natural landscape described in the chapters in this unit, and will be able to identify some broad issues concerning natural degradation in modern China.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Help students to achieve a concrete image of the natural landscape in China by learning new vocabulary of local Chinese faunas and floras (see glossary provided).
- (2) Ask student to write a summary using scientific language about human interactions with nature in the Shengnongjia reserve area based on the information given in a chronological review of the history and construction work of the reserve in Chapter 59.
- (3) Guide students to identify some broad issues concerning environmental degradation in modern China. These issues are: saving extinguishing species, deforestation, human intrusion into animals' habitats, water pollution, animal hunting, the construction of the Three Gorges Dam which poses potential threat to the ecological system of the Yangtze River and etc. Cite text evidence on these topics from the chapters.
- (3) Teach local influences of Chinese natural Daoist philosophy on the author's environmental concerns. There are two citations from the Daoist classics Dao De Jin which are on page 48 in Chapter 8 and page 366 in Chapter 59 respectively. They are both cited in traditional Chinese language. Ask students first to translate them into modern Chinese language, then to discuss their relevance to the current environmental issues.

Glossary (Unit Three Lesson One)

水青树: Metasequoia.

大熊猫: Giant Panda.

冷箭竹: Cold Arrow Bamboo.

华南虎: South China tiger.

黄连: Rhizome of goldthread.

迎春树: Winter jasmine.

栢桐: Dove tree.

香果树: Spice bush.

麂子: Muntjac.

金丝猴: Golden monkey.

金钱豹: Leopard.

灵猫: Civet.

锦鸡: Golden pheasant.

大鲵: Giant salamander.

Unit Three Lesson Two

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to understand the embedded literary and cultural meanings of historical sites and items in Chapter 51, and will be able to contextualize this novel in its literary, cultural and historical backgrounds.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Draw students' attention to the fact that the Three Gorges is treated both as a natural landscape and a historical site loaded with cultural memories and meanings. Compare the author's different purposes and focuses in his reference to the Three Gorges in Chapter 8 and the one in Chapter 51.

(2) Introduce the Chinese literary tradition of reading land like a text in search of cultural memories and references. Ask students to make a list of all the cultural references and memories of the Three Gorges area from this chapter, and also do an Internet research on this historical site to find more cultural references, e.g. Li Bai's poem Zao Fa Baidi Cheng (see materials provided). Write a short essay arguing whether you agree or disagree with Moran's statement that "only a knowledge of history permits one to fully appreciate a landscape" (211).

(3) Classroom discussion.

Daoist ecocentrism is a key point of reference in our discussion in the previous lesson. There is also a Confucian notion of "the unity of Heaven and human". Do you think this idea has any relevance to our discussion in this current lesson?

Supplementary materials (Unit Three Lesson Two)

早发白帝城

李白

朝辞白帝彩云间，

千里江陵一日还。

两岸猿声啼不住，

轻舟已过万重山。

Early Departure from White Emperor City

Li Bai

At dawn we leave White Emperor

its clouds all colored,

For passage to Jiangling

in one sun's circuit.

While both banks' gibbons cry

calls still unceasing,

Our light boat has gone by

many fold mountains.

Unit Three Lesson Three

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to experience and learn about Chinese folk culture, and will be able to draw a parallel between the natural environmental degradation and Chinese folk culture degeneration.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Inspire Western students' interests in Chinese folk culture by exploring common human instincts across cultures. Draw students' attention to the image of the snake on the Han Dynasty tiles which also appears in Western religious myth. Introduce the tale of the birth of the first named woman and man in Chinese mythical tradition which shares similarities and differences with the story told from a Western religious tradition.
- (2) Introduce different textual features between orthodox prosodic poetry and unregulated folk song by comparing the poem of Li Bai from the previous lesson and a piece of folk song from Chapter 59. Do a comparative study of the literati culture and the folk culture represented by these two different styles of poetry. Ask students to use one sentence to describe the very essence of each of the cultures in their eyes (see glossary provided).
- (3) Give students insights into the relation between natural degradation and cultural degeneration. Sample questions: Based on the reading in Chapter 59, what happened to the Chinese folk culture in the past? Why is it so difficult to collect genuine folk songs and find singers of these folk songs now? Do you think there is a parallel between the environmental degradation and cultural degeneration in China? Is this what the author implies when he writes about the environmental degradation in the Shengnongjia reserve area and the vanishing folk culture in the same region in Chapter 59?

Glossary (Unit Three Lesson Three)

民歌: Folk song.

手抄本: Hand-written copy.

五言律诗: Five-word prosody.

七言律诗: Seven-word prosody.

儒家: Confucian.

文人: Literati.

伦理教化: Ethical teachings.

少数民族: National minorities.

汉民族: The Han nationality.

民间文化: Folk culture.

污染: Contaminate.

限制: Constrain.

糟蹋: Vandalize.

拯救: Save; rescue.

灵魂: Soul.

Unit Three Lesson Four

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to identify and analyze forces driving natural degradation and folk cultural degeneration in modern China that the author has criticized in the novel, and will be able to form their own opinions on these issues based on information from multiple resources.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Update information on China's current environmental concerns. China's environmental situation has been undergoing constant changes since the book was written in the 1980s. Ask students to do an Internet research to find out current environmental concerns in China. Focus on one of the concerns and write a report on that specific topic. In the report, provide information on the causes of this environmental problem, what has been done to improve, what needs to be done to solve the problem in the future and etc.
- (2) Identify and analyze the forces causing folk culture degeneration in China. Sample questions: According to the author, what are the reasons accountable for the vanishing Chinese folk culture? By speaking loudly against these forces, does the author intend to take any action against them?
- (3) Invite personal responses on the above topic. Sample questions: Do you agree with the author that it is the unsolvable tension between those two cultures that has driven the Chinese folk culture to vanish gradually? Use the results from the comparative study in the previous lesson to explain why or why not? Are there any other influences you can identify based on your reading of the novel so far, such as Chinese Cultural Revolution, relation between the Han Chinese and national minorities, and etc?

Unit Three Lesson Five

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to acquire insights into the social phenomena of multi-ethnicity in southern China, and apply the concern of protecting minority cultures and promoting multi-culturalism universally.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Introduce various ethnic components of Chinese culture.

Task: Provided with necessary sources and materials from the teacher, in small groups, ask students to list all the names of Chinese ethnic minority groups, locate their major habitats on a Chinese map and attach the appropriate name tags to the places they live. Each group chooses one minority group and explains its cultural and historical connections or conflicts with the Han Chinese based on the information from the novel and from other resources. Suggest what the government and people should do in order to keep and protect the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic social dynamics in China.

(2) Understand the universal application of preserving minority cultures and promoting multi-culturalism. Apply the concern of vanishing Chinese folk culture to other countries or regions.

Classroom discussion: Tell us about the place you come from by answering the following questions: Is your country or region homogeneous or heterogeneous in ethnic background?

What are the main ethnic component(s) in your hometown? Does your government support the ideas of protecting minority cultures and promoting multi-culturalism? What kind of government policies are implemented in support of or against the above ideas?

What is your personal opinion on these issues?

Unit Four

Outline

Unit Theme:

One of the most salient characteristics of modern literature is that it contains a bitter line of hostility to civilization and ponders the perils of modernity.

Unit Goal:

Students will be able to acquire insights into Daoist and Buddhist spiritual sources of ancient Chinese civilization and self-other conflicts within that culture, and will be able to comprehend its existence against modernization.

Rational for Selection and Sequence of the Chapters in Unit Four:

Unit Four includes the teaching of Chapter 63, 65, 66 and 69. Chapter 63, 63 and 69 tell us the experiences of the narrator on his trips to some reclusive or religious places in China. The exposure of the differences between a city environment and rural mountain areas displays one of the modern characteristics of this novel, namely its hostility toward civilized modernization. The conflict does not only exist between modernity and ancient Chinese civilization but also reside within Chinese culture itself. This later confrontation is most obviously reflected onto the author's inner struggle between his Confucian self and anti-Confucian self. The teaching of Chapter 66 is intended to inspire the discussion of this internal self-other relation by introducing a strong anti-Confucianism voice from the author. By teaching the whole unit, we want students to acquire insights into various traditions of Chinese culture and comprehend Chinese culture as a composite instead of a monolithic one. We also expect students to apply this understanding of self-other tensions within Chinese culture to bridging cultural and literary gaps between China and the West.

Unit Four Lesson One

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to observe different scenery and life styles in urban and rural parts of China by comparing the narrator's life experiences in modern city environment with remote mountain areas.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Review the content of Chapter 55 in which a modern city environment is vividly described. Let students describe what they expect to see in a modern Chinese city, based on the information in the text and information they might have obtained from other media such as movies, TV and Internet. Based on these sources, ask students to imagine what activities people living in a modern Chinese city usually have (see glossary provided).
- (2) Ask students to make a list of the things the narrator saw in rural mountain areas in Chapter 63, which usually cannot be found in a city environment in China. Then ask students to describe what kind of life style people living in remote mountain areas lead by associating people's activities with the items on the list (see glossary provided).
- (3) Compare these two environments. Task: The narrator describes the city environment as suffocating, contaminated and impersonal. Cite textual evidence to justify the narrator's opinions. Also choose three words to describe the rural mountain environment and cite evidence from the text to support your decisions.
- (4) Student's personal responses to real life environments. Task: Write about your current living environment or a place where you used to live. It can be either a city or a rural environment. Describe the landscape and the life style of the people living there by using the same procedures you have used to describe a place in this lesson.

Glossary (Unit Four Lesson One)

都市: Big city.

灯火通明: Ablaze with lights.

喧闹: Bustling.

川流不息: Like an endless stream.

霓虹灯: Neon light.

广告: Advertisement.

行人: Pedestrian.

红绿灯: Traffic signal.

自行车: Bicycle.

愤世嫉俗: Give up on human society.

不通人情: Lack in human feeling.

山峦: Mountain ranges.

悬崖: Cliff.

一尘不染: Spotless clean.

古色古香: Ancient colors and ancient smells.

万籁俱静: Totally tranquil and silent.

字画: Calligraphy.

横匾: Horizontal central tablet.

楹联: Couplets.

Unit Four Lesson Two

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to identify the influences from Daoist and Buddhist religion on the forming of ancient Chinese civilization, and will be able to acquire an understanding of the general meanings of these spiritual sources and how they have been applied in the writing of this novel.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Introduce background information about Chinese Daoist and Buddhist religion.

Explain the Purity Unity Sect in Chapter 65 belongs to the Daoist religion while the Tiantai Sect in Chapter 69 is from the Buddhist religion. Teach new vocabulary related to religious practices and beliefs of Daoism and Buddhism (see glossary provided).

(2) Understand the general meaning of Daoism and its application in the novel. Task: Identify the key ideas of Daoism explained in Chapter 63: union of existence and non-existence, union of heaven and man, non-action, spontaneity, and absence of self. Relate each of the ideas to its textual references to demonstrate how the general meaning of Daoism has been applied in the writing of this novel.

(3) Invite personal responses to the central ideas of Daoism. Task: Choose one of the essential ideas of Daoism which you can most identify with and apply it to your understanding of life. For example, you can apply this idea to solving one major conflict in your life, to achieving self-improvement or to making a better world around you.

(4) Provide students with a short paragraph explaining the general meaning of Buddhism. Follow the same procedures above to analyze its central ideas and demonstrate its application in the novel.

Glossary (Unit Four Lesson Two)

道教名山: Famous Daoist mountain.

道士: Daoist; person who practices Daoism.

住持: Head Daoist.

修炼: Daoist practice.

仪轨: Rituals and ceremonies.

香火: Incense of Buddhist temples.

法师: Buddhist master.

僧人: Monk.

袈裟: Cassock.

大雄宝殿: Palace of Magnificent Treasures.

护法金刚: guardian of the Buddha.

合掌念唱: Press the palms and chant.

诵经: Chant.

Unit Four Lesson Three

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to do a character analysis on the protagonist in order to identify the inner struggle between his Confucian self and anti-Confucian self, and will be able to relate this understanding to the previous discussion of a composite self.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Understand the narrator's purposes of making trips to Daoist and Buddhist places.

Sample questions: What are the reasons the author gives explicitly for taking his trip to each of the places? Is there any other reason he implies? Is he looking for a reclusive life? Is he trying to remove his passions for the human world and calm a restless soul? Has he succeeded? Does he feel he belongs to these places? Does his soul get consoled?

(2) Analyze Confucian and anti-Confucian aspects within the narrator. Sample questions:

There is a recurrent image of fire and stove of human society through the novel (Chapter 63). Do you think this image captures the very essence of human society, e.g. warmth from the fire, closeness from sitting around the stove, and comfort from eating the food? Do you think his craving for this image betrays his craving for the human society and a normal life? Are these desires congruent with a Confucian idea of personal pursuing, namely taking responsibility for the society and defining the meaning of the self based on four core human relationships? Do those aspects present the narrator's Confucian personality? Does this personality stand in contrast to his anti-Confucian declaration through the voice of "You" on page 419 in Chapter 66? Write a personality analysis focusing on this conflict within the narrator's composite self who speaks in different narrative voices.

Unit Four Lesson Four

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to understand the non-literary meanings of living in cities and living in remote rural areas both in a universal context and in a Chinese cultural context, and will be able to capture the conflicts between a Confucian tradition and other non-Confucian traditions within Chinese culture.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Classroom discussion on what a city life style and a countryside life style represent respectively from a universal point of view. Comments associated with a city life style: lack of human communication, dependent on technology, utilitarian human relationship, pollution, noisiness, fast pace of life, intensive, money-oriented, globalized or internationalized, and etc. Comments associated with a countryside life style: slow and stable, close to nature, quite, casual, small and reliable community, face to face human interaction, genuine human relationship, environmental friendly, small local business.
- (2) Apply the pervious discussion in a specific Chinese cultural context. Task: Write an analytical essay comparing what these two life styles imply to us respectively in this unit by discovering the conflicts between a Confucian culture and a non-Confucian Daoist or Buddhist religious tradition. You need to first identify the essential ideas of the Confucian culture based on this unit of learning and previous reading experience of this novel, and contrast them to the general meanings of Daoism or Buddhism identified in Lesson Two of this unit. Answer the following questions: What characters of the Confucian culture associate it to a modern city environment and what characters of the Daoist and Buddhist religions relate them to a reclusive and rural environment?

Unit Four Lesson Five

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to form their own opinions on what elements should be included to present Chinese culture and give reasons to support their positions, both in a Chinese context and in a world context where multi-culturalism or cultural diversity has become a predominant social phenomenon in this age.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Relate the searching for Daoist and Buddhist religious traditions in the current unit to the searching for Chinese folk culture in the previous unit. Identify various cultural components within a composite Chinese culture and their relationships to each other.

Sample questions: What is the narrator's reason for engaging in these searches? Does his search for an authentic Chinese culture and a strong Chinese identity continue in the recent two units? Where has he tried to find the roots of Chinese culture, within the folk culture, or the Daoist or Buddhist religions, or the Confucian tradition? What major characteristics does each of the cultural traditions contain? Which characteristics conflict with each other and which characteristics cohere?

(2) Invite personal responses and apply this local Chinese issue across-culturally. Give your opinion on what elements should be included to present Chinese culture. Choose whether you want to present it as a monolithic one based on one mainstream cultural tradition or a composite one with all its diversities. Give your reasons. Tell us whether this is also the way you would like to present your own culture. Justify your decision.

(3) Classroom debate with the topic: Is it the cultural differences or the cultural similarities that makes our world a better place to live?

Unit Five

Outline

Unit Theme:

Skepticism is one way of understanding the world. It breaks away from a realistic tradition based on a rational and logical philosophical outlook.

Unit Goal:

Students will be able to identify with the author's overall modern skeptical stance which permeates the whole novel, and will be able to apply this outlook to understanding his discussion about Chinese painting, history, fiction, and his search for Soul Mountain.

Rationale for Selection and Sequence of the Chapters in Unit Five:

The teaching of Unit Five is based on the content of Chapter 70, 71, 72 and the last chapter of the novel, Chapter 81. These chapters near the end of the novel are strongly imbued with a skeptical attitude and atmosphere. This spirit of skepticism is congruent with Gao's No-ism philosophical belief in guiding his writing the whole novel, and can be most noticeably observed in his questioning of Chinese painting in Chapter 70, Chinese history in Chapter 71, and both western and Chinese fictional creation in Chapter 72. By questioning the existence of God, he doubts the reality of the universe and the self in Chapter 81. These chapters bear the most distinctive Chinese characteristics in terms of content and subject matter. The ending of the novel brings the spirit of skepticism both to a universal and a personal level. The predominant spirit of skepticism, together with other universal literary themes identified in the previous units, strongly suggests that the novel Soul Mountain contains qualities of a successful piece of modern literature. The novel is certainly qualified to be called a piece of "world literature with Chinese characteristics".

Unit Five Lesson One

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to learn about traditional Chinese paintings and painters, Gong Xian, Ba Da and Zheng Banqiao in Chapter 70 and understand the author's skeptical perspective in his discussion and evaluation their artistic achievements

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Identify images of local Chinese characteristics and other common images usually appearing in traditional Chinese paintings in Chapter 70: snow, wooden bridge, clear dream, solitary hut, bird, duck, lotus flower, bamboo. Teach new painting-related vocabulary (see glossary provided).

(2) Learn about the painters and their paintings. Task: Three artists are discussed with regard to their personal lives, strengths and weaknesses in painting, common objects of their paintings, and artistic and life philosophies. Group the information of the same artist together and organize the information to make it connect smoothly and flow logically. Choose one of the artists and write a summary on that artist.

(3) Understand the author's skeptical attitude in his discussion of each of the artists.

Gong Xian: Does Gong Xian try to understand the world and fight against it in order to preserve his innate artistic nature? Does he resort to any spiritual or religious beliefs to achieve a better understanding of life and art?

Ba Da: Why does the author argue that Ba Da's artistic achievement lies in his madness?

With a strange pair of eyes, what do you image Ba Da to see about the world?

Zheng Banqiao: Zheng has a famous sentence "It is difficult to be muddle-headed". What does this mean and how does it relate to his artistic creation and achievements?

Glossary (Unit Five Lesson One)

雪景: Snow scene.

木桥: Wooden bridge.

清溪: Clean stream.

独居的寒舍: Solitary hut.

笔墨: Brush-work.

用笔浓重: Use ink extravagantly.

意境: Artistic conception.

文人画: Literati painting.

淡雅: Insipid elegance.

故作清高: Contrived lofty purity.

笔墨趣味: Interesting brush-strokes.

作态的书卷气: Affection of pedantry.

性灵: Natural consciousness.

Unit Five Lesson Two

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to acquire a basic knowledge of Chinese history and some important historical or literary figures from studying Chapter 71, and will be able to distinguish among historical record, Shamanist tale and fictional story.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Introduce background information of Lu Xun, the giant literary figure in modern Chinese history. Lu Xun is regarded as the first modern Chinese writer. Ah Q is the famous character created by Lu Xun in his fictional short story called The True Story of Ah Q. Let student read a short simplified version of that story to help them understand the significance of the image of Ah Q for Chinese people.

(2) Introduce Sima Qian, the famous historian in Chinese history, who wrote the great work Historical Records. Ask students to do a research to find out whether the story about Yu the Great recorded by Sima Qian has been told in different ways according to different sources. Do you think history can be easily manipulated by the person who recorded it?

(3) Understand the author's doubt of the credibility of history.

Sample questions: What are the differences among fictional story, historical record and Shamanistic tale? Why does the narrator write about all of them in the same chapter? Do you find it is hard to tell what is real and what is imaginary simply based on reading this chapter? What is his intention of mixing them up? What does he mean by saying that "history is a riddle"?

Unit Five Lesson Three

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to write an overall literary analysis of the novel in terms of its plot and character development, and criticize the author's literary achievements in this novel.

Content of the Lesson:

- (1) Teach new vocabulary related to technical terms for literary devices and traditional Chinese literary form (see glossary provided).
- (2) Understand the conflicting views on literary development of novel. Task: Define the conventional literary concept of novel in terms of its plot structure and character development based on the information from one side of the conversation in Chapter 72. Explain how plot and character development are applied in the writing of this novel based on the argument from the other side of the conversation. Write a short paragraph explaining the differences between these two views on literary development of novel.
- (3) Analyze the overall literary development of this novel. Task: Write an overall literary analysis of this novel in terms of its plot and character development. Incorporate previous knowledge of this novel's unique textural features and the author's own arguments and explanations in this chapter.
- (4) Invite personal responses to the author's skeptical perspective. Task: The author expresses his skeptical perspective and questions the traditional definition of novel. By inviting a voice to mock his own novel, he makes fun of strictly divided literary genres and fixed patterns of writing. The whole novel becomes a strong demonstration of his modern and provocative point of view as a literary critic. Do you think his stance on literary creation is acceptable or not? Do you agree or disagree with him in this regard?

Glossary (Unit Five Lesson Three)

情节: Plot.

铺垫: Foreshadow.

发展: Rising action.

高潮: Climax.

结局: Conclusion.

主人公: Protagonist.

人称: Pronoun.

叙述的角度: Point of view of narrative.

人物形象的刻画: Portrayal of characters.

现代派: Modernist.

寻根派: Searching-for-roots school.

方志: Gazetteer.

志人志怪: Record of humans and strange events.

传奇: Romance.

话本: Prompt book.

章回: Episodic novel.

笔记: Belles-lettres.

Unit Five Lesson Four

Learning Outcome:

After being introduced to Gao's philosophical belief in No-ism, students will be able to apply this knowledge to understanding the spirit of skepticism, and will be able to relate this No-ism belief to the development of modern Freud psychology in the West

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Read Gao's essay "No-ism" (Meiyou Zhuyi) to understand his philosophical belief.

Sample questions: In the essay, Gao gives a list of definitions of No-ism to demonstrate what No-ism is and what No-ism is not. Can you explain in your own words relevant definitions which you think are congruent with the spirit of skepticism we have discussed in this unit? Can you find text evidence to demonstrate the influences of his belief in No-ism on his writing of this novel in this regard?

(2) Relate skepticism and Gao's No-ism belief cross-culturally.

Task: In the West, Freud's theory proposes a psychological way to approach and understand the world. Based on your previous knowledge of Western philosophical and psychological developments and your reading of Gao's essay "No-ism", do you think they share certain common characters with each other? If so, do you think Gao's belief in No-ism is influenced by modern Western culture to a certain extent? Or do you believe he solely gets his spiritual sources and inspirations from Chinese culture? Give reasons and justify your proposition.

Unit Five Lesson Five

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to write an essay arguing whether this novel succeeds in transcending its national boundaries, and whether it is qualified to be called a piece of “world literature with Chinese characteristics”.

Content of the Lesson:

(1) Identify universal elements in the novel.

Task: By questioning the existence of God, the narrator doubts the reality of the universe and the self in Chapter 81. The ending of the novel brings the spirit of skepticism both to a universal and a personal level. The predominant spirit of skepticism, together with other literary themes identified in the previous units, shows the universal qualities of this successful piece of modern world literature. Make an ordered list of all the identified universal themes according to the priority of your personal interest. Justify your choice of the order based on how close each of the themes is personally related to you or how much it helps to relate the whole novel to you.

(2) Identify Self-Other relationships among various Chinese cultural traditions in the novel. Task: Make a list of all the local elements which help to contextualize the novel in its Chinese historical, literary and social backgrounds. Identify three major self-other relationships within Chinese culture. Explain in each pair, whether the two sides are in conflict or in harmony with each other.

(3) Based on the above discussion, write an essay with the statement “Soul Mountain is a piece of world literature with Chinese characteristics” and develop arguments to support your claim.

Chapter Conclusion

Throughout the learning of this unit, we expect students to be able to establish their connections to this foreign novel based on the common understanding of literary themes of universal appeal and application in the novel.

Students should also be able to obtain insights into and identify with the Chinese culture-specific aspects in the novel from a cross-cultural perspective. They will be able to approach and contextualize the novel in its historical, social and cultural backgrounds. They will also get trained in critical literary analysis skills and will be able to apply this knowledge to exploring the literary devices employed in the novel. We hope this solid knowledge of textual features will further their understanding of this novel in the literary dimension.

Students will be encouraged to develop their personal responses to this foreign text. As teachers, we should recognize that a student's own personal life and literary experience is the most valuable thing we can base this teaching and learning on. They will also develop the habit of sharing learning experiences with other students to expand their life and literary horizons.

The biggest challenge students will face is to incorporate and accommodate this foreign text in their own literary cultures. By activating and connecting intertextual knowledge between their culture and the culture where the text is from, we hope they will stand a better chance of achieving this cross-cultural understanding and communication.

By the end of my teaching, I expect students to comprehend Chinese culture as a composite instead of a monolithic one, with both universally-appealing qualities and Chinese culture-specific characteristics existing within it. By achieving this pluralistic

understanding of this literature and the culture behind, I expect students to apply this understanding of self-other relationships within modern Chinese literature and Chinese culture to bridging cultural and literary gaps between China and the West.

Thesis Conclusion

The broad goal of this thesis has been to develop a reader-response intertextual curriculum of study for Gao Xingjian's novel Soul Mountain. I chose this novel because it embodies both the universal relevance and artistic excellence of world literature as well as China-specific characteristics that invite the challenge of cross-cultural understanding. Western students can engage this novel as a work of great literature with a value that is immediately relevant to them as Westerners and as human beings. Students can also engage the novel as a heterogeneous reflection of China and what it is to be Chinese. Gao Xingjian does not present a monolithic account of Chinese culture that reflects or invites stereotypes. Rather in his literature, he presents his culture in all its diversity and inner tensions. A non-Chinese reader may thus understand that the culture of the Chinese other is as rich, layered, diverse and complex as her own, and thus see it with more empathy.

I have designed a curriculum where students understand Soul Mountain by placing it in their own personal context, their own culture's historical and literary context, China's cultural and literary context, and the context of world literature. These diverse approaches to understanding can be guided towards a pluralistic convergence of understanding just as the novel's I, she, he and you reflect a pluralistic convergence of the self. My approach to teaching Soul Mountain is meant to illustrate concretely how to reach a stage beyond Universalism and Relativism, where students can strive to see the cultural Other both through their own eyes, and through the eyes of the Other, and finally, hopefully, to reach both the Self and the Other.

The thesis is concluded with the statement that Soul Mountain is indeed a piece of world literature with Chinese characteristics, and it can certainly be incorporated into the curriculum of teaching modern Chinese language and literature to the West successfully.

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