

# Wang Ning's Theoretical World and Its Application: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature and the Internationalization of the Chinese Humanities

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**Abstract:** As a renowned literary theorist and comparatist, Wang Ning has been actively engaged in discussions of several concepts from “glocal” perspectives. This paper argues that there is a remarkable and inspirational “pattern” in Wang Ning’s theoretical reconstructions of “glocal” phenomena in the field of literature and other disciplines of the humanities. It illustrates this “pattern” by looking in detail into how he interprets the concept of “cosmopolitanism,” how he reconstructs theories related to “world literature,” and finally how he views the direction of the internationalization of the Chinese humanities. If this pattern could be followed more widely by relevant scholars, their research would undoubtedly take a new leap forward.

**Keywords:** Wang Ning; cosmopolitanism; world Literature; chinese humanities

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**标题：**王宁的理论世界及其应用：世界主义、世界文学和中国人文学科的国际化

**内容摘要：**作为文学理论家和比较文学学者，王宁积极地在“全球—地域”视野下探讨若干理论概念。本文认为，王宁在理论构建文学和其他人文学科中的“全球—地域”现象时，创造了一种独到且极具借鉴价值的研究范式。本文通过重点探究王宁如何理解“世界主义”概念，如何重构“世界文学”理论体系，以及如何看待中国人文学科的国际化，以期向读者展示此范式及其贡献。如果能将王宁的研究范式推而广之，中国乃至世界各国的相关学者及其研究都将受益。

**关键词：**王宁；世界主义；世界文学；中国人文学科

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Wang Ning has been actively engaged in discussions of several concepts from “glocal” perspectives, such as “postmodernism,” “cosmopolitanism” and “globalization,” among others. Moreover, he has successfully applied these concepts to the Chinese context, and has employed them to promote China’s literature and other humanities disciplines globally, by finding the universality of the Chinese humanities, analyzing the reasons for their relatively marginalized position on the world stage, and pointing out directions as to how to internationalize the Chinese humanities. In Wang Ning’s efforts to theoretically reconstruct “glocal” phenomena in the field of humanities, there is a remarkable “pattern.” First, he forms his own theoretical frameworks by analyzing relevant conditions in China and by drawing inspiration from various strands of thought (of both Chinese and foreign origin). He then applies these frameworks to the Chinese context and, ultimately, he promotes relevant Chinese practices on the world stage. This pattern is inspirational, not only for Chinese scholars and foreign sinologists, but also for any researcher who is interested in “glocal” debates.

In this paper, the author will try to elaborate on this “pattern” in Wang Ning’s theoretical world, and its inspirations. Firstly, it will focus on demonstrating how his accumulated thinking on “cosmopolitanism” over the years has enabled him to develop his own framework for “world literature” and to apply this framework to the Chinese context. It will go on to discuss his views on the internationalization of the Chinese humanities. Many scholars both in China and in other traditionally “peripheral” areas of the world literature landscape, tend to be primarily enthusiastic about introducing relevant western theories and concepts into their countries. Wang Ning’s pattern, if it is followed, can help scholars to make a new leap forward—that is, to have equal conversations with western scholars, to reconsider western theoretical frameworks of world literature critically, and even to develop their own theoretical frameworks from Chinese perspectives. Wang Ning’s example can also encourage these scholars to take up the mission of “de-marginalizing” their nations’ positions in the world literature landscape. This, in turn, will significantly enrich the research of world literature as a whole. These kinds of positive chain reactions are likely to occur in other research fields of the humanities as well, if lessons are drawn from Wang Ning’s example by relevant scholars.

### **From “Cosmopolitanism” to “World Literature”**

When talking about the pioneers of “cosmopolitanism,” the Ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes (400–325 B.C.) might be the first to come to the minds of many scholars, including Wang Ning. Diogenes was born in Sinope, a colony along

the Black Sea coast of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey). He went into exile because of a scandal related to the adulteration of the coinage. He then eventually settled down in Athens, where he became one of the most famous Cynics. He advocated self-sustenance and the need for natural and uninhibited behavior, irrespective of social conventions. His sense of identity was also “unconventional”: for instance, he answered, “I am a citizen of the world” when he was asked where he came from (Nussbaum 5). As Wang Ning has explained, most Greek people at the time (including Plato and Aristotle) lived in their own city-states, followed particular sets of values and political doctrines prevailing there, and either identified with these city-states or, at a stretch, with the culturally homogenous Hellenic people. Arguably, Diogenes’ cosmopolitanism can be largely attributed to his cross-boundary travels and the diaspora experience.

Diogenes’ idea as regards the “world citizen,” which is a core component of “cosmopolitanism,” would inspire generations to come. For instance, the adherents of Stoicism, which was a philosophical school founded a century later, argued that each person “dwells [...] in two communities—the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration.” They also called for each person to regard himself/herself as concentric circles, with the smallest circle around the individual, followed by family, local group, citizens, countrymen, and humanity; and each person, as a citizen of the world, should “draw the circles somehow towards the centre, making all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers, and so forth” (Nussbaum 9). In this sense, cosmopolitanism is indeed echoed in some ancient Chinese ideas, which have been interpreted by modern scholars as manifestations of cosmopolitanism as well, like *tianxia* (all under heaven), and *sihai zhinei jie xiongdi*. The latter phrase represents a Confucian doctrine, translated beautifully by Wang Ning as the idea that Chinese people should “view all those coming from afar’ as friends” (Wang Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 172).

Wang Ning is of the opinion that Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the American continent between 1492 and 1502 made him one of the earliest cosmopolitans in action. With the discovery of the New World, an age of capitalist expansion started, during which weak countries’ national industries were absorbed into the capitalist world market and a new division of international labor was formed. All these laid the groundwork for the phenomenon of globalization. Although a few scholars have traced the history of the globalization process to the third century B.C., most scholars hold that this process began in earnest in the eighteenth century, thanks to the development of transportation and communication

technologies. Alongside the turbulent process of the development of globalization, the ancient idea of cosmopolitanism also evolved into a modern concept.

An inescapable name when discussing modern cosmopolitanism is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). He was born in Königsberg, which was the capital of East Prussia and a major commercial center, military port and cosmopolitan university town at the time. In his 1795 article "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," Kant put forward a term *ius cosmopolitanum* (cosmopolitan law/right, a third category of law, in addition to constitutional law and international law), as a way to help the world to achieve enduring peace. Cosmopolitan law, which is closely related to the universal rights of humanity and international political rights, maintains that all human beings are equal members of a universal community, and acknowledges the rights of individuals as citizens of the universal community rather than of particular countries. Wang Ning tends to agree with some critics who found inconsistencies in these ideas of Kant, and he suggests that these inconsistencies were partly caused by the tension of the concept of "cosmopolitanism" itself. Still, Wang Ning suggests that Kant's cosmopolitan thoughts not only laid a foundation for debates concerning cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century, but also are still influencing current discussions on this concept.

Wang Ning also holds Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in high regard, in terms of their contributions to the development of the concept of "cosmopolitanism" during the early phase of the globalization process. Like many advocates of cosmopolitanism, Marx was also a cosmopolite, whose Jewish background and communist beliefs "contributed to his choice to travel and settle everywhere as a citizen of the world, conflating diaspora with homeland and work in the interests of humankind" (Wang Ning, "Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature" 169). In the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argued that capitalists would expand tirelessly and would be full of enthusiasm about breaking down the boundaries of nation-states, in order to obtain maximum surplus value. They also identified a parallel process of intellectual expansion. Consequently, economic and cultural production, circulation and consumption would no longer be limited to one country, but would spill over into foreign territories and even to other continents. Marx and Engels's arguments reflected a kind of greatly enlarged cosmopolitan vision, which encompasses everything in the industrial, political, literary and cultural fields, among others. Wang Ning indicates that two revolutionary aspects of this enlarged cosmopolitan vision are, its high evaluation of the proletariats of all countries, and its idea that "all individuals share fundamental characteristics and common interests" (Wang Ning, "Cosmopolitanism

and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 170). So, all of humankind, even those people residing in the most “outlying” regions of the world, can benefit from, and at the same time bring benefits to, cosmopolitanism.

“Globalization” as a theoretical concept appeared in the early twentieth century and came into popular use in the 1990s. Wang Ning suggested that western scholars’ enthusiastic studies about theories of globalization in recent years have generated a renewed interest in cosmopolitanism. Wang Ning also found that the contemporary meaning of cosmopolitanism approximates that of globalization. According to him, the term “globalization” implies “a sort of development, process, tendency, and change,” “covers all aspects of economy, politics, and culture,” and refers to an “increase of the social relations crossing the boundaries of nation-states at large.” The currently constructed discourse of globalization also maintains that all people share some fundamental ethics and rights transcending national boundaries. On the other hand, Wang Ning argues that the definition of cosmopolitanism today is still inconsistent and sometimes confusing, and cited Craig Calhoun to exemplify the multidimensional orientations and contradictions of cosmopolitanism in one of his articles; still, he considers the core of cosmopolitanism to be consistent and similar to that of globalization, namely the idea that “all human beings, regardless of their ethnic or other affiliations, belong to a big single social community,” and that national boundaries should be broken down in order to oppose “patriotism to some degree and nationalism entirely” (Wang Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 168).

More importantly, Wang Ning pointed out that although the political pursuits of both cosmopolitanism and globalization are problematically utopian, their literary and cultural goals can be realizable. He mentioned the foundations of the League of Nations and United Nations as examples of such political utopianism and argued that these organizations of global governance cannot replace state governments, and cannot lead towards a so-called world government. Still, he suggests that “today’s new cosmopolitanism transcends the old cosmopolitanism on the ethical level and the limits of Kant’s legal cosmopolitanism and becomes a sort of cultural cosmopolitanism” (Wang Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 171). In other words, cosmopolitanism is achievable in the cultural field.

Interestingly, the rejuvenation of cosmopolitanism, according to Wang Ning, also brought about the recent academic craze for world literature. But the ties between cosmopolitanism and world literature were formed much earlier. Some literary scholars, being influenced by cosmopolitan ideas, have been engaged in the theoretical construction of world literature since the advent of globalization in the

eighteenth century. Wang Ning has also left his own mark on this ongoing endeavor. His theoretical framework for world literature is especially informative for literary works produced in the “peripheries” of the world literature map, like China and other developing countries. What is more, this framework is applicable to other disciplines of the humanities, including philosophy and history.

Fascinated by Chinese novels, Persian and Serbian poetry and other non-European literary works, Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832) declared in 1827 that “national literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand” (Eckermann 132). In a collection of essays, Goethe elaborated on his ideas about world literature, and argued that the rise of world literature was driven by a new world market in the literary field. This argument was also supported by Marx and Engels, and has been endorsed more recently by the contemporary world literature thinker David Damrosch (1953-present).

Subject to the rules of the market in the era of globalization, the capitalization of the international literature market inevitably causes problems of imbalance and unfairness in the world literature spectrum. That is, the literary works produced in the economic, cultural or ideological center often “invade” literary markets in the peripheries, which are read, respected and emulated by the readers there; meanwhile, the reverse process is extremely difficult. Wang Ning pays special attention to scholars, like Franco Moretti (1950-present) and Douwe Fokkema (1931-2011), who are keen on tackling these problems. Based on Moretti’s mode of “distant reading,” many more works, especially those non-western and non-classical works which have been largely ignored by world literary scholars and critics, can be read and examined, and therefore a much larger-scale and all-encompassing world literature map emerges. As regards Fokkema, Wang Ning suggests that he values the cultural plurality and diversity provided by globalization; and that from these aspects of globalization, as well as from his training in sinology and comparative literature, he is able to go beyond the old-fashioned Eurocentric versions of cosmopolitanism and to find a sort of alternative cosmopolitanism and world literature in non-western contexts.

Wang Ning’s own theoretical construction of cosmopolitanism and world literature argues for a similar plurality and diversity of globalization, but to an even greater extent. For instance, he holds that world literature can be defined as “a canonical body of excellent literature of all countries, regardless of region,” “a global and cross-cultural perspective and a comparative horizon in the study, evaluation, and criticism of literature in general,” and also “a literary evolution through production, circulation, translation, and critical selection in different languages” (Wang

Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 168). He defines ten forms of cosmopolitanism which can assist in the study of world literature:

(1) something transcending the nationalist form, (2) a pursuit of moral justice, (3) a universal human concern, (4) a cosmopolitan and even diasporic state, (5) something decentralizing and pursuing a pluralistic cultural identity, (6) a pursuit of human happiness and cosmopolitan unity, (7) a political and religious belief, (8) a realization of global governance, (9) an artistic and aesthetic pursuit, and (10) a critical perspective from which to evaluate literary and cultural products. (Wang Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 172)

By advocating cosmopolitanism and world literature, Wang Ning does not intend to demean the importance of nation-states. On the contrary, he insists that literary critics should keep conspicuous national characteristics in mind. However, he presses for equal attention to be given to more universal characteristics and common aesthetics when conducting literary criticism. What Wang Ning really wants to do, perhaps, is to combine locality with cosmopolitanism, by exploring how literary works produced locally can represent cosmopolitan ideas, in contrast to nationalism. His attempts have been greatly successful, leading to the conclusion that “cosmopolitanism and world literature do not contradict local, regional, or nationalist sentiment, except in its narrowest and most exclusive varieties” (Wang Ning, “Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature” 179).

Wang Ning offers persuasive arguments and case studies to illustrate the above-mentioned conclusion in his work. For instance, he argues that masterpieces often represent themes of universal significance, such as love, death and jealousy, in ways that can provoke enduring interests among their readers. Therefore, these pieces can actually transcend the limits of national boundaries and time and become world literature.

Furthermore, Wang Ning also goes to great effort to elaborate both the global and local natures of literary works produced in mainland China. For instance, although he acknowledges that Mo Yan (1955-present) is a monolingual writer, and always sets his novels in his native Gaomi county in China’s Shandong Province, Wang Ning also points out that these facts do not make Mo Yan a nationalist writer. Firstly, cosmopolitanism does not require multilingualism, and secondly, there are other authors, whose works are considered to be world literature, who also stick



to one particular place in their stories, such as William Faulkner's (1897-1962) fictionalized Yoknapatawpha County in the southern US. Thirdly, Mo Yan has been influenced greatly by foreign writers like Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014), and has written not only for Chinese readers but also for readers throughout the world from the very beginning. Lastly, and most importantly, Mo Yan's novels touch upon fundamental issues and experiences shared by all mankind. Likewise, Wang Ning implies that although the stories told by Yan Lianke (1958-present) happened in China, they are blessed with universal importance and can be easily understood by foreign readers through translations: "It seems that the more local a writer is, the more likely it is that his/her works may become more cosmopolitan with the help of translation" (Wang Ning, "Cosmopolitanism and the Internationalization of Chinese Literature" 179).

Apart from constructing a theoretical framework for world literature as a whole, Wang Ning has also constructed theoretical frameworks for genres within world literature, such as "world poetry" and "world drama" (Wang Ning, "From World Literature to World Drama" 2018).

What is more, in addition to the literary field, Wang Ning is interested in discussions about "cosmopolitanism" in other disciplines of the humanities. For example, he introduced a philosophical concept similar to world literature in one of his articles, that is, the "world philosophy" put forward by Chung-ying Cheng. In "world philosophy," philosophers also construct a philosophical system based on the "fullness of global traditions of thought (Peters 426)." Much like Wang Ning's efforts to improve the position of Chinese literature globally, Cheng has also devoted himself to promote the universality of Confucianism on the world stage (Cheng 152).

Although Wang Ning rarely discusses the discipline of historical studies, his theoretical construction of world literature is nevertheless of value for this discipline too. Cosmopolitanism has influenced historians worldwide for a long time. The field of world history (or global history) emerged centuries ago, was academicized in the mid-twentieth century, and has proliferated since the late twentieth century. Analogous to world literature, world history rose to respond to Eurocentric assumptions and the tendency of using the present boundaries of nation-states to limit the studies of the past. It concerns two fundamental questions, namely, how historical dynamics have brought people of the world together, and how a "world history" can reveal the diversity of human experiences. In terms of its agenda, world history examines common patterns that can be detected across all cultures; networks, connections and systems that transcend linguistic, cultural and national



borders; and historical developments that have led to large-scale changes in human society, such as capitalist expansion, and the impact of these changes on different parts of the world. Some parts of Chinese history are definitely connected with the world through these kinds of patterns, networks or systems, such as the history of producing and trading porcelains in Jingdezhen town of China's Jiangxi province during the Ming dynasty. In light of Wang Ning's theoretical discussions of world literature, we can argue that aspects of China's national history should also be a concern for proponents of world history.

### **Promoting the Chinese Humanities**

Wang Ning is distressed about the fact that China, which has had great literary achievements throughout its history and which maintained close contacts with the outside world in the cultural fields even during the most politically isolated periods like the Qing Dynasty, has been reduced to a marginalized position on the world literature map in the modern and contemporary era. It is equally depressing for Wang Ning that when talking about cosmopolitanism, Chinese literary practitioners and scholars are usually doing only one thing, that is, identifying Chinese literature with western literature one-sidedly. What is worse, they often consider the translation of western works into Chinese as the only effective way to integrate Chinese literature into the world literature system. According to Wang Ning's observation, in China, several publishing houses are nearly single-minded about publishing translated foreign literature, and many Chinese bookstores sell translated versions and even original versions of foreign literary works. Although numerous translations of western literary works are available and respected in China, only a small collection of outstanding Chinese literary works have been translated into other languages and well received in foreign countries. In British or American book stores, it is difficult to find English translations of Chinese literary works, let alone those in the original Chinese language.

This one-sided process of introducing western things to China can also be found in other areas of the humanities. For instance, Chinese school students have to spend a lot of time learning about western history, and many of them are familiar with details of historical events that happened in western countries, such as the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. By contrast, many western school children probably know little about Chinese history, apart from a superficial knowledge of Confucius and Chairman Mao Zedong. Many western historians' books are translated in Chinese, sell well, and are "enshrined" on the bookshelves of ordinary Chinese families, like the Greek Canadian historian

Leften Stavrianos' *A Global History: From Prehistory to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. But few westerners want to read translated works written by Chinese historians.

According to Wang Ning, Chinese literature is marginalized in the world literature and humanities landscape not because of a lack of excellent Chinese literary works that can be defined as world literature, but rather, because of three social and political aspects.

The first aspect is about translation, which plays an essential role in popularizing national literature in the global market. Wang Ning implies that because world literature is written in different languages, translation is indispensable for the reconstruction of literary works in different linguistic and cultural environments. He concurs with Walter Benjamin's assertion that many literary works, even masterpieces of great value, would have died or suffered marginalization without translations, which provide literary works with "continued life" or an "afterlife" beyond their countries of origin. The importance of translation to world literature has been stressed by many other scholars. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of both Chinese and foreign translators who can produce high-quality translations of Chinese literary works. Although foreign language training is emphasized in China, few Chinese people can write in a foreign language to the standard of a native speaker, and while some foreigners are interested in learning Chinese, it is extremely difficult for them to master this language.

Secondly, the bias of Orientalism has sometimes prevailed among western scholars and in the western mass media. There is a tendency among some ordinary western people to look down on literary and other cultural products from Asia, for they see nothing valuable in these products, except for exotic flavors. Most of the time, their imaginations about China are not the modernized achievements exemplified by skyscrapers in megacities, high-speed railways across the country or Taikonauts in the China-made space station, but traditional cultural treasures like Peking opera and the Forbidden City at best, and opium dens in old Chinatowns at worst.

The third reason is to do with the shrinking of the market of high cultural products in an increasingly fast-paced world. This reason is actually relevant to almost all countries. After a day of intense work, most people probably prefer to relax by watching short videos on YouTube or TikTok, instead of reading. If they have to read, they are likely to choose something easy or entertaining, such as Helen Fielding's romantic novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* or George Martin's fantasy novel *A Song of Ice and Fire*. These tired people are unlikely to choose difficult high literature, such as the American transcendentalist writer Henry David Thoreau's

*Walden*, or Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*, the setting and protagonists of which are purely Japanese, let alone the translated Chinese classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

In addition to the three reasons listed by Wang Ning, there is one more reason to be considered. That is, the sense of linguistic superiority developed in English-speaking countries may prevent translated foreign literature from entering the domestic market of these countries. For instance, only works from Western Europe and North America were included in the first edition of *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces* in 1956, although, admittedly, works produced outside these regions started to appear in its "expanded edition" after 1995. Only 297 translations of foreign literary works were published in the US in 1999 (the total number of fictional and poetic works published in the US this year was 13,000), according to surveys of the National Endowment for the Arts Literature Program. In 2019, only 3% of titles published in the US were translations. This sense of linguistic superiority is detrimental to the appreciation of valuable literary works both from China and from other non-English speaking countries.

How, then, can scholars help Chinese literature and other disciplines of the humanities to escape from the "periphery" position? First of all, Wang Ning has called for the translation of Chinese literary masterpieces into the world's major languages. He mentions several efforts by the Chinese government in this regard, including the Chinese Writers' Association's decision to translate one hundred contemporary literary pieces into English, and the state's generous investment in the projects of teaching Chinese abroad through setting up hundreds of Confucius Institutes in foreign countries. In addition, China's National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences has set up special funding to support the translation of books written by Chinese humanities scholars into foreign languages. With these kinds of "cultivations," a body of both Chinese and foreign translators, who are able to produce quality translations of Chinese works, will grow in strength steadily. As regards the bias of Orientalism, it should also be eradicated eventually as China's economic and cultural influence grows internationally.

Solving the problem of the decline of the high culture market will involve some compromises. For instance, the decline of the high culture market in China is closely related to the growth of "consumer culture," "characterized by the manufactured, commercial, and consumptive" (Wang Ning, "Reconstructing (Neo) Confucianism in A "Glocal" postmodern Culture Context" 53). It is a direct consequence of economic globalization and China's market economy. Wang Ning points out that this consumer culture destroys the classical elegance and sublimity

that could be found in China's traditional humanistic spirit. Therefore, it is not surprising that consumer culture has been severely criticized by many scholars in China. However, attempts to challenge the prevalence of consumer culture have been largely unsuccessful, such as a campaign launched by a group of scholars through Shanghai's prestigious literary journals in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, as a postrevolutionary country, there have been different kinds of cultural influences coexisting in China after the "reform and opening up." Partially due to this pluralistically oriented atmosphere, consumer culture has gradually permeated the everyday life of Chinese people, and has even provided inspiration for some young scholars in their efforts to renovate the traditional Chinese humanities.

Practitioners and scholars of Chinese literature and other humanities disciplines can also, in turn, take advantage of technologies that have handicapped the high culture market, such as the internet. Not only has the internet given rise to internet novels and other kinds of literature with characteristics of "consumer culture," but it can also serve as a convenient platform for the circulation of world literature globally. There are many websites which provide the global audience with a chance to read a selection of world literature, as well as background information about literary works and their authors, such as the website *Words Without Borders*. It may be troubling to see that today, people prefer a quick-hit and fragmented reading experience. It may be even more exasperating to know that there are people who often "read" books through audio or video apps, like Podcast or TikTok. However, "reading" through these kinds of apps may actually help to develop a taste for high literature among the general public. Furthermore, the convenience of electronic modes of circulation and reading generated by the internet has encouraged some world literature authors to write for the internet directly, like the Serbian writer Milorad Pavić (1929-2009), who started as a print-based writer, but later turned his hand to the promotion of internet writing.

Last but not least, although not specified by Wang Ning, his academic works indicate the potential of the Chinese diasporas in promoting Chinese literature and other disciplines of the Chinese humanities internationally. This potential lies firstly in their ability to create works which feature both "Chinese-ness" and "cosmopolitanism." According to Wang Ning's elaboration of Tu Wei-ming's idea of "cultural China," the Chinese diaspora community is assuredly a part of "cultural China" (which also includes Chinese people from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and foreigners who learn Chinese). Therefore, we can consider works produced by them as an integrated part of the system of the Chinese humanities. On the other hand, the experience of leaving one's homeland and

settling down in a foreign country naturally brings certain cosmopolitan visions to the diasporas. We can see this influence in many promoters of cosmopolitanism, like Diogenes and Marx, and also in the literary and cultural works created by authors from the Chinese diasporas, like Yan Geling (1958-present), a Chinese-born female writer who moved to the US in the 1990s. Yan Geling wrote many novels about the China Theater of the Second World War and the lives of overseas Chinese. In these works, the cosmopolitan flavor is obvious in terms of the international setting of the stories and the multi-national composition of the protagonists. As regards her novels about China's Cultural Revolution, the storylines themselves may be essentially Chinese ones, but her excellent description of human emotions, such as love and suffering, can definitely find an echo among readers all over the world. Wang Ning has a high opinion of her and suggests that her works can be regarded as great pieces of world literature.

Apart from their contribution to the creation of literature, the Chinese diasporas can also play a special role in circulation and reception. They can recommend good Chinese works of the humanities directly to the residents of their host countries, and they can even work miracles in terms of boosting the sales of these works. For instance, largely thanks to the overwhelming support of the Chinese American communities and other Asian American groups, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, written in 1997 by the Chinese American writer Iris Chang (1968-2004), made the *New York Times* bestseller list (Yang 294). Thereafter, this book not only became renowned worldwide, but also re-drew the attention of the whole world to the Nanking Massacre several decades after the end of the Second World War—a humanitarian disaster for all mankind that happened on Chinese soil.

### Epilogue

As the saying goes, globalization is a double-edge sword. Wang Ning makes us believe that globalization offers China and other developing countries an opportunity to bring their literature and other humanities disciplines to the world. According to him, modern Chinese literature, which emerged in around 1919 and was unfortunately marginalized thereafter, has been accepted by the global audience gradually and has started merging with mainstream world literature in recent years. Wang Ning foresees that, with the acceleration of globalization, China's rapid economic development, and the winning of the Nobel Prize for literature by Mo Yan in 2012, the dynamic is becoming mutual—in addition to learning from the west, we are also being sought after to some extent. We have every reason to believe that this

exciting development will also take place in other areas of the Chinese humanities, and in other developing countries.

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