

Translation and Identity Formation in Transcultural Communicating Practice – Chinese Heterotopia in Kafka’s ‘the Great Wall of China’

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Abstract:

In this paper, I analyse the representation of China in the twentieth – century in the prose and poetry of two modernist authors through the textual tensions among utopia/ dystopia/heterotopia, specifically Franz Kafka’s ‘The Great Wall of China’ (1917) and Ezra Pound’s *The Cantos* (1885 – 1972) and *Cathay* (1915). Drawing on Foucault’s concept of heterotopia as a way of thinking about space in real and imaginary terms, as well as its political implications, I consider the two writers to translate China into utopias/heterotopias for their own identity formation. This approach allows my paper to make observations about the poetics of each author, the modernist reception of China in terms of cultural translation, and the translatability of Chinese thought in terms of intermediality. This paper identifies the atemporality in both authors’ approach to China, revealing the dispassionate identification of Chinese and Jewish culture in Kafka versus the subjective identification of real and imaginary China in Pound. I analyse the gaps between the superimposed factual plane and imagination, in order to examine how they translate, accept Chinese culture and philosophy in the horizon and crisis of modernity, how they speak of ‘China’ (textual China) for the aim of mirroring the self, how Chinese philosophy is transplanted as medicine (Pound) for the modern European spirit. Drawing on a broad range of research, this paper synthesises and brings into dialogue scholarship on hermeneutics, aesthetics, and cultural studies in several different languages. I propose to reinvigorate utopia’s inherently critical nature as critical utopias, heterotopia and meta – utopia being involved as emanations. The

synthesising remarks that compare Kafka with Pound will show that they are both conducting comparative studies, transcultural interpretations; they both reject unifying views of identity, and both accept Chinese poetics, philosophy in a formal and spiritual sense.

Keywords: Kafka, Heterotopia, Utopia, (Cultural) Translation

I. Discursive formation of utopia/dystopia/heterotopia

In this essay, I analyse Western representations of China in the twentieth-century through the textual tensions among utopia/dystopia/heterotopia, specifically Franz Kafka's 'The Great Wall of China' (1917). I consider that Kafka translates China into utopias/heterotopias for his own identity formation. I analyse the gaps between the superimposed factual plane and imagination, in order to examine how he translates, accepts Chinese culture and philosophy in the horizon and crisis of modernity, how he speaks of 'China' (textual China)¹ for the aim of mirroring the self. I propose to reinvigorate utopia's inherently critical nature as critical utopias, heterotopia and meta-utopia being involved as emanations. Via the displacement of (premodern) China as a concept, his heterotopia represents, contesting reality. My analysis will show that he is con-

¹Looking back to early modern Europe, China functioned as an ideal society for its well-ordered governance, respectful reception which contributed to the formation of Enlightenment political theories (Brandt and Purdy, 2016). The conceptions are both favorable (Leibniz) and negative (Montesquieu, Hegel), the negative providing archetypes to the Chinese images in Kafka's case, where the 'textual China' (Tautz, 2016, p.119) crucially functions via translation. The romantic conviction, the Orient Other is foreign yet familiar to the self in terms of symbolising a lost golden age that could be regained (Prager, 2014, p.128), relates the deep-seated utopian impulse to the history of Orientalism.

ducting comparative studies, transcultural interpretations; he rejects unifying views of identity, and accepts Chinese poetics, philosophy in formal and spiritual senses.

As a genre, utopia generally refers to an imaginary place with a vision of good society, embodying nuanced alternative societies. Dystopias dominated as a utopian genre in the twentieth-century specifically in the 1930s (Sargent, 2010, p. 29), projecting a vicious yet actual facet of our real existence and attacking capitalism. Having its fount in utopias, Foucault's heterotopias refer to existent spaces or effectively actualised utopias where incompatible spaces are juxtaposed, reflecting the normality and the abjection and being expected to have transformative potential to our real society; or to literary spaces, a 'non-place of language' disturbing people, in which (even less apparent) syntax is destroyed (Foucault, 2002, p. XVIII-XIX). Foucault's concept 'heterotopia' is not well established. Nevertheless, we can get fruitful interpretations with existing elucidation. Overarchingly, the Foucauldian heterotopia is a spatial term, in which domain we shall unfold the introduction. Foucault promotes this concept to showcase relational cultural spaces that interact with one another. He focuses on marginalised areas in dominant society to expose the center-peripheral relation at a spatial level. After Foucault's assertion, the twentieth-century is an 'epoch/age of space', spatial study occasions a 'reassertion of space' (Tally, 2017, p. 2).

I accentuate two central points before the detailed elaboration. One is heterotopia's relationship to utopias, and the empathic imagination thereof. Foucault differentiates heterotopia from utopia. Notwithstanding, heterotopia manifests affinity to utopia. Jameson effectively relates utopia to the impulse of its actualisation – utopia is 'the task for the future' (Jameson, 1977, p. 3). Utopia is never an idealistic fancy but embedded with political implications. Heterotopia refers to contemporaneity, the simultaneous co-existence of heterotopias and normal spaces, highlighting otherness and the alternative. Utopias have the ultimate impetus, while heterotopias can be considered very virtual, not revolutionary as Foucault hopes, and even has been confined within the literature. Trying to

tackle the problem that the less established idea 'heterotopia' is both real and imaginary, Knight accentuates heterotopia's literary origin in Foucault's terminology (Knight, 2017). The other, although this paper contends that heterotopias are not as critically powerful as utopias, it argues that writers' employments of heterotopias can effectively surpass the limit of the terminology.

This paper discusses specifically literary heterotopias in the light of Kafka's story to elaborate how textual heterotopia is constructed in literary works as literary deployments to produce a counter-discourse with political and representational connotations. The thrust of the paper is how the concept of heterotopia can be useful in examining artistic responses to contemporary and historical spaces that tackle queries of personal and cultural identity, and realistic values of these constructed heterotopias in terms of evocating effective responses, like reader's contemplations, thus causing a cognitive reformation through new ways of imaging spaces.

Kafka's text can be considered as a practice of *poiesis* (Aristotle)¹, referring to creating and making, as opposed to the mimetic mode: Kafka's China lives on the peripheral edge of time and space, symbolising an enclave infused with Taoism. He expects writing as a cultural practice to have political capacities. Through his self-conscious translation, reception, appropriation, and variation of Chinese culture and philosophy play crucial roles in their identity formation and my inquiry into his modernist cultural anxiety. My analysis will suggest the results of his identity-seeking: Kafka embodies the rejection of continuative and unifying views of identity, and his identity arrives in no place; China may not be the ostensible true homeland.

Literary spaces help to overcome confinements of a given cultural actuality (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, p. 8) and create relationships of intimacy, in the first place. The exotic spaces² in modernist

1 Aristotle et al, 2002, pp.xi-xxx.

2 The 'exotic' can be an implicit criticism of Weber's identification of rationalisation and intellectualisation as essential characteristic of modern Occidental culture (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, p.6).

texts have been positively interpreted as contesting and recoding of the relationship between the exotic and the familiar (ibid, p. 2), resonating with the mechanism of Foucauldian heterotopia and literary configurations to be discussed. Kontje's 'German Orientalisms' describes German writers' oscillation between identifying with Europe and the East (Kontje, 2004, pp. 2-3), highlighting the Oriental literary geography's role in national identity shaping. While a 'nonoccupational imperialism' reflected in colonial discourse and imagination's power of constructing the self is accentuated, and German's prevailing search for identity and Germanness as a result of their failures in the desire of nation and the intertwined desire of empire is contended (Zantop et al, 1998), Kafka, with a destabilised, composite identity, excludes himself from a single mold, either of the scholarly or western hegemony¹.

Simon (1996) identifies a cultural turn in translation studies, noting that translation is a process of re-writing and cultural creation within a social-historical context, instead of merely a bridge between cultural entities. Contextualising chosen texts indicates the verification of the collaboration of translation theory and spatial theory concerning utopias, namely thinking about translating China into a postulated utopia/heterotopia. I have chosen Kafka because he does transcultural literary practice in the modernist era, a historical period that denotes a shared crisis of modernity and the search for identity. He self-consciously and self-reflectively conducts cultural translation. Translating and writing represent pivotal themes rather than merely a medium for him, through which variations in cultural reception ensue, the writer's identity is shaped, and his subjectivity of reconstructing culture emanate. Despite the ubiquity of tension between utopia/dystopia in the chosen work, the question of conceiving utopia/heterotopia as a stylistic strategy of cultural

¹ Kafka deals with diverse Orientalisms, such as Zionism, Jewishness; the Orient also means Palestine, Egyptian (middle-east) (Brunotte et al., 2014), Slavic culture. Buber appropriates Taoism to reinterpret Judaism as an Orient culture (Librett, 2016, pp.82-183). Benjamin argues, Kafka's works are the battlefield of Judaism and Taoism (Goebel, 1997, p.6).

translation by the writer has received little attention. I consider utopias as self-critical, possessing inherent dialectics containing imperfection, conflicts, referring to the ultimate utopian impulse. I set up 'critical utopias', reinvigorating utopias' innate critical nature.

Spatial analysis of the chosen writers' texts has emerged from scholarships yet occupies a minor position. The dynamics among utopian tensions scrutinised through the lens of translation to examine its relationship with modernist identity has not been thoroughly and comparatively studied. Thomas More coined 'utopia', containing 'ou-topia (οὐ-τόπος, non-place) and Eutopia (good-place)', to link it with ideal political system. Utopia signifies transcendent ideas which have a transforming effect on the existing historical-social order (Mannheim, 1998, p. 185). There may lie dystopian factors in apparent utopian narratives (Sargent, 2010, p. 30). In the light of Sargent's differentiation between utopianism and the genre 'utopia', I consider dystopia not as an essentialist antithesis but an inside critical tension. I borrow 'meta-utopia' to emphasise utopias' innate self-critical impetus, which I term as 'critical utopias'. In 'meta-utopia', utopia and its parody, anti-utopia, enter into an inconclusive dialogue; meta-utopia solicits for reader's critical participation into the dialogue (Morson, 1981, p. 111/142). Utopian literary criticism is prone to be captive to science fiction, therefore, the ways in which the writers form their identities through utopias in the modernist context have yet to be explored.

Heterotopia, also derived from 'utopia', first appears in *The Order of Things* (1966), then gets its developed form in 'Of Other Spaces'¹ (1967). Drawing on Borges's quotation of a fake 'Chinese encyclopedia', Foucault proposes that knowledge built on Western order of reason exposes the limitation of Western thought, because there is no unified classification standard. It shows the impossibility of 'space' (where 'their propinquity would be possible'), because fantastic and real animals that are linked, overlapped, cannot find a common locus for residence (Foucault, 2002, pp. XVI-XIX). Fou-

¹'Different Spaces' is my version.

cault considers both utopias and heterotopias as emplacements that 'suspend, neutralise, or reverse¹ the ensemble of relations that are designated, represented, or reflected by them'; both are linked yet variant with all the other places (Foucault, 1998, p. 178). Heterotopias are distinguished from utopias: utopias are unreal, embodying perfected or inverted society; heterotopias are actual places, realised utopias, designed into institutions, in which 'the real emplacements within the culture are, simultaneously, represented, contested, and reversed², spaces that are outside all places despite being localisable' (ibid). Below are six principles of heterotopias:

1. Every culture establishes heterotopias with diverse forms and properties, e.g. heterotopias for people of deviant behavior (from the norms);
2. a society can make a heterotopia operate in a very different way;
3. heterotopia can juxtapose incompatible emplacements in a single real place;
4. with temporal discontinuities (heterochronias), e.g. accumulation of time, libraries;
5. simultaneously being isolated and penetrable by an open-close system;
6. a space of illusion that denounces all real space, emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as more illusory; a heterotopia of compensation, a real space as perfect, well-arranged as ours is disorganised (ibid, pp.179-184).

The literary heterotopia's 'impossibility' of thinking refers not to the fantastic, provided it is marked out, but to the indeterminacy between the fantastic and the actual. Social heterotopia denotes an in-between spatiality of actuality and places outside all the places. Both the requirement of an emphatic imagination, and the intersection between language and real space, hark back to utopia's characters. Foucault endows utopia with the unreality of passivity, but he homogenises utopia; he rather refers to utopianism. Foucault

¹Footnote 15.

² Six verbs in footnote 14/15 will be used to designate utopia/heterotopia's function.

signifies heterotopias as 'self-enclosed' (ibid, p.185), a traditional technique of utopias that has been interrogated and subverted. The self-negation and critical power in original utopias should not be obliterated; the latent utopianism of dystopia, as it is particularly pertinent to the twentieth-century west, should not be overlooked. Thus, I figure heterotopias as an emanation as dystopias in the utopian tradition, and argue for the recuperation of utopias as 'critical utopias', spaces endowed with critical self-reflection, embracing the two emanations.

II. Kafka's China heterotopia as an enclave with spiritual dimensions

Based on spatiality, namely utopia/dystopia/heterotopia, the gaps or understated gaps between symbolised China and known China, and between imaginary and the author's actual spaces will be scrutinised. I shall show how Kafka's interactions with the concept of China engender his literary deployments and affect his self-reflection on literature and translation as a process of either being or cultural transformation.

The multicultural factuality of Kafka submits his literature to an appropriate Foucauldian interpretation. In a broad sense, all the cultures constitute a world of heterotopias, because heterotopias describe a landscape of the coexistence of multiple cultures¹. For another, Kafka's stylistic ambiguity, discontinuities, which resist being fully deciphered, renders its literary space a heterotopia. The utopias/dystopias in the present text contain their opposites, tensions which render themselves a meta-utopia. Meta-utopia's 'hermeneutic perplexity' evoked by incompatible, heterogeneous materials (Morson, 1981, p.50), applies to Kafka's narrative paradoxes, and makes an analogue with heterotopia. So, heterotopia and meta-utopia sometimes overlap, functioning in utopia/dystopia with superimposed planes. The unfolding of the Chinese-box-like text

¹ All are the first principle.

spatialises the richness, ambiguities, and mythical colour of the novel's value orientation. The ambivalent faces of the oriental other mirror and conjoin the fragmented western self. I will analyse the paradoxical variety of nested interrelations in 'The Great Wall of China', and grasp the mental dimension. 'China' is chiefly evoked as a form but infused with Taoism.

A figure to help clarify how things are to develop is shown below:

Figure. Foucault's heterotopia VS Kafka's Great Wall of China

1. Diverse cultures	Southeast 'we' and purported northerners, whose coexistence transcends language (Rojas, 2015)
2. Disconnectedness	Textual disconnections, specifically an inserted independent 'An Imperial Message'
3. Juxtaposition of incompatible places	Double Empires of 'China' and Austria-Hungary; 'Chinese' nation and Jewish nation; literary/textual heterotopia of Chinese culture and real heterotopia of Hasidic/Yiddish culture
4. Temporal discontinuities	Empire of an unknown era, which is out of time and self-enclosed
5. Opening yet one is constrained when entering	Participation in constructing the Wall renders the peoples bewildered about their institution; Kafka's text itself, creation of heterotopia
6. Confusing and blurring the fictional and factual spaces; or heterotopias constructed by the sign system	Piecemeal structure for, supposedly, protecting against the northerners; self-referential text-based knowledge; meta-textuality

I shall analyse in detail how Kafka's heterotopian version of utopia deploys paralleled planes. It is pivotal concerning reading Western texts and their identity crises through writing on 'China', which through its broader structures can begin to piece together fractured identities, approaching the meta-utopia I am referencing firstly in terms of the literary entity.

The superimposed textual 'China' and actual Habsburg Empire represent a heterotopic aspect: heterotopia juxtaposes emplacements that are incompatible (Foucault, 1998, p.181), so it represents the 'ensemble of relations' that define the 'irreducible', 'non-superposable' emplacements (ibid, p. 178). In this story, 'China' is simultaneously an emblem of enchanting fantasy denoting a sense of community and solidarity (building a wall of nation), namely utopias, and an epitome of dystopias which reflects an actual world of the impenetrable confusion, ignorance of true knowledge, and chaos. Each utopia/dystopia is the superimposition of textual China and Kafka's factuality, which essentially constitutes inscrutability and unintelligibility. Focusing on dystopias, the Chinese are working in futility, because the fragmented Wall cannot fulfill its commitment to protecting the people; the Chinese suggest no individual will against the inefficiency of this inexpedient manipulation, because of the obedience to the postulated high command, and the blind nationalist optimism; they cannot get any truth about the construction or the Emperor; the truth is blurred, people do not doubt about any received knowledge (Kafka, 1946, p.89). The signifier, 'China' Empire, primarily stems from fantasy, since Kafka never visited China. The dystopias exhibit the Orientalist tropes from the accumulation of othering in textual China. For instance, Voltaire and Hegel said Chinese emperor ruled Chinese with his own universal will, a paternalism which infantilises the people (Germana, 2017, pp .155-156); this occasioned cultural stagnation (ibid, p. 21).

The heterotopia with the factual plane of the Habsburg Empire neutralises the orientalist ignorance, obedience of Chinese people. Kafka's Austro-Hungarian Empire constitutes the actual plane of

factuality. Kafka wrote this story when his interest in Zionism rose and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was torn apart by the war (Kontje, 2013, p. 62). Emperor Joseph was sanctified as the Austria-Hungary unity embodiment by the Habsburg myth (Shedel, 1990). Joseph is perceived as father of and gained allegiance from his peoples (Unowsky, 2005, p.7). The Orientalist tropes of loyal people, the patriarchy signifying dystopia are neutralised, because Joseph's image symbols the common identity (ibid, p.2) and peace for a super-national unity. Another textual source of Kafka's 'China', Dittmar's¹ travelogue, describes the Chinese as dirty; the emperor as the symbol of national unity (Goebel, 1997, p.67). The suggestive congruence between Chinese and Jewish nations constructs the analogous planes. Kafka saw poor living conditions and a 'lack of hygiene' in the constricted Jewish shtetls (Metz, 2004). His grieved description of the Jewish emigrants: waiting for the bread, spreading something 'edible' (Kafka, 1999, p. 191), is reflected in the Chinese at the 'thronged side street' 'munching the food' (Kafka, 1946, p. 90). As the two nations, Ch'ing and Austro-Hungarian Empire are rendered an implied specious analogy for their allegedly similar decadence. The point is the frontier between the imagination and the actual planes is rendered indecisive. Moreover, being highlighted of its textuality, this heterotopia suspends the referentiality of orientalist tropes² and the relationships behind them. The naming of 'legend', 'parable' by the narrator when relating the story of the Great Wall of China and the accentuated textual, mediated knowledge of the northern Other (Lemon, 2011, p. 125), reveal the unreliable and self-othered status of the narrator. Also, heterotopias are real and mythic(al) contestation of the space we live in (Foucault, 1998, p. 179), applies to Chinese legend and Austro-Hungarian myth.

Kafka's China represents a temporal discontinuity (heterochronias), a break with the accepted notion about time (Foucault, 1998, p.182), which is another aspect of heterotopia. 'China' is 'heteroto-

¹ He traveled to China's corrupting Ch'ing Dynasty, writing *Im neuen* to depict Chinese geography.

² Of Chinese people. But justifiably, Kafka deploys Orientalist discourse on Jews.

pias of time that accumulates indefinitely' (ibid): the beginning/finishing of the operation are conjoined. The undefined era, alien from our real temporal experience, renders it quasi-eternal (ibid) and quasi-isolated. Temporality is abolished; the insurmountable vastness, a dramatically conceptualised space, are Orientalist deployments that cannot be concealed. The vastness does not 'neutralise' (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2011, pp. 149-150) the Orientalism. Kafka explicitly uses 'stagnation in Peking', '[world's] most ancient empire has not yet [developed]' (Kafka, 1946, p. 93) in a sensibly discreet narrative voice, reinforcing the Orientalist tropes. But because it is a heterotopia, it simultaneously 'denounces all real emplacements' (Foucault, 1998, p.184). The ahistoricisation is towards the temporality itself, to denounce the perpetual despotism: 'the Empire is immortal' (Kafka, 1946, p. 90), whereas people's ineffective fidelity to tottering Emperors suggests Kafka's critique of his people. As Kafka characterises his writing, 'representing general human weakness' (Eyl, 2004, p. 63), this heterotopia represents, mirrors the self no matter whether it represents known China.

If dystopias specifically manifest heterotopias, utopias embody meta-utopias besides heterotopias. For the heterotopia, first, we discern superimposed planes of symbolised Chinese community and the factual Jewish community. 'China' offers an exotic form of imaginative communication and community affinity, empowering this heterotopia to reverse, compensate the modern indifference:

'building a wall of protection, [...] Unity! Unity! Shoulder to shoulder, a ring of brothers, a current of blood [...] returning throughout the endless leagues of China (Kafka, 1946, p. 84).

Kafka's Orientalism towards Eastern Jews, too, functions to oppose modern industrial society. The emblem of this portrait of beautiful unity is arguably alluding to the Hasidic dance, where the community forms a circle with arms round each other's necks

(Robertson, 1988). This Jewish dance is rendered popular by Buber¹ in reviving, translating Hasidism to talk about Jewish identity. Hasidism² embodies organic community without being homogeneous (Robertson, 1988), for Kafka, meaning real life and Jewish tradition that should be preserved. The East-European Jewish life, the unhygienic condition mentioned in dystopias, is reversely an 'authentic' life that should be worshiped (ibid). Hasidic life, deviant from assimilated Jews', is an actual heterotopia that Kafka champions. He desires small family, for physical security. I cannot agree that Kafka is unpolitical: China heterotopia is the form when Kafka talks about the (modern) nation-state. China as a whole is a dreamy utopia of multinational unity. Why the people, with changeable nature, cannot complete the work, yet live safely, even harmoniously with the northerners? The 'wall of protection' exists from all eternity: it is never an artificial work. It provides people a sense of security, which is what Kafka longs for. What Kafka argues against is arbitrarily unifying the people, as if they can be. Kafka designates many people achieving 'a single aim' as 'wild ideas' (Kafka, 1946, p.86), which can be a critique of cultural Zionism³. He calls for faith, but also substantiality and physicality.

Kafka's dialects, specifically of simultaneously desiring, renouncing community, will become clearer from the perspective of meta-utopia. The ostensible utopia, where the Chinese are basked in a national ecstasy of unity, is 'utopia as critical utopia'. The synecdoche of body and the exclamation marks warn us of the latent dystopia of the quasi-fascist crowd. The affect circulating among people eliminates differences, having a nationalist allusion to the anti-Semitic violence (Kontje, 2013, p.63). It represents Kafka's ambiguous attitude towards the concept of 'we', as he rejects a

¹ A representative of cultural Zionism. Kafka accepted Chinese Ghost and Love Stories and Jewish Myth lectures from Buber (Kafka, 2013, esp. pp.234-240); he knew but did not like Buber's Zionism.

² Much Eastern Jewish life is grounded in Hasidism (Metz, 2004).

³ People should not be randomly integrated by a unifying thought, which is exactly the aim of cultural Zionism.

closed community where everyone faces each other (Liska, 2009, p.22). Readers feel horrified: this face-to-face moment for inter-subjective mutation incites readers' critical participation in the dialogue for self-interrogation. Looking at actual heterotopias will suggest how literary heterotopia occasions dystopias. Kafka's attitude towards East European Hassidism keeps firm and positive (Bokhove, 2004, p.54). The dance also refers to Yiddish theatre which fascinates Kafka. Theatre defies traditional Hasidic life. Yiddish theatre belongs to yet subverts Eastern Jewish tradition (Bechtel, 2004, p.199). It represents a heterotopia within assimilated Jews and the Hasidic community. Yiddish itself is dynamic, heterogeneous (Liska, 2000), thus it disturbs the established order, as a heterotopia. It is positive in two senses: organic, dialectic. The community only becomes assimilative, exclusive here. The meta-utopia with a distance of negation can only be realised in this literary heterotopia. This critical utopia contests, reverses received notions of community.

Contextualising the textual paradox with Kafka's translation of Taoism offers us elucidation of that is otherwise 'unfolding yet enigmatic' (Naveh, 2000, p. 134). The Taoist alternative, instead of the vastness, neutralises the authority. It is the people's ignorance of the Emperor, in which national identity is grounded, maintains the super-stable unity. It is 'the greatest unifying influences among the people' (Kafka, 1946, p.93). Taoist ambiguity enables this utopia: 无为而治 'Non-action as fulfillment' prevents people from clashes in Laozi's era of deceit and slaughter. The impossibility of discovering anything definite (Kafka, 1946, p.89) apparently alludes to the Tao, as in *Laozi's* first chapter:

道可道 非常道 'The tao that can be tao-ed ['spoken of']
Is not the constant tao' (Zhang, 1992, p.27).

道(Tao) contains duality, represents the complex interrelationship between thinking and speaking/language, and is usually mistran-

slated as ‘way’¹, a meaning of the polysemous 道 (ibid). The unattainability of truth is implicitly paralleled with Kafka’s modern anguish where knowledge is impossible to be acceded through parables (Naveh, 2000, p.34). The Tao that transcends language intrinsically contains language’s opposite, silence, effectively eradicating the hierarchical dichotomy. Kafka has expressed his obsession and absorption in Taoism:

‘I have read [Laozi’s aphorisms] repeatedly. [My marbles] roll from one cranny of thought into the other. [My thought cannot corral] Laozi’s glass marbles’ (Zhang, 2021).

Taoist philosophy of paradox is used as a form in this story, for a paradoxical plot and labyrinthic structure. As is said in *Laozi*,

正言若反 ‘Words that [are true] seem to be paradoxical’ (Lau, 2008, p.143).

明道若昧 ‘Tao, when brightest seen, seems light to lack’ (ibid, p.76).

The narrative paradoxes, the lack of cohesion render a heterotopia that destroys the syntax and disallows ‘the *fabula*’ (Foucault, 2002, xix). Taoist dialects in the story like, ‘avoid further meditation, [not] because it might be harmful; [uncertain] that it would be harmful (Kafka, 1946, p.84), seemingly denotes a Confucian method of appeasement. In *Laozi*, ‘Happiness! – misery lurks beneath it! [vice versa] Who knows what either will come to in the end?’ (Lau, 2008, p.106). Kafka’s intention has not been revealed but is undone.

I shall add several heterotopias that merit attention, also explaining the figure provided before. Heterotopia’s open-close principle is embodied in this Chinese heterotopia’s masonry system

¹ Kafka studies German sinologist Wilhelm’s Taoist classics. Wilhelm discreetly uses ‘Sinn’ (‘sense’) containing ‘Weg’ (way), Wort (word), λόγος (Lógos) (Xu and Wang, 2014), partly redeeming the impossibility of maintaining the original duality, which is positive for Kafka’s understanding.

and Kafka's text itself. The honored project needs qualification to participate in, yet one gets bewildered by the nebulous plan. They think they are entering, yet are excluded by the fact of entering (Foucault, 1998, p.183). They can go into the progress but never the institution. Kafka's China heterotopia also constrains people to enter: it resists defined interpretation of its discourse. When readers 'submit' to Kafka's 'rituals', they are empowered to experience being Chinese in an Orientalist way. Readers are isolated in this semi-open/quasi-enclosed heterotopia. Getting out of it, readers regain temporality. And, the lucid dream, 'you sit at your window [...] *dream* it to yourself' (Kafka, 1946, p.91), announces heterotopia's revelation and termination. It is a consolation and compensation, which promises what reality cannot keep. The Chinese compensatory heterotopia, enables the incommensurable conversation that can only be achieved in imagination. It is a meta-utopian moment requiring readers' participation, which is empowered by imaginative person-to-person communication between author and reader, whereas Emperor-to-subjects communication is impossible. It offers a mirror utopia/heterotopia. Readers are summoned to go by way of this 'virtual point' (Foucault, 1998, p.179) to identify the unreal and reflect on the self. The verb 'dream' designates a means of inefficiency which effectively transmits the imagined hearing. This resonates with Chinese poet Tao Qian's 'There is a true meaning exceeding articulation', which can only be grasped in silence (Zhang, 1992, pp.124-125). This is the central poetics of Taoism, referring to the suggestive, intuitive, silent aesthetics which is absorbed and reflected in Pound's adoption. Kafka is open to revising his cognitive structure, absorbing Taoist 'non-words' as a culture of the other. The narrator studying the comparative history of races, a self-referential figure speaking for Kafka, suggests his ethnological scrutiny and his ambition for cultural reconstruction.

III. Conclusion

The Chinese U-Heterotopia is designed by Kafka, denoting its very characteristic language. 'Meta' and 'critical' remind both the ambiguity and distance necessary to address the self-negation of a static closure of this genre. This draws the attention back to the context of utopias as the intersection between language and space. When thinking about utopia in terms of critical utopia, it shall be reborn; and heterotopia provides the genre a refreshing category. The verb 'dream' in '*dream* it to yourself' designates a means of inefficiency which effectively transmits the imagined hearing. This resonates with Chinese poet Tao Qian's 'There is a true meaning exceeding articulation', which can only be grasped in silence (Zhang, 1992, pp. 124-125). Kafka is open to revising his cognitive structure, absorbing Taoist 'non-words' as a culture of the other. The narrator studying the comparative history of races, a self-referential figure speaking for Kafka, suggests his ethnological scrutiny and his ambition for cultural reconstruction. Kafka embraces Taoism in a transcendental sense, but his conversion to Taoism is highly individual-based. He evades mental predicaments modern people are confronted with, wandering in his personal utopia of Taoist wisdom. Although speaking of national establishment, the individual and political aspects are separated in this text. People's labour devoted to Confucian rule, and Taoist freedom, still present a dichotomy. Neither does Kafka believe Chinese Taoism can be applied to redeem the Jewish nation. He emphasises the transcendental effect on the individuals, exerting oneself for ends of a grand sense of unity, in a spiritual dimension. Kafka creates meta-utopia to stand on the borderline like embracement/rejection of the community, identity/non-identity; these gaps stem from his heterotopic cultural facts. Kafka identifies himself with Chinese. I underline, Kafka denies an identification with China by asserting he wants an immediate departure: 'I am a Chinese and am going home; I would make sure of returning soon' (Kafka, 2013, p. 647).

Corresponding to the Early Romantics who associate the Oriental Other with part of the wholeness of the world concerning constitution of subjectivity (Prager, 2014, p. 132), 'China' embodies a part of wholeness and oneness. Kafka constitutes a 'new mythology' that could restore totality to the fragmented self in modernist alienation (Germana, 2017, p. 95). The other is not absolute but a mirror, through which the writers see/seek the self. The other's image is derived from the self. The writer solicits Taoist medicine for residing the mental drifting and desolation of (capitalist) modernity. The tension I analysed is the split between the writer's material/mental world and utopias. In broader structures, the fractured identities can be imagined to piece together. By creating heterotopia, he gives the wandering spirit a locus. Concerning good politics, their ideal rulers are reminiscent of philosopher-king in More's *Utopia*, where More harks back to Plato's thesis in *Republic*: nation will be happy when philosophers become kings or [vice versa] (More, 1964, p.87). In Kafka's text, the semi-sacred (conceptual) high command knows his people, who otherwise, like dust, do not possess the intellect to plan or reflect. Kafka not only superimposes planes but superimposes utopia and heterotopia. Although the indecisive frontier between actual and imagined planes blurs, utopia/heterotopia superimposition always illuminates, reflects real problems. By this, we can scrutinise things/issues in his relationships with others; how the imaginative relationships between cultural others work.

I have never eschewed interpreting the texts from the perspective of heterotopia, but all the representations are utterly still utopias, which is my central claim. I term 'critical utopias' to mean, utopia itself is critical. The concept of meta-utopia reminds us utopia is never an ineffective illusion or one-dimensional placebo, but a lucid dream that involves readers in critical dialogues. It has the capacity for any displacements in the text. Foucault affirms heterotopia's intersection with utopia, copying its mechanism, aiming to stress both the imagination and the practice. I disagree with the proposition that heterotopia is 'never intended to study the

real sites' (Knight, 2017), instead, its object is tied to 'spatial techniques' (Foucault, 1984, p. 254), technological change in reality. Heterotopia has literary roots yet is extended to focus on the relations outside, reaching an intersection. Foucault does not imbue heterotopia with the impetus to realise. As scholars argue, heterotopia does not have a negative dialectic (Johnson, 2012). Heterotopia is less actualisable than fictional; it is liberation within the text, instead of practicality in reality. In contrast, utopia is always political, in ontological (humanity's eternal utopian impulse) and effective terms; it represents, reflects reality, and is related to political transformation. Foucault prefixes 'hetero' to 'topia', correctly describing the multicultural coexistence in the modern/post-modern era. Chinese philosophies effectively prevent those literary heterotopias from overemphasising the alterity. Creating heterotopia is a way of shaping the other as well as reflecting on the self and reviving culture. Chinese 'inscrutable' harmony can still be a praiseworthy method for comparative literature.

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