

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

**SEEKING THE DAO IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:
READING WESTERN FANTASIES FROM A DAOIST PERSPECTIVE**

尋覓兒童文學作品中的「道」：西方幻想文學之道家詮釋

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Western knowledge and literary theories have dominated the research and teaching of children's literature. Westernization causes Asian youth to ignore and even to forget their traditional cultures. In the United States, the education of language art teachers remains Western-centered, affirming Western cultural traditions and pride. Fortunately, globalization is gradually changing the field of children's literature and scholars have started to pay attention to the issue of cross-cultural contact. My study aims to counter the hegemony of Western literary theories by promoting a Daoist (Taoist) perspective in children's literature education. I argue that Daoist rhetorical theory by Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi can offer important interpretation and critique of Western fantasies.

Founders of Daoism (Taoism), Laozi (571-471 B.C.E.), Sunzi (around 500 B.C.E.), and Zhuangzi (369-286 B.C.E.) entertain the unity of opposites and the metamorphosis of contraries. The sages see life as a perpetual cyclic movement. Fortune and misfortune happen by turn and exist at the same time. They also argue that the soft can overcome the strong like water. A selfless and humble person can be compared to water, who nourishes others but locates herself in a lower place. Governing military operation is also like water: an army should stay away from the enemy's strong points and strike his weak points. The sages use different rhetorical strategies in their treatment of military affairs and educational issues. Laozi demonstrates his mastery over metaphysical philosophy and politics with spare and abstract language. Zhuangzi concretizes Laozi's philosophy through stories and dialogic conversations. Sunzi puts his Daoist (Taoist) philosophy into warfare practice and applies the Dao (Tao) to various war topics such as making assessments, disposition, momentum, and using spies.

My dissertation offers an in-depth Daoist reading of Western fantasies. Based on my teaching experience, I chose the following popular fantasies as my case studies. They are Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, and the 2008 Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom*. In my analysis, I seek places in the chosen works that resonate with the core thoughts of the

Daoist philosophy. They include the plot, philosophical or moral messages, and the persuasive style. In addition, I highlight the transnational nature of these Western fantasists' life experiences, which calls for a transnational perspective on Western fantasies. While I acknowledge the contribution of Western literary theories in deepening our understanding of these texts, the Daoist perspective offers unique insights to appreciating these Western fantasies in the age of globalization. My research will help language art teachers and children's literature scholars recognize the culture-specific differences and the shared commonality in popular Western fantasies.

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous support and guidance from professors Daniel Hade, Vivian Yenika-Agbaw, Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, and On-cho Ng. I wish to thank them for seeing the potential in me and offering great suggestions for my writing. I am grateful to the editor Matthew Kaslow for his timely assistance. On a personal level, I want to thank my beloved husband, Xiaoye You, without whom I would not be where I am today. He has given me tremendous encouragement and support. Finally, I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who have taken care of me and loved me.

Chapter 1

Introduction

I grew up in Taiwan and had training in literacy education and Chinese classics. I taught classics such as *Dao De Jing*, *The Analects*, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of The Mean*, *Three Characters Classic*, and *Tang Poetry* across all grades for nine years in Taiwanese elementary classrooms. Daoism (Taoism) and Confucianism are two major components of traditional Chinese cultures, permeating every area of Chinese life. As a language arts teacher, I feel obligated to introduce the classics to contemporary children in order to pass on the cultural heritage. For example, I tried to explain the meaning of *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*) in everyday modern Chinese. However, teaching children ancient literature is not an easy job. The abstract philosophy residing in the classics confused my students. For elementary students, those ancient sages and historical events seemed irrelevant to their daily lives, so they did not understand them so well. I realized that the contexts and the profound meaning of *Dao De Jing* did not make sense for general contemporary readers. This pedagogical difficulty challenged me to find a way to increase students' interest in Chinese classics.

When I pondered on how to help my students understand the classics, I found that what interested my students was Disney animations, European fairy tales, and American fantasies. They enjoyed discussing those stories and bought those commodities. Growing up in the time of rapid globalization, my students were deeply enchanted by European and American popular cultural products. They read books and watched movies such as *The Little Mermaid*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Wind in the Willow*, and so on, all translated into Chinese. As a language arts teacher, I recognized that I needed to change my pedagogy for this new generation and make good use of Western cultural products.

Thus, when I taught fourth-graders *Dao De Jing* in 1998, I asked my students to recite the *Dao De Jing* that “creating, yet not possessing; working, yet not taking credit” (1997, chapter 2). I explained that this sentence meant that a virtuous person should not claim credit when she helps others. In this way, she would earn much more than she expected. Next, we read aloud and shared some interesting stories. One student shared the story of *Charlotte’s Web*, which he felt was intriguing. Another student responded that Charlotte was a Daoist because she is a true friend for Wilbur. She scarifies herself to help Wilbur but never takes credit as Templeton does. Thus, Wilbur remembers her as his true friend throughout his whole life. Because of these stories, my students had a good medium to discuss *Dao De Jing*.

From my years of teaching experiments, I found that some Western fantasies popularly exported to Asian countries happened to have affinities with Daoist thoughts. Abundant Daoist appeals also exist in Western children’s literature. I felt very excited about my students’ interactions when discussing Dao through popular fantasies.

In Fall 2006, I came to the United State to pursue my Ph. D in language, social, and cultural education. In the past years, I have interacted with scholars from different parts of the world, which enabled me to view the world from a global perspective. My diasporic identity helps me see the weakness of children’s literature education in American Universities. I notice that Western critical theories have dominated the research and teaching of children’s literature. Sadly, as a site of resistance to homogenization, non-Western cultural theories are rarely heard. As Fritz Strich proposes, now we live in a world of globalization and share a world literature. The network connections between national cultures are essential. The cross-cultural interconnections help accelerate economic cooperation and promote “a traffic in ideas between peoples, a literary market to which the nations bring their intellectual treasures for exchange” (Strich, 1949, p. 13).

I share that aspiration with world literature scholars. My study aims to bring Chinese treasure—Daoist theory—for exchange. As David Damrosch has observed, “lacking specialized knowledge, the foreign reader is likely to impose domestic literary values on the foreign work, and even careful scholarly attempts to read a foreign work in light of a Western critical theory are deeply problematic” (2003, p. 4-5). As a Taiwanese scholar, I take it as my responsibility to introduce Daoist classics and its critical theory to children’s literature studies, enriching Western literary criticism. I would like to bring Daoist theory to interpret children’s literature, thus infusing new life into Western literary criticism. By circulating Daoist theory beyond its culture of origin, I expand both the landscape of Eastern and Western children’s literature. As Damrosch advocates, “a work only has an effective life as world literature whenever and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture” (2003, p. 4). Therefore, I am determined to focus my study on this East-West connection and explore Western literature to facilitate my teaching of Daoist classics.

Globalization and Literary Education

Globalization is an economic and cultural phenomenon related to the systems of commodity exchanges, economies, cultural and political power relationships among nations. Globalization has been a long historical process and has rapidly expanded its influence beyond the economic field in recent decades. Globalization, in Roland Robertson’s view (1992), has been developed since the fifteenth century. The trace of globalization can be seen from the development of maps and maritime travel. Modern technology caused the rise of the global exploration, the time of colonialism and mass migration. The later world wars accelerated the exchange and cooperation of cultures and international organizations like the United Nations. These above factors have made

people cross the nation-state boundaries and, as a result, a pure national ideology no longer exists.

In the age of globalization, literature transcends the nation-state boundaries. David Harvey (1990) asserts that globalization is a postmodern phenomenon in which mechanization and technology, such as shipping, railway, airplane, cell phone, the internet, and electronic devices, shrink the time and space of communication and thus, collapse the boundaries of a nation-state. After the 18th century, authors of those cultural products were no longer influenced merely by a single national ideology or a single culture. Their thoughts and experiences contain cross-national and cross-cultural elements, so their works cannot simply be claimed as a national literature. For example, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince*, was born in Lyon, France in 1900. As a teenager, he went to Switzerland to pursue a secondary education and went back to Paris again to study mathematics and received training to be a professional pilot in France's compulsory army. He had a mission in Morocco of Western Africa where he first encountered deserts and crash landings in mountains and storms. He participated in World War II. He later set his experience in Africa into his writing of *The Little Prince*. In 1940, he was exiled to New York and wrote *The Little Prince* in Long Island. Thanks to the development of globalization, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry could travel far beyond his hometown by planes and other new technologies. His experience with people and landscapes in France, Switzerland, West Africa, and the United States shaped his writing in which his national identity and the homogeneous culture in his hometown was transformed by complex transnational landscapes.

In addition to authors' transnational experiences, Western literature has been continuously appropriated in non-Western classrooms. Critics predict that under the rapid development of globalization, the nation-state ideologies will face an imminent demise.

A nation-state cannot control its people's subjectivities and ideologies because of the rapid circulation of cultural commodities and the deterritorialized groups with diasporic identities. Since globalization is a mutual interaction among Western culture and non-Western cultures. Eastern cultures such as Chinese culture indeed are transformed by the cultural products of Europe and America. However, readers in these non-Western countries do not passively accept all Western exports; rather, they evoke resistance against those products and appropriate them instead. Western stories may be translated and transformed into new packages. For example, I used European fairy tales and American fantasies to serve my own purpose of teaching Daoism and Confucianism in Taiwan. Benefited by an increasingly globalized market of children's literature, my elementary students were familiar with and enchanted by European and American fairy tales and fantasies. Those Western products worked effectively to arouse their interest in learning Chinese cultural heritage. The meanings of the Western stories are reshaped and transformed by my voice, a non-Western tone.

As Paul Jay (2001) points out, through various cultural appropriations and transformations, the culture of English is thoroughly hybridized in the United States and other countries and it is "getting ever more difficult to identify a dominant Western discourse that is not being subordinated to, and shaped by, this accelerating mix of sources and discourses from outside Britain and the United States" (p. 40). However, language education in American universities still assumes that globalization is Western capitalism's triumph over the third world. (Janet Abu-Lughod, 1991; Janet Wolff, 1991; Arjun Appadurai, 1993; Barbara Abou-El-Haj, 2005). Critics argue that the globalization of literary study cannot be simplified as a kind of homogenization in which Western cultural commodities and critical theories are exported to and dominate over other countries as in the colonial period. How to shift literary education away from the Anglo-

American center and across nationalist boundary is an unsolved problem and an important educational task.

Western Reading of Children's Literature

Using Western literary theories to read children's literature is commonly practiced in the field of children's literature. A theory used to explore children's literature, after all, is not merely a method of discussing problems, but offers a particular way of looking at human life. The relationship between theories and children's literature shows their similar concerns and mutually constitutive discourse. Scholars often apply theories of Reader-Response, Archetypal theory, Structuralist theory, Ideological theory, feminism, post-colonialism, post-modernism, psychoanalysis, Lacan, Martin Heidegger, and Emersonian naturalism to understand children's literature. For instance, in the late 1960s to the 1980s, reader-response theories are prevalent. They were concerned about the roles of the readers as active participants in the reading process. They believe that readers bring their own experience into reading and determine the meanings of a text. Readers should pay attention to the way they read. For Wolfgang Iser, reading is a negotiation between personal experience and texts. Louise Rosenblatt asserted that there is no single correct reading. "There are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works. A novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (1995, p. 24). Stanley Fish explored readers' experience from a spatial perspective. He maintained that the construction of meaning has much to do with what a reader does and moves throughout his reading process. He also believed that "the business of literary criticism finally is not to determine a correct reading of a text but, rather, to attempt to persuade

other readers of the value of a particular interpretation” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 222).

Lucy Rollin (1992), Karen Coats (1999), Martha Westwater (2000), and Kenneth Kidd (2004) apply psychoanalytic theories and take up broad issues in children’s literature. In *Psychoanalytic Responses to Children’s Literature*, Lucy Rollin and Mark I. West used Lewis Carroll’s words to describe in psychoanalytic responses that, “words mean more than we mean to express when we use them: so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant” (1999, p. 1). Again, using psychoanalytic theory, Lucy Rollin did a cultural study of nursery rhymes. By employing Julia Kristeva’s theory, Karen Coats (1999) and Martha Westwater (2000) explored a strong affinity between young adult fictions and abjection. Psychoanalytic scholars believe that the goal of psychoanalytic literary criticism is to “discover more about the work and about ourselves, to experience the freedom that comes with understanding, but to realize that there will always be more than we can know” (1999, p. 1). Rollin and West identified Sigmund Freud’s intention of using psychoanalysis as a therapy for neurotic symptoms. Kenneth Kidd reinforced the functions of psychoanalytic theories. He argues that applying psychoanalytics in reading shows that, “scholars are starting to underscore the interdependence, or mutuality of psychoanalysis and writing for young people” (2004, p. 355).

Breaking away from Freud, Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung proposed a collective unconscious image, an archetype, which exists in both dreams and literature. He contended that there is a basic universal archetype shared by all humans and it presents itself when people utter. Reading children’s literature from Jung’s perspective, scholars find archetypal plots showing in story patterns cross cultures.

Some scholars understand children's literature from a structuralist perspective. They focus on exploring codes of texts. As Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss argued, language itself is meaningless. Only when various signs are set in relationship to one another, they form their meaning. Similar to the relationship between words and meanings, Levi-Strauss argued that all cultures built their meaning in the same way by relating individual to families, clans, classes and communities. Underscoring the structure of relationships, the folklorist Vladimir Propp figured out thirty-one basic functions in the plots of the Russian folktales. Other scholars have noted that the structuralist theory can also be used to explore folktales in different cultures.

There are various Western theories that have been adapted in children's literature studies. Here, I cannot detail all of them due to the limitation of space. Briefly, Roland Barthes suggested structuralism through five basic kinds of codes: the proairetic code, the hermeneutic code, the code of connotations, the code of symbols, the cultural code. Jacques Derrida suggested that readers deconstruct literature by recognizing that the meaning of a word depends on the things it does not mean. Fredric Jameson asserted the political unconscious by stating that the present system is created in reaction and resistance to the past. Edward Said challenged the literature and politics through his argument in *Orientalism*. Judith Butler understood sexual difference and gender identity within cultural and political context (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 234-246).

Using Western theories to understand children's books creates dynamic interpretations of social issues and gains a new footing in children's literature. However, non-Western theories which prevail in their indigenous countries remain absent in children's literature studies in the West. Their indigenous voices should be heard in Western academia. Luckily, at the turn of twenty-first century, the globalization movement is gaining momentum and scholars have started to focus on issues of cross-

cultural contact. Therefore, in the following two sections, I will discuss the development of Daoist rhetoric in the China and later in the West.

Daoist Rhetoric from Ancient China to a Globalized World

Every ethnic group develops its own communication system which builds on their shared identity and ideology. In ancient times, international transportation and technology were not well developed. China remained relatively isolated from remote Europe and grew her own rhetorical preferences and educational philosophy. The Daoist sages—Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi—lived in the 6th and 4th century B.C.E. In their days, the Chinese probably had no idea about Western rhetorical traditions and educational philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece. It was impossible that Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi had a chance to comment on and communicate with Western scholars directly. Daoist rhetoric represents a uniquely Chinese perspective to political leadership and epistemology in old days.

Now we have come to the twenty-first century, an era of fast transportations and the speedy internet. Globalization leads the world languages, literatures, educational philosophies, politics, economics, and technologies to be intimately connected and bound together. Diasporic scholars from Asian countries, including myself, travel from one country to another and learn both her heritage culture and new cultures in a new settlement. In the West, scholars, politicians, businessmen, and scientists, on the other hand, also eagerly seek cooperation with China, India, Japan, and so on. The flow of global cultures between the East and the West works in a two-way process. As Sunzi, a Chinese war sage, proposed, one can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat if she knows her competitors and herself. The opportunity of mutual cooperation depends on accurate understanding of cultural ideologies outside one's own nation-state.

Understanding the rhetorical preferences and educational philosophies in Asia becomes essential for the students of Western nations.

In this post-national context, national literature of Europe and the United States are deterritorialized. People in the Western nations have their roots in a myriad of non-Western cultures. Children's literature education should incorporate a global perspective into its curriculum of literary criticism and theory. As James Clifford (1997), Arjun Appadurai (1996), and Paul Jay (2001) suggest, college education should present our students with "not simply aesthetic but also cultural objects in complex systems of transnational and intercultural exchange, appropriation, and transformation" (p. 44). I wonder despite having come to a world of globalization, why children's literature scholars still rarely hear a critical theory outside the European center?

In this globalized age, children's literature education needs to bring more non-Western perspective. Contemporary American and British critics call to end the paradigm of English as the privileged center of literary studies and avoid oppressive practices of colonization on other local cultures (Afruenne Rich, 1971; Janet Abu-Lughod, 1928; Chandra Mohanty, 1998; Caren Kaplan, 1994). A cross-cultural reading happens not just because of the practical need to learn from other cultures, but also because of an unprecedented opportunity for each culture to demonstrate its own creativity and enrichment. As Sue Hum and Arabella Lyon (2008) argue,

New methodologies and insights from non-Western cultures are now being applied to Western texts. These very different renderings of rhetorical language reshape Western knowledge and self-perception without the same colonial concerns of importing Western methodologies into other cultures. Since the

political and academic power structure still lies within the West, the primary goal of such studies is to create knowledge, not oppression. (2008, p. 159)

In the United States, when preparing language art teachers for diverse cultural classrooms and critical thinkings, scholars often associate literature with Western critical theories, such as Lacan, feminist, and Heideggerian, which explain how things are or could be in the world. However, none of these critical theories have applied Daoist perspective to children's literature education, even though Daoism is one of the main venues to understand Asian cultural thoughts. I suggest that children's literature education in the United States should pay more attention to the reciprocity of Western cultural production. It should be essential to prepare American students to get involved in a global network and be able to use non-Western theories, such as the Daoist theory, to understand children's literature.

Recorded in the texts of Laozi's *Dao De Jing*, Zhuangzi's *Zhuangzi* and Sunzi's *The Art of War*, Daoist critical theory is a precious heritage which all of mankind shares. As a Chinese scholar of children's literature with a diasporic identity, my interpretation of Daoist rhetoric and Western children's literature is developed by maintaining contact with my home culture and by academic training in the United States. I explore how ancient Chinese theory can be used as an interpretive lens to understand Western fantasies in a global network and transcend the borders of national literature. I uncover the coincidence and contradiction between Chinese traditional epistemology and Western children's literature. By demonstrating a new possibility of reading Western children's literature, my dissertation offers educators in the world a practical pedagogy to access Daoist views critically.

Daoist Discourse in Western Children's Literature

Nowadays, under the influence of globalization, non-Western cultures are transported to other parts of the world. Daoist epistemology, one of the non-Western cultures, has travelled to the West and undergone new transformations in new continents. A few Western scholars have employed the Daoist rhetoric to arrive at a new interpretation of Western children's literature. For example, British writer Benjamin Hoff, in *The Dao of Pooh* and *The Te of Piglet*, explains Daoism through the characters in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*. He reveals that Daoist communication art embraces a life philosophy that can be found within Western animal fantasies. Through famous Western fantasies, he tries to "release Daoist wisdom from the grip of the Overacademics and restore to it the childlike awareness" (1993, p. 3).

The attempt of adopting Western fantasy to explain Daoism is a reaction to what Hoff conceived as "an unfortunate situation" of Western scholarly works on Daoism. In the past, English-language writing about Laozi was dominated by scholars who explored Laozi mostly in a way of playing abstract concepts and thus got the Daoist philosophy into a muddle. Their metaphysical description confuses general English readers. Benjamin Hoff feels that the scholars' effort has focused more on "cataloguing and bickering over Minute Particulars than in communicating the practical wisdom of Daoist principles" (1993, p. 2). Thus readers cannot grasp the meaning of Dao, which decreases the accuracy of the cross-cultural understanding. Hoff's cross-cultural exploration has received positive feedback from his readers. Among the 247 Amazon customer reviews from June 25, 1996 to August 2010, 156 ranked *The Dao of Pooh* as five stars (63%) and 40 ranked it as four stars (16%). Most readers think that so many other books explain Daoism in complicated ways. They really enjoy the simplicity with which Hoff explained Daoist thoughts.

Hoff's book is a two-way communication. He explains Daoism through *Winnie-the-Pooh* and also explains *Winnie-the-Pooh* through Daoism. The readers pick up this book because they love Winnie the Pooh and through personalized animals, this book makes the Daoist concepts easy to grasp. According to the reviews, the book is a nice introduction to eastern philosophy, which frees people from a modern society which is filled with superficial standards and desire.

Another scholarly work, *The Dao of Rhetoric*, written by Steven C. Combs is also a landmark cross-cultural reading. Combs advanced Daoist ideas from a rhetorical perspective and critically examined four contemporary films—*The Dao of Steve*, *A Bug's Life*, *Antz*, and *Shrek*. He concludes that Daoist rhetoric provides a vantage point for observing the limitation of current Western rhetorical theories.

Some Western writers tried to incorporate Daoist philosophy into Western fantasies. They produced engaging works for modern readers. For example, Ursula K. LeGuin's *Earthsea* series is inspired by *Dao De Jing*, which she read at the age of twelve. Later she translated *Dao De Jing* in her sixties. She believes that Daoist philosophy leads to personal happiness and world harmony. Through popular Western fantasy, she connects her readings at a young age to a deeper philosophy which she learns in her adult life.

The Daoist discourse in Western children's literature shows that scholars have owned the cross-cultural ability. The nation-state boundary no longer limits their exploration of literature. They found that despite the different historical and geographical settings, some rhetorical strategies and educational philosophies resonate in the East and the West. The comparison between the Daoist rhetoric central to Asian cultures and the Western fantasy important to global readers demonstrates a coherent persuasive power generated from human nature.

As previous research shows, modern fantasies hold a magical attraction and power for contemporary readers in uncovering the complexity of universal truth. It is a viable media to exchange cultural messages among different traditions. Modern fantasy is a feasible tool to introduce and enliven Chinese philosophy to children as well as to juveniles and adults, yet few scholars have performed systematic investigations on adopting a Daoist theory to read children's literature.

There are some studies as shown above employing Daoist ideas in reading and creating literature. Regretfully, most of the Western scholars focus on the passive parts of Daoism, such as "non-action" and "the soft overcoming the strong." There are still some positive thoughts in the Daoist school which have been long ignored and not systematically explored, especially in the field of children's literature. In addition, most Daoist readings of Western products were written by Western scholars. The limitation of cultural outsiders who do not grow up in China or in a Chinese cultural environment is understandable. As Sims Bishop (1997) asserts, it is impossible to ask outsiders of specific cultures to select authentic multicultural children's literature. However, with the help of cultural insiders, children and outsiders can read multicultural literature extensively and recognize its core social values and original language. It is worthy of hearing an interpretation from insiders of Chinese culture.

In my research, I systematically examine both the passive and positive perspectives of the Daoist school established by Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi. As a cultural insider, I will investigate Laozi's positive notions clothed in contrary tones such as the concepts of "subdue the enemy without fighting," "the more one gives to others, the greater his abundance," "usefulness from what is not there," "the high will be lowered, and the low will be raised," and "great eloquence seems awkward." In addition, I will use Zhuangzi's stories, an attractive segment of Chinese children's literature that is, unfortunately, rarely

discussed in the field of children's literature research, to illuminate Laozi's Daoist philosophy.

Reading Western Fantasies from a Daoist Perspective

In light of the problem in children's literature education and scholarships, my study tries to answer three questions: First, how can we incorporate Chinese Daoist critical perspective into children's literature research and education? Second, what are the characteristics of Daoist educational philosophy embodied or embedded in Western children's literature? Third, how do we make use of Western fantasies to explore the theories of Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi in classrooms?

For my research, I selected texts in Western children's literature based on three major criteria. First, I chose stories ranging between 19th and 21th centuries chronologically. Second, I selected authors with various nationalities. Third, I selected literary fairy tales, animal fantasies and fantasy movies which are popular in China and strongly resonate with Daoist philosophy. The four selected fantasies are Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales (1805-1875), E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1942), and the Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008). The authors have different nationalities and cross-national experiences: Andersen comes from Denmark, Saint-Exupéry from France, and White from the United States. In the case of movie *The Forbidden Kingdom*, the screenwriter John Fusco comes from the United States and Kungfu actors Jet Li and Jackie Chan come from China, which enrich the elements of cultural mixture.

In addition, I selected the texts based on my teaching experience in Taiwan. I found that some of Andersen's stories are very popular in China and Taiwan but some are not. For example, "the fir tree" and "the Galoshes of Fortune" are commonly seen in

children's books and Television animations. However, my American friends told me that these two stories are not well known in the United States. I wondered why certain stories are welcomed in China and some are marginalized. I discovered that those adored stories for Chinese readers have strong connection with traditional Chinese culture and philosophy. Therefore, they have been selectively translated and performed well in the market. I selected *Charlotte's Web* and *The Little Prince* for my research because my students connected Daoist thoughts to these two novels in classrooms. I thought that they would be intriguing choices for educators and students.

Since I kept elementary school children in mind, I did not include high fantasies in my research such as LeGuin's Earth Sequence (1964-2001) which embeds itself deeply in Daoist philosophy. Young children tend to read and watch fairy tales, animal fantasies, and Hollywood movies rather than high fantasy, which is characterized by its serious issues and complex narratives set in an imaginary realm. The simple narrative style and interesting talking animals provoke their interest and bring them joy and hope. In addition to the students' preferences, those tales and animal fantasies are often collected in school libraries, so children have easy access to them. *The Forbidden Kingdom* is also well known by young children in China.

However, many children's literature pieces can be read from Daoist perspective. For example, Dr. Seuss's stories "Yertle the Turtle" and "Gertrude McFuzz" contain possible Daoist messages. Here, what I offer is a literary theory. Once we are familiar with this theory, we can use it to read various children's literature genres and critique them from a Daoist perspective. By doing so, we can broaden our literary criticism and teach diverse cultures through children's literature.

Since the main texts applied in my study will be Daoist rhetoric and fantasy, it is reasonable to spend some time giving a definition of these key terms before I embark on my research. They are Dao, rhetoric and fantasies.

Dao 道 (Way):

The concept of Dao (Tao) in China is defined broadly, literally translated as “way” or “path.” Dao means the principles according to which the universe functions and the methods that people use to deal with problems.

Rhetoric:

The term “rhetoric” originated from ancient Greece but its form and function vary in every community. In the past century, scholars tend to define rhetoric from a broader perspective, regarding it as a persuasive power which shapes people’s living style and belief in every culture. For example, according to George Kennedy’s definition, rhetoric is an universal phenomenon and “one found even among animals, for individuals everywhere seek to persuade others to take or refrain from action, or to hold or discard some belief” (3). In ancient Greece, rhetoric refers to a structured pedagogical system developed to teach public speaking and written composition. Aristotle briefly defined rhetoric as “an ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion” (37).

In classical Greek rhetoric, Aristotle asserted three artistic means of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is the good character and morality of the speaker. Ethos presents a speaker’s virtue, credibility, and good will. The speaker demonstrates his sympathy, benevolence, cleverness, and courage with audiences. The exhibition of the speakers’ credibility makes his speech trustworthy. Pathos deals with the emotion of the audiences. In order to persuade the audience, a rhetor must understand the states of audiences’ minds including anger, fear, enmity, confidence, friendship, calmness, shame,

shamelessness, kindness, unkindness, envy, emulation, pity, and indignation. Aristotle taught people how to animate a speech to deal with each type of character and achieve the aim that a rhetor intends. Logos deals with logical arguments. Aristotle asserted logos as a reasonable proof, which includes both inductive arguments and deductive arguments that are validated based on the community's shared values.

Conceived as persuasive communication, rhetoric has been practiced in every culture and nation (Combs, 2005, p. 1). In China, Laozi, Zhuangzi and Sunzi are the founders of Philosophical Daoism and military Daoism. Different from the Western rhetorical ones, Daoist rhetoric does not intend to teach people public speaking for defending in a court or a composition to persuade others but solves social and political problems in the human world. Daoist theory is widely applied in composing poetry, making political arguments, creating healthy recipe, and inventing martial art. Therefore, Daoist rhetoric is a culture-specific theory to understand the educational application in children's literature.

Fantasy:

Fantasy is defined as stories that happen in the fantasy world, where animals, toys, and dolls can talk and think. Protagonists embrace magic power and experience suspense and the supernatural adventure in extraordinary worlds such as cyberspace or a time-shift realm. They can go through the door of past and future or encounter outer-space visitors, goblins, trolls, and witches (Huck & Kiefer, 2004, p. 284).

Types of fantasy include sixteen categories: literary fairy tales, animal fantasy, the world of toys and dolls, eccentric characters and preposterous situations, extraordinary worlds, magical powers, suspense and the supernatural, time-shift fantasy, imaginary realms, high fantasy and science fiction (Barbara Z. Kiefer, 2010, pp. 284-329). In my dissertation, I choose to study literary fairy tales, animal fantasy and time-shift fantasy.

1. Literary Fairy Tales: they are also called modern fairy tales which utilize the form of the old but has an identifiable author. Hans Christian Andersen is generally credited as the first author of modern fairy tales. His retellings of old tales are “embellished with deeper meanings, making them very much his creations” (p. 288). Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*, Kenneth Grahame’s *The reluctant Dragon* and James Thurber’s *Many Moons* are also well-known modern fairy tales.
2. Animal Fantasy: there are tales of talking animals, toys, and dolls. For example, E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*, Beatrix Potter’s stories, Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (pp. 291-295).
3. Time-Shift Fantasy: characters who “appear to shift easily from their particular moment in the present to a long-lost point in someone else’s past. Usually these time leaps are lined to a tangible object or place that is common to both periods” such as Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom* and Philippa Pearce’s *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (2004, p. 136).

I took five steps as my research methodology. First, I closely read the Daoist classics of Laozi, *The Art of War*, and *Zhuangzi* and consulted professors specialized in Daoist philosophy and Chinese history. Secondly, I investigated previous studies in Daoist readings of Western literature and films such as *The Dao of Rhetoric* and *The Tao of Pooh*. Third, I found out the core thoughts of Daoist philosophy under the topics of “death and birth,” “gain and loss,” “action and non-action,” “the soft and the hard,” and so on. Then I responded to the following questions.

1. In the Daoist classics, which messages have touched me and affected my teaching philosophy? Why? I quoted the messages from the original texts and

wrote down page numbers.

2. Among the Daoist classics, which points or stories do I not like and strongly oppose to teach in K-12 classrooms? Why?
3. How to find evidence from contemporary news and social events to support my arguments for the first and second questions.

Forth, I reviewed the research of those chosen fantasies in scholarly articles and books and explored the following notions.

1. From the selected fantasies, explore their similarities and contradictions with Daoist philosophy.
2. Interpret the selected fantasies from Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi's perspectives.
3. Think of a pedagogy and design a classroom activity suitable for my own country when teaching K-12 students Daoist classics through Western fantasies

After reviewing previous research in scholarly articles and books, I acknowledged Western scholarship and made my Daoist perspective distinct from other theories. I explored how previous scholars used theories such as the Lacanian, feminism, and psychoanalysis for their readings and compared them with my Daoist reading. This comparison helped me recognize the culture-specific differences and the shared commonality in popular Western fantasies. Through the process of cross-cultural exploration, I prepared myself with a profound knowledge of Daoist theory for the desired negotiation between Western products and a Chinese philosophy.

My dissertation includes seven chapters. In chapter one, I argue for the need of Daoist reading in American language education in the face of rapid globalization. In

chapter two, I analyze Daoist rhetoric in Laozi's *Dao De Jing*, Zhuangzi's fantasies and Sunzi's *The Art of War*. I discuss how the Daoist sages use the contrary theory of Yin and Yang and imaginative stories to articulate Daoist communication art. In chapter three to six, I choose four popular fantasies worldwide as my research subjects: Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, and the 2008 Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom*. I offer a profound Daoist interpretation of the Western modern fantasies. In chapter seven, I reflect upon my previous discussion and reinforce the significance of Daoist theory in the children's literature discipline.

Chapter 2

Daoism through the Eyes of Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi

Many Chinese intellectual schools proposed different notions of Dao to solve the political disorder during the Spring-Autumn period (770-476 B.C.E.) and the Warring States period (475-221 B.C. E.). Their proposals continue to influence Chinese culture and politics to this day. Dao, for the intellectuals, is the way by which the universe operates the world. Some also viewed Dao as the principle by which humans must abide in order to survive. Chinese philosophy does not simply represent a way of Chinese living. It has “its cosmological speculations, ethical principles, epistemological arguments and its methodology” (Liu, 2008, p. xii) and challenges Western traditions in philosophical debates. The most influential schools which explored the concept of Dao are Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism. In my dissertation, I specifically focus on the Dao of the Daoist school as represented by Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi.

The Dao of Different Schools

Established by Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi before 221 B.C.E., the Dao of Confucianism emphasized moralistic and humanistic practice. Confucians proposed *ren* 仁 (benevolence and sincerity), *li* 禮 (rites), and *zhong yong* 中庸 (the Middle Way) as their key values. *Ren* can be achieved through self-examination and the cultivation of knowledge. *Li* controls a gentleman’s verbal and nonverbal behaviors. *Zhuong Yong* is seen as conduct in line with moderation and justice. Confucius argued that a benevolent government would lead to a mighty country. Guiding people by virtue and rites, people will have a sense of shame and correct their faults of their own accord. On the contrary,

governing by relying on edicts and punishment will only solve the surface problems, changing people's behaviors, but not their thoughts.

Rather than advocating a benevolent government as Confucianism, Legalists, represented by Han Feizi (280-233 B.C.E.), believed that a ruler should utilize three political means to govern the country. The three means are *fa* 法 (penal law), *shu* 術 (political strategy), *shi* 勢 (power position). Han Feizi argued that penal law was the most efficient way to govern a country. *Fa* 法 (penal law) indicates that a ruler should strictly practice penal law on everybody. In addition, a ruler must examine his subordinates' words and behaviors and check if they are in line with their rank titles. If they are, a ruler should reward them. Otherwise, they should be punished. This *shu* 術 (political strategy) can discourage subordinates against deception and overstatement. *Shi* 勢 (power position) teaches a ruler not to relegate the power of rewarding and punishing to others, or they will intervene in political decisions and control the court. Han Feizi borrowed from Laozi's philosophical thoughts; however, they have fundamental differences. As Jeeloo Liu observes, "the Legalist aims to strengthen institutional control, while Laozi is against the institution as such; the Legalist uses virtue as a means for political success, while Laozi treats virtue as the ultimate basis of politics" (2006, p. 149).

In contrast to that of Confucius and Han Feizi, Mozi's political theory grew out of his lower-class roots. He proposed strict self-constraint, universal love, identification with the superiors, frugality, simplicity in funeral, and opposition against music. He asserted that a gentleman should love all people without making any distinctions and he should live frugally. He also tried hard to persuade rulers not to wage wars. His thoughts were widely hailed in his days. JeeLoo Liu commented that "what Mozi found to be the major problem with Confucianism was its impracticality; he saw Confucianism as a

teaching that promoted wastefulness of human energy as well as of social resources” (2006, p. 109).

The Dao of Daoism reveals a transcendent worldview which is different from that of Confucianism, Legalism, and Mohism. Laozi (571-471 B.C.E.) and Zhuangzi (369-286 B.C.E.) are regarded as the founders of Daoism. Laozi’s Dao refers to “the ultimately correct way of Heaven and of the human world” and shows a rich metaphysical meaning (Liu, 2006, p. 132). Zhuangzi pursued an absolute spiritual freedom and uniformity with the natural world. His view on truth and reality has been widely branded as “relativism,” “skepticism,” and “mysticism” (Liu, 2008; Van Norden, 2011). Bryan W. Van Norden maintains that Daoism may be classified as mysticism. Daoism expresses a kind of knowledge that is nonlinguistic and cannot be adequately expressed in words (2011, p. 133).

Sunzi, even though some scholars may not see him as a Daoist, shared Laozi and Zhuangzi’s dialectic worldviews in his military strategies: gain and loss; death and life; softness and hardness; non-action and action. Therefore, I include Sunzi in my discussion of the Daoist school. For example, both Laozi and Sunzi proposed that the best military ruler subdues the enemy without slaughtering the innocent. Both of them also advocated the merit of water. For Laozi, water has the virtue of modesty. Water for Sunzi has the virtue of wisdom. For example, it avoids the confrontation with mountains by making a detour to her destination. Even though their understanding of the Dao is similar, Laozi saw human disasters as being caused by their desires. He tried hard to warn people to stay away from sensational temptations. In contrast, in order to win a war, Sunzi made good use of human weaknesses, trapping his enemies into desires and disturbing their minds. Sunzi shared a large part of Daoist philosophy with Laozi and Zhuangzi. Scholars such as

Steven C. Comb and I count Sunzi as a member of the Daoist school. In the following discussion, I will explore the thoughts asserted by Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi in detail.

Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi in Context

Grounded in Chinese society and history, Daoism is “the oldest indigenous philosophic-spiritual tradition of China and one of the most ancient of the world’s spiritual structures” (Littlejohn, 2009, p. 1). As Steven Combs (2005) further explains, “Daoist rhetoric, as a philosophical rhetoric, must be primarily concerned with expressing the Dao and affecting its audiences” (p. 77). Laozi (Lao Tsu, 571-471B.C.E.) is commonly considered the originator of Daoism. Living in the Spring-Autumn period, he worked as a curator for the Royal Library of the Zhou dynasty. Disappointed by the moral decay of Zhou society, he decided to venture west to seek his dreams. Before he left the country, the gate sentry pleaded with him for a record of his wisdom. He consented and composed the 5000-character text *Dao De Jing*, one of the Chinese classics. *Dao De Jing* comprises two parts: *dao* 道 (the way) and *de* 德 (virtue). In the chapters of *dao*, it explains how nature gives a myriad of creatures lives; in the Chapters of *de*, it indicates how virtue rears their lives. For Laozi, Dao is the source of the universe which exercises absolute power over everything and directs the operation by its natural laws.

Sunzi (around 500 B.C.E.) is one of the earliest Chinese warfare sages. He also lived in the Spring-Autumn period, in a time when a slave-owning society was shifting to feudalism and small states were fighting against each other frequently. To seek peace and reduce casualty, Sunzi researched war strategies and developed his thinking on military leadership. At that time, Wu was a small country with a limited army and provision. For a long time, Wu could not cross huge mountains to attack their neighbor state Chu, which

was much stronger and bigger. However, after Sunzi was employed as a general of Wu, he helped Wu defeat Chu and established a great military reputation among other countries. His success was attributed to his systematic war strategies.

Living around 500 B.C.E., no record shows that Laozi and Sunzi had conversed with each other face to face. However, from their works, they communicated with each other by stating their opinions on metaphysical philosophy and warfare.

About two centuries later, Zhuangzi (369-286 B.C.E.) joined their conversation through his fictional stories. Zhuangzi was born in a poor family and lived under a political tyranny in the state of Song during the Warring States period. It was a time in which vigorous debates over issues of morality and politics were popular. This historical background deeply impacted Zhuangzi's thoughts. He inherited Laozi's ideas and further developed a sophisticated rhetoric with stories.

Zhuangzi was an expert storyteller and educator. With over 100 fantasies and fables, his works included historical stories, anecdotes, paradoxes, and puzzles. He criticized worldly hypocrites in the tones of a diverse menagerie of figures: personifying animals and plants, talking skulls, mythical beasts, and natural objects to contrast his Utopia world. Dialogical formula is his favorite rhetorical strategy. He also used some rhetorical strategies such as throwing challenging questions to his audiences, responding with historical stories, and reconstructing the conversations of well-known politicians. He tended to use "humorous devices rather than direct refutation" (Carr, 2000, p. 91). For example, he would ask rhetorical questions as answers to inspire the inquirers or told a fable to imply his attitude toward certain events. Lisa Raphals observes that "Like Socrates, Zhuangzi asks more questions than he answers, and repeatedly formulates ideas in order to revise and attack them" (1996, p. 41). By manipulating metaphors, hyperboles, parallelisms, repetitions, and antitheses, his stories manifested highly persuasive rhetoric.

In addition, Zhuangzi mastered integrating Chinese hidden codes in his stories, through which Chinese audiences are engaged in his stories. Based on culturally shared myths and beliefs, his stories are convincing and attractive to Chinese readers, thus playing an important role in children's education.

Daoist masters—Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi—used artistic communication in their treatment of military affairs and educational issues in ancient China. They are not only Daoist sages but also rhetoricians. Laozi demonstrated his mastery on metaphysical philosophy and politics with spare and abstract language. Zhuangzi, unlike Laozi, used stories and conversations to explain the Dao. He concretized Laozi's philosophy through telling funny but thought-provoking stories. Different from Laozi and Zhuangzi, Sunzi was a practical military strategist. He put Daoist philosophy into warfare practice and applied the Dao to various war topics such as making assessments, disposition, momentum, and using spies. The rhetoric of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Sunzi features a complex network with political and ecological concerns in ancient China as modern fantasies do to the contemporary world.

Dao: Follow the Nature, Balance, and Dialectics

Dao as a metaphysical entity is the primeval source of all things and the primeval power of the universe. It operates the cosmic order in a way of perpetual flux. Its movement is eternally repetitious, cyclical, and changing. Dao exists in everything, including living creatures and inanimate objects. In a wider sense of Daoism, we are all part of Dao and Dao is part of everyone. As John Leonard explains Dao in *The Way of Poetry*,

Since the Way (Dao) lies behind everything, then everything is part of the Way. People who are Christians might tend to think in terms of Christians versus non-Christian, but Daoists would think of Christians as Daoists who emphasize Christianity in their thought. People who are not Daoists are not, in the Daoist view, non-Daoists, they are simply Daoists who have not heard of the Way, or who are not consciously trying to follow it. There is no US and Them in Daoism. (2010, p. 4)

Dao reveals itself in nature. Humanity is part of nature. Therefore, “the operation of the human world should ideally be continuous with that of the natural order (Shun, 1995, p. 865). The Dao of Daoism maintains three major characteristics: following the nature, keeping the balance, and dialectics. In the following sections, I will explore these three characteristics.

Following the Nature

Dao includes two dimensions: one is called the way of *tian* 天 (Heaven) which refers to the principle of ecology; the other is called the way of *ren* 人 (human) which is the principle of humanity. For Laozi, ecological nature and human nature are reciprocal correspondences. The Dao of heaven endows every creature its own nature and values them equally. If the way of humanity can follow the way of heaven, we will enjoy peace and prosperity. If a creature or an object works with its own nature, they will function perfectly.

Following nature involves “one’s responding spontaneously to situations with no preconceived goals or preconceptions of what is proper” (Shun, 1995, p. 908). A person of non-action can be called a Daoist who never forces self or others to do what they

cannot. A person living in non-action acts in line with ecological rhythm and eliminates “all attachments of the self and just let everything follow its natural course, without devising and imposing a way of life on himself or others” (Shun, 1995, p. 908). For Zhuangzi, a perfect way of life “does not deviate from the essence of the inborn nature and the predestined fate” (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 127). Zhuangzi illuminated this point with two examples.

Short as the legs are, the duck will come to trouble if we stretch them out. Long as the legs are, the crane will come into grief if we cut them short. Therefore, something that is long by nature is not to be shortened; something that is short by nature is not to be lengthened. In this way, there will be no worry or care. (1999, p. 127)

As the nature of ducks and cranes present themselves, we had better not to change their legs' length by human strains. Zhuangzi further indicated that humans, mudfish, and monkeys all eat different diets. People eat meat; deer eat grass; centipedes eat snakes; owls eat mice. These four kinds of animals all show different preference. “Of the man, the deer, the centipede and the owl, who know the right tastes?” (p. 33). Thus, Zhuangzi demonstrated the ambiguous standards in a natural world. Since there is differentiation in inborn nature, there is no fixed standard. When we follow everything's inborn nature, we live with the Dao. Living within Dao, we will not feel the existence of the Dao. The situation is like a fish swimming in a lake. When it is in a lake, it is unfettered to think of what water is. Only when a fish is out of its lake does it know what water means. Similarly, if a person lives with the Dao, he cannot feel the existence of Dao. When he starts to be aware of something, he may have strayed away from Dao. Zhuangzi asserted

that “our worst misfortunes come by ignoring or obscuring the guidance our intuitions provide and turning instead to the authority of tradition or reason (Carr, 2000, p. 92).

Every being is suited to its own use or purpose. It is not true that the bigger is the better or the more the greater. Zhuangzi proposed that, for example, a centipede has a hundred feet but a snake has no foot. Both of them can move very well, no matter how many legs they have. The value of each creature is not the more the better. Rather, no matter how small or big they are, they are suited for their own purposes. Zhuangzi suggested that we do not doubt about the uniqueness of everyone and we do not force others to meet certain standards.

Balance

The Dao of heaven balances the inequality in both the natural and human worlds. “The Tao of heaven takes from those who have too much and gives to those who do not have enough”, so “the high will be lowered, and the low will be raised” (Laozi, 1997, Chapter 77). Heaven likes to maintain a balanced system. It pities on a person who is poor and needy, providing him with what he needs; but it takes away what one has when it is abundant. The principle is like archery. When we want to shoot high, we pull the arrow down; low, we pull the arrow up. Maintaining balance is the way that heaven handles the universe. Therefore, Laozi reminded people that they should “stop short than fill to the brim” and they do not show off their talent. A sharp blade can easily go blunt. Likewise, people who claim wealth and talent will bring disaster to themselves. However, human behaviors always violate the will of heaven. They often act in an opposite way, “taking from those who do not have enough to give to those who already have too much” (Chapter 77). Therefore, calamities have continued for thousands of years.

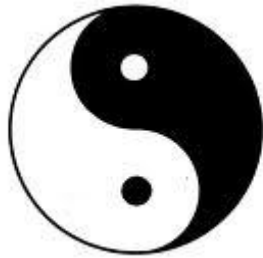
Dialectics

Based on a dialectic foundation, the Dao of Daoism entertains the unity of opposites.

Dao, or the cosmological law, is performed by the two opposite powers of yin and yang.

Yin-yang represents opposite entities in nature: male and female, life and death, sun and moon, river and mountain, day and night, white and black, up and down, and so on. They look contrary but complementary to each other. Yang embraces yin; yin contains yang.

The yin-yang symbol is showed below.



The black color symbolizes yin; the white, yang. The big white drop flows into the big black drop; the big black drop flows into the big white drop. The big white drop contains a small black dot, and vice versa. The symbol signifies that everything has two opposite sides: a good thing has a bad side; a bad thing has a good side. The fortunate resides in the unfortunate; the unfortunate dwells in the fortunate. Every thing contains two opposite powers. The Dao owns the capacity to transcend and reconcile with the opposite energy.

The Dao entertained a metamorphosis of contraries and the Daoist sages deconstructed the chain of dualism. They challenge people's habitual assumption about long and short, good and bad. Their arguments are similar to the critiques performed by post-modernist scholars Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998). They denounced the traditional epistemological perspective of oppositions in logic and civilization and proposed postmodernism as a reaction to modernism. Daoists believe that everything can find its yin within yang and its yang within yin. Through engaging in

a form of complex irony, Daoist sages sought to undermine the fixed standards between dualism.

For Zhuangzi, dialectic mediation gives people room to experience the voice of inner and external nature. The inquiry for truth is through dialectics rather than language. Intellectuals all knew the power of language in Zhuangzi's times. But not all of them grasped the profound Dao; they merely utilized their glib tongues to gain fame and wealth. Zhuangzi regretted the loss of Dao. Without a genuine comprehension of Dao, the effort of beautiful language is in vain. Zhuangzi used stories to raise people's awareness of the false language over truth and "[led] us to laugh at and question ourselves as well, at least those of us who consider ourselves to be characteristically rational creatures" (Carr, 2000, p. 91). David Loy explains that Zhuangzi's Dao "does not involve an ineffable rejection of language as inevitably dualistic and delusive" but celebrates language's "playfulness possible when we are no longer trapped by and in our own words" (1996, p. 60). Zhuangzi posed his challenge to language as well as a fixed standard through analogies,

The fungi that sprout in the morning and die before the evening do not know the alternation of night and day... Those are cases of the short-lived. In the south of the state of Chu there is a miraculous tortoise, for whom each spring or autumn lasts 500 hundred years... Those are cases of the long-lived. (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 5)

It is also said that Pengzu, who lived over 700 years, had the longest life in Chinese history. Zhunagzi argued that if the fungi are called "short-lived" and the miraculous tortoise a "long-lived," wasn't Pengzu just another "short-lived"? Through comparison,

Zhuangzi questioned the definition of long and short. Who is long-lived and who is short-lived depends on whom we compare to. If one compares herself with an insufficient one, she may feel greater. On the contrary, if she compares herself to a superior one, then she becomes petty. Actually, she is still herself. Nothing really changes through the comparison. The feelings of superiority and inferiority are illusions.

Zhuangzi saw no need to compare to others or define oneself based on others. Fungi do not own the same physical substance as a tortoise. It is natural for fungi not to have the same experience as a tortoise does. Even though the lives of fungi are much shorter than that of a tortoise, it does not mean that fungi are less happy or less meaningful. Fungi can decompose animals' corpses and turn them into nutrients for plants. Plants become food for animals and support animals' lives. In this aspect, they are very important for ecology. Their existence cannot be substituted by any giant animals. Through dialectic comparisons, Zhuangzi deconstructed the standards long established in the human world. His fables allow audiences to "manipulate this protean Nature and transcend the limits it initially seems to place on human life" (Kjellberg & Ivanhoe, 1996, p. 138).

Contemporary commentators of Daoism claim that Zhuangzi adhered to relativism (Chad, 1983; Wong, 1996; Kjellberg & Ivanhoe, 1996). He demonstrated in his stories and fables that what are good for people depends on the individual and the situation. Through a series of dialectic debates, we can "never say something is absolutely right or wrong since there is simply no objective standard" (Liu, 2008, p. 167). Dialectic principles imbue in Daoist rhetoric. In the following discussion, I will explore Daoist philosophy under the dialectic rubrics of "gain and loss," "life and death," "hardness and softness," "action and non-action," and "knowledge and ignorance" and compare the thoughts of Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi respectively.

Daoist Dialectics

Gain and Loss

Based on Laozi's observation, a gain will never be so if there is no concept of loss. A loss will never be a loss if there is no concept of gain. Gain and loss derives from a relative relationship rather than a truth. Laozi illuminated this dialectic relationship that, "It is because everyone under Heaven recognized beauty as beauty, that the idea of ugliness exists. And equally if everyone recognized virtue as virtue, this would merely create fresh conceptions of wickedness" (1999, Chapter 2). In fact, there is no absolute gain and loss. There is no standard between good and bad, pretty and ugly, clever and stupid, empty and full, difficult and easy, up and down, hard and soft, feminine and masculine, long and short, successful and unsuccessful. All values are illusion. Without comparisons, there is no value judgment. For example, when we wear a dress, we may not have a strong feeling about its value. However, when another person appears and wears a fashionable dress or humble clothes, we start to have an opinion on our own dress. The feeling of the inferiority and superiority emerges from the comparison. Laozi observed the roots of this unhappiness and noted its illusory goals. People assume that of every kind of thing there is a best one. They compare to others and want more. However, there is always a better one in the process of pursuing material luxury or fame. The endless goals exhaust the pursuers. Laozi deconstructed the fixed social values. He hoped that by demystifying the social standards, people would be empowered and be freed from ideological constraints. Finally, people can find self-contentment in their own conditions.

Furthermore, Laozi indicated that a real loss comes from a real gain. Logically speaking, the more we take in, the more we own. Laozi, however, rejected this reasoning. He discussed the sensational indulgence as an illuminating example. People presume that

the more visual and sensory stimulus they receive, the more satisfaction they feel.

However, Laozi said, “The five colors confuse the eye. The five sounds dull the ear. The five tastes spoil the palate. Excess of hunting and chasing makes minds go mad. Products that are hard to get impede their owner’s movement” (Laozi, 1997, Chapter 12). Frankly speaking, Laozi’s observation is so true. In our dietary experience, when we are very hungry, we feel satisfied with even a normal meal. However, after a big feast, we no longer feel the taste of the food. Too much food decreases our sensitivity. Therefore, Laozi reminded us that when physical excitement goes too far, it will hurt our health. This reasoning can be experienced in our daily life.

In addition, Laozi believed that the more we forsake, the more we gain. The game of giving out and taking in is a system of recurring circulation. Like the circulation of water, water in a river evaporates to the sky. The vapor turns into clouds and rains and returns to the river. Give out and take in. Take in and give out. The universe is a closed orbit. The more water evaporates to sky, the more rain falls back onto earth. The human relationship resembles the water circulation. We will receive the same as what we give out. Therefore, Laozi declared that, “The sage never tries to store things up. The more he does for others, the more he has. The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance....The more he does for others, the more he has. The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance” (1997, Chapter 81).

Laozi not only believed that the less interest we take, the more benefit we receive but also that the more humiliation we stand for others, the greater leadership we demonstrate. Laozi explained the subversive relationship between gain and loss, having and not having. “He who takes upon himself the country’s disasters deserves to be king of the universe” because “the humble is the root of the noble” (Laozi, 1997, Chapter 39). A humble attitude is always more welcome than arrogance. If a king is not welcomed by

his people, it will potentially threaten his throne. Laozi explained that this is why in ancient China princes and lords called themselves “orphaned,” “widowed,” and “worthless” to show their abasement for the noble blood. Laozi asked us, “why is the sea king of a hundred streams?” (1997, Chapter 66). We all know the reason is that the sea lies below all streams. This sea’s low location does not devalue her status. On the contrary, her low position attracts all rivers to come down for her. In the scientific term, it is called the power of gravity. Likewise, the more humiliation we stand for others, the greater leadership we demonstrate.

Laozi ironically exposed that sometimes a seemingly loss is a real gain, what seems empty is actually full. For example, “cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which make it useful. Therefore profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there” (Laozi, 1997, Chapter 11). When people build a house, they need to leave empty rooms inside the house. The empty space is used to contain people and furniture. That is the function of “what is not there.” People always see the advantage of owing something but neglect the benefit of owning nothing. Katrin Froese explains that “nothingness cannot simply be reduced to a negation of what is or once was” rather the “attunement of nothingness signifies openness to other beings” (2006, p. 114). A hollow room “imbues the world with meaning because it is the space or opening that allows things to connect to each other” (Froese, 2006, p. 115). Being and nothingness are not opposed but interconnective. As Laozi indicated, things come from nothing. The relationship of gain and loss is demonstrated in the yin-yang symbol.  Black contains white; white includes black. A gain contains a possible loss; the loss contains a possible gain. Owning and not owning look opposite, but actually are compatible. Heidegger also celebrated the paradox between emptiness and fullness, owing and not owning. He asserted that “the empty space allows things to be and the openness allows

things to show themselves (Froese, 2006, p. 115). The paradox creates the openness of fragmentation resonating in postmodernist thoughts. Laozi also affirmed the greatest possession of possessing nothing in nature. “All things arise from Tao. By virtue they are nourished, developed, cared for, sheltered, comforted, grown, and protected. Creating without claiming, doing without taking credit, guiding without interfering. This is primal virtue” (1997, Chapter 51). Nature nourishes the myriad of creatures, yet does not possess or take credit. Nature never sees itself own everything that proves its ownership. For Laozi, “a truly good man is not aware of his goodness, and is therefore good” (Chapter 38). A virtuous person dwells on what is of real benefit to receivers, not the reputation. He cares “on the fruit and not the flower” (chapter 38). This expectation sounds impractical. However, Laozi believed that this selfless person is actually in an advantageous position because the way of heaven shows that “not putting on a display. They shine forth. Not justifying themselves, they are distinguished. Not boasting, they receive recognition. Not bragging, they never falter” (1997, Chapter 22). As the previous example shows, the empty space in a house is very useful for its practical end. Analogous to a human relationship, the empty space can be understood as a spiritual reward such as friendship and trust. And a solid wood can be seen as material reward. A selfless person receives a spiritual reward which is invisible but lasting. Keeping his reward unpaid, he may gain more than the material goods. Therefore, Laozi said that through selfless action, a sage attains fulfillment for himself (Chapter 7).

People, in order to pursue social honors and wealth, often sacrifice their health. Is it worthy? Do they gain or lose? Laozi asked, “fame or self: which matters more? Self or wealth: which is more precious?” (Chapter 44). Comparing lives to fame and wealth, what else can be more valuable? Without lives, what can these external things do for the

owners? Laozi foresaw that their “loss” will be more than their “gain.” Zhuangzi used a fable to further Laozi’s argument.

Let’s take the case of a serf and a slave boy herding their sheep together. Both of them lost their sheep. When the serf was asked how it happened, he answered that he had been reading a book; when the slave boy was asked how it happened, he answered that he had been playing at dice. Both of them had been doing different things, but the loss of their sheep was one and the same. (1999, p. 131)

Zhuangzi revealed that everyone sacrifices themselves for the sake of different things. Superior persons may throw away their lives in the pursuit of fame. Inferior persons may throw away their lives in the pursuit of money. Their reasons are different, but in the end, their lives are lost. What they gain actually is nothing. Laozi and Zhuangzi knew that they could not restrain people’s desire. However, through dialectic inquiring, Laozi and Zhuangzi hoped that people would rethink their decisions when taking actions.

Daoists also think that a loss can be seen as a gain and a gain can be seen as a loss. Laozi said that “Happiness is rooted in misery. Misery lurks beneath happiness” (1997, Chapter 58). One can see luck and misery in one thing. Zhuangzi told two fables to illustrate this point. In the Chinese ceremony ritual, only auspicious creatures can be chosen as sacrifices for gods. It is said that,

Oxen with white foreheads, pigs with turned-up snouts and men with piles cannot be used as offerings to the River God. The wizards know all about this: They consider these creatures as inauspicious. Holy men, however, consider these creatures as the most auspicious. (1999, p. 69).

Zhuangzi delineated the irony of gaining benefit from what is not there. The animals' utility for the wizard brings them death. In contrast, their uselessness preserves their lives. For the sacrificial candidates, the auspicious comes from their inauspicious signs, just as the function of a house comes from its empty space.

Zhuangzi "recognizes that there are facts about the world, but the way these are labeled and divided are arbitrary" (Berkson, 1996, p. 105). With another fable, he continued the articulation on the topic of losing as gaining. A carpenter master saw a huge oak tree on his way to the state of Qi. His apprentices were obsessed by its amazing size. However, the master never stopped to take a close look. He explained that, "it is a useless tree. Its quality is too bad to make anything." At night, the master dreamt of the oak tree, who gave him a lesson that, "my uselessness is of the greatest use to me. You see, all the fruit trees were cut down just because they are useful for human. If I had been useful to human, how could I have benefitted from this great use for my life? "

In these two fables, Zhuangzi reversed the secular definition of what is gain and what is loss. The oak tree for carpenters is too bad to make anything. Therefore, the tree preserves its life. Its loss of use is its big use. This complementary world view echoes Laozi's notion that, "profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there" (1997, Chapter 11). His deconstruction helps people see the gain from the loss and see the full from the empty.

Laozi expressed that heaven and earth cannot hold an extreme wind and rain for a long time, not to mention humans to hold a fortune or misfortune forever. The meteorological phenomena shows that "high winds do not last all morning. Heavy rain does not last all day" (1997, Chapter 23). This is the way of heaven and earth operating the weather. The alternation of fortune and misery is unpredictable. Therefore, people

need to see the good things from a pessimistic perspective in order to prepare for accidents and see a mishap from an optimistic angle in order to welcome an unexpected chance.

Finally, Laozi taught about what is the real gain. The real gain belongs to a person who is content with what he owns. Laozi assured that a person “who knows that enough is enough will always have enough” (Chapter 46). Laozi clearly pointed out that the feeling of loss comes from greed. He declared that, there is “no greater curse than discontent. No greater misfortune than wanting something for oneself” (1997, Chapter 46). wealth and poverty contrast each other. We feel rich because others are poor. However, there are always richer people in the world. How could our pursuit of wealth end? The endless dreams results in more pain. Laozi concluded that, “He who is attached to things will suffer much. He who saves will suffer heavy loss. A content man is never disappointed” (1997, Chapter 44). The more things one desires, the more effort she makes. However, if she does accumulate a lot of treasure, once she fails, her loss will be much heavier than people who do not have. Therefore, Laozi asked that, “gain and loss: which is more painful?” (Chapter 44). He suggested that we temper our desire and cast off greed. Only when one knows when to stop does she not find herself in trouble and will stay safe forever. By doing so, we can see the beauty of simplicity and stay away from trouble.

With understanding the Dao, Sunzi also saw gain from loss. He sought benefits from seemingly miserable conditions. In a battlefield, ideally, a ruler wants to gain an advantage from geological locations. He avoids dangerous terrain while trapping the enemy to those hazardous locations such as deep shafts, steep river gorges, boxed-in recesses, tangled undergrowth, and treacherous crevasses. However, Sunzi assumed that if his troop is forced into a dangerous place deep in the enemy’s country, he still can gain

two advantages. One is to “plunder the enemy’s most fertile fields” to supply his own provision. The second is to “throw his troops into a situation from which there is no way out,” thus his troop has no way to retreat, but to fight to the death. As Martin Heidegger, profoundly influenced by Daoism, proposed, the anxiety of death is a pillar of authentic experience (Froese, 2006, p. 114). In the most dangerous locations, his soldiers are ready to die. Therefore, they will “do nothing less than total exertion” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 87).

Life and Death

For Laozi, seeking death is like a loss of life. People have a great fear of it. However, when people have no way to live, their desperate search for death brings an opportunity to survive. Laozi warned rulers “if men are not afraid to die, it is of no avail to threaten them with death.” When people do not have a sense of awe, there will be disaster (Chapter 72, 74). Laozi witnessed that many rulers intruded in people’s houses and harassed them at work. People were starving to death but the ruler continued to collect taxes. When people cannot find a way to live, they are rebellious and hard to govern (Chapter 75). As Martin Heidegger observed, “death, as the ultimate limit, brings us face to face with ultimate groundlessness of our existence, which not only elicits despair but also can impel us to participate in a process of self-making” (Froese, 2006, p. 114). The awareness of impending death threatens ordinary families. People doubt the necessity to be loyal to the rulers. Laozi strongly blamed the greedy rulers, sighing “why the people think so little of death? Because the rulers demand too much of life. Therefore the people take death lightly” (Chapter 75). The more the ruler gains, the more the people lose.

For Sunzi, seeking death is a door toward life. Seeking life is a door toward death. Sunzi identified three occasions in which people will fight to the bitter end and, thereby, survive. First, when the commander is the soldiers’ bosom friend and soul mate, his

soldiers love to follow him through every vicissitude without fear of mortal peril. Second, when the soldiers are thrown into the most dangerous place from where there is no way out and they are ready to die, they will “do nothing less than total exertion” (Sunzi, p. 87). Third, when the soldiers burn with rage at the enemy, they will fight at the risk for their lives. In these three occasions, the soldiers’ fearlessness for the coming deaths will bring the troops a greater chance to win. Consequently, they may preserve their lives. In contrast, Sunzi remarked that if soldiers are timid and have room for retreat, they will die sooner in battlefields.

Sunzi did not have better luck than other military leaders. However, he had a better sense of the Dao of heaven and always kept an eye on what would be the gain from the loss. Therefore, he could always boost his soldiers’ morale and won many battles.

Zhuangzi’s view on death is transcendental. He saw life as a perpetual cyclic movement. Transformation between life and death is a natural course. He did not feel fearful or angry at death. Instead, he acknowledged and accepted the unpredictable death. He stated that, “there are remarkable changes in the dead man’s physical form, but there is not injury done to his mind” (1999, p. 107). The same spirit can become a bird soaring to the sky or a fish diving into the river, or a man talking to friends. We sometimes experience physical transformations in dreams. A human body’s demise does not mean the end of life. It is a door leading to a new life. Zhuangzi suggested that people should not be shocked by nor resist these changes. If we “resign ourselves to the natural transformation, we shall enter the boundless realm of nature of Tao” (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 106). According to Van Norden, Descartes also noted that “we sometimes dream without knowing that we are dreaming. Since we cannot be certain that we are not dreaming now, it is possible to doubt every aspect of the external world” (2011, p. 144). Zhuangzi’s point

of doubting is to “relieve us of certain kinds of fear or anxiety” (Van Norden, 2011, p. 144). If we realize that death is not bad at all, death is less frightening.

Hardness and Softness

The core thought of Daoism is that the soft can overcome the strong. It is like water which is soft and yielding. However, to carve a solid mountain nothing is better than water (Chapter 43, 78). For example, dripping water can eventually erode stones. One can cut a hard stone into pieces, but no one can cut water into pieces. Laozi believes that feminine softness can conquer masculine hardness. Therefore, in human relationships, Laozi proposed that soft attitude works better than hard attitude. It is like what water can do on mountains. Soft attitudes refer to a soft heart which shows mercy and liberty to others. Laozi proposed that a ruler with mercy will achieve a complete triumph in battles because the power of mercy arouses morale and strengthens the defense. Therefore, Laozi suggested that in dealing with human relationships, one should treat others gently and kindly. However, Laozi regretted that “nowadays people shun mercy but try to be brave. This is certain death” (1997, Chapter 67). Furthermore, a soft person is passive for external reputation. When facing success, she reluctantly accepts fame. She does not seek full recognition for her contribution. Yet, when facing troubles, she takes upon herself others’ humiliation. Because of her non-contended softness, she provides a great leadership. In addition, Laozi asserted that a soft person allows others their liberty. She is open-minded and generous, never intending to dominate others. Instead, she gets along with others in accordance with their nature, so she encounters no complaints.

Sunzi shared the idea with Laozi that the soft can overcome the hard. Enlightened by water, Sunzi saw that water always changes its course in accordance with the contours of the terrain. It evades mountains, detouring to their sides. Therefore, the law of fighting a

battle should be “when the enemy is formidable, evade him” (p. 7). The basic rule is to stay away from the enemy’s strong points and strike his weak points. In addition to avoidance, military tactics should be flexible and change based on changing dispositions like that of flowing water (Sunzi, 1999, p. 43).

Water for Sunzi is just a metaphor to explain more than natural phenomena. If mountain’s hardness can be likened to a bastion of iron or impregnable weapons, water’s softness can be likened to strategies of gentle attitude, verbal rhetoric, and lure. The first kind of softness is the use of a soft attitude. Sunzi suggested that we use soft attitudes, namely gentleness and kindness, to get along with the stubborn enemy. When we capture the enemy’s generals or soldiers, instead of torturing them, we treat them like our children. Through the gentle and kind care, the captured may experience a feeling of gratitude and respect toward us. Under this situation, their soldiers can be taken into our ranks and their captured chariots and weapons be used together with ours. This is how softness overcomes the hardness. In doing so, we boost our own strength in the process of absorbing others’ (Sunzi, 1999, p. 6).

The second softness is the use of verbal rhetoric. Sunzi grasped the power of verbal rhetoric, which is like a knife. A knife can chop meat for cooking but also can kill people. Using verbal rhetoric is a short cut to eliminate opponents. For example, if the enemy is timid and careful, we can use words to compliment his greatness as well as to show them our cowardice, by which we will encourage his arrogance (p. 6). If the enemy is bold and boiling with rage, we exaggerate the story to provoke his flare. Under disturbing emotions, the enemy will make many errors. In wars, blinded by arrogance and anger, people lose their lives and fail the battles. In another case, if the enemy deeply trusts each other and is strongly united as one close family, we foment dissension among themselves by spreading evil rumors and slanders. As long as they doubt each other, internal strife

will follow. Then we can defeat them easily. That is an example of using seemingly soft language to conquer a strong army.

The third softness is the use of lure. People usually treasure certain things above others. When they see their beloved but cannot obtain it, they will possibly do whatever it takes to gain it. Sunzi taught us to tempt the enemy with desirable bait. “When the enemy is greedy for grains, hand out a bait to lure them” (1999, p. 6) or “seize whatever the enemy prizes most and he will do what you wish him to do” (1999, p. 87). By doing so, we can force them to obey us. Those are three means of softness which can be used to conquer strong enemy.

Echoing Sunzi’s argument, Zhuangzi believed that the same concept also works in dealing with human relationships. Especially when one encounters an evil person, she should try to avoid his evil nature but encourage his kind part. Zhuanzi explained why some people often get hurt but some do not. It is because some do not understand the nature of things that they deal with. Zhuangzi illuminates this point by a fable.

Boyu asked Yan He, “Don’t you know how the tiger keeper works?” How does the tiger keeper work with fierce tigers? Boyu says that, “He does not risk feeding the tiger with live animals, for fear that it would become ferocious when it kills the animals. He does not risk feeding the tiger with whole animals, for fear that it would become ferocious when it tears the animals apart. He knows when the tiger is hungry and when the tiger is full; he is fully aware of its fierce disposition. The tiger is of a different species from man, yet it is gentle to its keeper because the keeper complies to its disposition. The tiger gets murderous only when it is irritated” (1999, p. 63).

A tiger's cruelty is inherent in its beastly nature. However, it does not hurt certain people because they never bring out a tiger's beastly desire. Throwing live animals to a tiger will stimulate its beastly wildness. By being indulged in chasing and tearing animals apart, tigers become excited. The loss of their calmness pushes them to kill anything including the keepers. A similar tendency also happens in human society. Some murders are committed by well-educated and rational people. When those people are irritated by insults or frustration, they might reveal their evil side and commit horrible things. Therefore, to guide a person, one should be like the wise tiger keeper who understands the tiger's disposition and makes good use of its superior part. This way, one can get along with a sanguinary person and guide him toward goodness without being hurt. It is like the spirit of water which does not coercively go through solid mountains but tenderly makes a detour.

Action and Non-Action

People usually assume that the more action they take, the greater jobs they can accomplish. However, Laozi thought that the less action one takes, the greater jobs he or she will accomplish. Laozi pointed out that in order to perfect every action, one should take non-action and let things take their own course. Non-action is literally interpreted as "the kind of unpremeditated, nondeliberative, noncalculating, nonpurposive action" (Schwartz, 1985, p. 188). Therefore, "in the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired." However, "in the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped" (Chapter 48). Laozi asserted that when less and less is done until non-action is achieved, nothing is left undone. One should learn new knowledge every day. Not until all artificial desire is left, can she return to a clear mind. So a sage asks herself to drop her "extra food and

unnecessary luggage” every day at the spiritual and material levels (Chapter 24). By dropping her desire day by day, she returns to her innocent and pure nature.

Non-action can be explored further in two domains: politics and communication. In terms of politics, Laozi asserted the best way of governing is that the ruler takes no action and people are reformed. Laozi encouraged rulers to “practice non-action” and “work without doing” (Chapter 63). Confucius once admired the non-action of emperor Shun. Confucius asked, “Was it not Shun who rule by *wu-wei* (non-action)? What did he do? He simply maintained himself in dignity and reverently faced south” (Confucius, Chapter 4). What Shun did is “simply flowed effortlessly and without deliberation from his spiritual power” (Schwartz, 1985, p. 189). Shun’s action reflected the order of nature. Shun believed that the more intervention a ruler imposed, the more trouble he brings. Everyone has natural endowments to do a good job in their duties. Therefore sage kings said: “I take no action and people are reformed. I enjoy peace and people become honest. I do nothing and people become rich. I have no desires and people return to the good and simple life” (Laozi, Chapter 57). Analogously, governing a country is like cooking a small fish. If a cook turns the fish over and over too often, the fish will crumble and scatter all over the pan, so does a ruler to his people. If a ruler intervenes in people’s business too much, he will ruin people’s peaceful lives. On the contrary, if the ruler leaves his people alone, not to intervene with complicated laws and heavy tax, his people will live freely and happily. Laozi emphasized that, “He who acts defeats his own purpose. He who grasps loses. The sage does not act, and so is not defeated. He does not grasp and therefore does not lose” (1997, Chapter 64). Only when a ruler stops using his cleverness to control people will he bring true peace for himself and his people. When a ruler “does not teach or impose on the people’s standards of behavior, including those of conventional morality,” his people will live in a natural way (Shun, 1995, p. 908).

In terms of communication, Laozi indicated that the more silver tongued a talk is, the less trustworthy a message it holds. Instead, “Great intelligence seems stupid. Great eloquence seems awkward” (1997, Chapter 45). Audiences are sometimes blinded by silver-tongued talks and even equate those talks to a sign of wisdom. Worried about this wrong belief, Laozi argued that capable persons do not talk much nor have a glib tongue. To prevent themselves from making wrong statements or easy promises, the capable always do a lot rather than talk a lot. Since easy promises show the speaker takes his words lightly, great difficulty will present itself in the process of fulfilling a light promise. Laozi saw that “truthful words are not beautiful. Beautiful words are not truthful” (1997, Chapter 81). A Daoist likes to maintain a quiet and calm mind. Tranquility can make her aware of her endless potential and hear unheard voices. She empties herself from thinking anything and watches the constant change of all things: their rising and falling, emerging and collapsing and finally returning to their sources. Through the reflections of a tranquil mind, all things become transparent. All the sickness and strength of self and others will reveal themselves. By the complete understanding of self and the world, she is able to make her talk insightful and responsible (Laozi, 1997, Chapter 5, 8, 56, 63). Even though her words are simple, they are valuable just like a person who “wears rough cloth and holds the jewel in his heart” (1997, Chapter 70).

Generally speaking, Laozi supported non-action in warfare. A gentleman uses weapons reluctantly because they are instruments of fear. However, like the yin-yang symbol, Laozi did not deny actions at all. He never forgets to prepare well for all actions. Instead, he showed an aggressive attitude in preparing for potential wars and fulfilling his jobs.

Speaking of wars, Laozi showed mercy to his victims in battlefields. He sadly depicted a postwar scene where, “Thorn bushes spring up wherever the army has passed.

Lean years follow in the wake of a great war.” Further, he admonished people in power that, “whenever you advise a ruler in the way of Tao (Dao), counsel him not to use force to conquer the universe. For this would only cause resistance” (1997, Chapter 30).

However, sometimes we do not want to fight with other countries, but other countries invade and seize our lands and people. At this urgent moment, Laozi would launch a war by using the sharpest weapons, armors, boats and carriages which are never displayed in peacetime (Chapter 36, 80) and to “wage war with surprise moves” (Chapter 57). We can read of Laozi’s aggressive actions in Chapter 36, 57, and 80 in *Dao De Jing*. When fighting is the only means to seek peace, Laozi would “just do what needs to be done” to win a war.

With reluctance to kill people, Laozi still practically faced the cruelty of wars. Laozi had mentioned that a country with a small population is his ideal country. However, after taking a close look at his description of this ideal country, we can find that non-action is not doing nothing, but passively waiting with potential actions.

A small country has fewer people. Though there are machines that can work ten to a hundred times faster than man, they are not needed. Though they have boats and carriages, no one uses them. Though they have armor and weapons, no one displays them. Their food is plain and good, their clothes fine but simple, their homes secure. They are happy in their ways. (1997, Chapter.80)

In an ideal country, we can see that the residents own machines, boats, weapons, food, clothes and houses. They have good equipment for transportation, military, and living. They just try not to use them. People in this country live in a safe and self-sufficient

situation, so they take death seriously. They do not risk their lives for long-distance travels but enjoy a simple and primary living style.

Laozi emphasized the necessity of sufficient preparation for wars. He did not expect that others would never invade his country. With a humble but firm attitude, he was ready to deter enemy. Laozi said, “I dare not make the first move but would rather play the guest. I dare not advance an inch but would rather withdraw a foot” (1997, Chapter 69). This passage shows that Laozi did not want to take the initial action in a war, but would rather take a conservative step, which reveals his benevolence and non-fighting orientation. However, as Laozi implied in Chapter 80, if an enemy intends to invade his country, he definitely will teach them a lesson. He exhibited his military might in a way that the enemy cannot foresee. Thus Laozi said that, “this is called rolling up your sleeves without showing your arm. Capturing the enemy without attacking, and being armed without weapons” (1997, Chapter 69).

Laozi knew that killing people goes against the Dao. After achieving the victory, we should stop the fighting right away, never glorying in the winning. Laozi emphasized that victory in war should not be celebrated with joy. Instead, it should be treated as attending a funeral ceremony. If one rejoices for the victory, he is cold-blooded. A cold-blooded ruler cannot fulfill himself (1997, Chapter 30, 31). As Laozi firmly asserted, the Dao of heaven likes to maintain balance. When one reaches his peak, it is his time to fall down. Likewise, an overjoyed army will lose. Instead, an army who burns with mournful indignation is bound to win.

Laozi's actions is also shown in his patience and persistence in work. Laozi encouraged people to do things consistently and patiently. He delineated that, “A tree as great as a man's embrace springs from a small shoot; a terrace nine stories high begins with a pile of earth; a journey of a thousand miles starts under one's feet” (1997, Chapter

64). A difficult task usually is accomplished after many small steps. Even for a sage, he did not attempt to do anything big but started from simple tasks. Thus he could achieve greatness eventually. Sages knew “the low is the foundation of high” and the perseverance of one’s will guarantees his accomplishment (Chapter 39). However, Laozi sighed that, “people usually fail when they are on the verge of success.” He thought that if people could “give as much care to the end as to the beginning,” then their success will not be too far. On the contrary, if one thinks ambitiously and works impatiently, he will fail like the one in Laozi’s analogies that “he who stands on tiptoe is not steady. He who strides cannot maintain the pace” (1997, Chapter 24). When we read Laozi’s messages, we should not only see his passive side of non-action, but also his aggressive actions in various contexts.

In the fable of “Paoding carves up a cow,” Zhuangzi reinforced Laozi’s idea of achieving intuitive non-actions through continuing actions, a never-ending practice. A story is said that a butcher, Paoding, was carving a bullock for Lord Wenhui. At every touch of his hand, the knife was slicing the flesh so gracefully and faultlessly. He followed the natural structure of the bullock, so he never touched its tendon or big bones. When Paoding was finished, the bullock didn’t even know it was dead. Lord Wenhui was amazed at his masterful skill. Paoding responded, “when I first began to carve a bullock, I saw nothing but the whole bullock.” After many years’ practice, “now I work on it by intuition and do not look at it with my eyes. My visual organs stop functioning while my intuition goes its own way” (p. 43). This is his non-action way to butcher bullocks. Without many years of experience, Paoding could not have built his intuition to this amazing extent. Echoing Laozi’s emphasis on patience and persistence, Paoding’s seemingly intuitive sense comes from continuous practices and experiences. Robert Eno echoes that,

In wide variety of ideal person so perfectly trained that in action his skills are transparent, requiring no attention for their perfect execution, thus allowing him to focus with full awareness on the lay of the land (often demoted by the term 勢 *shi*), and so exercise over his situation greater control than ordinary men. (1996, p. 137)

From Laozi's notions and Zhuangzi's fables, we can see that these ideal persons who perform non-action are doing more than nothing.

In the cruel and real world, Sunzi had no choice but used military force to achieve a relative peace. However, Sunzi's core thoughts were in line with Laozi's philosophy. He gave high priority to non-action over actions. His ideal victory was to win a war without physical fighting. He proposed that, "The best policy in war is to thwart the enemy's strategy. The second best is to disrupt his alliances through diplomatic means. The third best is to attack his army in the field. The worst policy of all is to attack walled cities" (1999, p. 17). If possible, Sunzi preferred to use verbal rhetoric and diplomatic tactics to solve problems rather than to attack soldiers and cities. There are three drawbacks to attack walled cities. First, attacking walled cities would drain his state of manpower and wealth. Sunzi anticipated the need of waging a physical war: one thousand light chariots, a hundred thousand armored soldiers with provisions enough to carry them for a long distance, the cost of maintenance of equipment, and stipends for the entertainment of state guests and diplomatic envoys. The total expenditure will amount to a huge price. When the war ends, his strength will be exhausted and his money will run out. His weakness would offer neighboring countries an advantage to seize his land. Second, such a close fighting would cause damage to the enemy's property and lives. When the

destruction took place, Sunzi could not take over the resource of the enemy state in whole. Sunzi hoped to gain maximal benefits with the smallest investment. Furthermore, physical battle will kill a lot of people. As a benevolent leader, Sunzi did not want to hurt innocent people. Therefore, Sunzi preferred to use non-action or non-violence to win a war. However, to win a war merely by the conviction of non-violence is not enough. One must build an unattackable military power in order to win.

With the hope of non-action in mind, Sunzi instead suggested five necessary actions. First, a commander should prepare the necessary provisions and weapons for his country. If one country does not have enough wealth to provide the above resource, it is hard to avoid being invaded and much harder to win by non-action. Therefore, a country should prepare abundant provisions and an overwhelming military force. In this situation, a country does not need to take any action. Its enemy states will be threatened by its military menace. Under pressure, it is easy to play around with diplomatic policies and break down the alliances among its enemy countries. That is called “to win a war without fighting.” In the modern society, this non-action strategy is often seen in international relations. Countries who advocate world peace own the most nuclear weapons such as the United States and China. Their weapons can destroy the whole world. However, they claim that they will not use them to harm humanity, but instead to threaten evil countries. That is the means of keeping peace by building strong military power; acting as a peacekeeper by non-acting.

The second action is that a commander should discipline his soldiers strictly through judicious rewards and punishments. For example, “in a chariot battle, when more than ten chariots have been captured, reward those who captured the first one” (p. 15). However, if the soldiers do not act in line with military laws or fail their missions, a ruler should punish them severely. As Sunzi emphasized, without strict punishment, soldiers will act

like spoiled children and be useless in a battlefield. However, before using severe penal punishment, Sunzi emphasized that a ruler should first build a close friendship with his army. Due to their respect and love for the ruler, the soldiers will not feel indignant when facing severe punishment.

The third action is that a sovereign must fully trust a capable commander and empower him by giving him absolute authority. When the sovereign himself stays in non-action, his commander can take a variety of actions. With complete trust, his commander is able to take any action based on his professional judgments without hesitation. As Hans-Georg Moeller explains Zhuangzi's belief, "while the ruler stays passively at the center of all action, all actions are coordinated by being clearly distinct from one another....The order of the political process depends on the subjects doing what is theirs to do—and only what is theirs to do—at the right place and time" (Moeller, 2004, p. 69).

The fourth action is that a commander should know himself and the enemy. A commander should bear in mind that,

Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without peril. If you are ignorant of the enemy and know yourself, you will stand equal chances of winning and losing. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you are bound to be defeated in every battle. (Sunzi, 1999, p. 23)

A commander should create an advantageous position for his troops. Enlightened by water, Sunzi realized that the nature of an army is like that of water. When water is put on level ground, it remains still. However, if the water is placed on a slope, it will move downward in a very fast and powerful way. As long as a ruler places his army into a good situation, they will move with agility. The difference creates powerful momentum. The

force of the army will be like “an onrushing torrent which, when suddenly released, plunges into a chasm a thousand fathoms deep” (p. 29). Due to the momentum, sending his army to battle is like rolling stones down a hill. The force is unstoppable and ferocious.

The above five actions are the foundation of non-action in warfare. Sunzi confidently claimed that, “the general who employs my assessment methods is bound to win; the general who does not heed my words will certainly lose” (1999, p. 5). Here, “non-action” for Sunzi does not mean to do things carelessly nor wait passively as its literal meaning. Instead, only when one equips himself with all possible actions will he be up to the standards to consider non-action. For example, white light may look nothing to many people. It is actually blended with seven colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and purple. Sunzi’s application of non-action comes from his secure feeling, being conscious that he has a strong backing.

Non-action for Sunzi also served the purpose of deception. He honestly admitted that, “war is a game of deception” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 7). In order to win a war, we need to feign non-action to act. Accordingly, we “feign incapability when in fact capable; feign inactivity when ready to strike; appear to be far away when actually nearby, and vice versa” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 7). As long as we look weak and inactive, the enemy may slack off toward their tense defense. At that moment, we “attack where he is least prepared” and “take action when he least expects us” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 7). This is what Sunzi meant the use of non-action in action.

Non-action for Sunzi also shows a ruler’s virtue. Sunzi laid heavy responsibility on the rulers. He stated that “war is a question of vital importance to the state, a matter of life and death, the road to survival or ruin” (1999, p. 3). This is the ruler’s duty to win a battle for his country. A capable ruler makes a victory look like a destiny. His people

thought their victories came as easily as “being able to see the sun and the moon, which is not test of vision; lifting a strand of animal hair, which is no sign of strength” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 26). However, his people never know why they could win so easily. His people assume that non-action can win wars. They did not know that the non-action is grounded in well-prepared actions. Their ruler had already assessed all the relative advantages and disadvantages carefully, developed thoughtful tactics and momentum, and made no mistakes in every movement. All those efforts made the winning an easy job. The capable ruler never revealed his actions in the process of managing warfare. The ruler hides his shining actions in a non-action guise.

Knowledge and Ignorance

In terms of the utility of knowledge, Laozi and Sunzi both knew its advantage and danger. Laozi hesitated about using it. Sunzi determinedly manipulated it for his own purpose. Laozi asserted that a ruler should not give people too much knowledge. Knowledge enlightens people. After one’s knowledge is widely expanded, then problems ensue. She may desire more than she needs. The desire for goods or fame is “the root cause of that human strife and conflict which lie at the heart of the social tragedy” (Schwartz, 1985, p. 191). Intelligent people use knowledge to cheat. Some use knowledge to seize wealth and rank from others. Some use it to fool his subordinates and superiors. Laozi sighed that, “Why is it so hard to rule? Because people are so clever. Rulers who try to use cleverness cheat the country. Those who rule without cleverness are a blessing to the land” (1997, Chapter 65). Too much knowledge not only harms people’s minds but also offer intellectuals an opportunity to fool people. Laozi stated that if people lack knowledge and desire, then intellectuals will not be able to make a playful use of desire to control them (Chapter 3).

By a fable “The tattooed Yue people,” Zhuangzi mocked at the vain attempts to make a profit out of a community who has less desire. “A man from the state of Song carried some ceremonial caps to the state of Yue for sale. But the men in Yue used to cut off their hair and tattoo their bodies, so the caps were useless to them” (p. 11). When a community does not value the products that more civilized people love, there is no way for intellectuals to induce that community to do wrong by the lure.

Knowledge not only evokes desire but also constrain people’s thoughts. Sometimes the more knowledge a person possesses, the more limitations she has. She despises others’ ignorance and condemns their rudeness. For example, when a person is versed in rituals, she may pull up her sleeves to fight with people who fail to respond her with propriety (Laozi, Chapter 38). She has formed an expectation of what is proper and what is not, thereby constraining herself. Knowledge reduces her tolerance for different behaviors. Laozi did not deny that knowledge does bring civilization. At the same time, it also brings trouble. Thus, Laozi suggested that rulers do not teach people too much knowledge, only the practical skills necessary for making a living.

Laozi’s notion of knowledge reminds us of the biblical story in Genesis. A long time ago, Adam and Eve enjoyed carefree life in the Garden of Eden. One day they ate the forbidden fruit and obtained knowledge about right and wrong. They became much clever than before. However, that knowledge did not bring them happiness but more worry. They started to understand many things including shame and propriety. They could not face God nakedly any more. They needed clothes to cover their bodies. They needed many new things to pacify their minds. The new need brought new work which exhausted their minds and bodies. From then on, people could not rest completely. This story echoes Laozi’s notion about knowledge. In Laozi’s days, people’s pursuit was for more than what they needed. Witnessing the fight for endless beauty, music, taste,

excitement, and treasure, Laozi reevaluated the benefit of knowledge and concluded that with less knowledge, people may live happier. Without material competition, people might feel carefree and peaceful. Under the primitive custom, intellectuals cannot manipulate people's desire or create conflicts. Postmodernist scholars also make similar arguments. They question the increasing levels manufacturing and high technology and deconstruct the utilities of knowledge.

Contrary to Laozi's disapproval of the use of knowledge, Sunzi fooled the enemy with his broad knowledge. Knowing the danger of knowledge, Sunzi used it as a device to profit. Human weakness offers Sunzi opportunities to control people. For example, he employed deception, knowledge of nature, morality, honor, and punishment to win a war. First, Sunzi lured the enemy with desirable bait and forced the enemy to obey his orders. He "seized whatever the enemy prizes most." By evoking the enemy's desire, the enemy blindly pursued the target and listened to him. Sunzi confidently stated that even when a well-organized army attacked him, he would not worry. He just took away whatever the enemy prizes the most, then the enemy did whatever he wanted them to do (1999, p. 87). In addition to the lure for enemy, Sunzi also boosted his people's morale by giving them material rewards. Moreover, deception was also encouraged in wars. Sunzi taught rulers the games of disguise based on yin-yang. For example, when we feign ourselves as cowards, we encourage the enemy's overconfidence to take advantage.

Sunzi not only had broad knowledge of military psychology but also of science. The science is the knowledge of weather, geography and military laws. In Sunzi's terminology, they are called Heaven (天 *tian*) and earth (地 *di*). By the three means, a ruler can convince his people to follow him. By "heaven," a ruler needs to have the knowledge of weather. He should conduct battles in accordance with changes of weathers and comprehend all kinds of atmospheric and climatic changes. By "earth," it means that

a leader should be able to assess the geographic distance and conditions. In order to take advantage of the natural geography, he should understand the geographic variations such as the narrowness and broadness of a land and the danger of the terrain. The knowledge helps a leader to choose proper locations. He knows how to gain the most advantageous terrain but trap his enemy into danger. He knows how to make right prediction about when to retreat and advance. By possessing the two kinds of knowledge, a ruler can operate a large army like directing one person.

In addition to the above knowledge, a ruler needs to recognize and avoid five weak personalities in himself: stubborn recklessness, fear of death, hot temperament, susceptibility to critique, and excessive compassion toward his people. Being stubborn, a ruler may be easily deceived; being reckless, he may be easily killed; being hot tempered, he can be stirred to anger easily; being sensitive to honor, he is open to be insulted. If he is too compassionate toward his people, he may hesitate to make immediate decision. The five weaknesses will bring trouble to the state. They are the cause of calamities in war. The recognition of the five weaknesses is basic knowledge for rulers. Sunzi never overlooked them. On the other hand, he also made good use of the enemy's weaknesses when the enemy showed one of them.

Lastly, a knowledgeable ruler is familiar with how to reduce the enemy's power. Sunzi suggested a method: concentrate our energy at one place while diverting theirs to ten places. By doing so, we can seduce the enemy to strike at wrong targets, thereby dispersing their power (Sunzi, 1997, p. 39). We concentrate our power in one place and divide enemy's power into ten places. By creating a potential difference, our army will have an easy win.

Zhuangzi affirmed the benefit of knowledge to the people. However, no matter how smart humans might be, Zhuangzi also called our attention to human limitation. He stated

that, “man’s life is limited but knowledge is unlimited. To pursue the unlimited with the limited is fatiguing; to know this but still pursue unlimited knowledge with limited life is fatal” (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 43). Zhuangzi discouraged us from pursuing everything because it is impossible. The universe is so big and its knowledge is infinite.

However, he encouraged us to expand our imagination through widening our knowledge. Zhuangzi demonstrated that “no fully objective way exists to decide which of the conflicting perspectives is correct because any decision is bound to reflect a perspective” (Yearley, 1996, p. 156). With knowledge, one can widen his mind and come along with new ideas. Breaking away from our self-constrained thoughts, a thing’s utilities will be endless. Zhuangzi told a story to demonstrate the difference between ignorant and knowledgeable persons. In the state of Song, a family inherited a secret formula, by which they could protect their skin from cracking and earned a little money on cloth bleaching. However, the same formula earned a great deal of wealth and fame for a traveler. The traveler used the same formula to help the king of Wu win a battle on water. With the protection of the formula, the Wu soldiers could fight successfully in water battles and defeated their enemy. Zhuangzi, by this fable, indicated that our fate is not fixed. As long as we can make good use of our knowledge and extend our imagination and worldview, the same conditions can result in different ends.

Zhuangzi concluded the story that, “By the same recipe for chapped hands, one man gained a piece of land while others never went beyond bleaching the silk floss. It is because they used it in different ways” (1999, pp. 11-12). Zhuangzi asserted that the value of something depends on how you approach it and where you put it into use. If one is not knowledgeable, his narrow sight will limit an object’s function. It will only possess the value that a person anticipates it to be. If the person expands his knowledge, this item will widely open its possibility in functions. That is the benefit of knowledge.

According to Zhuangzi, even though humans know little, we are still guided by a greater knowledge in our everyday life, of which we are not aware. The unconscious knowledge is the truth we have not discovered yet and we will never completely discover. Therefore, Zhuangzi said, “although we have limited knowledge, we have to rely on what we do not know in order to understand nature” (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 433). It is how “our feet tread on restricted spots of the earth, we have to rely on those places of the earth on which we have not treaded in order to go a long distance” (Zhuangzi, 1999, p. 433). As Laozi said, “without going outside, you may know the whole world. Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven” (1997, Chapter 47). Our bodies and minds have already demonstrated a great knowledge in line with the Dao. We are just not aware of the existence of Dao.

Conclusion

Daoist sages used dialectic reversals to deconstruct the dichotomy in which gain is traditionally preferred to loss; life, to death; hardness, to softness; action, to non-action; knowledge, to ignorance. However, as A. C. Graham proposes, “reversals in Lao-tzu are merely of relative superiority, they are not experiments in abolishing A in revenge against the traditional effort to abolish B” (1991, P. 227). Laozi, Sunzi, and Zhuangzi never devalued the importance of the signified yang: gain, life, hardness, action, and knowledge. From previous discussion, we can see that the three Daoist sages capitalized on dialectics to expose the interrelationship between yin and yang. They broke down the dichotomy to challenge our habitual values and to reveal to us the principles of the universe which are more than what we perceive through worldly logos.

Chapter 3

Laozi and Zhuangzi Meet Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen's tales are popular all over the world. In China, his stories have intrigued ordinary people and been welcomed by both young students and teachers over the last century. They appeal to the Chinese because they resonate with elements of Chinese cultural thoughts. In this chapter, I would like to examine the connections between Andersen's tales and Chinese political and cultural traditions, particularly the Daoist tradition. This Eastern lens, I believe, will shed new light on this great European fantasist and his work.

Allegorical fantasies allow readers in different times and places to expand upon their meanings by responding to them differently; however, if we trace back to the original meanings of the stories, their creations are closely related to the authors' cultural background and living experience. To explore the Daoist connections in Andersen's tales, it is necessary to understand both Andersen's and Daoist sages' life experiences. Their life experiences might have inspired them to create works with resonant messages.

The Life of Hans Christian Andersen

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) was born in the Danish town of Odense, two months before his parents got married. He was the only child, therefore all their love and hope was heavily placed on him. Andersen's family was very poor. His mother was an illiterate peasant with a simple, pious, and superstitious mind. His father was a shoemaker, having no opportunity to obtain an education. However, his father was active reader and thinker. He commented on political and religious events of his time rebelliously and critically. He taught Andersen how to appreciate the beauty of

everything in human and non-human worlds. After all, everything has its own characteristic. A leaf, a battle, even a darning needle reveals its astounding effect on daily life. His father also taught Andersen how to make toy theaters and play those miniature figures through imaginary stories. Sadly, his father suffered poverty and depression. As a result, his father left home for wars. When Andersen was eleven, his father died from diseases.

Little Andersen had a lonely childhood. He had no child friends. He indulged himself in reading books and playing with his home-made toy theaters. Luckily, he had some adult friends who shared similar interests with him. His school experience was terribly scarring. He was bullied and never returned to that school. He only stayed in a small Jewish school for one year where classmates were nice. The young Andersen never stopped dreaming of his splendid future. At fourteen, he made his way to Copenhagen to seek good fortune. For three years, he almost starved. He made a living by performing in theaters. One day, good luck visited him. The formidable Jonas Collin, a state councilor, included Andersen in his family. Jonas Collin sent Andersen to a strict school where the headmaster, Simon Meisling, educated Andersen harshly, forbidding him from doing many activities. After the hard training, Andersen started to write adult poems, travel novels, plays, and fairy tales. In 1835, he published a thin paperbound booklet of four fairy tales which gained increasing praise from child readers and adults. At the same time, he also received cruel condemnation from some Danish critics. They criticized his lack of moral lessons and the absurdity of his talking objects in his stories. However, Andersen did not care about those comments. For him, these stories bore the warm memories of his father and they are invaluable to him (H. C. Andersen, Naomi Lewis, and Joel Stewart, 2004).

He called his life a fairy tale. His life was plagued by the obscurity of poverty, self-doubt, self-pity, and self-mockery. Even though later he became a famous writer, he never took a step away from his young days. Many of his fairy tales have obvious autobiographical reflections. For example, the story “The Ugly Duckling” strongly resembles little Andersen’s unpleasant experience in schools, where the teachers and classmates despised his poor appearance and lack of knowledge. The story shows the transformation of the ignoble duckling into a noble swan, which signifies Andersen’s coming-of-age. When children are astounded at the beauty of the swan, the swan feels worthy of having so much suffering before, or he would have never appreciated the happiness he has now (H. C. Andersen, 1942).

Similar to Andersen’s early life, the lives of Laozi and Zhuangzi were harsh and impoverished; travelling across boundless nature, they chose to stay poor for their whole lives. They refused to take high ranks with material comfort for their careers. Different from Daoist sages, Andersen was ambitious for fame and wealth. He desperately wanted to be recognized as a Denmark’s best writer (Zipes, 2005). Andersen eventually enjoyed the perpetual wealth and reputation like the ugly duckling in his story.

Despite the different choices that the two Daoist sages and Andersen made, the three writers share a similar philosophy which enlightens people all over the world. Andersen concealed his deep sorrow and reflections into his stories. The protagonists in his tales often face terrible insecurity and mockery. For readers, it is painful to read the hurt and rage in his tales (Zipes, 2005). Tatar described that during her lectures on Andersen at Harvard University, her students almost cried when they heard the cruel description of “a child corpse lying out in the streets in ‘The Little Match Girl,’ the horrors of the executioners’ ax in ‘The Red Shoes,’ or the merciless torments suffered by Inger in ‘The Girl who Trod on the Loaf’” (2007, p. xi). However, at the end of Andersen’s stories,

good usually overcomes evil, sometimes in a religious and transcendental way. As Tatar and Zipes observe, the characters in Andersen's stories may experience silent suffering or physical torture. However, through the suffering they establish their true nobility and enjoy happy lives in a spiritual world as compensation (Tatar, 1999, p. 214; Zipes, 1999, p. 96). The just endings comfort the hearts of suffering people in the world. Andersen "wanted to bask in divine glory, for he believed that God has assigned him a special place on earth" (Zipes, 2005, p. xiii). His fairy tales not only expose readers to the dark sides of the world but also enlighten them about the ultimate goal of life. For Andersen, suffering within the nineteenth-century sentimentalism tradition, these characters could not find a way to live freely. Through his stories, Andersen perpetuated the very conservative Christian principles of his days. His religious spirit shares some common ground with Daoist transcendental views.

Andersen is credited as the first fairy tales writer who created original stories (H. C. Andersen, 1982). Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm, one century earlier than Hans Andersen, had compiled many famous fairy tales, such as "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Hansel and Gretel," and "Rapunzel." They collected the existing oral folklores and beautified the language. Andersen, in contrast, created new stories, delving deep into his cultural consciousness and the primal human nature. He used his emotional sentimentality and wit to satirize his contemporaries with entertaining stories. He believed in fairy tales sincerely. As Andrew Lang comments, "there are not many people now, perhaps there are none, who can write really good fairy tales, because they do not believe enough in their own stories" (1892, preface). Andersen believed that in the distant past some fairy tales and legends are based in fact. He had drawn upon themes, motifs, characterizations, and settings common in traditional literature and added his own

creativity. His enchanting tales have been orally and literarily transmitted over generations worldwide and have enticed readers into an out-of-the ordinary life.

Literature Review

Andersen's tales are widely discussed in the academic world. In the field of education, his tales have inspired many teachers to reflect upon both their educational philosophy and classroom practices. As Maria Tatar (1999) argues, there are many variant forms of fairy tales. The origins of fairy tales are hard to trace. For instance, there are "Cinderella" stories in China, Italy, Germany, and England. These "Cinderellas" bear a stylistic mode in which an oppressed heroine will encounter good luck and then change her fate. Therefore, Tatar asserts that fairy tales derive largely from a community's collective memory. She further notes that Andersen captures the style and spirit of European folk tales. However, his creation calculates strong didactic lessons with religious implications that are not obvious in traditional folk tales. Since his tales are so influential, they have become a part of the Western collective culture.

Most studies on Andersen's tales are centered on educational concerns in Europe and the U.S.; few are situated in Asia. In the U.S., W. James Popham (1997) used Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes" as a metaphor to discuss the educational standards in secondary schools. Because "a ruler is not apt to redress his state of undress unless someone forcefully informs him he's naked as a jaybird, a ruler can be persuaded to parade around in the buff if he's made to believe he is wearing wonderful but invisible garments" (p. 21). Educators always feel secure if they follow the "standards" that have long been praised. Some educators are entranced with standards but fail to recognize a raft of problems caused by different determinative groups and different sub-standards. Popham indicates that content standard is "the knowledge and skills we want our students

to achieve as a consequence of education” (p. 22). However, it has some weaknesses such as the overwhelming numbers of instructional objectives and the absence of assessments.

Music educator, Carlos Xavier Rodriguez, interprets Andersen’s fairy tale “Nightingale” from an educational perspective in American classrooms. He argues that the story reveals that sensitivity of musical expression is a highly intuitive skill. In the story, the mechanical bird can perform as correct as the real nightingale. However, emotions beyond the same songs are different. Students with technical proficiency are like the mechanical bird that given an accurate performance but not an emotional performance. Teachers should emphasize the expressive part that the real nightingale has mastered and foster the development of the intuitive skill. The mechanical bird’s singing lacks intuitive beauty and meaning to herself because she does everything only to meet the demand of the task. The performers should have their own unique and personal manner when interpreting music, not just work as an accurate performing machine. The author makes good connections between the story of the nightingale and music education. She argues that, “The story of the nightingale reminds music educators that there are some important aspects of musical sound and performance that should never be forgotten and that these aspects make the music unique, creative, personal, and meaningful” (p. 25). Furthermore, the living environment influences the result of performance. The real nightingale lives in a wild world, so that her musical expression is sensitive. Therefore, if students are permitted to discover and experience wilder environments, their performance will be more comprehensive.

Another research project was done in Andersen’s home country, called the European Natural Interactive Communication for Edutainment project from 2002 to 2005. Niels Ole Bernsen and Laila Dybkjar present a multimodal conversational edutainment system which embodies 3D animated fairy tales authored by Andersen. This project builds a

prototype which enables kids and youngsters to have conversation with 3D animated author Andersen and his fairy tales characters. The prototype system deals with speech recognition for both English and Swedish language, gesture recognition and gesture input fusion, conversation theory, natural language understanding and multi-character plots.

In the game, users meet Andersen in Copenhagen and talk with him. At any time, users can freely change the topic of their talks and provide their own comments. Han Christian Andersen will give response in context. When Andersen is alone, he is presented as thinking and meandering at his room or on the street of Copenhagen. He tells stories that users mention and reacts based on Andersen's possible knowledge. If Andersen cannot understand the questions, he will tell the user. For example, a user asks, "How old are you?" Andersen answers that, "I was born in 1805 and died in 1875. So my lifetime lasted 70 years. It was a time full of great events in the world and also for me. I am happy to tell you about the things I remember from my life which must have been very exciting..." When the user asks him a question like "can you dance?" Andersen answers, "Sorry, I am sorry but I still don't understand. Maybe you are talking about one of the many things I still don't know about" (2002, p. 40). This is an interactive spoken computer game. However, it is still a big challenge for the future project to achieve full human social conversation skill and multiple emotions.

Comparing mermaid stories between Andersen's literary version and Disney videos, Bonnie J. Leadbeater and Glorilodato Wilson (1993) juxtapose Andersen's mermaid stories in the 19th and 20th century and recognize how these adolescent princesses have evolved in women's roles. Through the comparison, readers can see the reflection of Western culture across time. Andersen's fairy tales were written for children and with strong educational utility. His stories convey mores and the consequence of violating the mores. Disney's version conveys the religious and moralistic messages in an entertaining

form. It holds children's attention and blurs the moral dilemma with funny episodes and adorable creatures. The Disney's "The Little Mermaid" offers parents "more control of television viewing over both what is watched and how much advertising their children can see" (p. 469). Even though the video format is an attractive media for audiences, adults prefer the written medium. The written tales allow adults to have more interpersonal contact with child readers and give adults opportunities to convey and interpret the stories.

The author argues that even though time evolves, the Mermaid in the late 20th century still transmits and enforces the norm of the silent woman as that of the 19th century. In Andersen's version, the Mermaid princess yearns for the human world and eternal life. At the end, the Mermaid is unable to become the prince's wife. She perishes and turns into a spiritual being as a daughter of the air. Disney's "Little Mermaid" stands to explore the world of men. However, the exploration does not go very far. The authors argue that, "the sexual ordering of women's roles is unchanged" and the status quo of women's powerlessness and silence remain accepted at the end of the 20th century (p. 484).

These studies of Andersen's tales are meaningful to educators. The interpretations of "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "Nightingale" enlighten educators on the standard evaluation and rigid pedagogy in education. The study on Andersen's tales in 3D animated technology enriches the traditional form of storytelling. Through the comparison between two versions of "Little Mermaid," the authors discover the evolution of gender roles from the mid 19th to late 20th century. The aforementioned studies encourage readers to experience Andersen's tales from different angles.

However, Andersen's tales are not only popular in the West. In China, his tales are long established and have influenced on Chinese politics and education. Both

condemnations and compliments have been made by Chinese politicians and educators in the past century. In the following section, I will indicate these hot discussions in China.

Andersen in China

Readers may have certain expectations and accept literary works in one historical period, and have different expectations and not accept it in another. The reception is historically conditioned, based on the political climate and the pursuit of a particular cultural ideology. The reception of Andersen in China is not always positive. As Jack Zipes (2005) argues, Andersen's tales are the best-known in the world but also the most misunderstood ones. In England and America, Andersen's fairy tales were widely accepted by the middle class partly because his works reflected very conservative Christian spirit. In addition, his works emerged in the transition from romanticism to realism in the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century, rationalism dominated Europe, which was pursuing scientific facts and practical experientialism. In the eighteenth century, people started to resist rationalism and turned to pursue free imagination, emphasizing the beauty of nature and the lives of common people. In the nineteenth century, people became concerned with the middle and lower classes' lives. Andersen integrated his personal imagination and realistic elements in his stories, making them popular in his times.

In China, Andersen's works were received in close alignment with the political and cultural climate (Wang Quangeng, 1985). In the 1920s and 1930s, his tales were hailed as renowned and excellent works. However, in the 1930s and 1940s, his works went downhill, receiving harsh accusations. The positive and negative receptions are closely associated with political correctness of the time.

Andersen's fairy tales were first introduced to China in 1913 by Zhou Zuoren, a chief campaigner of the Chinese New Cultural Movement. The Chinese literati worked hard to promulgate and translate Andersen's tales. Using Andersen's stories to counter the Chinese feudal tradition of education and politics, they regarded the popularization of Andersen's works as a political and cultural project. The new ideal world for the May-Forth reformers was to overthrow the Confucian cannons and the patriarchy carried out by the feudalist government. Andersen's tales recognize children's mentality and interest. By using lyrical narrative, animals and plants as characters, and magic, his stories attract children. Lacking in imaginative elements, Confucian cannons aims to educate children in morality and loyalty to the family and country. May-Forth reformers thought that the Confucian texts tend to be didactic and feudalistic. Andersen's works represent new Western modernization which Chinese literati regarded as a savior of their corruptive nation. Andersen's barbarian children and boundless imagination oppose the Confucian expectation of filial piety.

Ironically, in the 1920s and 1930s, some Chinese literati also used Andersen's fairy tales to resist Western imperialism and invasion. For example, Luo Bannong, one of the early translators of Andersen fairy tales, published the story of "The Emperor's New Clothes" in *Chinese Novelist World* (中華小說界 *Zhong Hua Xia Shuo Jie*) in 1914 July. He renamed it as "The Little Attic of the Foreign Fan" (Yang Mi Xiao Lou 洋迷小樓). The story depicts a student who studies in the West and comes back to China. He nakedly walks on a street. Everybody laughs at him. However, he proudly responds that all the passersby are too stupid to see his delicate dress, which is a new invention from the West. He entertained Chinese readers through the taunt of the Western worshiper. However, Luo claimed that his translation was authentic to the original story but adapted for the

Chinese custom. The goal of the translation was to teach the Chinese Western worshipers a lesson (Wang Quangeng 王泉根, 1985).

In the 1930s and 1940s, Andersen's stories were seen as impracticable and poisonous material for children, since they were useless for saving the suffering China. China underwent Japanese invasion and civil wars. Chinese literati believed Andersen's works made children evade reality and dwell in a deeply imaginative world. They were obstructive for solving the social problems. Only a few of Andersen's tales were accepted and told by Chinese adults such as "The Little Match Girl" and "The Emperor's New Clothes." These two stories conformed to the convictions of Communism. For example, the little match girl represents the misery of the lower working class who were exploited by the bourgeois. Chinese communists had infinite sympathy with her miserable fate. Thus the politicians had therefore put this story to the list of required school readings. Similar political consideration was applied to "The Emperor's New Clothes." The emperor's ignorance represents the autocratic government's wallowing in luxury and pleasure, which is exactly what Communists wanted to condemn.

Influenced by globalization, Andersen's tales have been imported to China since 1913 and experienced various adaption and political interpretations. After The People's Republic of China opened itself to the rest of the world in 1979, Chinese society became less political and more prosperous. Children's literature no longer aims to serve political struggles exclusively. In the twenty first century, his works continue to be identified in the Chinese context and bear new cultural implications. Andersen's tales have had more translations, allowing them to stay away from the political purpose and leave more space for philosophical and personal interpretations. The following exploration takes a new angle, which reads Andersen's tales from a Daoist perspective. Most of Andersen's tales have picture book versions. In my analysis, I focus on the non illustrated tales and

include three popular and three not so popular tales. Among his tales, these six embody strong Daoist elements.

Boundless Longevity and Temporary Joy

For Daoist sages and Andersen, the means of living forever is through a transcendent way. As Burno Bettelheim (1976) indicates, “most fairy tales originated in periods when religion was a most important part of life; thus they deal, directly or by inference, with religious themes” (p. 13). Fairy tales from around the world reflect the ethical and religious themes prominent in their times and places of origins. In *Dao De Jing*, Laozi explains that the reason Heaven and Earth are everlasting is because they do not foster his or her life but others (1999, chapter 7). Only when one does not foster his own life, will he last forever. Only when one puts himself behind others, will he be to the fore. Only when one sets himself outside the self, will he stay in the center of others’ world. For Laozi, a sage always “put himself in the background” and “does not strive for any personal end” (chapter 7). His argument subverts the secular assumption, turning the logical reasoning upside down. Sometimes people have a hard time comprehending Laozi’s means of achieving a boundless longevity.

Interestingly, Andersen also depicted a boundless longevity with religious nature in his tales. Since Andersen lived in the 19th century Europe where a strongly moralistic atmosphere dominated literature, the wish for ethical perfection was vividly reflected in his works. For example, in “The Little Mermaid,” the mermaid faces a death and life choice when she knows that the prince will marry another girl. What benefits her is so obvious. If she does not use the sharp knife to kill the prince, she cannot get the prince’s blood to bath her feet. Then she will turn into foam on the waves. The cruel reality challenges the little mermaid’s ethical consciousness. She recalls her past: she has made

so many sacrifices for the prince. She traded her beautiful voice to the witch and endured the extreme pain of her human feet. However, the prince hurts her in return. She sighs that, “Alas, he doesn’t know it was I who saved his life. I carried him over the sea to the garden where the temple stands... It is I who will care for him, love him, and give all my life to him” (2004, p. 74). The little mermaid endures the distress of not being able to tell the prince about her rescue of him. He falls in love with another beautiful girl. His action, even if not deliberate, puts the little mermaid in danger. Whether she should continue her sacrifice challenges her morality. At the end she does not kill the prince, thus giving up the chance to reunite with her beloved family and sacrificing herself.

The story’s end reveals Andersen’s pursuit of an ethical perfection, that is, to bring others happiness by giving up his own. Ending the story with a sad scene, Andersen sought a compensation for a good girl’s extinction. He changed the rules of gaining an immortal soul in the mermaid’s world to those in the air daughter’s world. It is said that the little mermaid becomes one of the children of the air who will rise to the kingdom of God after three hundred years.

Andersen’s ethical view resonates in Laozi’s notion of nature, which is devoted wholly to the human being in a silent way. According to Laozi’s principles, if a person puts other’s need prior to hers, she eventually will gain great reward in return. However, in the story, the prince does not pay back the little mermaid, but puts her into danger. The way Andersen dealt with this sad end was to appeal to a religious compensation, turning the little mermaid into an air’s daughter and awarding her an immortal soul in Heavenly Kingdom.

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw critiques the little mermaid’s disadvantaged situation from a colonial perspective. She suggests that the little mermaid’s sacrifice is her own choice. She crosses over to the human world as an outsider, thus she is reduced to a dominated

and powerless person. However, if she goes back to her underwater world, she is a princess with royal power. She has chances to choose her residence, “If she would only kill the prince she would easily return to a home where she is not only cherished for her talents but also valued” (Yenika-Agbaw, 2011, p. 99). But she did not.

The pursuit of ethical perfection for Andersen and Laozi seems the same. However, with a careful examination, we find that their solutions for an undeserved disaster deviated. Andersen resorts to the justice of God; Laozi, to the justice of natural principle, the Dao. The divergence comes from the different cultural assumption in the 19th century Europe and the 6th century B.C.E. China.

In order to contrast with the selfless mermaid, Andersen created another tale “Red Shoes,” devising an inescapable punishment for a girl who pursues her desire by ignoring others’ pain. In the story, a little girl Karen cruelly deserts the sick old lady, who adopted her and loved her as her own child. She goes to a big ball with the forbidden red shoes for a church Communion. Putting on the shoes, she cannot control her feet and keeps dancing. She dances towards the open church-door and meets an angel there with stern and solemn face. The angel says, “dance you shall from door to door, and at all the houses where the children are vain and proud, you shall knock till they hear you and are frightened” (Tatar, 1999, p. 243). Under such unbearable suffering, Karen asks the executioner to cut off her feet with the red shoes and repented in front of God. Finally, her soul feels released. The admonishing message to children is clearly revealed in this tales. Writing allegorical fantasies, Andersen reveals his condemnation of the vanity in his time. “Red Shoes” shows that in Andersen’s ethical concern, vanity should not be encouraged. Furthermore, it deserves a ruthless punishment.

However, from Laozi’s point of view, Karen might not need to be punished in such a severe way. She is just too ignorant to know the principle of the Dao, which operates

the world in a selfless way. Laozi would prefer to teach Karen the Dao of nature and educate her about what are the true benefits and consequences of her actions. The punishment for Laozi would not come from God but people's bad treatment as a reactions of her selfishness.

Happiness is Rooted in Misery

Andersen satirizes the pursuit of vanity and material luxury through stories. His fairy tales reveal simplicity and humor but also incisively expose human's weakness. In the story "The Happy Family," two old snails and their only son are satisfied to live on a burdock forest where they get delicious food and warm clothes. Even though they have never gone outside of the burdock forest, they have heard that in the old days their ancestors enjoyed honorable treatment in a manor where they got boiled, turned black, and laid out on a silver plate. The snails imagine how wonderful the legendary experience will be but are ignorant of its death implication of death. Luckily, none of the snail family gets a chance to go to a manor or they will die. Counter to their wish, the old snails comfort their children that, "The manor must have fallen into ruins and that everybody in the world had died out" (p. 226). Since no outsiders provide a contradicting argument, they believe that their assumption must be true. Content with their environment, they enjoy the "rain beat down for them on the burdock leaves—rub-a-dub-a-dub—and the sun shone for them to give colour to the burdock forest, and they were very happy" (p. 226).

The snails might not know what happened in the old days, but human readers know. That legendary experience the old snails aspire to is actually a tragedy. The fact of the rumor is that their ancestors were fried in a heated pot and lost their lives. Without consciousness, how could they feel the honor lying on a beautiful silver plate? Luckily,

the snail family has no chances to fulfill their wish, so they live carefree in their small forest. A closed and self-sufficient world is Laozi's ideal country, where

A small country has fewer people. Their food is plain and good, their clothes fine but simple, their homes secure. They are happy in their ways. Though they live within sight of their neighbors, and crowing cocks and barking dogs are heard across the way, yet they leave each other in peace while they grow old and die. (1997, chapter 80)

Laozi contended that a small country where everyone has enough supply and no particular talent is promoted is the greatest paradise. The people there never think of invading others because what their neighboring country has, they have as well. In contrast, if people have too much intelligence, their thoughts will go too far to feel content. Thus, Laozi sighed that it is so hard to rule people because people are too clever to stay satisfied with their possession. Knowledge opens people's eyes and at the same time expands their desires. Desires drive people to work hard even at the expense of life. Laozi thought that it is unworthy. Laozi questioned the worldly value by asking, "between a person's fame and his life, which one does the person treasure more?" (chapter 4). The unspoken answer implies that life should be a top priority. The way a sage keeps people content with their life is not to enlighten them with knowledge. Sages do not encourage the pleasure of sensation but focus on strengthening their bodies and developing agriculture. Like Andersen's tale, the snail family lives in an isolated forest. They cannot see anything better than their own burdock home, so they are contented and happy. If the snail family is able to go far away and witness grandness outside their home, they might no longer feel happy with their condition.

From Zhuangzi's point of view, the value of carefree life is more than that of fame and wealth. He celebrated the aspiration of not being "glorious" by which one can do whatever he likes without restriction from external power. Zhuangzi's reserved attitude is evidenced in his reluctance to participate in politics. A story recorded in *Zhuangzi* says that once Zhuangzi was offered a government position in the state of Wei. Two administrators from Wei came to persuade him to take the position. Zhuangzi, instead of giving a rude rejection, asked them a question: "I've heard that there is a sacred turtle in the state of Chu, which was dead for three thousand years. The lord keeps it in a bamboo case covered with a kerchief. Would this turtle prefer to be dead and kept in such a grand style or to be alive and able to drag its tail in the mud?" (p. 281). The two ministers, of course, chose to be alive rather than being a holy decoration, so did Zhuangzi.

Echoing the ironic notions in Andersen's "The Happy Family," in the above fable Zhuangzi indicates that the pursuit of glory at the expense of freedom and life is not worthy. Even though both the snail family and Zhuangzi live in a simple and humble life, they gain the most valuable gift, their lives and freedom. The snail family's luck comes from the ignorance of outside world; Zhuangzi's luck comes from the loss of a good official position. As Daoist message will say "happiness is rooted in misery. Misery lurks beneath happiness" (1997, chapter 58). Luck and misery are one. Misery can turn into a good luck. Good luck may end up as a misery. To pursue fame and wealth is to fill water into a bottomless pit which will never be full.

Zhuangzi also thought that comparison is vain and unfair to people living in different conditions. To promote certain qualities and look down on others brings pain to people who live in different conditions. An inspiring fable is said,

One day, siding up from the ocean, a tortoise passed by a well. A frog in a well talked to the tortoise that, “Hey, come on in and sit for a while. I live like a king here. When I leap into the water, it supports my weight and keeps me afloat. And when I dive below the surface, I relax and let the mud massage my legs. And in the evening, if I don’t want to stay in the well, I jump up here. I spread out in a chink in the side of the well, where I sleep and dream curious dreams. And in the morning, I jump down and play all around the well. I am happy like this every day. I see crabs and tadpoles in the well, too, but I don’t think they are as happy as I am.” The tortoise goes in and takes a look. He said, “I can not fit. Your well is too small.” The frog answers that, “But it’s so big, how can you say it’s small?” The tortoise said, “if you want to talk big, the Eastern Sea is big. The Eastern Sea is so big, that a thousand miles isn’t enough to measure the distance across, and a thousand yards isn’t enough to measure its depth. Now that is big. Your well is nothing in comparison.” The frog feels surprised but depressed. (Zhuangzi, 2005, pp. 66-68)

Indeed the frog does not understand the tortoise’s pleasure because of his limited ability. However, for a frog, living in a well has already satisfied him. If a tortoise forces a frog to embrace a “greater” aspiration, it will frustrate the frog. He not only cannot reach the goal but also lose his confidence. He may no longer enjoy his living environment.

According to an educational philosophy, there is no absolute pain or happiness embedded in one thing. It is a person’s feeling which makes the thing painful or joyful. An activity over which one feels excited about may be a heavy burden for another person. For example, a boy who has strong muscles may enjoy football class. The football class offers him an opportunity to show his outstanding athleticism. However, for a physically

weak boy, a football game may be his nightmare, because it evokes his frustrating memory of the previous experience. The various feelings come from one's physical quality, personality, cultural background, education, classes, and age. Everyone is different and unique. Educators should not set up single standards to judge children's achievements. Children who fail to meet our expectations may lose their own paths and become self-accusing.

Misery Lurks Beneath Happiness

Different from the old snail family, in Andersen's story "The Fir Tree," the fir tree eventually fulfills his dream. However, it brings him annihilation. This story illuminates the Daoist notion that the fame humans desperately pursue sometimes brings misery. As the story depicts, in the fir tree's young age, "the little fir tree was in such a passionate hurry to grow. It paid no heed to the warmth of sun or the sweetness of the air, and it took no notice of the village children who went chattering along when they were out after strawberries or raspberries" (2004, p. 128). The fir tree was filled with ambition to become a huge tree, but he failed to realize that the most valuable were around him. When the tree finally became big and strong, he stood higher than others and saw faraway. Ironically, just because of his excellent physical condition, he turned out to be the best choice for carpenters. As a grown and glorious fir tree, he was cut down. "The axe cut deep through pit and marrow, and the tree fell to the earth with a sigh, faint with pain, with no more thoughts of any happiness" (2004, p. 130).

When the fir tree looked back, he eventually realized that the happiest time was his youth. He recalled his young day: even though with no grand looking, he lived carefree with forest friends. Children sat down by him and always looked at him with admiration. He, however, never cherished the admiration until he experienced the broken dream.

Every word from the sunbeams, winds, and dews became clear and meaningful to him. “Rejoice in your youth” said the sunbeams. “Rejoice in your lusty growth, and in the young life this is in you.” The wind kissed the tree and the dew wept tears over it (2004, p. 129).

The young tree is too naïve to understand faithful advice. He preferred the glory scene of a Christmas tree that sparrows twittered. “We looked in through the window-panes and saw how the trees were planted in the middle of a cosy room and decorated with the loveliest things: gilded apples, honey cakes, toys and hundreds of candles” (2004, p. 134). When the fir tree asked what happens then, the sparrows could not give an answer, just said, “We, we didn’t see anymore. But it was magnificent.” The fir tree thus could not know the whole story. The fir tree did experience the happy moments as a Christmas tree, sitting in a warm house and wearing shining decorations. But soon after Christmas, it was time for the tree to be chopped up. He was turned into many small pieces as fuel in a campfire. The tree groaned so painfully that “every groan was like a little shot going off” (2004, p. 134). He started to miss the summer days in the wood and the winter days with shining stars. His regret for the lost past gives readers an inspiration that sometimes the ‘glory’ may not be true “glory”. By contrast, a seeming distress may not be so bad. With an example, Laozi contended that when “one tempers a sword-edge to its very sharpest, the sword-edge will soon grows dull,” so does the development of a fate (Laozi, Chapter 9). When one reaches her climax, she will begin to go down. Thus, a wise person should not only look at a glorious side of an event but also carefully examine its dark side.

In the fir tree’s case, he simple-mindedly assumed that to be a big tree is the best, so he hurries to grow up and pays no heed to things around him. However, as in Laozi’s observation, the “good” and “bad” cannot be distinctly defined. Negative and positive

sides contain each other like the symbol of Yin and Yang. Success could be the beginning of failure; failure, the beginning of success.

The storyline of Andersen's tales teaches Daoist philosophy, which also appears in Zhuangzi's fables. Zhuangzi argued that for different people one thing might embody different values. In some occasions, a useless object for one person may be very useful for another. The judgment depends on the user's philosophy and her expected utility. This argument can be seen clearly in Zhuangzi's fable "The Earth Spirit's Tree." It is said that a master carpenter was taking his students to the state of Qi to build a house. On the way, they passed by a huge tree standing beside a temple of the earth spirit. The tree was so huge, towering above the surrounding hill. However, the master walked on without a glance, which confused his students. The master explained,

Forget it! Don't talk about it! It's a useless tree. A boat made from it would sink; a coffin made from it would rot; a vessel made from it would split; a door made from it would sweat... The timber is worthless and useless. That's why it can stand so many years. (1999, p. 65)

In terms of the tree's quality, all the comments were very correct. Strangely, that night, the master had a dream of the huge tree. The tree talked to him angrily,

What other trees are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with useful trees? Hawthorns, pear trees, orange trees and pomelos are all fruit trees. The fruits will be torn off as soon as their fruits are ripe. And then the trees will be abused--- their large branches will be broken and their small branches will be snapped. It is their utility that makes their life miserable. That is why they cannot

live out their life-span but die a premature death. It is the same with all things. For a long time, I have been trying to be useless. On several occasions I had a narrow escape. Now that I am useless, my uselessness is of the greatest use to me. (1999, pp. 65-67).

Zhuangzi subverts the conventional definition of usefulness and uselessness, leading audiences to understand or interpret things from an opposite angle. Similar to postmodernism, Werner Karl Heisenberg (1946), Kurt Gödel (1962) and Ihab Hassan (1986) emphasize the feature of indeterminacy. All matters of ambiguities, ruptures and displacements affect knowledge and prove their uncertainty and incompleteness in the postmodern age. By reading Zhuangzi's fables, people may make a judgment cautiously.

Softening the Glare and Merging with Dust

Daoist sages declaimed that misery not only derives from one's discontent to her current condition and the greed for valuable but also from others' harm. Out of jealousy, an incapable person may harm a capable, virtuous person. A wise person detects the benefit of the nameless and protects herself from harm. As Laozi suggested, an intelligent person "better stops short than fill to the brim." (1997, chapter 9) It implies that even though one had superior competence, she had better to perform her talent quietly. Just like a spring sun, it stores a huge amount of heat but only releases the proper amount, enough for supporting earthly lives. By doing silent work, the capable person benefits a lot of mass but does pressure other people inferior to her. According to Laozi, this perfect state of mind can "soften the glare and merge with dust" (1997, chapter 4). A true sage always stands with the masses. Her beauty is hidden deep but is ever present. On the

contrary, Laozi disliked people who clean themselves in order to highlight the others' dirtiness. The contrast of good and bad easily leads to hatred among different classes.

In Andersen's story "The Nightingale," the nightingale embodies Daoist spirit of "softening her glare and merging with dust." Possessing the special talent of singing, she, however, hides her talent under a humble appearance. With magical power, her singing brings comfort and redemption for the emperor's suffering and drives away the Death Ghost. However, her appearance is so ordinary. The emperor's subordinate who captures the nightingale cannot believe that the famous nightingale is a "little gray bird." He says, "Is it possible? I should never have thought it was like that. How common it looks" (2004, p. 141). With her ordinary appearance, the nightingale has truly merged with dust.

However, she takes care of people in need whether from low or high classes. Most of the time, she stays deep in the woods with low classes. Therefore, when the emperor's subordinate found her, he sighed "It sounds just like glass bells. I can't imagine why we have never heard it before" (2004, p. 141). Interestingly, a poor girl in the kitchen can hear her singing often. The girl said "My goodness, yes, of course I know it. How that bird can sing. She lives by the lake at the other side of the forest. And when I am on my way back and feeling tired, I sit down for a while and listen" (2004, p. 140). The nightingale stands for common people and shares the same likes and dislikes with the masses. She demonstrates the Daoist spirit of "softening the glare and merging with dust." In contrast, the artificial bird has a tail with glittered silver and gold and studded all over with diamonds, rubies and sapphires. Stored and cherished in a loyal palace, she sings in a delicate voice only for the emperor and ranking officials. With a shining appearance and pure nobility, the artificial bird is separated from the "dust," which is less admired by Laozi.

With a story, Zhuangzi revealed the danger when one does not “merge with dust” but cleans herself to reveal others’ dirt. It is said that, one day Yan Han, a tutor of the crown prince of Wei, asked Qu Boyu about how to guide a violent king to do goodness. Yan Han described the challenge that, “here is a man of sanguinary nature. If I allow him to act absurdly, it will endanger the state; if I restrain his behavior, it will endanger my own life. What am I to do with a man like this?” (1999, p. 61). Qu answered that, to deal with a sanguinary ruler, you’d better be friendly with him and give him guidance later. However, don’t be too intimate while you are friendly with him; don’t show it distinctly while you give him guidance. If you are too intimate with him, you might be ruined. If you show your guidance too overtly, you might be considered to be seeking fame. Yan He asked for a concrete example to be friendly but distant with an evil man. Qu suggested Yan to guide but not to expose his intention of educating. This was a difficult direction to follow. To strike this balance, Qu emphasized the importance of creating identification between the two individuals. He answers, “If he is childish, you should also appear to be childish; if he is ill-behaved, you should also appear to be ill-behaved; if he is reckless, you should also appear to be reckless” (1999, p. 63). A ruler likes to receive good reputation even though he is evil. If a virtuous man points out the ruler’s weakness directly, the latter must be very embarrassed and uncomfortable. Under this situation, any comments that the virtuous man gives will be viewed as sarcasm and anger the sanguinary. The virtuous man may be killed because of his critiques. On the contrary, if the virtuous man acts as seemingly bad as the sanguinary authority, the authority would not feel threatened by the virtuous man’s superior virtue and fame. He identifies the virtuous man as his like-mind. They become bosom friends, seemingly sharing the same habits. Then, the sanguinary ruler will start to welcome this speaker and calm down to

listen to what he wants to say. The speaker might eventually get a chance to guide the ruler toward where he hopes him to be.

Zhuangzi asserted that to hail certain characteristics as the best leads people to feel angry and jealous. For instance, if a person who is ill-behaved receives honest critiques from a well-behaved and well-known person, he will feel shameful and angry. Through the comparison with the virtuous man, his ill-behavior looks worse. Laozi suggested not to exalt the gifted persons and rare treasure. “Not exalting the gifted prevents quarreling. Not collecting treasures prevents stealing. Not seeing desirable things prevents confusion of the heart” (1997, chapter 3). In particular, when a person in power strongly desires a certain thing, his desire will cause his subordinates much trouble.

The emperor’s desire in “The Nightingale” illuminates Laozi’s arguments. The nightingale originally lives with common people in the woods. Desiring to hear the bird’s fancy singing, the emperor demands his subordinates to catch the bird right away. His insistence upon hearing the nightingale’s singing frightens his subordinates. The gentleman-in-waiting ran “up and down all the stairs, in and out of all rooms and corridors; half of the court ran with him” (2004, p. 140). All of the court knows that if they do not satisfy the emperor’s wish, he will have the whole court trampled upon. The forceful and emergent demand disturbs the peaceful lives of the court members.

Desire can drive a person to be crazy and do what he should not or dare not do in a normal situation. When the emperor was crazy to hear the nightingale’s voice, he considered nothing but wanted to capture the bird. And because of the emperor’s desire, the nightingale becomes a treasure. People who rely on the emperor to make a living are busy running about to capture the bird, and so does the Japanese business man. When the business man knew that the Chinese emperor was fond of a singing nightingale, he ordered a delicate but artificial one, whose singing skill is exactly like the living one but

covered with shining diamonds and rubies. As the business man expected, the emperor immediately gave him the title of Imperial Nightingale-Carrier in Chief. Thus Laozi advised a ruler not to let “the five colors blind the eye; the five tones deafen the ear; the five flavors dull the taste; racing and hunting madden the mind” On one hand, the visual and audio enjoyment can easily lead him astray (1997, chapter 12). On the other hand, people around him can make good use of the ruler’s desire to bribe him and further control his emotion and decision.

Transformation

As discussed before, happiness is rooted in misery and misery lurks beneath happiness. Sometimes people court disaster because of their greed; sometimes because of others’ jealousy. People receive honors or notoriety, joy or sadness. However, no matter their fortunate or misery, Daoist sages and Andersen saw them as a big dream. All changes are just temporary phenomena. Daoist sages gave all changes to nature to handle. They thought that life is a dream. In dreams, people experience bodily transformation, shifting their spirits from one body to another. People experience different lives in various existences through physical metamorphosis. However, in dreams, nothing really belongs to someone. People busily pursue the next desirable thing. When he does own it, he learns that it may not be better than what he had.

In Andersen’s tale “The Galoshes of Fortune,” Councilor Knap, who lives in the 1800s, missed the wonderful old days of King Hans. He becomes lost in thought about the golden past in the 1700s. When Councilor Knap put on the magic galoshes of Fortune, as the magic galoshes would have it, he was sent back into the reign of King Hans immediately. There the streets were not paved, so his feet sank deep into the mud. Moreover, the bridge that led from Highbridge Square to Palace Square was not built and

all the street lights were out. All he saw was a shallow stream with a boat. The modern Newmarket in his days was now a large meadow and bushes here and there. Facilities in the old days were simple and crude. The whole city looked deplorable. He realized that not only was transportation in the city very inconvenient but also people were lacking in knowledge. Even a worthy bachelor was completely ignorant on his most commonplace remarks. He could not have a smooth conversation with these people in medieval costumes. In light of these difficulties, he felt disgruntled with this age. He found out what he had been longing for was in fact so terrible. The experience of living in King Hans' days made him miss the beauty of his modern days.

When the fortune galoshes were put on by the clerk, his wish of turning into a little lark came true. He had dreamt to be born with wings and to fly freely for a long time. In his mind, flying was a noble art. Here came his luck, the galoshes began to function at once and "in a trice his coat-tails and sleeves grew together as wings, his clothes turned into feathers, and his galoshes became claws" (p. 106). He noticed the change and laughed. However, the happy flying did not last long. He was now aware of his size. He was just as big as the palm branches. A huge object was dropping over him. It was a boy's cap. He was thrust in a hand so tightly and painfully. Again, he learned that being a lark is not happy. After experiencing the thrilling danger in his lark life, he flew through an open window and perched on a table. He spontaneously blurted out certain words. Then, he transformed again. Instantly he regained the body of the copying clerk, who sat on the table. He sighed, "do I happen to be sleeping here? And what a disturbing dream I've had—all nonsense from beginning to end" (1942, p. 106). He feels that his dreams were so true and vivid and "How clearly I understand things, and how wide awake I feel" (p. 103). Every new life has its problem but the galoshes could only change him into one creature at a time. When becoming a new one, he must give up his previous one.

Andersen in this story repeatedly hinted that every new transformation of body and role will not be more delightful than the original one. In each new life, the protagonists experience suffering out of their high expectation. They misestimate the joy that others might possess. Interestingly, in ancient China, Zhuangzi told a resemble story about his dream. Different from Andersen's disappointed dreams, Zhuangzi enjoyed his new transformation but felt confused about which life was real. He described that,

I, by the name of Zhuang Zhou, once dreamed that I was a butterfly, a butterfly fluttering happily here and there. I was so pleased that I forgot that I was Zhuang Zhou. When I suddenly woke up, I was astonished to find that I was as a matter of fact Zhunag Zhou. Did Zhuang Zhou dream of the butterfly or did the butterfly dream of Zhuang Zhou? (1999, p. 41).

Zhuangzu pointed out that when a person is in a dream, he is not aware of it. Sometimes people even ridiculously do things like fortune-telling in their dreams. Only after waking up, they realize that all of the experiences are just fancy. Following the confusion of the butterfly and Zhuang Zhou [Zhuangzi], how can a person make sure that his life now is not a big dream? An enlightened person like Zhuangzi has great doubts of what is reality and what is illusion. In his fable, the temporary reality in which humans stick to is skillfully exposed. No matter the wealth or poverty in our contemporary stage, it will all disappear someday. Attaching to an external pursuit at the expense of our inner nature is not worthy.

Conclusion

Andersen's stories reflect the beauty of natural lives versus the heartbreaking darkness associated with ethical weakness. Zhuangzi and Laozi allegorized the nearsightedness of common people on wealth and reputation. Their stories expose the spiritual degeneration of the worldly life but treats it with an optimistic attitude. For example, Laozi and Zhuangzi proposed that to have boundless longevity is to foster others' lives and put oneself behind others. In doing so, one's influence will last forever and one's symbolic life will never end. Furthermore, Daoist sages reveal that happiness is rooted in misery and misery lurks beneath happiness. Unhappiness is derived from comparison and jealousy. Andersen echoed this Daoist philosophy through two tales "The Happy Family" and "The Fir Tree" in which Andersen connoted that fame and wealth will not lead to an ultimate joy. Taking the fir tree as an example, he ignores everything but being a huge tree. When he finally becomes a big and glorious tree, he is cut down. In contrast, the snail family wishes to live in a beautiful manor and lay on a silver plate. However, none gets a chance to fulfill this dream. Just because of this unfulfillable dream, they survive. They remain living in a simple life with innocent minds. This "misfortune," however, saves their lives and brings them true joy.

In terms of avoiding disasters, Daoist sages suggest that capable persons act humbly. Without comparison between capable and incapable, virtuous and vicious persons, there will be less harm derived from jealousy and anger. In addition to a humble attitude, if one is situated in a high position and holds power, she had better hide her desire. Some inferiors trick their superior by catering to her wish, such as the Japanese business man who made artificial nightingale to earn a chief position from the Chinese emperor. Zhuangzi and Andersen see through the problems of their societies profoundly. They told stories to question what is reality and what is illusion. Their tales inspire readers to examine the truth, finding out that a life is just a big dream. Their sharp observations of

complicated human experiences and their sympathy with inferiors endow their stories with lasting resonance in later generations.

Chapter 4

Zhuangzi Reads Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

In this increasingly multicultural and globalized world, Western literature should perhaps no longer be seen only through Western perspectives, especially since *The Little Prince* has been translated into many languages. As Plato advises the speaker in *Phaedrus*, if a speaker wants to persuade her audiences effectively, the speaker should understand the “soul” of his audiences (1994, p. 102). As I am from Taiwan, I would like to offer an alternative reading of *The Little Prince* from the “souls” of Daoist sages. My reading will be a cultural and philosophical one based on the Daoist ideas in Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* and *Zhuangzi*. I explore how the text and Daoist thoughts are applicable in education.

Laozi teaches us to learn from nature. He espoused ideas and actions that are in concert and concord with nature and opposed the notion of a self-centered and conceited person. In his view, the best way to govern a country is to leave the people alone. The King in *The Little Prince* claims that he can dominate everything, but he also needs to follow the principle of nature. In this point, following the natural principle, or the Dao, is what Laozi supported. However, the Conceited Man expects everyone to admire him; the Drunkard gets dead drunk in order to forget the shame of the drunk; the Businessman keeps counting and buying more stars without any practical use; the Lamplighter lights and extinguishes the lamp every minute, refusing to rest; the Geographer spends his whole life making maps, but never leaves his room to see outside. They harm themselves because they are violating the rules of nature, thus leading to a lot of troubles. From the vantage point of Laozi’s *Dao*, these acts violate the natural way, which only can result in

failure and self-deceit. Laozi cautions against the urge of controlling nature and others and avoids discontent and disorder.

Literature Review

The Little Prince is a significant piece of children's literature by the acclaimed French aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and it has been much studied, albeit largely through Western lenses. From reviewing previous studies, they show that scholars like to use Western literary theories and models to achieve a complete comprehension of the text for educational purposes. Through associating the work with some theories and models, scholars explain how the way things are or could be.

In Laurence Gagnon's opinion, Heideggerian model is useful for interpreting children's literature. He asserts that "any literary work is susceptible to an indefinite variety of interpretation" like a formal system. The Heideggerian model concerns the fundamental capabilities of being a human, which is also shown in the little prince. Since according to the Heideggerian model, the little prince has the ability to live authentically, he is aware of himself and concerned about things in the world. In the story, when the little prince travels over different planets, he finds none of the residents he admires. All residents live unauthentically because they only take care of things from an egocentric point of view. Every protagonist represents one kind of human weakness seen in one particular occupation. For example, the little prince's visit excites the king, who has no subjects except a rat. He wants to feel his superior power of being a king through overriding the little prince. The conceited man imagines that all others are his admirers even though he is the only person in his planet. The drinker drinks a lot in order to forget his shame of being drunk. The businessman indulges himself in accumulating numbers

but does not know what they are used for. The geographer visits nowhere to make his maps. All of them only concern themselves.

In the process of finding the authentic self, according to Gagnon's Heideggerian model, making friends with considerate comrades is essential. For example, in the story, when the pilot was little, he was interested in becoming a professional painter. However, adults around him did not appreciate his talent at art, laughing at his drawings. They misinterpreted his drawing of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant as a hat. They suggested that he should give up this useless activity and turn to pursue "valuable" subjects, such as geography and arithmetic. After he meets with the little prince, who accurately describes the abstract painting, he starts to draw again. He finds his authentic self with the help of an understanding friend. To build self-confidence and self-acceptance, one must have the help of a good friend who really cares about his business.

However, it is equally important to seek personal uniqueness within a closed friendship. "There is always a danger here; one can lose oneself to the things one takes care of and the persons one cares for. One can become so concerned with other beings that one identifies with them rather than striving for the unique identity proper to oneself" (Gagnon, 1973, p. 62). In this case, Gagnon thinks that one cannot live authentically within a intimate friendship. After one leaves his captivating beloved and comes back with true understanding of the self, only then will their friendship be stable and happy. For example, the little prince was too concerned with his rose's irony. He feels like he is a slave of the rose. He desperately escapes from her attachment and seeks his freedom. However, after the little prince wanders through several planets, he finds that his rose has a precious meaning for him. This time, he is truly willing to serve the rose of his planet. The self understanding frees the little prince from his complaint.

As a scholar of educational psychology, Frank Pajares read *The Little Prince* from an educational perspective. He observes three educational principles in the little prince's encounter with the fox: firstly, one should keep questioning until the answer satisfies her; secondly, being tamed by a lover is critically important for establishing ties; thirdly, only with a sincere heart, one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eyes. Pajares admits that he has been influenced by literary models and books. The effects of these early exposures to literature are lasting and powerful for him. Reading *The Little Prince*, he comes to develop his study habits and teaching philosophy. Firstly, once the little prince has asked a question, he never lets go until he finds a good explanation. Pajares believes the most valuable knowledge comes from continuing questioning until the satisfactory answer appears (Bembenutty, 2007).

Secondly, he learned the critical importance of taming and being tamed. In the process of taming, one must begin with small gestures and patiently walks toward the sense of closeness. One who makes a new friend should show love slowly until the lover feels comfortable to accept his affection. The pursuer had better to appear in the same time, thereby the lover will have an expectation and feel excited. These words are inspiring and thought-provoking to Pajares. The fox understands a series of resistances and acceptances in the progress of friendship. Pajares applies these concepts to tame his students and builds a connection with them. At the same time, he invites his students to tame him. As the fox indicates, one feels responsible for what she has tamed. To spend time on students makes the students important for Pajares. That is what the fox told the little prince, "What is essential is invisible to the eye" (Saint-Exupéry, p. 59).

From reading *The Little Prince*, some scholars shape their educational philosophy. They learn how to live authentically, how to build close friendship, and how to inquire for answers. Saint-Exupéry's work enlightens many readers all over the world. His

comprehension of life and philosophy closely relates to his colorful and dangerous career. In the following section, I would like to read *The Little Prince* from a Daoist perspective. Before my interpretation, I will briefly outline the background of Saint-Exupéry.

The Life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) is known worldwide because of his *The Little Prince*, which was published in 1943 when World War II was going like a raging fire. He wrote this story in his house in Long Island, New York City in 1942. He drew all figures with watercolors and deeply involved his personal experience of being a progressive pilot in his writing. When he wrote, Saint-Exupéry discarded 100 pages for every one he sent to the printer (Severson, 2004, p. 161). He was serious in doing every activity that he felt meaningful. Throughout his career, he made great effort to serve in naval companies and war missions. When he was physically incompetent for flying at the age of 43, he never ceased his dream to return to naval action in France. In one reconnaissance mission over Annecy in 1943, he disappeared and never returned. His death is a mystery, leaving no physical trace like the little prince.

His life experience heavily shaped his values and arguments reflected in his works. *The Little Prince* is said to be a reflection of the author's childhood. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was born in Lyon, France in 1900. His father worked in an insurance industry and died when Saint-Exupéry was 4 years old. His mother, Madame de Saint-Exupéry, was a nurse. She raised five small children on her own. At age 17, Saint-Exupéry successfully finished the secondary education in Switzerland and planned to go to a university with his younger brother. However, his brother got rheumatic fever and suddenly passed away, which shocked Antoine. This was the second time he faced the loss of family. According to his memoir, his brother died in a quiet and gentle way, a

scene later reappearing in the story again when the little prince dies (Severson, 2004, p. 158-160).

Saint-Exupéry hoped to work for the navy. In order to qualify for a naval position, he enrolled in mathematics and some classes in the Lycée Saint-Louis in Paris. He passed the written exams but failed the oral exams on history and geography. Interestingly, in *The Little Prince*, Antoine satirized the geographer who “does not leave his desk” but “receives the explorers in his study” (p. 44). Saint-Exupéry seems to express his voice of protest on his previous exam experience. Later, Saint-Exupéry went to serve the compulsory military service in 1921 and received training to be a professional pilot. He had a mission in Morocco where he first encountered deserts. He later applied the desert experience in his writing. After his military service, he had a difficult time making a living. He tried to find a better job to please his father-in-law. Nevertheless, his love affair broke up. With a good friend’s help, luckily he obtained a job in an aviation company. Among other jobs, he continued to be a pilot, a job which he loved. He gained a lot of mechanical knowledge by repairing downed airplanes, and experienced many difficult tasks such as getting through crash landing in a dessert, a mountain or in storms, rescuing his fellows through air and ground search. He spent time in Western Africa and learned more about desserts. He received reconnaissance assignments when World War II broke out. Even though he found his own meaning in the service of his country, he lost all his old flying partners during war and felt very lonely. In 1940, he exiled himself to New York. In 1942, he started to write *The Little Prince*. All the details about the naval life, desserts, and life philosophy come from his own experiences and reflections.

Mocking Human Weakness through Fictional Characters

Most literary models used to interpret the *The Little Prince* come from Western frameworks. In the following discussion, I will read it from a Daoist perspective. First, I investigate the rhetorical strategies shared by both Saint-Exupery and Zhuangzi. Next, I probe into their transcendental philosophy step by step.

Both Saint-Exupery and Zhuangzi deftly create characters with whom readers can identify in their own weaknesses. In *The Little Prince*, without describing the weakness of the grown-ups whom he met in his young age, Saint-Exupery indirectly portrays their shortcomings through the little prince's description of inhabitants in various planets. Readers can identify and characterize with these grown-ups by their professions and their reactions.

A short temper is often the response from an adult to children's questions. The pilot's response to the little prince's endless questions reveals the grown-ups' impatience. At the moment, when the pilot was very busy trying to unscrew a bolt that had been stuck in the engine, the little prince kept asking about what use were the thorns for flowers. The pilot gave him a careless answer that "The thorns are of no use at all. Flowers have thorns just for spite!" (p. 19). However, the little prince ponders this answer for a long time and protests against his explanation that, "I don't believe you! Flowers are weak creatures. They are naive. They reassure themselves as best as they can. They believe that their thorns are terrible weapons..." (p. 19).

The pilot did not pay attention to his question and kept thinking how to fix his airplane. However, the little prince disturbed his thoughts and asked again, "Are you actually believe that the flowers—". Not after the little prince finished his question, the polite screamed, "Oh, no! No, no, no! I don't believe anything. I answered you with the first thing came into my head. Don't you see—I am very busy with matters of consequence" (p. 19)! The little prince is hurt so much. Here, younger readers will easily

recognize the short-tempered reactions similar to those of their parents or some grown-ups.

Again, the businessman in the fourth planet is used to satirize the greedy businessman on earth. The businessman on planet number four cannot stop counting the numbers of stars because he believes that the stars will belong to him as long as he is the first one to find them. He said, “I can’t stop...I have so much to do! I am concerned with matters of consequence.” The little prince asks him what he does with five-hundred million of stars. He answers, “Nothing. I own them. ...I administer them. I count them and recount them. That means that I write the number of my stars on a little paper. And then I put this paper in a drawer and lock it with a key” (pp. 39-40). This ridiculous argument in fact reflects businessmen’s lives on earth. They devote their time and hearts to the changes of prices in stock market boards. They sometimes feel excited, sometimes deep depressed. Their emotions are closely bound by the numbers on the stock board. They may not spend all the money in their short lives. Why should they care so much about the change of the numbers and tie their emotions to numbers? As the little prince comments on accumulating wealth, he concludes that he cleans out three volcanoes because “it is of some use to my volcanoes, and it is of some use to my flower, that I own them. But you are of no use to the stars... The grown-ups are certainly altogether extraordinary” (p. 40)

Every fictional character in various planets represents one profession in the grown-ups’ world. Readers can easily identify the corresponding characters on earth. The author’s detailed portrayal of the conversation leaves readers a wide space to reflect upon the purpose of their lives. Zhuangzi used a similar rhetorical strategy to critique his contemporaries. Since Zhuangzi lived in a time of chaos and violence, a direct critique of kings or high-ranking officials would be dangerous. So he employed fictional stories or

used animals as protagonists to mimic the behaviors of the authorities. Once, when Zhuangzi derided the arrogant literati who liked to show off themselves in front of others, he told a story,

On a boat tour over the Yangtze River, the Duke of Wu landed and climbed a mountain inhabited by the monkeys. At the sight of him, the monkeys scattered in fright and fled into the deep hazel forest. One of the monkeys, however, swung about on the branches, as if displaying its dexterity to the duke. The duke shot at it with an arrow, which the monkey caught with nimbleness. Then the duke ordered his men to shoot together, and the monkey was killed at last. The duke turned to his friend Yan Buyi and said, “This monkey was killed because it showed off its dexterity and disdained me with its nimbleness. Take it as a lesson. Don’t try to show your arrogance toward others.” Yan Buyi went home and studied under Dong Wu to get rid of his arrogance. He abandoned pleasure and avoided renown. At the end of three years, all the people in the state were praising him. (1999, p. 421)

Zhuangzi used fiction to mock and warn against arrogant literati and officials whom he often faced. Audiences will easily understand Zhuangzi’s message by identifying themselves with one of the protagonists. The function of a fable is to help readers step out of their usual positions and see things from a different angle. In *The Little Prince*, Saint-Exupéry does not list all the problems of the grown-ups but uses characters in different planets to parallel the weaknesses and ironies of adults on earth. This strategy offers an implicit and mild lesson for the people that they mock.

In addition to their parallel rhetorical strategies, Saint-Exupery and Zhuagnzi share some ideas in a transcendental dimension. I will explore those transcendental ideas in the following discussion.

Seeing Death is Delightful as Rebirth

Saint-Exupery and Zhuagnzi regard the process of death to birth and birth to death as a natural cycle. By observing the constant change of nature, they adapt themselves to new conditions. They do not force themselves and others to violate their inner nature. However, they know how to make good use of one's nature, that is, to encourage her kindness and avoid her evil part.

People usually grieve over the death of the beloved and view it as a complete separation from the earthly world. However, the little prince does not view his death as a sad end, instead he regards it as a happy return to where he belongs and a celebrative reunion with his beloved rose in his planet. He also asks the pilot to view his death as a return to home, not the end of their friendship. However, when the pilot overhears the conversation between the little prince and the poisonous yellow snake, he suddenly realizes that the poison bite is bringing the life of the little prince to an end. His deep sorrow worries the little prince. The little prince seriously says:

It was wrong of you to come. You will suffer. I shall look as if I were dead; and that will not be true... You understand... it is too far. I cannot carry this body with me. It is too heavy. But it will be like an old abandoned shell. There is nothing sad about old shells. (2007, pp. 78-79).

The little prince seems dead. However, he will never disappear but just gives away his physical body and goes to another place through a spiritual transformation. The little prince transcends his physical body, which limits his presence only in one place. Without the physical limitation, he can be seen in many places all at the same time. As he told the pilot,

In one of them (stars) I shall be living. In one of them I shall be laughing. And so it will be as if all the stars were laughing, when you look at the sky at night... You—only you—will have stars that can laugh!... You know, it will be very nice. I, too, shall look at the stars. All the stars will pour out fresh water for me to drink... That will be so amusing! You will have five hundred million little bells, and I shall have five hundred million springs of fresh water. (2007, pp.77-79)

If people can penetrate the process of physical transformation, they will overcome the fear of death and meet their own inner little prince again. As Eugen Drewermann points out in his book, *Discovering the Royal Child Within A Spiritual Psychology of The Little Prince*, the little prince will return to our world and lives here on this earth only if “we help to point up and overcome contradiction on which he came to grief” (1993, p. 7). The little prince’s view of death echoes Daoist philosophy. Daoist sages viewed death as nothing fearsome or sorrowful. It is the process of physical transformation through which one’s body and mind go back to their original source.

For Zhuangzi, death and life constitute a natural cycle. He viewed the two life forms from an eternal, universal point of view. This concept is clearly illuminated in *Zhunagzi*. When Zhuangzi’s wife died, he played music and sang joyfully. His friend scolded him

for his pitiless behavior and thought that he should not go so far as to sing and celebrate. Zhuangzi calmly explained to his friend that,

By no means, when my wife just dies, how could I refrain from sorrow? But if we trace her beginning, she did not have life before she was born. Neither did she have life, nor had physical form at all. Neither did she have physical form, nor had she had vital energy at all. Amid what was opaque and obscure, transformation took place with her vital energy. Another transformation took place and she obtains her physical form. Yet another transformation took place with her physical form and she obtained life. Now that one more transformation has taken place and she has returned to death, this is like the succession of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. My deceased wife is now lying peacefully between the heaven and the earth. If I were to weep over her death, I think, this would mean that I am ignorant of fate. That is why I stopped weeping. (Ch 18, p.289)

Since there is nothing in the beginning, then the material transformation starts and creates something. When something ages, it gradually loses its function and dies and becomes nothing again. This is a continuing cycle, not an end. Zhuangzi described in detail how the magic transformation works: first one receives her vital energy, next the physical form, and last her life. When her body is worn out, she experiences the reverse process of transformation. In Zhuangzi's view, a human being's life is closely tied with natural changes such as the changes of four seasons. The belief that the transformation of a human's life is intimately connected to the celestial system is shared with world religions. For example, the cosmology of the Renaissance perceived that the occult virtues of all things in the natural world are transmitted into their material forms through the medium

of the “Soul of the World” (Miles, 2008, p. 437) and “every occult property is conveyed into herbs, stones, metals and animals, through the Sun, Moon, Planets, and Stars” (Agrippa, Freake, & Tyson, 1992, p. 44).

Echoing the little prince’s understanding of his death as a way to return in his own planet, Zhuangzi regarded death not only a process of physical transformation but also a rebirth in a new place. This creative concept of rebirth in another world is clearly shown in Zhunagzi’s conversation with a skeleton. On his way to the state of Chu, Zhuangzi saw an empty skull. Zhuangzi struck it with his horse whip and said,

Have you been reduced to this condition because you craved for life and lost your power of reason? Or because you were beheaded when your country perished? Or because you did evils that brought shame to your parents, wife and children? Or because you suffer from cold and hunger? Or because you died a natural death? (1999, p. 291)

When he finished asking these questions, he went to sleep, using the skull as his pillow. At midnight, he heard the skull speaking in his dream, “You seem to be an eloquent speaker, but your words have revealed all the human bondage. The dead are not burdened with these things. Would you like to hear about what it is like in the world of the dead?” “In the world of the dead, there is neither ruler above nor subjects below. With no changes of the four seasons, ease and comfort last eternally. Even the happiness of a king in the human world cannot surpass this!” (1999, p. 291)

Zhuangzi did not believe in his words and said, “If fate were to restore your physical form and restore your skin and bones so that you could return to your parents, wife, children, neighbors and friends, would you be willing to do that?” The skull said sadly,

“How can I abandon the happiness of a king to suffer from the hardships in the human world?” (1999, p. 291)

Through the mouth of the skull, Zhuangzi criticized the human’s ignorance of the non-material world because his vision is constrained. The skull’s avowal expressed a higher stage of happiness beyond the earthly goods and fame. The world of the dead is a metaphor for a world of freedom, where people are free from sensational desires. Laozi commented on the problem caused by sensational desires, “Misfortune comes from having a body. Without a body, how could there be misfortune” (1997, chapter 13)? After all, the purpose of owning beautiful figures, big houses, delicious feasts, fancy cars, and lofty praise is to satiate the desires of one’s eyes, ears, mouth, hearts, and feelings. If a person loses his health or body, either because of exhaustion from work or accidents, what can those luxurious goods and reputation mean to them and what is left in the end of life? Laozi and Zhuangzi raised those essential questions to inspire audiences, illuminating that to access to a world of freedom is to lessen one’s sensational desires. As long as one experiences comfort and carefree happiness in another spiritual world, similar to the skull’s, he will never wish to go back to the original world where his mind is filled with earthly pursuits.

Most children’s literature conveys an optimistic worldview to protect the assumingly innocent children. In contrast, Zhuangzi’s and Saint-Exupéry’s fables boldly discuss death and fear, and offered the readers hope from a new horizon. In their fables, protagonists may undergo severe harm and even death but after the darkest shadow comes the sunshine, a new life reborn with a new form. As Stith Thompson reveals in his *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, there are many cases where the dead can restore life by magical healing or by transformation into animals, angels, monsters or stars. And also for Francellia Butler, the supernatural magic in literature “in any case, the possibility of

coming back as an eggplant or a fish, for instance, should sharpen one's interest in ecology" and "the hopeful note in folk literature is that people do tend to come back" (1972, p. 105). The message of "seeing death as rebirth" functions as a healing power. Zhuanzi and Saint-Exupéry cure trauma through a transcendent belief that death is a natural cycle, material transformation, and rebirth. Their stories have dealt with issues that some children's authors avoid.

Following the Nature of Each Person and Every Object

Laozi believed that ruling a country should be based on the principles of nature. That is to let everything develop alone and freely without intervention. Laozi questioned the effect of an artful control over others. He asked, "do you think you can take over the universe and improve it? I do not believe it can be done. The universe is sacred. You cannot improve it. If you try to change it, you will ruin it. If you try to hold it, you will lose it" (1997, chapter 29). So Laozi's suggestion is that one had better not seek complacency through your extreme and excess domination over others. A dogmatic control will cause failure, since it violates the way of nature operating the ecological system. And a ruler should set his expectations on the basis of an individual's nature and ability or the expectations cannot be met.

The King in *The Little Prince* orders according to natural principles and his subjects' characteristics, which embodies Laozi's suggestion of not commanding people dogmatically. The king tells the little prince that he is an absolute monarch. He rules everything in his planet, the other planets, and even all the stars. The king said, "They all obey instantly. I do not permit insubordination" (p. 30). The little prince marvels at the king's complete authority and tells the king that he wishes to see sunset right away. The king tells the little prince that he will not make this order because:

One must require each one the duty which each one can perform. Accepted authority rests first of all on reason. If you ordered your people to go and throw themselves into the sea, they would rise up in revolution. I have the right to require obedience because my orders are reasonable. (2007, p. 31)

The king consents to the little prince's request by firstly consulting a bulky almanac and saying, "Hum! Hum! That will be about—about—that will be this evening about twenty minutes to eight. And you will see how well I am obeyed" (p. 31).

In the little prince's preoccupation, a ruler who claims to own absolute power should be able to order sunset at any moment. However, the king demonstrates his method of ruling by resorting to rationalism and each object's individual nature. To further clarify his argument, he asks the little prince a question as a way to enlighten him.

If I ordered a general to fly from one flower to another like a butterfly, or to write a tragic drama, or to change himself into a sea bird, and if the general did not carry out the order that he had received, which one of us will be in the wrong? The general or myself? (2007, p. 38)

The king's question implies that the little prince asking for the sunset right away is as unreasonable as asking a human being to fly. The concept of following natural principles sounds very Daoist. It corresponds to Laozi's thought that

People's characteristics are different. Some people are positive and some negative, some people prefer warm and some cool, some people are strong and

some weak, some people are in peace and some in danger. Therefore, when a sage rules a country, he handles things based on people's unique characteristics in the most natural way, deleting the extreme and superfluous, letting no talent to be neglected and no material to be wasted. (2006, chapter 29)

However, the king only can be called a half-way Daoist, who knows the way of nature but cannot get rid of his personal desire to control others. He makes good use of his scientific knowledge when giving orders. In that case, he can save face from others' disobedient behaviors. His controlling desire is contrary to a true Daoist. A Daoist does not wish to control others. When incapable, he makes an argument on why a ruler should order his people according to their ability and wishes. His seemingly Daoist argument serves to disguise his inability. The Daoist theory of following one's nature is just an excuse for his failure to overpower orders. For example, when the little prince is tired, he yawns. The king forbids him to yawn in his presence because it is impolite to do so in front of a superior. However, the little prince does not stop yawning due to being exhausted from travel. The king feels offended and embarrassed. He changes his order by saying, "I order you to yawn. It is years since I have seen anyone yawning. Yawn again! It is an order." Under pressure, the little prince cannot yawn anymore. The king feels vexed and says, "Hum! Hum! Then I—I order you sometimes to yawn and sometimes to—" (2007, p. 29)

Never ordering what others are not willing to do, the king creates a fake image that others always obey him. His following the natural rules does not come from his true understanding of the Dao but from vanity. Therefore, we should not equate a Daoist argument with a true Daoist person. One's words should be examined through complex considerations, including the speaker's hidden intentions. Deep in a weak and self-abased

mind, the king's Daoist arguments may only work for comforting his injured heart due to his inability to handle problems. An eloquent and gorgeous argument is sometimes far from the truth. Based on Laozi's experience, "Truthful words are not beautiful. Beautiful words are not truthful. Good men do not argue. Those who argue are not good" (1997, chapter 81). In a Chinese saying, the more explanations one comes up with, the more mistakes he may try to cover.

Although the king cannot be called a true Daoist practitioner, he still holds part of Daoist spirits by disapproving of hegemony. The king believes that if his orders are not favored by his subjects, it is his responsibility to make them favored. He explains that, "if I ordered a general to change himself into a sea bird, and if the general did not obey me, that would not be the fault of the general. It would be my fault" (2007, p. 29). The king demonstrates an open and flexible mind. His self-reflective practice invites the readers to think about their attitudes when dealing with children's violation of their wishes. Some adults make suggestions to their children based on their own expectations. Do adults consider the different nature of each child? Do they impose their wishes on the child? When the child does not listen to their suggestions, how do the adults deal with the violation?

Laozi's Daoist theory is an alternative cultural lens to discuss *The Little Prince*. It offers transcended concepts to further explore a wide range of children's literature on educational issues. Contemporary picture books such as *Down the Colorado* explore the problems between parents and children due to controlling issues. Some children's books reveal that adults force children to do what parents value. Children do not have enough freedom. Such behaviors may evoke conflicts and cause continued a poor performance of the child. If a child has opportunities to follow his or her own nature, the child may enjoy his life and reach great success. In the picture book of *Down the Colorado*, Deborah

Kogan Ray describes a child, John Wesley Powell, struggling and his insistence on his own interests. Powell loved nature and expedition. He wanted to become a scientist and an explorer. However, his father always wanted him to be a minister. His father did not believe natural science would bring good to his children. For his father, religion answered all questions about the world's order. However, his father's opposition could not stop Wesley's enthusiasm and determination of pursuing science. Young Powell had a different plan for himself. Growing up in a poor family, at the age of twelve he was responsible for family's farming work. He could not go to school. He stole reading time from the middle of the night when he should have been sleeping. Poverty never changed his determination and interest in scientific exploration. However, a serious disaster struck him: he lost his right arm in America's Civil War. The disability brought him a disadvantage in the expedition. However, he still did not end his ambition for this pursuit. He finally led the first scientific expedition down the Colorado River and through the Great Canyon. Powell's success surpassed all expectations and he returned home as a national hero.

Wesley Powell, the one-armed explorer, is a good example for educators and parents. The book tells us that each child has his own character. Adults should not restrain his desire. It does more harm than good to force a child to do what he feels indifferent towards. Laozi proposes that we should accept the uniqueness of each child and do not make a dogmatic plan for them. What adults should do is to understand each child's character and support their interests.

Adapting Oneself to the Changes of Nature

The ideas of following one's nature and making no intervention are also applicable in following the changes of nature. Laozi suggested that "Tao abides in non-action, yet

nothing is left undone. If kings and lords observed this, the ten thousand things would develop naturally” (1997, chapter 37). Laozi believes that human beings should follow nature and not impose human’s artificial principles. Then people can live happier. When nature has changed its rule, we had better follow nature’s change and make appropriate adjustments.

In *The Little Prince*, the lamplighter does not want to change his habits according to the change of nature, so he lives tiresomely. The lamplighter lights on and off the lamp every minute when the little prince visits him. In the old days the planet turned slower. So he puts the lamp out in the morning and in the evening he lights it again. He has a day and night time to rest. However, the planet changes its rotating speed. From year to year the planet has spun more rapidly. The planet now makes a complete turn every minute, so he does not have a single second for repose. He has to light his lamp and put it out every minute. The lamplighter insists that the order of lighting the lamp has not been changed. The little prince then gives him a smart suggestion that “Your planet is so small that three strides will take you all the way around it. To be always in the sunshine, you need only walk along rather slowly. When you want to rest, you will walk and the day will last as long as you like” (2007, p. 50). The lamplighter does not accept the little prince’s suggestion. Even though he wishes that he could rest more, however, he insists that he must stay in the same place and follow the old rule. So he lights lamp on and off all the day, no matter how often it is. If he could follow nature and change his old order, he could rest as long as he wished.

So Laozi tells us to follow nature. Strictly following artificial orders is not necessary. Without artificial orders, this world will keep rotating and every creature will live by its own ways. In this rapid globalization, adults also need to change their old assumptions about education. Children have access to a wide range of information and

sensational temptation. Some parents and teachers think that guiding children to a “correct” direction is their duty. It is right to some extent. However, if adults are not sensitive enough to detect the subtle changes happening in children’s lives and environment like that in the lamplighter’s planet, they might feel exhausted when fighting with young generations due to some conflicted beliefs. Even though children may undergo difficulties, as the little prince suggests to the lamplighter, we should let things work in their natural way. In doing so, everything works in its own course. Children can have enough space to fulfill their natural talent and adults can rest well.

Building an Intimate Relationship with Patience

An intimate relationship makes a person feel self-important and secure. Developing a strong affection between two strangers relies on patience and waiting. The intimacy will progress slowly. For example, when pursuing a lover, sometimes the more force one uses, the farther she flees. Aggressive actions sometimes create too much tension in a new love relation. Laozi used the analogy of cooking a fish to describe the harm of impatience: if a cook keeps turning the fish during the process of frying, the fish will break into pieces (chapter 60). Therefore, “he who acts defeats his purpose. He who grasps loses” (1997, chapter 64). By contrast, if one approaches his lover step by step and shows his affection increasingly, he will eventually earn the lover’s heart. “A tree as great as a man’s embrace springs from a small shoot. A terrace nine stories high begins with a pile of earth. A journey of a thousand miles starts under one’s feet” (1997, chapter 64). Laozi admired the dispositions of patience and persistence.

Echoing Laozi’s suggestion, the fox teaches the little prince the principle of forming attachment. The little prince asks the fox, “What must I do, to tame you?” The fox answers,

You must be very patient. First you will sit down at a little distance from me like that in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day. (2007, p. 59)

The little prince follows what the fox suggests and comes back next day. The fox gives him more suggestions, that,

It would have been better to come back at the same hour. If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you...One must observe the proper rites. (2007, pp. 59-60)

By waiting with predictable happiness, a lover experiences exciting and romantic moments. That is a way to create stronger desire for love. However, the little prince still does not know what the difference is between being tamed and not. The fox explains,

If you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain—fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And

that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold, think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me. The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat. (2007, p. 58)

Taming establishes a tie. To the fox, the little prince is nothing more than a little boy. He has no feelings about the boy. But if the little prince tames him, he will become the only one in the world. The little prince is like a sun that came to shine on his life. Everything related to his tamer brings him sweet memory. Through the experience of establishing ties with a stranger, the little prince comes to understand the fox's words that "It is the time you have wasted for someone that makes the one so important" (2007, p. 62).

This little prince recognizes the values of unique attachment through his conversation with the earthly fox. He now understands why a thousand pretty roses in a garden cannot grab his heart. However, the rose in his planet sways his emotion. No matter where he goes, he always thinks of her. The differences between these roses do not come from their appearances but from the effort that the little prince has put on the rose. It is the rose that he has "watered, sheltered behind the screen, killed the caterpillar for," so the rose has strong ties with his heart.

What brings two strangers together and swear to live or die together is the time and energy that they devote to each other. The causality is evident between parents and children. When children get hurt, parents always are the saddest ones. Because parents dedicate their lives to nurture their children, spending a lot of time on them, the dedication establishes the close tie. The feeling of uniqueness and self-worth are formed by lovers. To be special does not require one to do a great deed for the whole world. He or she just needs to have a lover who regards him or her as the best. Thus the fox said,

“one only understands the thing that one tames” (2007, p. 59). If one wants someone to be his special one, one just needs to dedicate his love on the one.

As Martin Heidegger (1962) proposes, among the more fundamental capabilities of man are those of being concerned about things in the world. If one does not put others in his mind, then others’ grief or happiness will not bother him. One who only interacts with himself will find it difficult to know which role he plays and what function in which he works in a society. If no one admires or criticizes him, he can barely know who he is for sure. Instead, when one builds an intimate relationship with others, he will find his personal meaning in a society. Like the relationship between meaning and words in a text, without putting words in context, the words cannot be understood well. To establish an intimate friendship, both Laozi and Saint-Exupéry suggest to approach it patiently and unintentionally. Developing friendship is like the growth of a tree which begins from a small shoot and takes time to become big.

Conclusion

The Little Prince is like a mirror which reflects various weaknesses in human society. This story invites readers to reexamine their own lives and social and cultural relationships in an imaginary world. There are many interesting places of such cross-cultural resonance between *The Little Prince* and Daoist rhetoric. Both Daoist sages and Saint-Exupéry saw death as rebirth. They advocated following the nature of everybody, adapting ourselves to the changes of nature, and building an intimate relationship with others. By doing so, people can appreciate the beauty of different individuals and find their personal value in a society. Daoist rhetoric builds a transformational bridge across the metamorphosis of contraries, which manifests clearly in *The Little Prince*.

Chapter 5

Reading *Charlotte's Web* through Daoist Rhetoric

The globalization movement in children's literature is increasingly important and has focused on cross-cultural contact. The readerships of children's literature certainly extend outside Europe and the United States. Many language art teachers in East Asia, including myself, use *Charlotte's Web* to teach literature, morality, life philosophy, and science.¹ Despite being an American fantasy, the novel has become multicultural as it has been translated into over eighteen languages (White and Neumeyer, 1997). The novel possesses universal elements and has touched people from various cultures. Many enthusiastic discussions on Chinese and Japanese websites and blogs show that East Asian students enjoy reading *Charlotte's Web* and have developed their own understandings based on their particular cultural heritage.

As a teacher of Chinese classics, I sense that E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) embodies essential Daoist thinking, and thus it touches my heart. Therefore, I would like to explore how and why the text touches the souls of Daoist readership. As Charlotte Huck and Barbara Z. Kiefer (2004) state, "The experience of literature always involves both the book and the reader. Try as we might to set objective criteria, judgments about the quality of literature must always be tempered by an awareness of its audience" (p. 4). This chapter invites scholars in Western countries to explore an optional interpretation of *Charlotte's Web* from a Chinese epistemology.

Western Readings of *Charlotte's Web*

Setting the pedagogical scene in the Anglo-American context, scholars have made several valuable observations on *Charlotte's Web*. However, these observations were

performed with a monolingual and monocultural mindset, which assumed that the text would only be read by Anglo-American white Caucasian children in English-speaking nations. Obviously these readings do not account for the fact that the novel is being read both by Western and non-Western audiences across many cultures.

One such Western reading was offered by Karen Coats (1999). She contends that reading *Charlotte's Web* through Lacan's theory of subjectivity enables readers to realize how other people and symbolic language shape an individual's identity unconsciously. According to Lacan, the name-of-the-Father possesses the symbolic male power—phallus. Charlotte, due to her ability to spin words, possesses the power of phallus. Charlotte is a phallic mother for Wilbur, exercising absolute authority over him. The symbolic influence of language generates for both Wilbur and the audience a new identification when the magical words encounter human community.

Fred Erisman (1998) performed another Western reading of the novel. He argues that E. B. White's work reveals much of Emersonian philosophy and echoes with Emersonian naturalism. Although White was professedly influenced by Henry David Thoreau in his fifty-year authorial career, Erisman suggests that in the novel White called upon three major elements of Emerson's thought: the magic of ordinary things; the dualistic nature of the world and the dialectic and cyclical nature of life; and the transcendent power of friendship.

Also grounded in monocultural assumptions, Susie Garber (1997) suggests that in the American classroom, the novel is a splendid medium through which literacy and morality can be taught. In her third-grade class, through literary discussions, students learned how to "help your friend" and to "save a life," and came to understand that "everyone is special" (pp. 598-600). In such classroom research, it becomes clear that the text can inspire Anglo-American students. She explored life lessons by describing

students' reactions to the story, but she did not probe the motivations behind their reactions. Why does Charlotte's sacrifice possess the power to persuade students to give a hand to their friends? What elements in the text evoke students' sympathy to their friends' mishaps? They are essential questions for educators to achieve educational goals. To be an effective teacher, one needs to have an advanced rhetorical understanding of the text, especially when his or her students come from multicultural backgrounds.

Lucy Rollin and Mark West (1999) read *Charlotte's Web* from the perspective of Nancy Chodorow's psychoanalytic theory, mainly based on Chodorow's signal study *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978). Chodorow finds that women's mothering and the processes of reproducing mothering to their daughters are from role training and intentional socialization. Literature has influence on distinguishing gender roles. For example, Fern learns the concept of caring a baby from her mother. She follows her mother's way of taking care children and applies it into taking care of Wilbur. The fascinating part of the novel, according to Rollin, is the insertion of a male into the role of mothering. Wilbur as a male reproduces the mothering role by imitating his symbolic female mothers, Fern and Charlotte. Charlotte takes over the mothering of Wilbur from Fern. As a female mother, there are many concerns in her life. Therefore, Fern eventually withdraws from the attachment of her baby pig which causes Wilbur's pain and anxiety. Fern must go to school and later goes off with her male friend. Rollin applies the Chodorow's assertion to Wilbur's case and indicates that when a child's desire of intimacy with his mother fails, he forms a new self who separates him from the first mother. The second symbolic mother, Charlotte, presents another form of mothering. Unlike Fern's touching and feeding, Charlotte takes care of Wilbur solely through language: talk, singing, and weaving words. *Charlotte's Web* has great power to affect readers on gender role deeply embedded in American culture. Rollin's research parallels

Chodorow's study and argues that only when readers recognize the mothering patterns which are "deeply ingrained, unconscious, and thus all the more powerful in us" (p. 52), then readers can raise the awareness of mothering in our society.

Ashraf H. A. Rushdy (1991) reads *Charlotte's Web* from the relationship among community, desire and narrative. According to Rushdy, Wilbur's perilous beginning later turns out to an auspicious result which shows how an individual agent such as one spider can manipulate a given community new desire through narratives. Charlotte redirects the Zuckerman's desire of making Wilbur to be a Christmas feat into the desire of keeping Wilbur as a special pet. The narrative on Charlotte's web works. Like Kenneth Burke's suggestion, when a narrator "takes a given key word and wrenches it loose from its consensual category by metaphorically applying it to a different category" (p. 49), the new category reorients community's desire. An individual can alter the original desire of the community. At the same time, individuals are solicited to follow the desire of the communities. An individual's desire is often mediated by a community. The pattern of desire in other form demonstrates social control. If one pursues such community directed desire, he can get a reward. On the contrary, if he does not follow the desire of the community, he may get punishment. The whole novel for Rushdy is a representation of "the integral function of narratives in the orientation and reorientation of individual and communal desires".

John Griffith (1980) reads *Charlotte's Web* as a consoling fantasy in which everyman learns to overcome loneliness. He analyzes E. B. White's self reflections on the affair of freedom. White believes every child experiences a mystical connection with a vast nature and from the moment of insight, the child begins to be conscious of the sense of self. When Wilbur is sold to an alien farm, he feels "I'm tired of living. (p. 51)" He is lonely and could not endure the awful loneliness. Wilbur tries to do novel things to

release the desperate emotion. However, “to find significance that appears permanent, the individual must find a context larger than himself to give purpose to his actions” (p. 113). According to Griffith, if one who lives in and for himself, death will be the ultimate end for the individual. Instead, if one is an important member of a family or a group, his death will not be at all consuming terror. His life will wear out in the fulfillment of serving others. By the time one is old, he will peacefully follow the natural order and be ready to rest forever. Therefore, death is not sad. For example, Charlotte’s view on her death conveys the consoling peace, because she regards her death as a part of natural cycles.

In addition, since readers are invited to identify themselves with Wilbur, the story tends to give Wilbur a happy ending which consoles the readers. E. B. White is craft to mute the sadness in a humor way. When Charlotte is dead, White offers readers a gentle sentimentality that, “Wilbur never forgot Charlotte. Although he loved her children and grand-children dearly, none of the new spiders ever quite took her place in his heart” (p. 184). The amiable tone softens the sadness of a good friend’s death. Language also serves as a consoling medicine which heals the problem of loneliness and death. Charlotte only published five words. However, the five words solve the most important problem of Wilbur. For example, Charlotte “talk to Wilbur, sang to him, and wrote advertising copy for him” (p. 117). All her love is expressed verbally. The realization of the self-existence and self-reliance in vast nature has much to do with the effect of language in the story.

A philosophical reading is offered by Laurence Gagnon (1973). He reads *Charlotte’s Web* from a perspective of Martin Heidegger. In Laurence’s opinion, the rat, Templeton, commits himself to inauthentic living. He does not develop the capacity of caring for others. He stores rotten eggs merely for possessions, not for taking care of it. He does help in picking up new words and Charlotte’s egg sac merely for the reward, not worrying about others’ pain. He lives for the present. His lack of true care makes his live

inauthentic. Most time Wilbur also lives in inauthentic living. His feeling is always swayed by others' enticement such as the goose's words, a pail of slops, and the description of the web's words. He feels himself terrific and radiant because Charlotte thinks so and audiences think so. Then he believes that is what he is. Gagnon, according to Martin Heidegger's philosophy, argues that Wilbur's living is inauthentic because of inadequate self-consciousness. However, Wilbur commits to authentic existence after Charlotte tames him. He gradually realizes that he is different from others. And he turns his attention away from being totally concern about his own survival to his friend's death. Wilbur finally becomes an authentic self and heeds his own call of concern.

Reading the text with Western feminist and gender concerns, some scholars hold that the novel affirms some stereotypes of traditional patriarchy. Sue Misheff (1998) claims that Charlotte is like a mother who constructs a safe place in the imaginary world for children and, in contrast with traditional classics, a female, rather than a male, is the savior and heroine in the story. Safe places are sought by authors, parents and children to temporarily escape the cruel reality. Similarly, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer propose that in the novel, the sacrificers are female such as Charlotte and her daughters, and the redeemers are male such as Wilbur. This particular design of gender roles is fixed in the stereotype of traditional patriarchy.

Francelia Bulter (1972) looks the sacrifice of a female from a transcendent perspective. For Francelia Bulter, Charlotte's death allows her to live a transcendent immortality. Her life comes back in the forms of her offspring, the memory of the extraordinary web-writing and the love of Wilbur. Francelia Bulter admires E. B. White's boldness on appealing to the subject of death to children which "most writers for children now avoid" (p. 116) Bulter concludes that, "generally in folk tales, the magic potion which conquers death is love" (p.107).

An outstanding fiction such as *Charlotte's Web* usually contains complicated appeals. Therefore, it opens wide possibilities to be read them from different lens. Yet every interpretation belongs to and associated with certain customs. Scholars Perry Nodelman, Mavis Reimer, Karen Coat, Fred Erisman, Sue Misheff, Lucy Rollin, Francelia Bulter, Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, John Griffith, and Laurence Gagnon have applied Western critical theories in reading children's books. Their insights help scholars explore the complicated factors which affect readers' understanding of a work. Unfortunately, most of the readings focus on Western theories. The introduction of a Daoist reading of *Charlotte's Web* challenges the domination of Western assumptions in children's literature studies. Through wrenching and loosing it from consensual Western theories, an Asian perspective contributes to a new insight for children's literature. As multiculturalists argue the way teachers teach reading has to modify in order to foster social transformation and improve multicultural education (Bank, 1993; Cai and Bishop, 1994; Hade, 1997; Fraser & Perry, 1993). Daniel Hade defines multiculturalism as "a systematic critique of the ideology of Westernness" and "the challenge of living with each other in a world of differences" (1997, p. 240). A Daoist reading provides scholars more diverse and cross-cultural understandings. Since a person's living experiences shapes one's thoughts and writing, before I go to my Daoist interpretation of the story, it is important to briefly introduce the personal background of the author.

The Life of E. B. White

Elwyn Brooks White (July 11, 1899 – October 1, 1985) was born in Mt. Vernon, New York. He was the youngest child in the family. His father Samuel White was a piano manufacturer. He served in the army before going on to Cornell University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1921. He worked for *The New Yorker* magazine for

sixty years and wrote many famous books for both adults and children, such as *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte's Web* (1952). Co-authored with his professor William Strunk, he wrote *The Elements of Style* (1959), which is a handbook of grammatical and stylistic guidance for writer. White won an honorary Pulitzer Prize and Presidential Medal of Freedom for his works.

A Daoist Reading of *Charlotte's Web*

Daoist rhetoric is a special art of Chinese persuasion, offering a unique strategy to motivate one to take or to abstain from actions. As Steven Combs (2005) explains, “Daoist rhetoric, as a philosophical rhetoric, must be primarily concerned with expressing the Dao and affecting its audiences” (p. 77). Laozi (Lao Tsu) is commonly considered the originator of Daoism. Laozi composed *Dao De Jing*. In the text, Laozi masterly exercises the rhetorical power of Yin and Yang to persuade his audiences. Yin and Yang represent all opposite entities in nature: male and female, life and death, up and down, day and night. Different from Western dualism, Yin and Yang are not only contrary but also complementary. Yang embraces Yin; Yin contains Yang. Dao, or the cosmological law, operates in the contraries of Yin and Yang. The best rhetoric, according to Laozi, acknowledges not only contrary but also complementary aspects.

Laozi prefers analogies and metaphors in his rhetoric because they do not focus on minute detail of the reality or impose any explicit instruction on the audience. Through stories, symbols, and analogies, audiences construct meanings based in their imagination and creativity. They learn various lessons from Laozi's metaphors depending on their cultural background and personal experiences. As Daniel Hade observes, “when readers are exploring the possibilities of meaning and playing with literary forms, they are making a response. Children are active learners—active responders” (1991, p. 7). Through analogies, audiences construct meanings based on their experiences. Laozi liked

to use water as analogy to explain Daoist ideas which will be integral in my investigation of *Charlotte's Web*.

Close to Laozi's epistemology, E. B. White's existential sensation exposes his strong feeling about individual connection to whole nature. It is evident in "On Man's Meat" (1942), White describes his existential sensation of *Charlotte's Web*:

Intuitively, I've always been aware of the vitally important pact which a man has with himself, to be all things to himself, and to be identified with all things, to stand self-reliant, taking advantage of his haphazard connection with a planet, riding his luck, and following his bent with the tenacity of a hound. My first and greatest love affair was with this thing we call freedom, this lady of infinite allure, this dangerous and beautiful and sublime being who restores and supplies us all. It began with the haunting intimation of his mystical inner life; of God in man; of nature publishing herself through the "I." This elusive sensation is mobbing and memorable. (pp. 208-209)

For Laozi, "nature" was beginning of all things like a mother. All things are her sons. People who apprehend the "natural mother", thereby knows the sons. And one who has known the sons will hold all the tighter to the "natural mother" (chapter 52). Laozi clearly pointed out the sensitive bond between a small individual and enormous nature. Once a person can understand the true heart of his original "mother", then he is able to penetrate the essence of her "sons". The mother symbolizes the nature and the son the individual. The connection between sons and mother is exemplified in the White's metaphoric relation between a man and all things. E. B. White's melancholy sense of life echoes Daoist thoughts in the pursuit of freedom. Laozi and White share a similar epistemology

which makes *Charlotte's Web* easy to be read from a Daoist perspective. Next, I will explore some rhetorical elements in *Charlotte's Web* that embody Laozi's dialectical principles.

The Power of Softness

Daoism emphasizes malleability in life, which presents a constant becoming process. As Steven Combs (2005) notes, "Daoist rhetoric is inherently unstable because the world constantly changes, and, with it, its rhetorical principles and perceptual vantage point" (p. 76). Laozi's favorite metaphor for malleability is water. He says that "Nothing is softer and more yielding than water, but the thing that can overcome the strongest cannot subdue water, as water has its own characteristic" (2006, chapter 78). For a person with malleability, she will accept various suggestions. Her mind will be like water which is soft, flexible, and changeable. She will not hold stubborn opinions and will not likely be rejected or harmed by others. Because of her open mind, she will be welcomed by friends and colleagues. Charlotte is such a person who allows herself to adjust in various situations and opens her mind to different suggestions.

Charlotte shows her malleability in her choice of words to describe Wilbur. To rescue Wilbur, Charlotte finds an impressive phrase, "Some Pig," to reveal to humans Wilbur's special character. Charlotte says: "The message I wrote in my web, praising Wilbur, has been received. The Zuckermans have fallen for it, and so has everybody else... I dare say my trick will work and Wilbur's life can be saved" (1952, p. 87). She understands that a spider weaving words is very unusual for the human audience. Her use of language to praise Wilbur works very well for changing the human audiences' stereotypical view of a runt pig. However, when human interest in the amazing miracle fades, Charlotte realizes that the phrase is not powerful enough. She needs some new idea

to arouse human audiences' attention. Charlotte honestly and humbly admits her lack of ideas and her need for help. So she gathers all the animals of the barn cellar, including Wilbur, goose, gander, goslings, sheep, lambs, and Templeton, a mean rat, and asks for advice: "If anybody can think of another message, or remark, I'll be glad to weave it into the web. Any suggestions for a new slogan? " (1952, p. 87)

When Charlotte opens up her mind and pleads for everybody's suggestions, she manifests water's character of malleability. Water never holds to one particular shape and it can change all the time, so water can exist in any environment. Charlotte's humble and open-minded manner resembles water's malleability. Although she is smarter and more knowledgeable than other animals, Charlotte listens to others. Her openness helps to expand her perspective. Naturally she receives many suggestions from her friends:

"How about 'Pig Supreme'?" asked one of the lambs.

"No good," said Charlotte. "It sounds like a rich desert."

"How about 'Terrific, terrific, terrific'?" asked the goose.

"Cut that down to one 'terrific' and it will do very nicely," said Charlotte.

"I think 'terrific' might impress Zuckerman." (pp. 87-88)

Obviously, the second suggestion, which the goose offers, is a very smart idea. A good idea has appeared, but how to spell it? Charlotte behaves like water again by being patient and never giving up just like the dripping water, which can go through a rock if it keeps dripping. Charlotte keeps consulting her friends:

"Does anybody here know how to spell 'terrific'?"

“I think,” said the gander, “it’s tee double ee double rr double rr double eye double ff double eye double see see see see see.” (p. 89)

Because of Charlotte’s sincerity, the gander boldly contributes her spelling:

“teerrriiiffiicccc.” If we ignore her “creative” use of repetition, it is the right answer.

Charlotte just needs to cut off some letters, then it becomes a perfect word to speak of Wilbur’s beauty. A not so smart gander can offer a right answer, which encourages others to be brave and creative. Laozi notes that there is nothing softer than water, yet it always achieves a triumph. Hence when water’s malleability and durability are similarly practiced by Charlotte in dealing with and communicating with friends, Laozi’s rhetoric of water shows its power. Every animal friend is eager to contribute his or her own perspective. Charlotte displays great toleration and durability like water which, when a stone is thrown into it, will hold it inside. Therefore a hot discussion continues. The old sheep speaks up:

[I]f Charlotte needs help in finding words, I think she can get it from our friend Templeton. The rat visits the dump regularly and has access to old magazines. He can tear out bits of advertisements and bring them up here to the barn cellar, so that Charlotte can have something to copy. (p. 89)

The old sheep offers a good suggestion, but everybody knows that Templeton is both mean and selfish. He always seeks his own advantage, which really worries Charlotte. Charlotte’s helplessness and anxiety is shown on her facial expression. Like water, she manifests her softest and weakest form in front of others. Her helplessness evokes empathy among friends, therefore, the old sheep determines to try his best to persuade

Templeton. Charlotte's malleability and softness brings all friends together and overcomes a hard time. The story so far echoes the Daoist principle that the softest overcomes the hardest.

Giving Out is Receiving

Selfishness sometimes is inevitable, since human nature is complex, embracing both kind and evil elements. However, Laozi proposes that if people understand the working of the universe, they will not behave so selfishly. Laozi discovers a universal principle, that is, in order to receive something, one must give it up to others first. The universe is a single entity and objects circulate within it in a spiral, therefore, everything one gives out will return to the original place, meaning the giver. No matter how small an action one performs, it will affect all creatures. Emerson also highlights the cyclical nature of life in his transcendentalism. However, he tends to focus on the cycling or reoccurrence of natural phenomena, such as the change of four seasons or the rise and the fall of sun everyday. In addition to the cycling principle, Laozi sensibly finds the opposite and complementary relations between actions:

In order to contract it, you must expand it first.

In order to weaken it, you must strengthen it first.

In order to void it, you must build it up first.

In order to take it, you must give it out first. (2006, chapter 36)

As the complementary partnership symbolized in Yin and Yang, contracting and expanding, weakening and strengthening, voiding and building up, and taking something and giving it out are all opposite actions. Laozi views the opposite pairs as one thing but

manifest themselves in different metamorphosis. The recurring phenomena is like air. When it is hot, it rises to the sky; when it cools down, it falls down to the earth. The circulation sustains the process of returning. This circulation represents the flow of Yin and Yang.

According to Laozi's subverting rhetoric, in order to receive something, the best way is to give it out first, an idea which the old sheep understands very well. To persuade Templeton, the mean and selfish rat, the old sheep explains the Daoist rhetoric of giving out is receiving to Templeton. First, the old sheep tells Templeton about his coming demise if Wilbur dies:

You'll worry all right on a zero morning next January when Wilbur is dead and nobody comes down here with a nice pail of warm slops to pour into the trough. Wilbur's leftover food is your chief source of supply, Templeton. You know that. Wilbur's food is your food; therefore Wilbur's destiny and your destiny are closely linked. If Wilbur is killed and his trough stands empty day after day, you'll grow so thin we can look right through your stomach and see objects on the other side. (p. 90)

This threatening but reasonable prediction scares Templeton. Templeton's whiskers quiver. He thinks about the old sheep's words carefully and realizes that giving a hand to Wilbur can gain his future food. This giving out can actually benefit him, so he is persuaded. Through the explanation of the old sheep, Templeton starts to feel that his life can not be isolated from Wilbur's.

Then the old sheep offers a choice for Templeton to avoid starvation. By helping Wilbur, Templeton will ensure his own food. Thus, Templeton changes his indifferent

attitude towards others and agrees to bring back a magazine clipping from the dump the next day. By using Daoist rhetoric, the old sheep gains Templeton's cooperation. The old sheep knows what Templeton wants, thus Templeton becomes a rhetorical audience "who [is] capable of being influenced by discourse and of being [a mediator] of change" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 8).

The old sheep also conforms to the proposal of Sunzi. He contends that to know yourself and the enemy guarantees victory. If one does not understand the enemy, but only understand himself very well, the chances of winning are 50 percents. If she understands the enemy very well, but fails to recognize her own situation, the chances of winning are 50 percent. If she understands neither the enemy nor himself, the loss will be sure. To reach success, one must understand both self and others, including how others feel and what are the most valued things for them. Then she can persuade others to take action. As the conversation between the old sheep and Templeton shows, Daoist rhetoric has an effective benefit to both the speaker and the audience.

Daoist subverting rhetoric has immediate implications for inspiring children's compassion through literature. As the Russian poet Kornei Chukovsky (1963) suggests, "the goal of every storyteller consists of fostering in the child, at whatever cost, compassion and humanness, this miraculous ability of man to be disturbed by another being's misfortune, to feel joy with another beings' happiness, to experience another's fate as your own" (p. 138). Unfortunately, not every child can empathise others' distress and offer help right away. Some children tend to self-centered and only care about their own business like Templeton. How can an educator develop their compassion and humanness? Daoist rhetoric may be a good theory to explain the cyclic systems among natural world and social interactions. When children understand that everybody's life is bound together and no one can live in isolation, they may be willing to help. In the story,

Templeton helps Charlotte because he realizes that his fate is connected with Wilbur. His fortune is not isolated from his friends. Likewise, if children recognize that what they do for others will somehow return to them, they may possibly care more about surrounding friends and give more sympathy to others. As Charlotte Huck and Barbara Z. Kiefer (2004) profess, “We all have, in our experience, memories of certain books that change us in some way—by disturbing us, gloriously affirming some emotion we knew but could never shape in words, or by revealing to us something about human nature” (p. 4).

Laozi’s theory of giving out is receiving echoes John Griffith’s claim that Wilbur finds his own significance only when he serves another than himself and finds his own value in a larger context. Similarly, according to Martin Heidegger’s theory, Gagnon points out that only when Wilbur and Templeton know how to care of others, they will recognize their authentic selves through finding out her position in a social network. By understanding the Daoist elements manifest in the old sheep’s talk, readers may experience moments of revelation and be inspired to care about friends.

Retiring When the Job is Done

Laozi proposes that when a person has done great work, he or she should retire and stay quiet behind the others. One who does not boast his or her contribution and merit will gain honor in return. Laozi explains, “When a sage wished to be above his people, he spoke humbly, declaring that he has no virtue. Although the sage was above his people, people did not have the feeling of being oppressed. Consequently, all the people respected him and no one disliked him” (2006, chapter 66). People respected the sage because he wanted to benefit the people rather than to gain any honor or reward. Laozi illustrates the sagely behavior through a parable of the great river and sea: “The reason why the great river and sea become the beneficiaries of all the hundreds of thousands of

small valley streams is because they place themselves in lower positions. Therefore, they become sought by all the small valley streams” (2006, chapter 66). The great river and sea gather water from all streams even though they never ask for it, because gravity pulls water down to the lowest place. In ancient Chinese mythology, people followed sages because of their true love and their disinterest for fame. Daoists assume that in a society, a person who does not claim his or her contribution usually wins the hearts of her friends and colleagues, who will be glad to follow that person’s lead. In contrast, a person who always seeks the best place and honor has few followers.

In the novel, Charlotte becomes a Chinese sage by performing the Daoist principle of retiring when job is done. Charlotte works hard to weave a perfect web to save Wilbur. After the work is done, her web looks beautiful: “Each strand held dozens of bright drops of early morning dew. The light from the east struck it all plain and clear. It was a perfect piece of designing and building” (p. 147). When Charlotte has accomplished the great task, she feels completely exhausted. She tells Wilbur that she will not be going back to the barn and she will die soon. Charlotte sacrifices herself for Wilbur but she expects no admiration or appreciation from Wilbur or the crowd. Charlotte embodies the spirit of the great sea which places itself in the lowest place. Humbly, Charlotte explains her unselfish deed as part of her natural disposition to Wilbur: “You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing. After all, what’s life, anyway? We’re born, we live a little while, we die. A spider’s life can’t help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone’s life can stand a little of that” (p. 164).

Charlotte’s unconditional love and retiring attitude touch Wilbur. So when Charlotte is going to die, Wilbur feels very upset and worried about her illness. He “threw himself

down on an agony of pain and sorrow” and moaned, “Charlotte! My true friend!” (p. 165). To protect Charlotte’s egg sac, Wilbur begs Templeton to climb up and get it for him. However, Templeton yawns and straightens his whiskers, reluctant to help Charlotte or Wilbur. Finally, by trading his delicious food to Templeton, Wilbur successfully saves Charlotte’s forthcoming children. This story illuminates what Laozi said, “Do not reveal yourself much, thus you will be luminous. Do not boast yourself, thus you will be given credit” (Ch. 22). Charlotte does not boast about her contribution in saving Wilbur, but her altruism is answered and remembered by Wilbur. The story demonstrates the magic power of Daoist rhetoric: retiring when job is done.

However, if we read the story from a feminist perspective, it will be very different. Some scholars extend feminist perspectives to read animal fantasies (such as, Hade “Being”; Nodelman and Reimer; Misheff). Since animals frequently embody a fixed and unchangeable gender stereotype, scholars become more conscious about the gendered experiences and identities conveyed in children’s books. They reject the definition of the traditional female dispositions and the domination of masculinity. When females perform traditional roles in children’s literature, scholars tend to suggest that females are controlled by the patriarchal bond and therefore inferior to males. This tendency is evident in Misheff’s interpretation of Charlotte’s gender role:

Readers can notice in *Charlotte’s Web* that what White asks readers to admire as the love of a faithful friend is actually the undemanding and self-sacrificing love of a mother for a demanding and egocentric male child. Charlotte devotes herself to Wilbur at the expense of her own needs in a way many people would find less admirable, or natural, if she were a male and he a female. (1998, p. 158)

The sensible observation of traditional patriarchy will awaken girl readers not to ignore the message of females being suppressed by masculinity when they read, and male readers at the same time to notice that his responses are governed by the sense of male superiority.

For some feminist scholars, Charlotte's death for a male child is a manifestation of an oppression forced by masculinity. Nodelman and Reimer criticize the so-called appropriate gender behavior in American culture expressed in *Charlotte's Web*. The story assumes that female should sacrifice for male in a silent way just like E. B. White's description at end of Charlotte's life that, "Nobody, of the hundreds of people that had visited the Fair, knew that a grey spider had played the most important part of all. No one was with her when she died" (p. 171). Such silent sacrifices of a mother have been hailed as the beauty and virtue of a woman. Cultural value unconsciously advocates an assumption that sacrification is the nature and responsibility of women. If a woman holds a loud celebration for her own sacrifice, her behavior will not be approved by society. On the contrary, if a male sacrifices for a female, he might be celebrated as a romantic hero. Since female has long been suppressed under the social restriction, male is encouraged to enjoy public compliments; female, silent sacrifice.

Divergently, Daoist rhetoric honors a silent sacrifice. For Laozi, a silent sacrifice has no gender preference. He does not ask for the female to be the silent one but that all people who know Dao should learn from silent sacrifice. Nature could be human's exemplary model who makes a silent contribution to all creatures. Charlotte becomes a true hero in the Daoist world not because of her gender role but her altruism which reveals the Daoist spirit. Regardless of genders, Laozi asserts that a selfish person can easily turn into an altruistic one when she realizes that "Empty will be full and wear out

will be new, because every thing you have done will come to you eventually” (2006, chapter 22).

Laozi understands the power relationship of genders from the natural world. He believes that males and females are complementary, symbolically like heaven and earth. They embrace two opposite but equal powers. Neither one is superior to the other. This view is different from the Western binary opposition. The binary theory proposes that genders are a pair of dichotomy and one always dominates over the other. Altruism, for Laozi, is the choice of a wise person who knows the way of heaven, which is “the more he helps others, the more gains he will get. The more he gives, the more he will receive” (2006, chapter 81). That is also the principle that nature exerts on all myriad things. Charlotte rescues Wilbur. Wilbur also preserves Charlotte’s children in return. The recurring cycles is mutual interaction. In Charlotte’s case, a simple interpretation of Charlotte as an oppressed female can not explain the complicated love between Charlotte and Wilbur. If their genders reverse, the mutual help will still work. Charlotte’s retiring symbolizes a cardinal rule of universe in Daoism.

For Laozi, male and female take charge of different jobs because of their natural dispositions. Although Laozi presupposes gender relations on an equal basis, he tends to admire the female’s disposition more. Laozi says:

Large country should learn to be humble, the way the female regard the male. Eventually, it is the female who gets the advantage. When a large country is humble, it will inspire the small country’s confidence and compliance. When a small country is humble, it will move the large country to protect it. (2006, Chapter 61)

His admiration of female's modesty is repeatedly stated in *Dao De Jing*. In addition to the advocacy of feminine attitude, Laozi thought that a mother's love has great universal persuasive power. Her devotion is as pure as the heart of Heaven, containing great mercy and wisdom.

Daoist rhetoric proposes a balanced system in the gender issue. This is why Ursula K. LeGuin becomes fascinated with the philosophical tradition of Daoism. She confesses that "Yang and Yin are a balance. Only together ... are they fertile." She even contends that the west "has gone wrong" to privilege Yang over Yin, thus losing the sense of equilibrium (1978, p. 169). She incorporates Yin and Yang in her works, believing that the harmony and wholeness of Daoism are more conducive to human happiness and success. Charlotte's death for a male child should not be merely interpreted from a feminist perspective. A strong argument on Charlotte's oppression should be carefully reexamined. Daoist perspective tells the difference between oppression and altruism in Charlotte's case and explores the sacrifice from a transcendental perspective.

Conclusion

A Daoist rhetorical perspective refreshes the long-established views of Western critical theories and fosters the understanding of Western children's books from a Chinese epistemology. Laozi developed his relativity theory in the 6th century BCE without the influence of Western theories. Laozi's dialectical principles serve "the important rhetorical function of changing people's habitual thought patterns and leading them to see the reverse possibilities, by appealing to our intuition and deepest level of knowledge" (Lu, p. 237). Thus, Daoist rhetoric becomes an important tool for understanding Chinese thinking and expands the possible reading of children's works.

The Daoist reading of *Charlotte's Web* calls our attention to the profound moral appeals in the novel that may enlighten both children and educators cross-culturally. *Charlotte's Web* has become one of those popular and joyful books which are “short, simple, often didactic in intention, and clearly positive in their outlook on life—optimistic, with happy endings” (Nodelman, 2000, p. 1). With didactic intention, the text provides a lot of pleasure for children. Plato observes that virtue and moral goodness is more beneficial for the long-term happiness than the vice (Plato, 1994b, 52). My analysis of the novel has illustrated that some Daoist principles such as the power of softness, giving out is receiving, and retiring when the job is done. As Western children's literature increasingly lands itself in the Orient, Daoist rhetoric can open up a constructive conversation in interpreting children's literature and offer Western works like *Charlotte's Web* a possible Eastern reading.

Note: 1. In East Asia, children's literature has performed important moral teachings since ancient times. When I was a language art teacher in Taiwan, I used *Charlotte's Web* as an extension of the Chinese language curriculum. I adopted Daoist and Confucian concepts to help my students understand the moral values residing in the novel. Response from both parents and students was generally based on Chinese traditional values such as being faithful to friends, sacrificing oneself for his or her children, and children spiritually extending the life of the parents. They shared Chinese folktales to praise the greatness of mother's love such as Mencius' mother, who moved their home three times in order to give her son a better environment of education. Mencius's mother loved Mencius as much as Charlotte loves Wilbur.

Chapter 6

Sunzi's War Rhetoric in Educating Teenagers

Teenagers experience wars not only in the actual war zones but also in the home, school, and the streets. In our global society, the wars that they confront are complicated—wars fought between good and evil, father and son, the bully and the bullied, the colonizer and the colonized, and among nations, races, and genders. In March, 2010, the tragedy of Phoebe Prince captured headlines in the U.S. news media. Nine teens bullied the teenage girl for three months. She committed suicide after being raped and tormented by classmates both in person and online. According to the District Attorney Elizabeth Scheibel, Phoebe's teachers witnessed her suffering but did not intervene. Similar bullying cases happen again and again in the United States and elsewhere (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Murakami, 1985; Olweus, 1997; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). After the Phoebe case was reported, hundreds of individuals expressed their anger and sorrow on the Internet. Some of them recalled their own experience of having been bullied in their teenage years. One former victim said that such an experience would leave a mental scar forever. When he reported the abuse to his teachers, they thought he must have done something wrong to provoke his classmates' anger. He wished that teachers had believed him at the time and intervened.

Teachers and parents need to educate teenagers about bullying. Bullying is defined by Hazler (1996) as "repeatedly (not just once or twice) harming others. This can be done by physical attack or by hurting others' feeling through words, actions, or social exclusion. Bullying may be done by one person or by a group. It is an unfair match since the bully is either physically, verbally and/or socially stronger than the victim" (p. 6). Bullies are often recognized as having physical strength, impulsive desire to dominate

others, and have less empathy (Olweus, 1991). Victims generally fall into two types: passive and provocative (Olweus, 1978). Passive victims tend to feel anxious, sad, hopeless, lonely, and depressive. When they are attacked by perpetrators, they usually accept the abuse and withdraw or cry, not fighting back. In contrast, provocative victims show anger and aggressive retaliation. They rashly stand up against the perpetrators and, according to research, more likely become potential perpetrators. They might aggress against weaker children while then being abused by stronger peers.

Both types of victims show low self-esteem. They blame themselves overly and regard themselves as useless, stupid, and ugly persons. They usually experience peer rejection and dislike by their peers. Studies evidence that their low self-esteem causes psychosocial and psychosexual obstacles which will continue far beyond the bullying event (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Olweus, 1997; Hazler, 1996). In order to implement successful interventions, social workers and psychologists suggest that for a passive victim, educators should offer them assertiveness training and a stronger visual profile of self; for a provocative victim, a less aggressive solution to solve problems (Dodge, Coie, Pettit & Price, 1990).

There are practical ways to prevent bullying in schools. Since most victims belong to the category of passive victims, Tattum (1997) suggests that educators should offer them peer support by carefully matching victims with elder and stronger companions whose role is to protect and support the victims. The elder companion had better come from the same school and the same neighborhood, thereby they will see each other often, which helps to build up a sense of security and self-confidence in the victim during transition times. In addition, according to Tattum (1997), educators should raise victims' awareness of bullies' habits and identify bullying hot spots; place bullying on School Board agenda; invite parents to discuss the bullying issue; encourage community support and advocate

for changes to school policy in legislation.

In this chapter, I focus on the issue of helping passive victims and potential bullies strengthen their self-esteem. Besides seeking strong peer support and improving school policy as suggested by Tattum (1997), parents and educators can also make good use of media literacy to help teenagers cultivate their physical and psychological power. They can discuss bullying and solutions with teenagers using popular teens bullying movies, such as “Welcome to the Dollhouse” (1995), “The Chocolate War” (1988), “Mean Creek” (2004), and “The Karate Kid” (1984; 2010).

The responsibility of educating teenagers on conflict resolution has been taken on by some fiction writers, movie makers, and educators. The 2008 Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom* presents a modern war between a teenage boy and street bullies. The movie entertains young audiences; more importantly, it helps them to face the challenges of being bullied and to survive various struggles through the spirit of Chinese martial arts. The movie producer Casey Silver explains that, “My son practices martial arts and I started to wonder why there hasn’t been a broad appeal movie for the West with a deeper idea about the beauty and poetry, as well as the deeper philosophy that underlies Kungfu” (Cited in Burns, 2008, p. 11). The screen writer John Fusco echoes Silver’s aspiration. He hopes Western moviegoers come away from this movie wanting to read the classic Chinese mythology *The Journey to the West* and learn that Kungfu is a philosophy, a way of life, a way of thinking, not just a way of fighting. Fusco says, “at the end of his adventures, the young hero in *The Forbidden Kingdom* would learn to face his fears while learning the deeper meaning of Kungfu” (Cited in Burns, 2008, p. 11).

As evidenced by the glowing appraisals, the movie makers believe that Chinese martial arts and its philosophy can assist teenagers to appreciate the beauty and poetic elements in fighting and inspire them to solve problems in their daily lives. This movie

depicts a Boston boy Jason who encounters bullies in Boston's Chinatown. At the most dangerous moment, he is miraculously whisked away to ancient China and learns Kungfu with Chinese masters. He learns to fight with an understanding of the spirit of Chinese martial arts. When he returns to the contemporary United States, he becomes a new teenager who bravely fights with the bullies and no longer lives under the fear of teenaged gangs. Jason can overcome bullying because he has learned Kungfu and its philosophy, which boost his self-esteem and confidence.

The movie makers instill the philosophy of Chinese martial arts by informing the movie with Sunzi's war rhetoric. In this chapter, I will examine the movie based on three aspects of Sunzi's discourse on wars: becoming a benevolent leader, cultivating crafty wisdom, and mastering Kungfu. When teachers and parents watch this movie with teenagers, they can take the opportunity to discuss Sunzi's war rhetoric with them. I also suggest ways that classroom teachers can engage students in sensitive and critical discussions of the movie from a cross-cultural perspective.

Sunzi's Philosophy of War

To understand the spirit of Chinese martial arts, Sunzi's *The Art of War* is a crucial reference and a good starting point. The text, as Mair (2007) comments, is "the earliest and most important Chinese book that deals exclusively with strategy and tactics" and "it is concerned more with the overall planning for war" instead of simply the use of various weapons (Précis). To learn how ancient Chinese strategists solve military and political strife and how they defeat opponents with the least expenditure can help young people deal with their contemporary conflicts.

Sunzi is one of the earliest Chinese warfare sages. He lived in the Spring-Autumn period (722 BCE–481 BCE), in a time when a slave-owning society was shifting to

feudalism and small states were fighting against each other frequently. To seek peace and reduce casualties, Sunzi researched war strategies and developed his thinking on military leadership. According to Sunzi, a commander must establish his convincing words through four means: morality, the knowledge of weather and geography, good management, and strict laws. In Sunzi's terminology, those means are called the Way (道 *dao*), Heaven (天 *tian*), earth (地 *di*), command (將 *jiang*) and rules (法 *fa*). If a commander is kind and trustworthy, he possesses moral influence by which the people will think in line with him until they die. A good commander operates troops in accordance with changes of weather and the geographic features. He is able to put the military laws into practice strictly and understand how his subordinates feel and what they value.

As a military strategist and rhetorician, Sunzi deeply understood human psychology. Conceived as persuasive communication, rhetoric has been practiced in every culture and nation (Combs, 2005). Comparable to Aristotle, who holds that the best speaker must demonstrate authority, good character, logical arguments and the ability to manipulate the audience's emotion effectively, Sunzi built a system of persuasion in an ancient Chinese context. He proposes that understanding the self and the other is a significant step to winning a war. Mutual understanding and appreciation prevents lethal destruction and promises the greatest outcome for both warring parties. Sunzi's war strategy has guided Chinese political and military leaders in every dynasty and continues to help modern people deal with various kinds of struggles. Before an in-depth discussion of Sunzi's rhetoric in the movie, I will first offer a summary of the movie.

Screenwriter and the Production

Screenwriter John Fusco was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. In order to seek

authentic Delta blues music, he traveled the American South at the age of 16. He composed songs and performed in road bands. At the age of 21, he returned to a night school and later went to NYU's Tisch School of the Arts to study his favorite dramatic writing. His student screenplays won national awards. Fusco then continued to write screenplays and received good comments such as "Young Guns" (1988), "Young Guns II" (1990), "Thunderheart" (1992), "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron" (2000), "Dreamkeeper" (2003), "Hidalgo" (2004) and "The Forbidden Kingdom" (2008). He received the Spur Award from the Western Writers of America. Because he loves Chinese culture and martial arts since he was a kid, he is familiar with Chinese cultural myths and legends. He personally studies Chinese Kungfu at the Vermont Kung Fu Academy and China and believes its philosophy (Burns, 2008).

In part inspired by the Chinese mythology *Xi You Ji*, "The Forbidden Kingdom" represents Fusco's effort to bring the Chinese Kungfu philosophy to international audiences. In an interview, Fusco said, "If I had tried reading *Laozi* or the Four Classics to my young son. I would have lost him. So I made up a fun time travel journey that would be something of a primer. (Eve, 2008)" Thus he appropriates the 16th-century Chinese story and turns it into a contemporary cross-cultural, cross-temporal and cross-spatial fantasy. "The Forbidden Kingdom" at the beginning was a bedtime story for his son. He sees film as a fertile opportunity to educate American children (or adults for that matter) about Chinese wisdom while entertaining them. So he told this story and the movie idea to Producer Casey Silver. Silver was completely enamored by Fusco's bedtime story. In the process of producing the film, Silver also consulted Chinese Kungfu actors Jet Li and Jackie Chan and adopted their suggestions. Fusco and Silver targeted this movie at both American and Chinese audiences and make it fun and enjoyable to the entire family. As Jackie Chan admitted, "John is deeply mesmerized by Chinese culture

and Chinese Kungfu movies from the way he has incorporated all the different characters into one movie... I was sold by the ideology of how we can convert this tale based on ancient Chinese legends starting out from Chinese culture to become world culture” (Burns, 2008, p. 10). The Forbidden Kingdom turns out to be a successful martial arts action-adventure movie and received various comments from both American and Chinese audiences.

The War in the movie *The Forbidden Kingdom*

Living in Boston’s Chinatown, seventeen-year-old Jason Tripitakas is fascinated by Chinese Kungfu. One day, in a pawnshop he happens to run into a staff with a bronze monkey symbol engraved in it, of which he has dreamt before. The store owner Old Hop tells him that his family has kept the staff for more than a century and is waiting for its destined seeker to return it to its rightful owner. In the late evening, some street gangs bully Jason and shoot Old Hop. Before he dies, Old Hop thrusts the staff at Jason and enjoins him to return it to its proper owner. The bullies run after Jason trying to capture him. In a harrowing action scene, the staff miraculously brings Jason to an ancient Chinese village.

Tipped off that the staff is within the village, the Jade Warlord persecutes the people during his search. Jason is rescued by Kungfu masters Lu Yan and Silent Monk. They tell Jason the story of this staff based on the Chinese mythology *Journey to the West*. Monkey King was born out of a rock. He is skilled in the boundless magic of transformation. Angry at not being invited to the Jade Emperor’s banquet, he attends anyway. Infuriated by the monkey, the Jade Warlord turns him into a stone statue. Then a prophecy says that there will be a destined seeker who returns Monkey King’s lost staff and frees him.

Jason, Lu Yan, Silent Monk, and Golden Sparrow, a pretty Chinese girl who wants

to avenge her parents' death caused by the Jade Warlord's hands, join the mission to rescue Monkey King. Despite numerous attacks by a Jade Warrior, the White-haired Witch, they finally defeat the Jade Warlord and free Monkey King. The closing scene shows that Jason flies back to the moment in which he faces the bullies in Boston. The lessons in Chinese Kungfu and Sunzi's philosophy have transformed Jason into a brave boy. He fights back and drives the bullies away with his martial arts. In the following passages, I will explore Sunzi's war rhetoric as shown in this movie.

Becoming a Benevolent Leader

According to Sunzi, the best military rhetoric is claiming to be a benevolent leader who fights for justice. When a commander exhibits his moral inspiration and shows that helping others is his only concern, he will generate powerful persuasion and identification among his people. Kings in the Spring-Autumn period were interested in military invasion rather than helping others. Their ambition of expanding territories and gaining wealth and power prompted them to wage wars. Sunzi (1999) taught the kings that "a commander who decides to advance without any thought of winning personal fame and to withdraw without fear of punishment and whose only concern is to protect his people and serve his sovereign" is a virtuous leader (p.78). Since the commander fights for justice instead of for his personal fame or for the fear of punishment, his people will trust his altruism and fight to death for him.

The emphasis on becoming a benevolent leader is infused into *The Forbidden Kingdom*. Lu Yan and Silent Monk fight against the Jade Warlord with a just cause, which turns them into benevolent leaders. Both have a benevolent intention of saving the people, thus they hold substantial moral capital. The claim of fighting for justice inspires Jason, Golden Sparrow, and the monks who follow the lead of Lu Yan and Silent Monk to

save Monkey King. In the movie, Lu Yan and Silent Monk risk their lives to save common people. They teach Jason Kungfu in order to enhance his ability to survive the battle. Sunzi (1999) suggests that when a leader “cares for his soldiers as if they were infants” and “he loves his soldiers as if they were his own sons, they will stand by him even unto death” (p. 79). People will follow the leader through every vicissitude, whether to live or die, without fear of moral peril. Because Lu Yan and Silent Monk act not for their own benefits, their leadership inspires their followers.

In contrast, the Jade Warlord is portrayed as an evil leader. He tricks Monkey King into giving away his magic staff by saying that only fighting with bare hands is a fair fight. However, when Monkey King puts away his weapon, the Jade Warlord does not keep his word. He uses his witchcraft to imprison Monkey King as a stone statue for five centuries. The young audiences of the movie can clearly see that Monkey King is innocent and that he was defeated unfairly. Thus, the rescuing mission led by Silent Monk and Lu Yan naturally turns into a just war.

When applying Sunzi’s war rhetoric in education, teachers and parents may use this movie to explain that persuasion should aim for justice and for helping others. When teenagers face a bullying situation, they could persuade their friends to stand with them by describing the righteousness in fighting the bullies. They can list what evil things the bullies have done to other teenagers, so as to establish the negative ethos of the bullies. Then the teenagers could argue why a group of friends need to be united and fight back. If they fear to face the bullies, they will inevitably be hurt. However, chronic victims are usually weak in character and lack confidence. How could they persuade others to stand with them, not to mention to become leaders? Educators should provide victims a transition training to turn them from a poor coward to a benevolent leader. Tattum (1997) suggested pairing them with elder, stronger companions who could demonstrate

braveness and protect them. The transition training is exemplified in the movie. Jason initially acts as a weak victim. Then he encounters Kungfu masters, who show him a virtuous character and invincible martial arts. Later they teach Jason martial arts to enhance his self-defense ability and his understanding of Daoist philosophy. Paired with capable and benevolent leaders, Jason has opportunities to mimic them and becomes one himself.

Cultivating Crafty Wisdom

Sunzi argues that the wisest way to win a war is to win it without fighting. How do we make it happen? Sunzi suggests using verbal persuasion first. According to Kennedy (1998), rhetoric is a physical and psychological energy reacting to a particular situation. In ancient times, aboriginal people found that using physical strength to solve problems causes bloody deaths, harming each other gravely, so gradually they developed verbal communications art to substitute for the physical fight. Similarly, Sunzi (1999) renders that “The best policy in war is to thwart the enemy’s strategy. The second best is to disrupt his alliances through diplomatic means. The third best is to attack his army in the field. The worst policy of all is to attack walled cities” (p. 17). To lower the cost of a battle, one should thwart the enemy’s plan and disrupt his inner unity through verbal persuasion.

Sunzi proposes that one cultivates crafty wisdom to win wars. When the enemy is formidable, it is presumably governed by a clever leader. The first step of winning a war is to flatter the enemy. Exaggerate his deeds and pretend to be inferior to him. “Feign incapability when in fact capable; feign inactivity when ready to strike” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 7). After the enemy has been placated, he might temporarily put away his strong defense. The second step is to provoke the enemy’s anger. Anger will disturb his calmness and

interfere with his judgment. When the enemy is blind to the coming danger, “attack where he is least prepared. Take action when he least expects you” (Sunzi, 1999, p. 7). A leader holds great responsibilities. If he commits wrong, he does damage on a large scale. Using crafty rhetoric is an important means to defeat a clever enemy.

The Jade Warlord, who may have studied Sunzi’s war strategies as did many real-life Chinese military leaders, capitalizes on the Monkey King’s arrogance and anger. In the Chinese mythology of *Journey to the West*, Monkey King is the leader of the Mountain of Fruits and Flowers. With the magic staff in hand, the monkey’s Kungfu is invincible: even the heavenly army cannot conquer him. The Jade Warlord is also an outstanding leader, the highest commander of the heavenly army. However, Monkey King offends him in Jade Emperor’s banquet. Unable to stand the monkey’s arrogance, the Jade Warlord attacks him to validate his authority as a heavenly army commander. He exercises his witchcraft to lift up hundred of fire balls and spears, shooting at Monkey King. However, the Jade Warlord fails. He realizes that he cannot conquer Monkey King in the physical combat.

The Jade Warlord utilizes Sunzi’s rhetoric next. He stops exercising his Kungfu but compliments on Monkey King’s “most excellent staff fighting.” Hearing that, Monkey King becomes very proud. Then the Jade Warlord mocks him that, “but without the weapon, you are nothing but a common monkey. No more weapon, no more magic. Face against face.” Monkey King’s pride makes him accept his enemy’s proposal immediately. He forgets Sunzi’s warning that war is a game of deceit. He puts away his magic staff and uses bare hands to fight the Jade Warlord. In a second, the Warlord uses his witchcraft to turn him into a stone. When discussing this movie with teens, educators can teach them how to use crafty wisdom. For example, when teenagers face bullies, they may present their weakness at first, complimenting the bullies’ “great power” and “goodness.” When

the bullies' pride is inflated, the teenagers can use language to trick the bullies to disarm like what the Jade Warlord does to Monkey King. If victims can use verbal rhetoric to ease the bullies' anger, they may less likely be hurt.

Another way to disrupt unity is to generate a cause for conflict. People often fight against each other because of conflict of interests. In *The Forbidden Kingdom*, the Jade Warlord is the person who utilizes Sunzi's war rhetoric on this point. He wants to kill Jason and to gain Monkey King's magic staff. He creates a conflict between White Hair Witch and Jason by offering them one elixir. After Lu Yan is injured by White Hair Witch's arrow, only the elixir of immortality can save his life. Jason goes to see the Warlord for the elixir. They strike up the following conversation:

Jason: A man is dying back on Song Mountain. I need the elixir.

The Jade Warlord: And why should I give it to you?

Jason: Because I brought you the staff.

The Jade Warlord: The life of your friend for the power to rule a kingdom? A most reasonable offer. This man, a good friend?

Jason: And a good teacher.

The Jade Warlord: A man who honors his teacher honors himself. However, there is a bit of a problem with your request. You see... I've promised the elixir to someone else.

Jason: But she did not bring you the staff. I did.

The Jade Warlord [turns to White Hair Witch]: The boy has the point.

White Hair Witch: My Liege, you made a promise.

The Jade Warlord: There is but one way to resolve such matters. A martial challenge... to the death.

White Hair Witch [answers excitedly]: With pleasure. (Fusco, 2008)

White Hair Witch wants the elixir to stay young. According to Sunzi's (1999) suggestion, "When the enemy is greedy for grain, hand out a bait to lure him" (p. 9); the Jade Warlord offers the only elixir as a bait to seduce White Hair Witch to kill Jason. This way the Jade Warlord does not fight by himself but achieves his goal of gaining the staff.

Manipulation of human psychology is the key to winning without fighting. Many victims of bullying use physical violence to fight back. Sometimes their fighting stops bullying but sometimes they get hurt badly. Even though school policy tolerates zero counter-aggression by provocative victims, studies indicate that most victims deem fighting back as the most effective technique to stop bullying (Black, Weinles & Washington, 2010). Many victims prefer to place themselves at risk of being labeled as a bully or even being expelled from school. Learning from Sunzi's rhetoric of winning without fighting, educators can discuss alternative ways with teens. Take the Jade Warlord's strategy as an example. He provokes a conflict between Jason and White Hair Witch. The conflict of interests makes White Hair Witch want to kill Jason and Jason to kill White Hair Witch. The Jade Warlord does not need to crash his opponents directly. Following Sunzi's suggestion, when teens encounter bullies, the best strategy is to understand the conflict of interests among the bullies and try to create a conflict to break their unity.

Creating conflicts between bullies seems evil and immoral. However, the real world is very cruel. If educators do not tolerate crafty verbal strategy, the victims may be physically hurt by the bullies. In that case, it is hard to judge who is right and who is wrong. Myers (2008) acknowledges that recent war stories often "confront the moral dilemmas posed by modern wars, with no simplistic accounts of good guys versus bad

and no definitions of what constitutes heroism” (p. 25). By teaching teens Sunzi’s rhetoric, parents and educators can remind them that the suffering of the bullies and the bullied is in fact generated by a vaster, deeper sociopolitical system. Rather than focusing their mental and physical energies on confronting the bully, victims might seek the source of conflicts within the naturalized hegemony and thereby develop more effective solutions.

Mastering Kungfu

In Sunzi’s opinion, being benevolent and wise is not enough to win a war. A great commander needs to possess super power to protect others. One of the rhetorical strategies from *The Art of War* is to demonstrate one’s supreme ability in martial arts. One who masters the martial arts and military affairs is in a position to offer protection and ward off danger, so that his words would be listened to and obeyed by the saved. The power of protection is an effective rhetoric, since striving to survive is part of human nature. In the movie, Lu Yan and the Silent Monk teach Jason Kungfu and the Daoist philosophy derived from Sunzi and Laozi. Jason desperately wants to learn the masters’ Kungfu. He obeys their strict instructions respectfully because the masters have saved his life.

Kungfu training is depicted as strenuous in the movie. In order to increase the flexibility of Jason’s legs, they are roped and pulled in opposite directions by his masters. The masters ignore Jason’s painful cries, showing no pity on him. The masters teach him that “Kungfu, Kungfu! Hard work over time to accomplish skill” (Fusco, 2008). They also tell Jason an ancient Chinese fable: A butcher cuts meat everyday for many years and his knife never touches oxen’s bones. The butcher is able to do so because he has practiced dismembering oxen over thousands of times. He knows every bone and every

piece of flesh in an ox. Mastering Kungfu comes from strenuous training like dismembering an ox.

Besides the physical lessons, the masters cultivate Jason's virtue through meditation. They illuminate the spirit of Kungfu in meditation: "Learn the form but seek the formless. Hear the soundless. Learn it all then forget it all" (Fusco, 2008). For example, when a fisherman has caught fish, he will no longer need a fishing rod. When one reads books and acquires their substance, he has no need to preserve the books. "Words exist because of meaning; once you've got the meaning you can forget the words" (Watsib, 1968, p. 302). So when the masters teach Jason the form of Kungfu, the lesson is not merely the form but the Daoist philosophy behind those movements. If one knows the true meaning of a form, one can use it freely in any occasion. So the masters tell Jason that, "Learn the way, then find your own way. The musician can have Kungfu. Or the poet who paints pictures with words and makes emperors weep. This, too, is Kungfu" (Fusco, 2008). The spirit of Kungfu is both form and formless, way and no way. The Daoist epistemology contains seemingly binary but complementary forces symbolized by Yin and Yang.

To teach teenagers how to protect themselves and how to be a welcome leader, learning Kungfu is a good choice. The principle is to encourage a victim to acquire Kungfu, broadly defined, and its philosophy which can boost their self-esteem when they face bullies. Youngsters grow up in an era saturated with school and media violence. "[S]hedding innocence and discarding naïve notions of what counts as heroism or legitimate authority" and "searching from alternative values and communities, friends, and surrogate families who typically help them to survive" is a practical suggestion (Myers, 2008, p. 24). Kungfu seems violent but is needed for our youngsters' safety.

Martial arts not only can help the bullied but also the bullies. Since a youngster

could be a victim and a bully at the same time, helping teenagers overcome their violent tendency is the responsibility of educators. When a child grows up being bullied and neglected, they derive psychological scars. The bullied sometimes turns into a hardened and angry bully. Some suggest that psychotherapy, community intervention, or high-security detention can “rescue” young gangs. However, those approaches prove insufficient to change the young gangs’ long-term behaviors (Small, Kenndy & Bender, 1999). Twemlow & Sacco (1998) propose that the use of martial arts literature provides an effective treatment for violent youngsters. As demonstrated in martial arts novels, the practitioners of Kungfu must commit to respect and self-control, using violence in a righteous situation. By learning from the martial arts heroes, intractably youngsters will have good models and show off their strength and anger in a controlled way. As Sunzi suggests, the art of fighting is not simply about might but involves Daoist wisdom. Educators should teach youngsters the true meaning of form and formlessness and cultivate their spirit in the pursuit of softness and justice.

Sunzi’s war wisdom can be broadly applied to the discussion of other teens bullying movies. For example, “Welcome to the Dollhouse” depicts Dawn Wiener’s miserable junior high school life where she is bullied by classmates. Insults and humiliations force her to revenge radically on her friends and family. As a result, she ends up with no friends and loneliness. The last scene shows that Dawn obediently follows other students singing the school anthem, which leaves the audience wondering what is happening or will happen to her. Will her obedience help boost her self-esteem or is it just another form of oppression on a young life? Teachers and scholars can discuss this movie with teens and use Sunzi’s wisdom to answer the unsolved questions. According to Sunzi, people who deal with conflicts using force are not the smartest. People who win friends’ hearts often cultivate themselves and master a skill that can benefit others. By mastering a skill and

helping others, one can build up her confidence among peers. And a firm person can also easily work with others through verbal negotiations. For example, when Dawn's parents need a room to celebrate their anniversary, Dawn resists tearing down her clubhouse. Her stubbornness leads to family dispute. According to Sunzi, conflicts can be solved through a harmonious way. If Dawn had learned from Sunzi, she would know that to win a family war is to win the family members' hearts first. Sunzi says that a person who cares of others' need as if his, people will stand by him even unto death. That is the way to become a welcome teenager. Sunzi has offered strategies to deal with various conflicts. Educators and parents can discuss Sunzi's strategies with teenagers and identify proper ones to resolve family and school conflicts.

The Forbidden Kingdom provides not only a venue for students to discuss their daily struggles but also an opportunity for them to explore cross-cultural representations. Through scrutinizing Sunzi's rhetoric in this movie, educators discuss survival strategies with teenagers and help them deal with their daily struggles. However, as an American movie that claims to have embodied the spirit of ancient Chinese culture, does it represent Chinese culture truthfully? Educators need to encourage students to examine the movie critically while watching it.

The Problematics of Cultural Representation

In the globalized world, students get to know other cultures most through books and media. For many Westerners, "movies, television, and stories are the most popular means of obtaining information about these cultures" (Yenika-Agbaw, 2008, p. 3). *The Forbidden Kingdom* won the top box office rating in the first week of release in North America, but it was not well-received in China. The reason is obvious. The entire piece largely caters to the taste of Western audiences. It includes many Chinese cultural

elements, combining street fighting, Chinese Kungfu, fantasy, exotic atmosphere, and performance by renowned martial arts stars Jackie Chan and Jet Li. Oriental martial arts offer the Western audiences an infinite scope of imagination. The various martial arts styles such as tiger boxing, mantis boxing, and crane fist combined with the use of diverse weapons like knives, swords, staffs, and whips enhance the entertainment value of the oriental scenes. However, as a Chinese saying goes, “the expert understands the inner working; the layman can only scratch the surface.” In the eyes of the Chinese audiences, the movie has betrayed Chinese culture in many places.

First, many classical characters appear absurdly laughable as a Western commercial product. For example, Jade Emperor, the head of all gods, acts as an irresponsible emperor in the movie. After the peach banquet, he leaves behind the unsolved internal strife among the Heavenly gods. He goes to seclusion with his wife for five hundreds years and ignores the suffering of people on earth. Jade Emperor’s image is obviously twisted. The Emperor is the highest god in Chinese mythology, who is wise at handling gods’ relations and earthly problems. He once was a prince on earth, who discarded his throne and went to mountains for spiritual cultivation. He later rescued his people from suffering and underwent millions of challenges. His wisdom and benevolence touched the gods and he was elected as the highest god in heaven. In the movie, Jade Emperor becomes a naïve ruler, who is merely concerned with his own meditation and indifferent to the internal strife among gods. This twist smears the Chinese god, which has led to harsh criticisms by Chinese audiences on some Internet websites.

Second, this movie portrays an American as the savior of an Eastern world. When Jade Emperor is secluded away, the Jade Warlord controls Heaven and Earth in a bloody way. Over hundreds of years, no single hero is able to save the world. Then an American young boy, a blond-haired, white-skinned male, emerges; the so-called “savior” finally

comes to rescue this world. Does not the movie hail the greatness of White American males? Ancient Chinese Kungfu masters only perform minor roles in the movie, whose job is to assist the white savior. As a heroic American male, this savior is a convenient placeholder for the gaze of the film's intended audience.

Third, the grand structure of the movie follows that of a well-known contemporary Western fantasy. It borrows some scenes of *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 2003; 2004) to introduce *Journey to the West* to Western audiences. In *The Lord of the Rings*, a young boy, Frodo, is chosen to destroy the Ring and fend off the threat of Sauron. Frodo sets off an expedition to the Cracks of Doom in Mordor, where the Ring was forged. In *The Forbidden Kingdom*, a young boy sets off an expedition to return Monkey King's magic staff and defeats the evil, the Jade Warlord. Even the appearance of the Five Finger Peak and the army of the Jade Warlord in *The Forbidden Kingdom* strikingly resembles the scenes in *The Lord of the Rings*. In addition, when Jason and his master are injured in a remote place, they happen to come across a nearby monastery and enter a mysterious mountain. The mountain and monks are like the Rivendell in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The movie's only virtue, from the Chinese perspective, is that the Chinese girl, Golden Sparrow, does not devote her body to a white American male. The love story between Golden Sparrow and Jason is handled with a clever and subtle hand. Even though they develop affection for each other, they never hold hands or kiss in the ancient Chinese context, which retains the Neo-Confucian ritual spirit that "male and female should not have bodily contact before marriage." On this point, the movie makers respect the Chinese tradition. When Jason returns to Boston, the Chinese girl only gives a verbal compliment to his braveness, without showing further sexual intimacy. The ending leaves the movie with endless imaginative possibilities. If Golden Sparrow offered vain worship and devotion to Jason, there would be little left to be admired in terms of the movie's

cultural authenticity and its portrayed ethnic relationship.

Conclusion

Popular media have a great influence on contemporary teenagers' beliefs and behaviors. Wan & Gut's study (2008) suggests that adolescents spend a lot of time on media. It is necessary to include media literacy education in the academic curriculum to advance young adult's survival skills and help them cope with life challenges. Bullying and martial arts are popular themes depicted in Hollywood movies, which should be closely examined by teachers, parents, and teenagers. With guidance from an adult or teachers, teens can also start to notice certain cultural dynamics between the East and the West in some movies. The Hollywood movie *The Forbidden Kingdom* looms large in multicultural themes and bully issues.

This chapter offers teachers and scholars Sunzi's war wisdom and a critical perspective of cultural representation in the Hollywood movie. With the help of educators, teenagers can learn some survival strategies from Sunzi's points of view such as benevolence, crafty wisdom, and the virtues of Kungfu. Through exploring Sunzi's rhetoric in this movie, educators can take the opportunity to discuss conflict resolution with teenagers and help them make friends and deal with bullies. In addition, educators can cultivate teenagers' critical views towards cultural representation and authenticity by watching this cross-cultural movie.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In the field of children's literature, there are two major problems in literary criticism and literacy education: the lack of non-Western critical voices and the ability to reconcile differences among Western and non-Western cultures. As an increasing number of scholars have recognized, although the globalization movement in literary studies is becoming prominent and has gradually focused on cross-cultural contact, scholars are not adequately prepared to comprehend non-Western theories. Theories grown out of Asia and African contexts are either ignored or designated as inferior and backward (Appadurai, 1996; Greenblatt, 1992; Huntington, 1996; Said, 1993; Wallerstein, 1997). Edward W. Said pointed out two mistaken assumptions in globalizing literary studies: "first, the idea that literature exists within a national framework and, second, the assumption that a literary object exists in some sort of stable or at least consistently identifiable form" (2001, p. 64). He regretted that scholars and teachers of his generation who were educated in what was an essentially Eurocentric mode and authorities were all "grounded in the European and North Atlantic world of classics, the church, the empire, their tradition, languages and masterworks" (2001, p. 65). In a global market, these problems situate Western academics in a disadvantageous position. Said suggested that scholars of the new generation should attune to the non-European and decolonized currents of his time.

My proposal to read Western fantasies through the Daoist lens will improve both literary criticism and literacy education. With my Chinese diaspora experience and through my rearticulation of the Daoist voices, I have created my own hermeneutic in Western fantasies. The meaning of Western literature will no longer exist within a

national boundary. I demonstrate that literary objects need not to be restricted within certain sort of “stable or consistently identifiable form” (Said, 2001, p. 64).

Literary criticism can be an inclusive dialogue among different cultures and should allow scholars in other regions to pronounce their indigenous theories. They may originate from India, Egypt, Japan, Congo, Nigeria, Indonesia, Australia, and so on. At the same time, Western fantasy world will also inhabit new residents from eastern, northern, and southern lands.

Cross-cultural Dialogue in Literary Criticism

After the 18th century, children’s literature cannot be easily called national literature. The authors of Western children’s literature have demonstrated cross-national experiences and a global insight through their worldwide travel and reading. Likewise, readership of Western children’s literature certainly extends beyond just European and North American countries. Western children’s literature has become the product of global interactions and cultural exchanges. Thus, they deserve to be explored from a global perspective, including Asian and African perspectives.

Since the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, authors’ thoughts and experiences have been no longer limited in a nation-state boundary. Their works transcend the boundary and contain cross-national and cross-cultural elements. In my study, I demonstrated that the authors of my selected fantasies all showed cross-national experience and ability. For example, Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) was born in the Danish town of Odense. At fourteen, he made his way to Copenhagen to seek his good fortune. Later, he traveled to several European countries to make a living. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) was born in France in 1900, studied in Switzerland, went on wars in Western Africa, and exiled to New York where he wrote *The Little Prince*. E.

B. White (1899 –1985) was born in the United States, worked for *The New Yorker* magazine for sixty years, and widely read literature from all over the world. Screenwriter John Fusco was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, traveled the American South at the age of 16, studied in NYU, and learned Chinese Kungfu in China. All these authors demonstrated a global view in their works. How could we limit our understanding and interpretation of children's literature within a national boundary or a certain theory?

In addition, the readership of Western children's literature has spread all over the world, including to Asia and Africa. When children's literature, such as a translated version of *Harry Potter*, is read cross a range of cultures, it also assumes across-cultural identities. Research shows that few studies have explored how Western children's books have been read cross-culturally through non-Western lenses such as a Chinese perspective. How could children's literature scholars merely keep Euro-American audiences in mind and only pay attention to European theories?

This disciplinary gap begets some questions for us. Should scholars merely stick to Western theories, but not open up for other indigenous theories from non-Western countries? Should scholars only focus on cultural authenticity or the exotic elements of non-Western literature but not be aware of other non-Western readings of Western children's literature? Should non-Western scholars' voices be heard in children's literature?

I argue that in this increasingly multicultural and globalized world, Western literature should no longer be seen only through Western perspectives. Reading Western children's literature from non-Western perspectives can reveal to us the complexity of reading and writing literature in a globalized world. For example, I used the Daoist theory to examine the connections between Western products and Chinese cultural traditions. In the process of comparison and reflection, I found that the nature and tenor of Western

children's literature and Daoism reveal a unifying paradigm about truth. They do not divorce in their quest for the good and beauty. However, Daoist theory is not always fit to explain some phenomena in Western fantasies. The unfit parts may be caused by differences in the authors's cultural assumptions and beliefs. For example, Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" sheds light on the virtue of self-sacrifice for others. This view resonates in Laozi's notion of the way of Heaven: nature takes care of human beings in a silent way. However, when encountering conflict or stress, Daoist solutions are not always Andersen's choices. In some occasions, Daoist philosophy can not explain the motivation and the behaviors of these protagonists in Andersen's stories. For instance, if a Daoist would write *The Little Mermaid*, she would end the story depicting the mermaid turning into foam and reuniting with ocean as a perfect natural cycle. Like Zhuangzi's joy for his wife's death, she would regard death just as a physical transformation. Life begins from nothing to vital energy, to physical form, and to nothing again. Different from the Daoist cyclical view of death, Andersen dealt with an innocent girl's fate with a religious compensation. Facing the arrival of death, Andersen awards the little mermaid an immortal soul in the Heavenly Kingdom by turning her into an air's daughter. On one hand, Andersen's tales have indeed widely appealed to the Chinese readers because of their resonance with some Chinese virtues. On the other hand, their multiple versions and adaptations in the past century reflect their contradiction with Chinese political and cultural preferences.

Shedding a new light on European works, Daoist theory is a viable alternative that will serve not only literary scholars in China and the United States, but also others in the rest of the world. My study encourages dialogue in children's literature criticism and hopefully will motivate scholars in other regions to rethink their indigenous theories and the possibility of opening up a new theoretical perspective to children's literature.

Cross-cultural Dialogue in Literacy Education

My study also aims to help pre-service teachers to face the challenge of globalization. Through reading my Daoist interpretation of Western fantasies, pre-service teachers will have clear ideas about Daoism and the ability to teach Western literature through a Daoist theoretical perspective.

In the 21st century, more and more people are moving across national borders. Schools and work places are becoming culturally and racially mixed. In the past decade, Western and Eastern classrooms have become filled with a fast-growing number of immigrant students who grow up in different cultures, speak different languages, and believe in different religions and value systems. Research shows that 20% of students in American K-12 classrooms have a foreign born parent; 9% in the United Kingdom; and more than 80% in the United Arab Emirates (Capps et al., 2005; McEachron & Bhatti, 2005; Habboush, 2010). Language arts education in Chinese and U.S. colleges aims to cultivate students' communicative skills and sensibility so that they could teach in multicultural classrooms or conduct international business. The ability to navigate the cultural and linguistic differences is crucial for getting a job in the global market.

However, research also shows that pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to face the challenges of teaching students who are culturally different from them (Howard, 1999; Merryfield, 2000; Gay, 2002; Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010). Pre-service teachers in the United States and China have few ideas regarding who these multicultural students are and what they know. College educations need to improve pre-service teachers' cultural sensibility and linguistic competence in order to work with transnational students and colleagues.

The significance of Daoist theory in teacher education is mounting for both Chinese and American academics. In China, over the last decade, markets have drastically

increased the production of picture books, comic books, and young adult fictions based on Chinese history and literature. In the K-12 Chinese curriculum, Chinese culture-related readings consist of 50% of language courses' focus. However, out of 55 credit hours, teacher education programs in China only offers 3 credit hours of Chinese literature and philosophy; the rest are mostly Western educational theories, methodology, and literature. Chinese pre-service teachers do not have much training in teaching Chinese classics before they go into classrooms and publishing houses.

In the United States, the training for pre-service teachers in teaching Chinese culture is nearly non-existent. Yet, there is more and more cooperation between businesses and cultural exchanges with China. Even President Obama's youngest daughter started learning Chinese at the age of eight. She thought that by learning Chinese, she would have a chance to talk with the Chinese President in Mandarin (CBS NEWS, Jan 20, 2011). In a public speech, President Obama quoted Guanzi (725-645 B. C. E.), an ancient Chinese politician, to show his familiarity with and respect to Chinese culture. The imperative to expand cooperation among nations reinforces the importance of cross-cultural education for pre-service teachers who are responsible for our future generations.

On the one hand, my study can help American pre-service teachers live and work with people from Chinese cultures. On the other hand, this study will help Chinese pre-service teachers to appreciate their own cultural heritage and further create for them a new hermeneutics. My Daoist analysis of Western fantasies can be a good example for building a cross-cultural and cross-national curriculum for language arts education. If educators would like to design a Daoist theory course, they can use my methodology and analysis to guide their students. This study will provide them with knowledge of Daoist theory and the ability to negotiate between Western products and Daoist values.

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