

Interactive Cross-Cultural Encounters: Pluri-culture and (Im)migration in the Writings of Gao Xingjian

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The aim of this paper is to explore how the complexities of pluri-culture and (im)migration are presented through interactive cross-cultural encounters in the novels, plays and films of Gao Xingjian, 2000 Nobel Laureate in Literature. I will examine how Gao's writings become the user interface interacting with the reader/audience, inviting them to feel and experience pluri-culture and (im)migration on their own.

Gao Xingjian is ethnically Chinese who became an émigré to France in 1987, and was granted French citizenship in 1997. He claims that "as soon as [he] arrived [at France he] became a full member of French society" (Conversation with Gao). However, in his works there is always a tension caused by an interplay between the particularity of his Chinese roots and the universality of the global routes he has taken to reach out to a world audience. This interplay is also reflected in the Nobel citation: "for an œuvre of universal validity, bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity, which has opened new paths for the Chinese novel and drama" (Nobel Press Release). I will explore this tension in the light of pluri-culture and (im)migration.

As soon as Gao began his migration to France in 1987, he noticed a need for migrants like him to engage in active mutual exchange and mutual enrichment. In "*Wen xue xu yao xiang hu jiao liu, xiang hu feng fu*" ("Literatures Need Mutual Exchange and Mutual Enrichment"), Gao notes that the western modernist writers have become canonical, and there is a need for further reform (translation mine): "The problem before us is where can western contemporary literature go? What can

Chinese writers like us who have entered an active period of creation do? ” (Gao 1987: 126). Liu Xin-wu recalls Gao telling him on 31 May 2000 in Paris, on the eve of Gao’s being awarded the Nobel Prize in literature (translation mine): “City development and social life in Paris are facing a crisis, that is, how to develop and change further. It is similar in the cultural arts. He says that in the conceptual art exhibition on time taking place in the Centre Georges Pompidou, to him it is a big pile-up of modernist art and postmodernist art to the end point with considerable bluffing and ludicrously pompous. Actually it is very weak with anaemia. There is a great need for a renaissance, to return to the real and simple” (Liu 61). Most of Gao’s important works were written between 1987 when he settled in France, and 2000 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. His works in this period show his attempts to work out what he meant by “real and simple” writing.

Migration takes place on multiple levels. First, it is a very complicated and extended process going far beyond the migration of citizenship. Gao adapted easily to his new country because his cultural migration to France began early: he studied French literature at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute between 1957 and 1962, and took a degree in French and literature. This far preceded his first visit to France, which did not take place until 1979, his first opportunity to travel abroad.

Second, migration is not a one-way process from the country of origin to the country of destination. Gao Xingjian’s cultural migration to France is never complete. On the one hand, the migration between nations and attainment of the new citizenship marks the linear route to the country of destination, from China to France. Thus, as Gao was granted French citizenship in 1997, France claims the honours awarded to him because when Gao was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2000, he was a French citizen. He also earned top honours in France: Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) awarded by the French Government in 1992, as well as the Prix Communauté Française de Belgique 1994, and Prix du Nouvel An Chinois 1997.

On the other hand, the ethnic cultural roots are always there despite the migration between nations, as can be inferred from the congratulatory message Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji delivered to Gao when interviewed by the Hong Kong newspaper *East Daily*:

Q.: *What's your comment on Gao's winning the Nobel Prize?*

A.: *I am very happy that works written in Chinese can win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Chinese characters have a history of several thousand years, and Chinese language has an infinite charm, (I) believe that there will be Chinese works winning Nobel Prizes again in the future. Although it's a pity that the winner this time is a French citizen instead of Chinese, I still would like to send my congratulations both to the winner and the French Department of Culture.*

I will show how Gao charts global routes to work both below and beyond the national level, and attain a universality so profound that it enables him to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. There are two main movements: a centripetal movement converging towards the self, and a centrifugal movement reaching towards a universal humanity, which in so doing de-emphasizes the national level.

Centripetal movement converging towards the self

Gao Xingjian began his Nobel acceptance speech entitled “The Case for Literature” by referring to the internal movement towards the self. He thinks that a writer is an “individual”, meaning an “ordinary,” “sensitive” “person” who “does not speak as the spokesperson of the people.” To Gao, literature can only be the voice of the individual, primarily derived from the feelings of the individual, and allows the person to preserve his human consciousness and affirm his self-value. Therefore, Gao thinks that talking to oneself is the starting point of literature and answers the writer’s need for self-fulfilment. Of course, considering the circumstances when Gao wrote his works, there is a practical need, as many of Gao’s works were banned in China. Even at present when Gao is living in France, he is earning his living by selling his ink paintings--and they are not cheap.

Nevertheless, this focus on the self is also a powerful means to reach the common humanity in his readers and audience. What does focusing on the self-mean? Gao's major novel, instrumental in helping him to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, *Soul Mountain*, illustrates this. Gao's works often feature external journeys which are analogous to internal quests. Literally, migration means a change of the locations of home. But this change is never complete. One is forever caught between the similarities to the old home and the differences found in the new home. At the beginning of the novel, the "you" is a stereotypical tourist, newly arrived in an old bus at the mountain county town in the South with his backpack and a bag. Binarism prevails as he tries to distinguish himself from the "locals," the crowd of youths eating sunflower seeds who "have been here for many generations." Then, "home" turns out to be a condition rather than a location. Eating at the food stalls the "you" says: "You've lived in the city for a long time and need to feel that you have a hometown. You want a hometown so that you'll be able to return to your childhood to recollect long lost memories" (8). External similarities can link the individual in the new location to his self in the past. In *Soul Mountain*, the "cobblestone street" of the present links the individual to his past: "So you arrive in Wuyizhen, on a long and narrow street inlaid with black cobblestones, and walking along this cobblestone street with its deep single-wheel rut, you suddenly enter your childhood, you seem to have spent your childhood in an old mountain town like this" (16). At the same time, the new location can never be the same as the old location. The "you" finds that despite the similarity, the town is different from his childhood home: "The one-wheel handcarts can no longer be seen and instead of the creak of jujube axles greased with bean oil, the streets are filled with the din of bicycle bells" (16). The new home, the destiny of migration, also carries an acknowledgement of changes in time, culture and location. Gao's novel *One Man's Bible* begins with the "he's" dream of his childhood days in China in a hotel in central France. Gao writes: "That kind of reminiscence of life is mixed with dreams. Those impressions transcend time and space" (6) (translation mine).

In the Nobel Acceptance Speech, Gao thinks that “the writer today receives multicultural influences outside the culture of his own race emphasising the cultural features of a people is inevitably suspect [sic].” *Soul Mountain* is ethnically Chinese, written in China in Chinese about Chinese matters. It reflects the 10-month journey Gao embarked on up the Yangtze River after he was wrongly diagnosed as having lung cancer. But it is far more complicated than the dichotomy between urban coastal China and the primordial interior Yangtze river area, and by analogy between the West and the East. The focus is not just on the confrontation between the many minority rural cultures along the Yangtze River marked by spiritualism, as against the majority urban Han culture marked by reason. It is also on how these apparently disparate cultures can understand and complement one another.

This simultaneous consciousness of multiple cultures is not unique to Gao. The millennium issue of *Modern China* begins with Philip Huang’s excellent article “Biculturality in Modern China,” in which he foregrounds the need to make a distinction between ideologies that may “require either/or choices between tradition/modernity, Chinese/Western, autonomy/domination, or Sinicization/Westernization,” and the “life experiences” of real people that “usually do not” require such binary distinctions (Huang 22). Speaking from the perspective of a bilingual Chinese living in the western world, Huang elucidates the freedom experienced in everyday life: “what is ‘Chinese’ is simply what the Chinese people have seen fit to incorporate into their lives”; both the “Chinese culture” and the “Chinese language” are “what is lived and used by the Chinese people at a given time” (22). Gao is definitely exemplifying this biculturality in which cultures converge in real life experiences. To Huang, biculturality opens new possibilities for “intercultural understanding” and “transnational visions,” since “cultural contacts at the level of the everyday lived experience of the people can result in ready accommodation, without aggression or domination and victimization or subjugation” (29).

The need to go back to the self is also shared by Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Laureate for Literature who is also Chinese. In his Nobel Lecture entitled

“Storytellers,” Mo Yan thinks that though he was greatly inspired by the American novelist William Faulkner and the Columbian Gabriel García Márquez, “in literary creation, supreme self-confidence and the need to follow one’s own instincts are essential. ... Write my own stories in my own way.”

The depiction of internal journeys makes Gao’s works cross cultural boundaries very easily. In *Soul Mountain*, the “I” explains the distinction between external reality and internal reality: “Real life is not the same as manifestations of life. ... I had gone against real life because I was simply stringing together life’s manifestations, so of course I wasn’t able to accurately portray life and in the end only succeeded in distorting reality” (12). In the original Chinese version, “manifestation” is “*biao xiang*” (superficial appearance) and “*xian xiang*” (phenomenon) (13). External individual “manifestations” are marked by cultural specificities and differences, while the underlying constant “phenomenon” is what is innate, marking the common denominator underlying humanity, and the instances of cultural similarities and universals. Gao thinks:

Whereas modern and contemporary painting uses colors and materials on the flat surface, I prefer to use black and white for the re-appropriation of light in my search for a spiritual realm. In my painting the light does not come from an external source. When a person looks inwards, wherever he gazes into the darkness will radiate with light. The fusion of the water and the ink allows the light of this inner vision to reveal itself in the painting. (Mabel Lee, *Silhouette*)

The transcendence of linear geographical space and time can also be seen in Gao’s first play, *Absolute Signal* (《絕對信號》, 1982). The youths for the duration of the play are trapped inside the train, destined to reach a certain geographical location at a specific time. The realistic frame play has a linear progression, with the linear path of the train and the linear travel time. The modernist superimposition of the different times and spaces of the reminiscence and imagination disrupts the permutation and chronology of time. The youths are situated at a point in the railway network. Symbolically, their lives are organized in a social network and defined according to their social function, such as Hei Zi’s sister inheriting her father’s job. However, the reminiscence scenes take place in various locations, a green world of youth, openness, and

freedom, with the characters trying to live their own lives, a would-be world of their favourite dreams. Hei Zi's reminiscence scene with Mi Feng features the noise of fish jumping out of water, and she later thinks of the wind over the grassland in her imagination scene. On stage with the alternative acting area, the lighting and sound effects, literally there is a liberation from the signal car, an alternative time and space. *Absolute Signal* also makes much use of music and sound effects. The monotonous and impersonal sound of the train frames the reminiscence scenes, marking the difference between the regulation and conformity in the realistic frame play, and the personal freedom in the reminiscence scenes. Xiao Hao enters with his trumpet, which the Trainmaster forbids him to play. He manages to play his trumpet in his reminiscence scene when he recalls his love for Mi Feng, and in the final tableau. The music signifies variety and self-expression.

What is crucial is the idea of the "third eye" in Gao's works. Gao advocates "cold literature," which requires cold detachment, a distanced gaze above the person of the author and the characters. Gao calls this "the author's third eye that is neutral." "Cold literature" also proposes a unique relationship between the author and the reader: writing as a gratification of the individual intellect together with an observation, a review of what has been experienced, reminiscences and feelings or the portrayal of a state of mind. Literature portrays the true circumstances of human existence, and is the medium for the spiritual communication between the author and the reader. To Gao, what is important is to live in the present, and literature is simply man focusing his gaze on his self. In Gao's paintings, it is quite common actually to have the "third eye", sometimes dominant, sometimes subtle, the "gaze" perceiving the internal worlds. He said: "Painting calls upon how one sees things, and on physical force; writing, on one's intellectual capacity; each regulates the other. Painting enables me instantly to conjure up before my eyes my own interior perceptions: it is a small personal world that is quite complete and leaves no room for doubt – and that often astonishes even me. It is a pure act of creation. Often I have no idea what I am about to paint" (Dutrait).

This gaze upon the self through a third eye is also realized through performance. *Between Life and Death* (1991) is an experiment to realize this new kind of drama of flexible coordinates. Its global appeal can be seen in its being widely read and performed. The play makes use of neutrality to enable the play to be meaningful universally. The neutral actor, neutrality in the script, and neutral action purify the play and engage the global audience in active exchanges, enabling it to regard the performance as “real” in its own way. In “Some Suggestions on Producing *Between Life and Death*,” Gao writes: “The play has no intention to create ‘realism’ on stage; quite the opposite, it strives to highlight the feeling of performance and theatricality” (80). Gao Xing-jian thinks that “performance” or “*biao yan*” is very important. He writes in “*Ju Zuo Fa Yu Zhong Xing Yan Yuan*” (“Playwriting and the neutral actor,” 1993) (translation mine): “Among the many elements in drama, I think that the performance of the actor is the root of this kind of art” (253). *Between Life and Death* features a woman's self-recollections at the end of her life. The character is literally fragmented, as it was played by two art forms by two performers: a dancer's solo and an actor's monologue. It is an experiment towards the kind of transcultural theatre Gao introduces at the beginning of “Another kind of drama”, saying that he is looking for a kind of drama between Chinese traditional *xiju* and western spoken drama, between the two main types of the Asian drama centering on the song and dance of the artist including Chinese opera, Japanese Noh drama and Kabuki, the Indonesian Balinese drama with song and dance, and the European drama focusing on the script of the playwright. Gao expressed the view at a press conference in November 2002 on the global premiere of *Snow in August* that he needs a cast of “total actors” who can sing, act, and have sound training in martial arts.

Centrifugal movement going towards the universal

Second, there is an external movement going towards both existing universal culture and the creation of new literature. Gao Xingjian thinks that language is universal, “the ultimate crystallisation of human civilization.” Language penetrates human perceptions and links man to

his own understanding of the world. The written word connects both spatially and temporally, “allows communication between separate individuals, even if they are from different races and times,” and connects “the shared present time in the writing and reading of literature to its eternal spiritual value.” As a Chinese, Gao knows that the cultural traditions of China nationally reside within him, but he thinks that “a writer’s creativity begins precisely with what has already been articulated in his language and addresses what has not been adequately articulated in that language.” To Gao, there is “no need to stick on oneself a stock national,” and “literature transcends national boundaries.” *Soul Mountain* is very successful in France. Instead of interpreting it in its Chinese context, the novel was read through its universal themes. Gérard Meudal, the *Libération* journalist, thinks that the book is about an individual who is opposed to all forms of oppression. The critic for *Le Monde* takes it as a novel about man and nature (Dutrait 12). As Gao himself puts it: “Although it is concerned with the events taking place in China, the book goes beyond that concrete environment. The difficulties of man’s existence, and the hope that each individual has of finding relief from them, on the spiritual level, are the same in the East as in the West. So if the book has had a certain resonance for French readers, it is not only because of their interest in Chinese culture.”

There are many instances in *Soul Mountain* in which cultural specificities are transcended and universalized. Chapter Two shows the “Ts” interaction with the “he,” a traditional song master and dancer of the Qiang tribe that worships fire. The tribe comes from Genda village down the mountain. Starting from quaint ethnicity, the narrative heads towards universality: “It is in the Qiang region halfway up Qionglai Mountain, in the border areas of the Qinghai-Tibetan highlands and the Sichuan basin, that I witness a vestige of early human civilization, the worship of fire. Fire, the bringer of civilization, has been worshipped by the early ancestors of human beings everywhere” (10).

Migration implies a journey from Point A to Point B. However, for Gao, the journey itself is the significance. This journey is not rational linear external travel through geographical spaces, but an irrational

internal perception of existence. The “real” presented in Gao’s drama is a state, a perception, an expression rather than a philosophy. Gao writes in “*Ling Yi Zhong Xi Ju*” (“Another kind of drama,” translation mine): “My diverse running after dramatic forms is intended to show the naked truth of the conditions of existence of modern man” (191). He writes in “*Yao Shen Me Yang De Ju Zuo*” (“What kind of playwriting is required,” translation mine) “I think that the audience comes to the theatre not to think and analyse. I advocate leaving thought and analysis to the philosopher, and leaving perception to drama. The characters in drama do not obey the standard of rationality.” For example, in *The Other Shore* (《彼岸》 1986), which refers to the Buddhist concept of *paramita* (the “perfection” of a virtue), the “other shore” represents a state of enlightenment which everyone wants to reach. While the play features journeys of collective and individual longing, right at the very beginning of the stage directions, Gao says that the “Other Shore” is non-existent. The highlight is in the being, in the internal journey itself. The stage is totally fluid, as the actors assume multiple roles and the distinction between the audience and the actors is occasionally blurred. The stage direction reads:

The play can be performed in a theatre, a living room, a rehearsal room, an empty warehouse, a gymnasium, the hall of a temple, a circus tent, or any empty space as long as the necessary lighting and sound equipment can be properly installed. Lighting can be dispensed with if the play is performed during the day. The actors may be among the audience, or the audience among the actors. The two situations are the same and will not make any difference to the play. (*The Other Shore*)

Thus, the type of actors needed will be both versatile and cosmopolitan, as Gao describes in his notes to the production: “As with the actors in traditional [Chinese] opera, these new actors must be versatile and their skills should include singing, the martial arts, stylized movements and delivering dialogues. They should also be able to perform Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekov [sic], Aristophanes, Racine, Lao She, Cao Yu, Guo Moruo, Goethe, Brecht, Pirandello, Beckett, and even mimes and musicals. The present play is written with the intention of providing an all-around training for the actors” (*The Other Shore*).

Another way to go beyond national culture is through translations, which enables literature to “transcend languages and then specific social customs and inter-human relationships created by geographical location and history – to make profound revelations about the universality of human nature.” It is amazing how Gao’s novels can be readily translated into different languages, and how his plays can be performed in multiple countries. For example, *Between Life and Death* (《生死界》1991) was commissioned by the Bureau of Culture of France, and first performed at the Renaud-Barrault Théâtre Le Rond Point, Paris in 1993. It reached stages around the world, and was published in Chinese, French, German and English. In Gao’s second play, *Chezhan* (*Bus Stop*, 1983), also written in China, various techniques of avant-garde European theatre are incorporated. The play is reminiscent of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, as it features a group of people waiting endlessly at a bus stop for a bus which will never come. The performance of the play goes beyond written language, the original Chinese or the translated language, to action and theatricality. Claire Conceison noted after producing the play how the actors moved and interacted with the space and one another, “created images, patterns, and actions that cannot be created in the act of merely reading printed dialogue.” In the production at the University of Michigan in March 2001, Conceison adapted the play easily to the U.S. setting by removing specific geographical locations, such as “Front Gate” which is a place in Beijing. She finds the play humanistic rather than showing cultural specificities, and the roles so non-race-specific that a multi-racial casting can easily be used.

A major proposition of Gao to transcend boundaries is his advocacy of “no-ism”. In focusing on man’s existential condition rather than ideology, national boundaries and racial consciousness, Gao thinks that literature is a “universal observation of human existence.” In Chapter 42 of *Soul Mountain* (《靈山》1989), “you” dreams that he visits a fortified mountain village of a minority tribe and finds old men and women performing incantations in a funeral rite for him. Instead of succumbing to the preset role of the dead man, the “you” insists on returning to life. Symbolically this means a refusal to be incorporated

into the deadness of formulaic rituals, the rules and “isms” curbing the freedom of the individual self, as Gao says in “The Case for Literature”: “Literature transcends ideology, national boundaries and racial consciousness in the same way as the individual’s existence basically transcends this or that -ism. This is because man’s existential condition is superior to any theories or speculations about life.” In dispelling the old men’s and women’s rituals, symbolic of the older generation and the established systems that can make the “you” spiritually dead, he asserts his fundamental individuality in the world of real human beings: “A deathly loneliness prevails. ... You refuse to die just like this, you must quickly, and right away, return to the world of human beings” (249).

The “all-round theater -- all-round performers making an all-round presentation” is realized in *August Snow* (*Ba Yue Xue*). The play premiered in Taipei in late December 2002, followed by a one-month run at the Marseille Opera House that coincides with the city’s “Year of Gao Xingjian.” The play is about the life of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism. What is innovative is the performance style. It was built on the Peking Opera, but Gao thinks that this traditional Chinese art form can be modernized, breaking the divisions between East and West, between modern and traditional, to realize his dream of a new type of theater, a “modern Eastern opera” that did not adhere strictly to the forms of either the Peking Opera or Western theater, but that embraced dance, the martial arts, and the dramatic tension of modern theatre.

A significant innovation in Gao’s novels and drama is the use of pronouns. In his Nobel Acceptance Speech, Gao explains:

The fixing of a key speaker pronoun is the starting point for portraying perceptions and from this various narrative patterns take shape. It is during the process of searching for his own narrative method that the writer gives concrete form to his perceptions. In my fiction I use pronouns instead of the usual characters and also use the pronouns I, you, and he to tell about or to focus on the protagonist. The portrayal of the one character by using different pronouns creates a sense of distance. As this also provides actors on the stage with a broader psychological space I have also introduced the changing of pronouns into my drama.

The shifts in pronouns invite changes in perspectives. *Soul Mountain*, as a journey within China, presents the intracultural with the Han protagonists wandering into the minority regions. It suggests ways to cross intercultural boundaries, the most important being Gao's improvement on the western stream of consciousness method. Thinking that this western method only sets off from one subject, Gao proposes a new literary language called "the stream of language." He explains his use of the changing perspectives of "I," "you," and "he" in the novel (translation mine): "In *Soul Mountain*, the changing three personal pronouns are expressing the same experience of the same subject. ... The 'she' in the third person is the different experience and thought of the other sex which the subject cannot directly communicate with. In other words, this novel is a long monologue with a constant change in pronouns. I would like to call this a stream of language" (Gao, *Wenxue yu Xuanxue*). Not only is the same experience experienced three times through the "I," "you," and "she," the relationship between the author and the reader is also revealed: the "I" is like the author recording his real life of the local in words; the "you" is the storyteller constantly telling folktales and turning local histories into stories; the "she" is the reader, the object of the "you's" stories.

The creative use of pronouns is also found in Gao's plays. To Gao, the actor is at once himself, an actor, and a character. For example, in the second half of *Dialogue and Rebuttal* (《對話與反詰》1992), there is a change of persons as Man refers to himself as "you" and Girl refers to herself as "she". Such change of perspectives also enables the role to be perceived and experienced in different ways.

Gao's works are polyphonous. Mikhail Bakhtin first used the term "heteroglossia" to refer to multiple discourse and perceptions with the simultaneous use of different types of discourse or other signs to create a tension between signs and the conflicting relationships that revolve within a text" (Ivanov 107). Gao makes use of this technique as early as *Wild Man* 《野人》 *Ye Ren* (1985). *Wild Man* is a play with multiple focuses and over thirty characters. There is the private story of the ecologist engaged in environmental protection research in the

forest, and his relationships with his estranged wife and a young girl, Fang. At the same time, there is the public story of the reporter Wang in search of the Wild Man to write a good report. There is the collective story with the old sorcerer and singer Mr Seng with his numerous shamanistic incantations and folksongs. There is the imaginative story of the child Xi Mao (Small Hair) and his dream of the Wild Man. There are other scenes involving bureaucrats, villagers, buyers, and international professionals.

Finally, Gao's film and screenplays also cross cultural barriers easily. *Silhouette* (2006) is a culmination of his earlier attempts to devise a new kind of film. First there is the "tripartite film" in which "the three components – picture, sounds or music, and language – each has independence and autonomy, while complementing, combining, and contrasting with the others to produce new meanings." According to Mabel Lee, who translated *Soul Mountain*, his earlier screenplay *Hua dou* is a multi-camera script for parallel filming, written in three blocks for 1) picture, 2) sounds or music which are directly perceived and can provoke immediate reactions and associations, and their third element, 3) language which hinges on the receiver who knows the language, in which words and phrases are abstractions constructed from concepts following fixed grammatical rules. Next, there is the 1986 short story "*Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather*" in which real scenes in the outside world are combined with internal scenes of recollections, dreams, memories, imagination and associations. In *Silhouette*, the camera functions like the artist's eyes as Gao thinks that this will create a rich film language expanding beyond language, visual images and linear narratives through non-linear connotations and associations, as the meaning expands beyond the picture and the dialogues:

[...] this form of observation and process of observation have a much greater propensity for evoking psychological reactions and associations. This concentrated gaze can constitute a film language rich with connotations, and, by changing the line of vision the activated associations are able to transcend the picture. All these techniques increase the capacity of the picture to expand, making it richer in meaning as well as more independent and autonomous, so that it ceases to be subordinate to situations and

events of the narrative that are extraneous to the picture. The dialogues of the characters and the explanations extraneous to the picture are also expendable. (Gao, *Concerning Silhouette*)

Therefore, with skillful interplay between centripetal movement converging towards the self and the centrifugal movement going towards the universal, Gao manages to make cross-cultural encounters interactive. Gao's works are heteroglossic tapestries of fluid language and neutral characters with multiple and shifting identities. He invites his audience, readers and spectators to experience pluri-culture through active cultural dialogues.

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