The Global Circulation of Victorian Actants and Ideas in the Niche of Nature, Culture, and Technology: Liberalism and Liberalization

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I. Global Processes, Local Niches

The study of world literature is rapidly growing in contested terrains: world literature as the best; as bearer of universal values; as circulating in translation/remediation; in relation to power and domination (e.g., in relation to postcolonial studies); in relation to globalization; in relation to commodification. Central to current debates about the value of world literature is the relation of world, a place or lifeworld that we inhabit, to globalization, a process or transformation that often acts upon us. This suggests the positive, cosmopolitan, diversity-friendly connotations of world literature, while also showing the pitfalls of its analysis, i.e., historical and present inequalities.

While the globalization of literature is ancient and the globalization of literary studies inevitable, there is often presumed division between the generalizers with larger hypotheses, comparisons and perspectives, and the particularizers, devoted to the local, thick description, and cultural difference (Felski). The particularizers see the dangers of homogenizing processes allegedly rooted in the encyclopedic ambitions and evolutionary models of nineteenth-century European thought, distorting the uniqueness of the objects compared; reducing them to variants on a common standard; often devaluing some cultures in relation to others. The generalizers claim that the larger perspectives serve as a jolt to consciousness, initiating a destabilizing, even humbling, awareness of the limitedness and contingency of one's own perspective.

This article will consider some implications for just one area of ELLAK's literatures in English, Victorian Studies, suggested by recent developments in the fields of world literatures and globalization studies. It will consider the global scope of Victorian literature as an actant in world affairs, as in processes of liberalization, democratization, and trade, but also the specificity of each local environment and moment of transculturation.[i] It hopes to make a methodological intervention on behalf of interdisciplinary and intercultural studies by providing a framework to address two current problems. First, how may we, in language and literature studies, best trace global processes of modernization, democratization, and liberalization without losing the specificity of the local? Global processes transform local environments, yet each locality is transformed distinctively, depending on its unique indigenous traditions. Second, how may we best study the uniqueness of distinct locales where the forces of tradition and modernization meet? If the first problem requires translators and transculturalists who know literary history and history of genres, the second requires the disciplines relating to environment: nature (natural sciences), culture (the humanities), and technology (social sciences, engineering, and medicine). And indeed in producing the article I have been able to draw on multilingual collaborators (The Global Circulation Project http://literature-compass.com/global-circulation-project/) and an interdisciplinary research centre (Egenis, The Centre for the Study of Life Sciences http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/sociology/research/sts/egenis/).

Egenis was founded in 2002, roughly coinciding with the first mapping of a human genome in 2003, to study the social implications of science. Through it, we have developed a symbiological approach that allows us to focus on specific environments at moments of change and transformation:

> Recent developments in molecular biology imply that classic distinctions between nature and nurture or biology and culture are not applicable to the human ecological niche. Research in epigenetics shows that the effects of culture on nature go all the way down to the gene and up to the stratosphere, and the effects of biology on culture are similarly inextricable. Living systems almost invariably involve the interaction of many kinds of organisms with a diversity of technologies. The anthropocene—the age of human cultures and technologies interacting with natural environments—changes rapidly, and to understand and manage its functioning requires perspectives from each domain. Symbiology is the post-organismic study of relationships in process. The kinds of relations we study include symmetric mutuality (relations among equals in power or status), asymmetric mutuality (relations among unequals--parents/offspring, teacher/pupil, human/nonhuman animals), recognition, reciprocity, solubility, domination, parasitism, alienation, isolation, and so forth, and these relations are discernible throughout nature and all cultures. (Gagnier @ (Egenis))

This article will argue that the intercultural transvaluation of actants and ideas often associated with Victorian Britain will be central not only to the development of Victorian Studies in global contexts made possible by new media, but also to other disciplines concerned with globalization, transculturation, and liberalization. The actants I discuss here include Victorian geopolitical ideologies such as individualism, socialism, nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism, but with more space we could include geopolitical institutions and state apparatuses such as modes of government, trade, legal systems, and armed services, and geopolitical commodities and technologies such as cotton, tea, water, transport and sanitation systems, around which lives and literatures are built. We ask what is in the specific niche that is crossed by global processes, and what are the salient actants in these relations-in-process.

II. Liberal Individualism

The Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911 with formal submission in 1912. The reforming literati, often associated with the May Fourth or New Culture Movements, experimented widely with western and other models that they might use in reforming China. In Lu Xun's term (拿来主义, *nalai zhuyi*) they translated, 'grabbed', or borrowed what they needed from western works and rejected what they could not use. They translated and intensely debated Darwin's theory of evolution via Thomas Huxley's 'Evolution and Ethics' (translated 1898), Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (trans. 1902), Mill's *On Liberty* (trans. 1903), and Spencer's *Study of Sociology* (trans. 1903). As they were concerned about China's relation to expanding and emerging British, American, and Japanese empires, they emphasized Spencer's Social Darwinism rather more than Darwinian evolutionary theory. Freud was translated in 1907, and by 1900 the term 'geren' (个人, individual) meaning something like the western sense of individualism, entered Chinese (Shih) (Liu). Today among sinologists this period of experimentation with external models is included within 'The History of Modern Critical Consciousness.' While the reforming literati were often critical of western materialism and domination over other cultures, they were interested in forms of liberal individualism as

developed by Mill, as well as the challenges to Millian progressivism launched by Freud and Nietzsche in the forms of unconscious motivation and the critical transvaluation of liberal values. They were also interested in Darwinism as a critique of human exceptionalism (which resonated with Daoism (see (Yang)), Malthusianism as competition for scarce natural resources, and, as mentioned, social Darwinism, the survival of the fittest, as competition between nations. Above all, they were interested in models of scientific and technological progress and its effects on human subjectivity, rather as Marx and Engels had been in their understanding of human freedom as beginning with labour and technology and unfreedom with their alienation.

Specialists in transculturation frequently emphasize the two-way, or even multiple, nature of exchange when cultures come in contact. When we turn to cultural translation of specific works, we are no longer engaged in literary appreciation, which focusses on the ontology of the masterpiece, the way that the masterpiece unfolds creatively and fits together as a whole or *gestalt*. Rather, we are looking at the phenomenology of a work's circulation, including the structure of the field of international cultural exchanges, political or economic constraints that influence the exchanges, the agents or actants of intermediation (in Bruno Latour's sense of actants as human or nonhuman agents with causal effects) (Latour *The Politics of Nature;* Latour "On Actor-Network Theory: A Few Clarifications"), and the processes of export and import. We think less in terms of genius and originality than in terms of circulation, appropriation, use, transtextuality, revoicing, reaccentuation, indigenization, mediation.

In the case of J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) in China, as translated by the polymath Yan Fu who had been trained as a naval engineer at Greenwich in Britain, we can see the processes of transculturation at work. Mill's work is the locus classicus of the western liberal tradition. Written to protect the individual not only against a strong State but especially against a growing 'marketplace of ideas' within an increasingly powerful commercial press, Mill advocated tolerance of individual diversity in the face of mass society; absolute liberty of thought and discussion; and critique of dogmatism, authoritarianism, and intolerance at all costs except injury to others. Mill emphasised critique, debate, and tolerance because, for him, seeking out the truth amid the many competing interests of modern society was difficult, and only by the widest possible attention to different perspectives might one be able to discern the path best for the many. This was the closest that we could come to the pursuit of truth as the Utilitarians understood it.

When Yan Fu (严复) translated *On Liberty* into wenyan (文言文), or classical Chinese—a script only accessible to well-educated peers--his interest was less in epistemology and the rights of the individual and more in the relation of the individual's responsibilities to the collective, a basic problem that exercised the Chinese reformers. Translated as *The Boundary between Self and Group* 《群己权界论》 (1903), Yan's work, unlike Mill's, maintained objective social norms that in most cases derived from long established Confucian teachings, including clear boundaries between self and group, and a clear moral and social order. In Yan's translation, Mill's epistemological pessimism was de-emphasized (Huang). Yan Fu writes:

> If people formed a group in which everyone was free to do as one liked without restriction, it would be mired in conflict, and the world would be dominated by might. Therefore, even if one has freedom, its limit must arise out of the right others equally have to freedom. This is the principle of xieju (谐剧) from the Great Learning, with which scholar-officials are able to pacify the world. The

purpose of Mill's book is to distinguish between the extent to which one may be free and that to which one should be unfree. (Huang, p. 92).

Max Ko-wu Huang has studied the translation and dissemination of *On Liberty* in detail. At one point, in the turmoil of early Republican China, Yan lost the manuscript, rather like Mill's maid allegedly burned Mill's copy of Carlyle's *French Revolution*. When the lost manuscript of the translation was returned to Yan, he wrote 'The future of my 400,000,000 compatriots truly relies on it. . . Heaven was unable to bear the sorrow of its loss' (Huang, p. 94-5). When Yan Fu was dying of opium addiction—opium being arguably a transcultural actant between British trade policy and a Chinese government too weak to resist it—he committed his last words on the boundary between the self and group. While he credited Mill's significance (see below), his emphasis was no longer Mill's. Yan instructed his son in his will (1921) to respect tradition as well as change and not to put the individual before the group:

> Keep in mind that China will not perish and that ancient principles can be reformed, but must not be abandoned. Keep in mind that, to lead an enjoyable life, staying healthy is the most important condition. Keep in mind that one has to work hard, and understand that time passes and will never return. Keep in mind that one must constantly reflect and think about things in a systematic way. Keep in mind that one must forever learn and absorb new kinds of knowledge, but understand that the perfect achievement of a goal in one's moral and intellectual pursuits is never easy. *As for the relations between self and group, remember that the group is of greater importance than the self.* (Huang, 107, italics added).

Yan was concerned that individual freedom in the west was not balanced with a moral order and social justice. His Confucian ideals of 'depending on the self,' 'completing the developments of the self,' 'seeking value within oneself,' Daoism's 'freedom,' and Yan Zhu's 'acting to benefit oneself' made him appreciate Mill's belief in the individual as a distinct moral subject endowed with freedom, but this was within a balanced relationship between self and group, not the Faustian-Promethean individualism of much western literature. Yet Mill's *On Liberty* had an afterlife well beyond Yan Fu. In 1961, the scientist Mao Zishu wrote, 'Since the creation of writing, Mill's book stands out as one of the most precious works ever written' for its positive freedom, correlating freedom with a moral concern with others (Huang 94-5). And in 1989, echoes of Mill, now much closer to the original, were among the voices of the protestors in Tiananmen Square 'to wrench from the state its monopoly on truth and the moral way and to open up a space for the individual subject' (cited in (Kelly) 106).

Perhaps the most far-reaching afterlife was in the great modernist Lao She's thought experiment on the suitability of western individualism in China's modernization in *Rickshaw Boy*. Lao She's (1899-1966) *Rickshaw Boy* (骆驼祥子 Luòtuo Xiángzi [Camel Lucky Lad] 1936-39) is a modern classic attributed with establishing the vernacular and common people in Chinese literature. The novel has been translated into 30 languages, and has sold seventy million copies in Russian alone; the numbers in sinophone languages have yet to be calculated (Shu). The plot is of an orphaned peasant who comes to Beijing (then Beiping, the name 'northern peace' used during the Republican era) from the countryside to make his way in the world. He is a model of a competitively fit specimen of humanity in a situation of self-reliant autonomy: '[Xiangzi] did not smoke, he did not drink, and he did not gamble. With no bad habits and no family burdens, there was nothing to keep him from his goal as long as he

persevered' (9)(Lao). He is healthy, strong, intelligent, capable, and willing to work for self-advancement, and he arrives with the goal of buying a rickshaw to make his living:

> Xiangzi's hands trembled more than ever as he tucked the warranty away and pulled the rickshaw out, nearly in tears. He took it to a remote spot to look it over, his very own rickshaw. He could see his face in the lacquer finish. . . . It occurred to him that he was twenty-two years old. Since his parents had died when he was very young, he had forgotten the day of his birth and had not celebrated a birthday since coming to the city. All right, he said to himself, I bought a new rickshaw today, so this will count as a birthday, mine and the rickshaw's. There was nothing to stop him from considering man and rickshaw as one (12)

Initially he identifies with his rickshaw, even physically works as one with it, each as an extension of the power of the other:

> Xiangzi did not notice [the cold], for his resolve pointed to a bright future. . . . Sometimes a strong headwind made it hard to breathe, but he lowered his head, clenched his teeth, and forged ahead, like a fish swimming upstream. Strong winds stiffened his resistance, as if he were locked in a fight to the death.. . When he laid down the shafts, he straightened up, exhaled grandly, and wiped the dust from the corner of his mouth, feeling invincible. (94)

Xiangzi sees the desperate condition of the old rickshaw men but pursues his individual goal heartened by his own capacities.

Yet with repeated setbacks and misfortunes, Xiangzi begins to adjust to the daily life of struggle, less and less ambitious. He becomes alienated from his labour and his rickshaw becomes merely instrumental: `A rickshaw was nothing to be pampered. No longer did he fancy buying one of his own, nor did he care about those owned by others. They were just rickshaws. When he pulled one, he ate and paid the rent; when he didn't, he paid no rent. . . That was the relationship—the only relationship—between man and rickshaw' (259). He takes some consolation with others and begins to feel solidarity. Yet with more misfortune, he turns to crime, violence, apathy, and anomie. He quits feeling, talking, becomes more and more alienated and isolated. The last chapter shows a brilliant Beiping in summer, full of life and colour, but also of cruelty, betrayal, and sadism, a people entertained by state killings. Lao She said that the moral was that `Individualism cannot be of use in a corrupt society.' The development of each and of all are interdependent. The last lines are:

> Respectable, ambitious, idealistic, self-serving, individualist, robust, and mighty, Xiangzi took part in untold numbers of burial processions but could not predict when he would bury himself, when he would lay this degenerate, selfish, hapless product of a sick society, this miserable ghost of individualism, to rest. (300)

We have discussed how the modernizers like Lao She transformed the genre of the novel in introducing common people and vernacular. A symbiological approach also considers the specific niche in which the story takes place, the environment in which the literature evolves. In the case of *Rickshaw Boy,* we can trace the liberalization of the rickshaw itself as actant. From Japanese *jinrikisha* (人力車, literally 'human-powered vehicle'), pulled rickshaws appeared in Tokyo in 1868. By 1874, 300 were imported to Shanghai. By 1879, there were 2500 in Shanghai, and by the 1920s, one sixth of all males in Beijing were pullers. By the time of the novel the rickshaw had become rural immigrants' door to

independence. Yet in 1949 hand-pulled rickshaws were abandoned by the PRC as undignified labour. In the 1990s cycle rickshaws, no longer hand-pulled, had become a tourist attraction, and in Dhaka, Bangladesh hand-decorated 'expressive rickshaws' advertised their owners as individual performers as well as transporters. In 2006 the Communist mayor of Kolkata declared that 'We cannot imagine one man sweating to pull another.' And in the latest—green--revolution, the cycle rickshaw in New York City, now called a pedicab, has become the choice for sustainable transport, with owners being commuters and riders rather than labourers (Banu) (Strand).

III. Liberalization and Caste

If we turn to India in the nineteenth century after the Napoleonic invasions, global liberals participated in transregional or global spheres of liberal discourse. Rammohan Roy (from the 1820s), Romesh Chunder Dutt (1870s), Dadabhai Naoroji (1880s), G. K. Gokhale (1900s), to B. R. Ambedkar (from the 1920s) criticized the Raj from within it, and the liberal writings of Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru and novelists Bankim Chatterjee and Mulk Raj Anand continued the debates up to and through independence. They sympathized with Chartists, Mazzini's republican radicalism, American and Irish struggles against Britain, and others who had experienced slavery and racial prejudice. They deployed arguments from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Byron, Mill, Dickens, and Ruskin. Even when they were ignored by their intended European interlocutors, they were raising consciousness among home audiences of liberalism even under conditions of exploitation and humiliation. (Mulk Raj Anand would later say that humiliation was the cause of nationalism in India.) (Kochler). The Indian liberals developed a sophisticated mathematical rhetoric of statistics that they deployed against the metrics of the Raj. They referred to indigenous traditions of Vedantic continuity, i.e. revelation stressing self-realisation, as a nation as well as individuals, and over time multicultural India revealed relations of individual rights to group beliefs that problematized liberalism to its core (Bayly) (Khilnani) (Guha).

At the same time as Lao She's *Rickshaw Boy*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) also took up the problem of the individual, now in relation to caste, beginning with the untouchable's labour in the latrines. Anand was taken as the social novelist 'Dickens of India' and the novel was legendarily edited by Gandhi as part of his assault on caste. Like Xiangzi, the young male protagonist Bakha is a model of an individual, entirely capable, self-reliant, and confident:

> [Bakha] worked away earnestly, quickly, without loss of effort. Brisk, yet steady, his capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like constant water from a natural spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as a rock when it came into play, seemed to shine forth like glass. He must have had immense pent-up resources lying deep, deep in his body, for as he rushed along with considerable skill and alacrity from one door-less latrine to another, cleaning, brushing, pouring phenol, he seemed as easy as a wave sailing away on a deep-bedded river. . . Though his job was dirty he remained clean. He didn't even soil his sleeves, handling the commodes, sweeping and scrubbing them. . . It was perhaps his absorption in his task that gave him the look of distinction (Anand)p. 15.

Whereas Xiangzi's nemesis is social corruption, Bakha's and the climax of the novel is the catastrophic touching (p. 47-8), when Bakha accidentally brushes against an upper caste merchant and causes a scandal on the streets: `His first impulse was to run, just to shoot

across the throng, away, away, far away from the torment. But then he realized that he was surrounded by a barrier, not a physical barrier, because one push from his hefty shoulders would have been enough to unbalance the skeleton-like bodies of the Hindu merchants, but a moral one. He knew that contact with him if he pushed through, would defile a great many more of these men.' On the run now, Bakha's life begins to unravel. The final scenes of the novel find him running from the defilement he has unwittingly caused and coming upon Gandhi, who is addressing the multitude. Listening to the Mahatma, those nearest Bakha begin to debate the possible solutions to the problem of caste and untouchability.

The first possibility is that of Christianity and its premise of the sacredness of each individual soul. This is appealing for its egalitarianism, but Christianity cannot be communicated by the missionary in the novel, who is arrogant and smug in his promotion of the Bible over the Gita. Then there is Gandhi's own solutions of *Swaraj* (freedom, self-rule, what in African emerging nations was known as *Uhuru*, independence) and the conservative *Swadeshi* (economic self-sufficiency). The last solution proposed is that of technology: flush toilets and sanitation systems, which in the novel are associated with the poet Iqbal Nath Sarshar, editor of *New Era*, and, of course, Nehru.

Mulk Raj Anand had studied and worked with London liberals and democratic socialists E.M. Forster and George Orwell at the offices of the *Criterion*, University College London, Cambridge, and in Bloomsbury. In July 1974, Anand contributed a lecture and essay 'The Search for National Identity in India' to UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) International Progress Organization: `The Cultural Self-comprehension of Nations' at Innsbruck, Austria. In his essay, Anand traces a history of multicultural and modernising India through key figures: in the sixteenth century the Great Mogul Akbar wanted to unite Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, and aboriginals. His grandson Aurangzeb wanted one religion, Muslim, so the great dream of one Hindustan ended. Cultural self-comprehension came to the fore only at the end of the nineteenth century, what Anand calls 'humiliation as the cause of nationalism' under British political unification. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was just one of the intellectuals who thought that the west and India could combine to benefit both, and welcomed English for arts and sciences. The elite Rabindranath Tagore, mindful of the peasants, also looked to the present, modern world rather than transcendent time, and emphasized individual freedom in both western and Brahmanic senses of autonomy. His nationalism of one's own country as part of one harmonious world partook of global hopes for internationalism. His friend Gandhi sought to unite India with *Furna Swaraj* (complete political freedom), through non-violence (non-co-operation), and *Swadeshi* (as in cotton manufacture). Nehru advanced modern economic India, combining practical science and technology with Gandhian vision. Seeing historical unity in the diversity of India's history, Nehru developed Parliamentary democracy and discarded East/West polarities altogether (Kochler). He accepted Muslim theocracy of Pakistan but not the two-nation theory. *Untouchable* ends with Gandhi's invocation and Nehru's science and technology.

Today a spokesperson for the Dalitbahujan—not only untouchables, Dalits, but now also tribals, women, and the so-called OBCs (Other Backward Communities)—Kancha Ilaiah claims that the persistence of caste is attributable to the fact that the Indian Liberals were abstract liberals, constructing nationalism within their own Brahmanic (caste) image, and thus could not remove caste from the national (Hindu) religion. Referring to the image from the Vedas--`His mouth became the Brahmin [the priest or intellectual caste]; his arms were made into the warrior [*kshatriya*], his thighs the people [*vaishiya* or merchants/tradespeople], and from his feet the servants [*shudra*] were born' (Khilnani) loc.

545-47—Ilaiah claims that `the brahmanical interaction with nature is anti-production as the brahmanical forces interact with the forces of nature only to consume or destroy them` (Ilaiah)(503-4 loc). He argues that the Brahmanic book knowledge is merely `idealist' and must be counterpoised with the techno-economic knowledge of the Dalitbahujan, whom he describes as more empirically oriented, like applied scientists and engineers, within their own specific niches:

> While confronting nature, the Dalitbahujans show enormous courage and confidence but while confronting people [of higher caste] who look different and claim to be superior, they suffer from historical diffidence. This diffidence is constructed over a period of centuries. They study very carefully what is available in nature. They are very comfortable in dealing with animals, birds and their human essence has been consistently expressed in feeding animals and in training many of them to be human friendly. They have more of an investigative psychology than an imaginative ability like the Brahmans have. For example, most of the Dalitbahujans know the whole range of mineral wealth underground and overground. They have an ability to grasp the smells of soil, animals and they know how to test metals, stones, trees, plants, leaves and so on. (Ilaiah, 438-46 loc)

Ilaiah concludes `the Dalitbahujans call their hands *matti chetulu (*meant for soil) whereas the brahmanical forces call their hands *pooja chetulu* (meant for worship)' (544-45 loc) and `The Dalitbahujan. . . evolved a culture of 'labour as life' as against the brahmanical method of 'eat and worship,' which in effect means a life of leisure' (3452-4 loc.).

Ilaiah traces Hindu caste back to the Vedas and contrasts it with western philosophy: 'European thinkers . . . went back to nature and productive social forces, but not to the Bible as the Indian nationalists have gone back to the Vedas.' (loc.380). Such internal debates in India highlight the extent of communitarianism underlying any individualisms. 'Will someone in the social sciences write a dissertation on how the rise of individualism in Bengal (in contrast to the West) destroyed rather than energised entrepreneurship. How, in India, caste and community drive capital and the free market?', writes Amit Chaudhuri today in *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013), his reflection on the intense transformations of the city of his birth (Chaudhuri) 118. And the great historian of *India After Gandhi*, Ramachandra Guha, writes about the difference between Indian individualism and British, a difference entrenched by the British:

> Within England the growth of liberal values placed a premium on the sovereignty of the individual; but in the colonies the individual was always seen as subordinate to the community. This was evident in government employment, where care was taken to balance numbers of Muslim and Hindu staff, and in politics, where the British introduced communal electorates, such that Muslims voted exclusively for other Muslims. Most British officials were predisposed to prefer Muslims, for, compared with Hindus, their forms of worship and ways of life were less alien. Overall, colonial policy deepened religious divisions, which helped consolidate the white man's rule.' (Guha) loc. 804-9

Today, caste continues to play a role in Indian democracy, less 'one person, one vote' than communitarian politics.

IV. Socialist Individualism, National Internationalism

Our final example of transcultural transvaluations of actants and ideas associated with Victorian liberalism and liberalization begins with Oscar Wilde's 'Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891), an essay that was often taken lightly in London (and subsequently in Victorian Studies) but circulated (and circulates) widely throughout the communist world (Gagnier *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*) Wilde had argued in characteristically brilliant fashion that in order for individualism to flourish, society would first have to institute a level playing field through socialist redistribution. Only from an initial basis of equality would people then be able to develop in accordance with their different and unique talents and capacities (Wilde). In his 'Défense de la culture' speech at the 1935 International Writers' Conference in Paris, the young, anti-fascist André Gide, long an admirer of Wilde, used Wilde's ideas to promote international universality through national particularity. Gide addressed the confederation: 'There are, for peoples as for individuals, certain indices of particular refractions, and this is precisely the great interest of our cosmopolitan meeting. . . the culture that we aspire to defend is the sum of the particular cultures of each nation. This culture is our common good. It is common to all of us. It is international'(Tran) (370).   Like Wilde, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, Eleanor Marx, and others of the *Fin de Siècle,* Gide was working his way into being that Victorian-inspired combination of communist individualist and national Internationalist (Gagnier *Individualism, Decadence, and Globalization: On the Relationship of Part to Whole*). He said: 'For my part, I claim to be strongly internationalist while remaining intensely French. In like manner, I am a fervent individualist, though I am in full agreement with the communist outlook, and am actually helped in my individualism by communism' (370). On the topic of World Literatures, he spoke out for universalism through particularity: 'What could be more particularly Spanish than Cervantes, English than Shakespeare, Russian than Gogol, French than Rabelais or Voltaire—at the same time what could be more general and more profoundly human' (371).

Gide's remarks at the International Writers' Conference then appear in the Art for Art's Sake Debates of 1935-39 in colonial Annam (French *Indochine*; today Vietnam), so the relevant empire in which the Victorian Wilde's ideas were translated was the French and the relevant movement was the Communist International. Gide was attractive to the Vietnamese for what they called his 'romanticism' (for them, the value he placed on individual subjective expression) and his 'realism' (for them, his representation of the real struggles of the masses). In the Art for Art's Sake Debates, the critic and activist Hoài Thanh cited Gide in developing a cosmopolitan outlook: 'Gide expresses his complete commitment to individualism. Individualism does not contradict communism, but rather individualism needs communism in order to reach complete fruition. The more an individual develops his character the more the collective benefits, Gide claims. The same is true for each national culture: the more each enunciates its distinctiveness, the more [hu]mankind benefits' (374). While Hoài Thanh was rebutted and his cause ultimately defeated by 'realist' Marxists, Gide's model of universality through particularity broke with the Confucian instrumental use of literature for the State in favour of creative and personal expression. Hoài Thanh thought that this would lead to ethically autonomous individuals who would benefit the collective. The free development and articulation of the individual could only be realized by the free development and articulation of all, as Wilde had proposed.

We could continue with other examples of transculturation between the Victorians and other modernizing cultures. During Korea's colonial period under the Japanese, the Theatre Arts Research Association (TARA 1931-1939) leaders Yu Ch'ijin and Ham Sedŏk drew on the Irish Renaissance/Celtic Twilight 'to establish a New Drama in Korea' (Hwang). Between 1910 and 1945, they introduced the poet-dramatists of the Irish uprising against Britain--

Augusta Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge, Edward Plunkett, Lord Dunsany, Sean O'Casey, and W. B. Yeats--whose drama provided objective correlatives for Korea under colonization: mad mothers whose sons do not return, deserted fields, hopeless symbolic seas. They developed both romantic realism that provided symbols for the emotions of colonization, such as that which Neil Lazarus calls 'inconsolability' (Lazarus), and classic realisms opening the drama to the life of common people. We could go on to compare the literatures of other rebellions and civil wars, such as Lee Kyun-Young's striking *The Other Side of Dark Remembrance* (1979; trans.1983), in which Lee deals with the Korean war only mediated through memory. Such comparative studies of specific niches such as through the literatures of civil war (English, American, Irish, Korean); the literature of the village in Bengal and in the southwest of England; the literature of the mines in Sichuan and in Wales; the literature of the plantation in Haiti, the southern USA, and the manor house in Yorkshire; or the New Woman in London and Shanghai, etc., are another way to approach transculturation processes that we can expect in future scholarship.

V. Asian Freedoms

In *Asian Freedoms: the Idea of Freedom in East and Southeast Asia* (1998)*,* the contributors, mostly Asian area studies social scientists and political theorists, claim that western ideas of freedom have circulated widely in Asia but have had radically different careers depending on the local stock of concepts or practices onto which they have been grafted. One common stock has been manifest in the tension between western individual freedoms and Buddhist and Confucian concepts of a well-ordered society, subject to rules. The western end of Eurasia developed notions of freedom in contrast with slavery over the last 2500 years beginning with slavery in Athens and Rome. In contrast with the west, where freedom was the opposite to slavery, in many Asian cultures it only became so in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under colonialism; it was then contrasted with external domination. Before that, freedom denoted hierarchical privileges exercised according to one's rank or status in a family, community, or in the service of the king. (Hence Hegel's notorious dictum in *The Philosophy of History* (1837), `the east knew and to the present day knows only that *one* is free; the Greek and Roman world, that *some* are free; the German world knows that *all* are free' (Teggart) (p. 405-6). However, Hegel's idea that the end of history would come about through the progressive disciplining through self-consciousness of 'uncontrolled natural will' conferring modern freedom, or freedom under constraint, producing the self-regulating modern western individual might be better achieved in 'Confucian' social relations of respect than in the hedonism of mass consumer society in the west.) In contrast, China had had bureaucratic absolutism for 2000 years, and freedom (*ziyou*) implied licence, doing what you liked at everyone else's expense, at least until the nineteenth century. Freedom in Asian societies is often a stage, a product of development and education, rather than opposed to slavery or related to 'class.' In Thai, for example, according to Thanet Aphornsuvan, the concept of the social does not begin with individuals, abstracting them into a totality (i.e., `society'), but rather with the concrete relations operating between members of the social order (Kelly) p. 164, much closer, in fact, to Kantian ideas of autonomy as against heteronomy, or Mill's of education as bringing one's heteronomous desires into the service of the social good.

 A careful reading of *Asian Freedoms* throws up many distinct but often overlapping ideas of freedom throughout Asia:

- Freedom as a value or status to be prized for its own sake, including rights to be involved in making political, economic, philosophic, and cultural/lifestyle decisions about oneself and one's society: `freedoms to'
- Freedom as hierarchical privilege or status in a family, community, or service (Confucian (Kung Fu 551 BCE – 479BCE): generated not from an opposite—slavery—but from a relationship of recognition, respect, and duty
- Freedom (*ziyou*) as licence, doing what one liked at everyone else's expense
- Freedom from suffering, pain, and poverty (Buddhism)
- Freedom from poverty, pain, ignorance (socialism)
- Freedom from claims of family, state, property and ties (Buddhism)
- Freedom from State control or foreign control
- Freedom as revolutionary liberation from despots or foreign control
- Freedom as a stage of development, a school rather than a market. Individual freedom only after an education guided by elite had instilled virtue and wisdom
- Meritocratic civil service exam premissing liberty on equality (in Vietnam since the 11th century and called in 1874 an `academic democracy')

In the Burmese treatise 'In Quest of Democracy' (1998), Aung San Suu Kyi combined western tolerance (Mill) and progress (Darwin) with Buddhist order, dissent with conservation, individual rights with respect, law, and order, pointing out that 'law and order` is often misused as an excuse for oppression. She contrasted *Nyein-wut-pi-pyar* (quiet-crouched-crushed-flattened) with a poem on Buddhist order:

> The shade of the tree is cool indeed
>
> The shade of parents is cooler
>
> The shade of teachers is cooler still
>
> The shade of the ruler is yet more cool
>
> But coolest of all is the shade of Buddha's teachings. (*Asian Freedoms*, p. 199)

Obviously, as we approach multiple nuanced notions of freedom, individuals, rights, and responsibilities in translation, Victorianists must defer to linguists in specific area studies. Yet as we study the processes of transculturation, we may conclude with one of the more persistent products of nineteeth-century western philosophy, the idea of human under-determination.

VI. Human Underdetermination

This idea has held that there is no essence of humankind other than our exceptional ability to interact self-consciously with our environments. While many species transform their environments—beavers build dams, bees make hives, birds make (and even steal) nests, microbes change the colours of the seas-- humans have an exceptional ability to transform nature through our use of technology, which in turn transforms us. The Frankfurt School called this the dialectic of enlightenment, the ways that human evolution and development are in a ceaseless loop in which we create technology that in turn returns to recreate us (Adorno).

The salient factor in human development is not what is in your genes, but what specific niche or environment your genes are in. And the ability of humans to reflect on this natural history of change and difference tells us that things can and will change; so that hope, so central to modern identities, is the natural consequence of human under-determination.

In the fifteenth century Giovanni Pico della Mirandola defended a conception of the human as the animal whose nature was not to have a nature, the Proteus who could sculpt itself into whatever shape it preferred. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophical anthropologists from Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx/Engels, and Nietzsche to Arnold Gehlen and Helmuth Plessner in the twentieth century also found that humans are exceptionally malleable. Schopenhauer had written that you know the species when you know one non-human animal, but humans have choice and in their choice consists their individuality and diversity, their unique identities. This exitless individuality or unfinishedness, our being presented at every moment with choices, being thrown into metaphysical unfoundedness, was the source of Sartre's notorious 'nausea'. More extreme and hubristic than the philosophical anthropologists—who understood, like Buddhists, that freedom was always within constraints--Transhumanists today argue that precisely because humans have the freedom to alter themselves and their environments through their use of technologies, we must mobilize every enhancement and augmentation in our power to overcome what used to be considered the limits of human freedom: ageing, sickness, and death. Transhumanists consider it their task to confront ageing, sickness, and death with whatever enhancements (rational self-manipulations) and augmentations (mechanical enhancements) they can, from pharmaceuticals or biotechnical neuroplasty to mechanical or digital extensions. (Their neoliberal leader is mnemonically named Max More, alluding to the Transhumanists' maximal ambition.) Without sharing the Transhumanists' ambitions, we concur that humans are developmentally plastic, with the capacity to be both creative and destructive, rational and irrational, active and passive in their diverse niches.

If we consider literature or other cultural products in their specific niches, we can see certain geopolitical ideologies linking the production and reproduction of life, such as individualisms, communisms, religions, and so forth. Elsewhere I have also focussed on forms of biodiversity around which lives and literatures are built--cotton, coffee, tea, rice, bananas, tobacco, sugar—and imaginative literatures about total environments of banana wilt, rice blast, waste management, sustainable transport, etc.: novels called *Rice, Yeast, Oil, Water, Men of Maize, Wolf Totem,Untouchable, Rickshaw Boy*, and so forth. Symbiological studies locate the salient actants—human or nonhuman--and relations within particular niches in which humans make their own identities. For humans do make their own identities. This is universal, in a well-known Victorian formulation: 'but they do not make them as they please. . . but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 'Eighteenth Brumaire' in (Tucker) p. 595.) Yet Marx was probably too deterministic. An immanent as well as an historical materialism would allow for a wider and more diverse range of actants and the emergence of more possibilities within the specificities of distinct niches.

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[i] Of course the processes of transculturation flow at least two ways, and are often triangulated. The Global Circulation Project was founded to provide a more dialectical account of transculturation, and that among secondary scholarship as well as primary sources. However, here, due to the expertise of the author, i.e., Victorian Britain and the relation of literary forms to social formations, this essay will focus on the circulation of Victorian literature and culture outside Britain. For reverse processes, see (Gagnier "The State, or Statelessness, of Victorian Studies: Special Issue Introduction: Victorian Studies, World Literatures, and Globalisation") and The Global Circulation Project http://literature-compass.com/global-circulation-project/, especially the Special Issue: The Global Circulation Project on Oxford Global Modernisms (2012), eds. Laura Doyle and Regenia Gagnier.