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Interpreting Love Narratives in East Asian Literature and Film by John R Wallace is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife and daughter,

who continue to encourage me to try to see better,
think better, care better.

Epigraph

Interpretation is born from curiosity.

Theory is passion given structure.

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Acknowledgments

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PART I

ABOUT THIS BOOK AND THIS COURSE

The basics of this textbook and the course are introduced in this part.

1. About this book

The book's audience ◆ the book's parts ◆ notes on eBook format

— Introductory note —

At the beginning of each chapter, I will list the key course terms that appear in the chapter in boxes like this one. This textbook, the course, and course grades are built around these terms. An asterisk before a word indicates that the word or phrase has a specific definition with further explanation in Part Five. (Asterisks are not used in these cases: chapter titles, these boxes, captions, footnotes, and Part Five.) However, a full understanding of most key terms requires that you know the content of Part Five, the explanation in the textbook where it is introduced, and elsewhere in the textbook (and in the classroom) as nuances are added and it takes shape as a working component of *interpretive projects.

When you are unsure of a term's specific meaning or need to jog your memory, take advantage of the rapid search for terms that can be done with digital books.

— Key Terms —

- Introduced:
  - cultural contexts
  - East Asia
  - interpretive projects (interpretive method, course method)
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):

- none

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter describes the book's target audience, the book's five parts, my thoughts on the advantages of the eBook format, and the current state of this ongoing writing project.

— Chapter Outline —

- 1.1. The primary reading audience
- 1.2. The five main parts of this book
  - 1.2.1. Part One: About this book and the course
  - 1.2.2. Part Two: Course assumptions, premises, and other theoretical positions
  - 1.2.3. Part Three: Course method—rules, standards, and procedures
  - 1.2.4. Part Four: *Cultural contexts
  - 1.2.5. Part Five: Course terminology
- 1.3. Advantages of the eBook format
- 1.4. Versions of this work

1.1. THE PRIMARY READING AUDIENCE

This eBook is the primary textbook for an upper-division undergraduate course that explores what the role might be and how to use *cultural contexts to interpret *love-related aspects of *East Asian *narratives, particularly contemporary film. Our goal is not to answer the question "What is *love?" or even "What is *East Asian *love?" nor it is to offer rich literary or film analysis. Rather, we borrow the unique space of *love-narratives to focus on *cultural contexts—more specifically social cultures of specific groups as can be articulated as *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices. Students[1] correctly expect the course to provide an opportunity to view and discuss *East Asian films from a cross-cultural perspective and may even expect that that will include time spent learning *traditional *values and ways of thinking (*worldviews). What is perhaps less expected are the theoretical journeys we will take into the relationship of culture to interpretation. Thus, while I address directly the core readership of this book, namely, the students who take the course from an interest in *East Asia, I also visualize a wider audience composed of those who ponder theories of interpretive processes including what psychology and cognitive neuroscience might suggest, or those who study culture's role in identity construction and *narrative formation, or who have an interest in the complex dynamics among *traditional and contemporary social *values in *East Asian *cultural groups. As you will see, the theory of interpretation set out in this book complicates the boundaries and ontological status of *cultural

1. My students are undergraduates at the University of California at Berkeley. While some major in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, most come from a diverse array of majors in the sciences and humanities. Many are from overseas, and most but not all are intimately involved in one or many *East Asian cultures either through family, or having lived in the country, or by having extensive knowledge in the language and culture of the country perhaps through partnering with individuals from these cultures. Class size is typically around fifty students.

groups. For our analytic intentions, we cannot meaningfully define cultural boundaries in geographic terms. So, in order to define a pool of potential films and other narratives, we limit ourselves to objects that meet all of these criteria:

- the narrative is primarily in Chinese, Japanese or Korean;
- the narrative was created by native or near-native (culturally fluent and nearly language perfect) speakers of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean;
- the narrative uses immediate settings that are primarily populated by a social network of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean speakers (even if, in a larger context, other cultures have a significant role in the story); and,
- the narrative was created primarily for an intended audience of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean speakers
- the ToM that we will construct is a native or near-native speaker of the language of the* cultural group.

A film set in Australia about a Chinese family that has immigrated there qualifies if the director is Chinese and the film is in Chinese, even if, say, a member of the family marries an English-speaking Australian citizen since the primary group remains the Chinese family and the social setting is constructed from the many thoughts, conversations, and actions of the family members. On the other hand, a spy film by an American director that is in English and that has American actors, although the setting is Hong Kong, does not quality, even if Chinese is occasionally used in the film.

This is not the only way to approach the topic, but for the purposes of *bounded dialogue (our primary method of inquiry—to be explained later) we need a pre-defined boundary and this offers one.

1.2. THE FIVE MAIN PARTS OF THIS BOOK

1.2.1. Part One: About this book and the course

Part One describes this book and a course for which it is the basis.

This volume began as an e-textbook for a class I teach but, along the way, evolved into a more thorough presentation of theory. It is, therefore, hybrid in content. Thus, the first part presents a theory of the processes involved in attributing meaning and significance to narratives, but with an eye on what this means when one encounters narratives not of one's own native culture. The remaining parts of the book engage the theory's deployment in its specifics towards interpretations of narratives that better recognized cultural content that is unfamiliar to the interpreter.

Since this book is closely tied to in-class instruction, and since the state of understanding of perception and meaning-attribution processes is rapidly changing, and because of the multimedia capabilities as well, the eBook format is a good one for this work. I make a few comments on this format in this part. I also lay out the basic learning objectives and structure for the course for which it serves as the basis.

1.2.2. Part Two: A theory of interpretation for cross-cultural reading

Part Two offers my theory of how we construct narratives and what we draw on to do so.

Schematically stated, I view the arrival at a state that could be described as "what the story is and what it means" to be a conversion of code to text by the reader (interpreter) via a variety of cognitive processes some of which are willed and

some of which are automatic. Significance (meaning) is achieved through hermeneutically entangled processes of information selection, organization, and the matching to known material (patterns and models), all to arrive at a meaning result that is "good enough" for the purposes at hand. This view of arriving at significance identifies a wide spectrum of areas in which our native culture supersedes the cultural content in which the narrative is embedded, leading to an interpretation that might feel correct but would not be perceived as such by an interpreter familiar with the "home" culture(s) of the narrative.

These theoretical positions form the basis for the *interpretive method (course method) I have designed for the course.

1.2.3. Part Three: Method—Elements of the interpretive projects

The *interpretive projects described in this book deploy a number of elements. Part Three describes the major ones. Others are better introduced in the following parts.

The ***interpretive project** is designed to allow individual analysis of an aspect of the *narrative well enough designed to allow comparison with the individual work of others once the process is complete but no so well-defined as to push conclusions into the same direction (which would subvert the purpose of individual, independent work).

To this end, this part introduces and describes the type of ***love** considered (***high-order, *cognitive-affective love**) and sets out as analytic targets that the contexts of greatest interest to be considered are not only those that can be easily related to culture but, more specifically, can be said to derive from the ***worldviews**, ***values**, and ***common practices** (***WV/CP**) of a identified and described, relevant, ***cultural group**. The ***status** of these ***arrayed *WV/CP** are

considered with respect to a ***ToM** (***Theory of Mind** of a ***narrative figure**, as constructed by the reader/interpreter), more specifically a ***ToM**'s ***thoughts, feelings, and actions** (***TF/A**).

Put another way, the interpretive goal is to answer this question:

> In a specific situation, what—plausibly and in terms of the culture(s) of the narrative, not one's own—might be the thoughts and feelings or reasons behind certain actions of a particular character in the story, at a particular moment in the narrative (that is related regard to love in some way) and to what degree do traditional worldviews or values explain that?

Individuals or individual groups develop answers to this, then those results are compared and tested against one another in a process called ***bounded dialogue**.

1.2.4. Part Four: Method—Designing and completing interpretive projects

Part Four explains how to build and manage the *interpretive projects.

An *interpretive project is a student process-to-report activity constrained by the defined *course method and the template associated with it. For these projects, students on their own or in groups analyze an aspect of a *narrative relevant to the course topic. The results are often shared. The *course method (based on course rules and standards) is designed so that these following qualities will be part of any *interpretive project: practicability, shareability, credibility, discovery & insight, accuracy, *equality, diversity, and liveliness.

1.2.5. Part Five: Cultural contexts—Traditional thought systems in East Asian love narratives

Part Five introduces some of the basic content of several major *authoritative thoughts systems (cosmologies, philosophies, ethical systems, religions) and explores how these might be manifesting in *narratives.

By *cultural context I mean those aspects of a *cultural group (ideals and practices) of which one is a member that constrain, prod, or inform that individual's *thoughts, feelings, and actions (TF/A) in some way.

With this in mind, *interpretive projects follow one of these two basic analytic orientations:

- We can take an annotative or predictive stance, trying to explain aspects of the *narrative with such questions as "What is 'X' (of the narrative) thinking or feeling? Why did she or he do that or what will she or he likely do?" Here, "X" is a *narrative figure, or someone who contributed to the creation of the *narrative such as the director, or those who consume the *narrative such as readers or viewing audiences. We call this *"making sense" of the *narrative and it is a process of checking the narrative progress as a way to check our own cultural understanding.
- We can take a broader view that may well be based on initial work more like the above. This second perspective is a historical stance that explores to what degree a *traditional *worldview or *value remains viable for the best interpretation of a situation. We couch these questions as questions of the *status of a *traditional *worldview or *value such as "What is the *status of the Confucian *value of *xiao* in relation to this narrative event or the narrative overall?"

Either of these analytic lines requires of the *interpretive project a selection and definition of relevant *cultural contexts. It is a premise of this course that *traditional *worldviews and *values, to some degree, frequently remain relevant to the accurate understanding of a *narrative (and, by implication, of real-world events). To this end, the course provides a discussion of various *traditional *worldviews, *values, and *common practices to construct possible *cultural contexts that might be relevant and of which the student may not have a detailed understanding. Contemporary *worldviews, *values, and *common practices are not taught as systematically, and often this information has peer-to-peer origins rather than being introduced by me. (Since this is an open-ended course with the intent of describing credibly the interpretations others might actually have, there will be many areas that might require our attention. We should be willing to consider any mode of thinking or practices or identities that might be relevant.)

Part Five begins with a broad discussion of Greek ideals of love and medieval European ideals of romance in the West because most of you have traces (*fragments or *derivatives) of these as part of your own *love-related *values. Self-awareness of your own *values helps clarify and sharpen your interpretive analysis. Then, in sections for each, we consider *worldviews and *ethical values of *traditional Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism that might inform the *love-related components of *narratives.

1.2.5. Part Six: Key terms and concepts

The lifeblood of this course is its lexicon of defined terms. Part Six works in conjunction (does not substitute for) the discussion of a term in the body of the book itself to help give it a full and rich definition. In some cases, the term is an abbreviated representation of a key course concept. In other cases, it is

to establish shared vocabulary, since the most fundamental premise of the course is that a word such as "true love" almost certainly does not mean the same thing to each of us. If we do not define terms, our analytic positions lack clarity to one another and lose their power to compare cultural objects or offer a crisp interpretation.

Some terms are about method; others, about theory; and still others, specific to *authoritative thought systems such as Daoism, Confucianism, or Buddhism. In actual class practices and exercises, many of these terms occur together, so it seems best to present them as a single list in A-Z order rather than ask you to remember under which category a term might occur. The result is a list with a wide variety of terms, but one that reflects well the conceptual content of this course.

1.3. ADVANTAGES OF THE EBOOK FORMAT

I have been thinking about the contextual frameworks (*cultural contexts) for *love *narratives in *East Asia for most of my professional career. My early training was in Heian period Japanese aristocratic women's memoirs, which have extensive musings about love relationships, as does much of the literature from that cultural moment. In the process of designing and refreshing this course, I have changed my interest and focus, evolved the theoretical basis, and redrawn the boundaries numerous times. Developments external to the specific content of the course content—in various fields of critical thought to some degree, but particularly in neuroscience—have changed my thinking, and this continues. However, what has influenced and expanded my thinking more than anything else has been the process of teaching itself, and the many discussions with students that ensue when teaching. Since this is a course about interpreting *love in *narratives, including the way you students are inclined to interpret things,

I must listen with care to your comments and conclusions. For example, a prior student once used in her analysis the phrase "*natural love," and I finally realized this was a standard many of you were sometimes using. I suspected it was probably something loosely defined and flexible. But when I designed an exercise to obtain a range of definitions that we could include as an official part of the course, I was surprised at how similar these definitions were in embracing the promise of longevity of the love, and its lack of conflict. Many expressed the opinion that "natural love" was the closest equivalent *East Asia has to the Western notion of "true love."[2] I realized that the answer to the question of whether or not the narrated love could be called a *natural love had considerable influence on how that reader (student) would understand the *love being narrated.

The eBook format has enabled me to present my current state of thought in a way that responds to these changes without waiting for it to settle into some more stable form, or forcing it to do so. It allows me to include newer thoughts that I am not sure will prove to have longevity but which seem promising. It allows for thinking that is a bit more experimental, less tested, and with flaws both known and unknown but hopefully nevertheless interesting. The ideas presented here are, indeed, far flung and often reach beyond my comfort zone in terms of research. However, since this is a teaching text, I have taken my task not to be the construction of theories that can withstand sustained critical review but rather the creation of a forum for thinking that opens pathways for talented students to pursue. This book, then, is most definitely more about start points than finish lines. That the contents can be freely shared fits well with my intent to stimulate rather than conclude thinking on a wide variety of topics.

I would also like to add just simply that this format allows me

2. This submission is representative: "... you are harmonizing within yourselves. Then, if you are fated to be together you will get closer and harmonize with one another, as natural love. It isn't a forced thing—you came together on your own terms."

to address you, the students, directly as the primary audience, which is the most appropriate “writer-reader” contract for this particular writing project. Others are most welcome to join our discussion, but I am writing this for you.

1.4. VERSIONS OF THIS WORK

Release One: The book was developed from course notes. The first electronic version to be released publicly was written, sometimes feverishly, while teaching the class for which it was the textbook. Sometimes during that semester (Spring 2018) I was only a few days ahead of the students in their use of the book. Portions of the book were blank and portions were basically only my notes.

Release Two: The book was reread and cleaned up for Summer 2019. That release is dated June 21, 2018.

Release Three: The book began a serious rewrite in August 2018 and continues when time permits. This version represents the results of that rewrite. This is the first version with extensive new material and research. The entire doubled in size as theoretical issues were settled. This version was released in June 2019. It needs editing for spelling, grammar, concision and some smoothing out of formatting. There are several chapters waiting to be included although the ideas are already in this version, just not fully argued. One part was withheld so I could work directly with students.

2. About this course

Course topic and structure ◆ teaching aspirations & learning outcomes ◆ Object learning and active learning ◆ *Connectionism, *Connectivism, *emergence

— Key Terms —

- Introduced in this chapter:
  - Connectionism
  - Connectivism
  - emergence
  - love
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - cultural contexts, East Asia, interpretive projects

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter states the core topics of the course, outlines its structure, shares my teaching aspirations (goals) that affect the learning directions, states the learning outcomes that you should aim for, and notes where the details of the course are located. It includes an extended description of three types of knowledge that are core to the course, including *emergent knowledge and its relationship to *Connectionism and *Connectivism.

— Chapter Outline —

- 2.1. Course overview
- 2.2. Course topics
- 2.3. Three types of knowledge encountered in this course
    - 2.3.1. Overview
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2.1. COURSE OVERVIEW

In this course you will learn the details of some traditional *cultural contexts and identify others on your own. You will deploy those contexts using a specific analytic method towards the goal of interpreting *narratives that have *love as an important element. Your analysis must always be clearly about *love. (This requirement is called the *"always about high-order love" standard.)

With *love (broadly defined) as your focus and *cultural contexts as your primary guide for interpretation, you will offer reasons why the fictional characters within a *narrative behave as they do, what they might be thinking, what they seem to think love is, what their hopes and expectations appear to be, and what they might be feeling. Thus, the course method requires that you bring to bear on *narratives credible *cultural contexts that you have constructed, using your best understanding of the immediate culture but also having considered the possible presence (extensive or limited) of traditional *worldviews and *ethical values that you may less frequently think about.

Many aspects of a *narrative—structure, tone, plot developments—result from the pressure or influence from other literary or cinematic objects (and for many other reasons). However, we are not explicating a story or film in its entirety, nor are we attempting to situate it in literary or film history. Rather, we are borrowing the *narrative space to discuss issues of culture. Therefore, we more or less completely set aside these other considerations, important though they

are for a rich understanding of the *narrative in its full artistic stature. As valuable as this is, we only use literature and films as forums for exploring the *status of *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices, premodern or otherwise. In short, our course project is to engage cultural features of *East Asia using *love as our way to focus this exploration.

The course is in three segments:

1. We begin by learning the course *interpretive method in its specifics, together with the assumptions and premises on which it is based. (Parts Two and Three of this book, working in conjunction with Part Five.)
2. We then take up one at a time *authoritative systems of thought that might influence how participants in *East Asian cultures think about love: Western views, Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. (Part Four of this book with reference to Part Five as necessary, plus further in-class discussions.)
3. Finally, we view, discuss, and interpret *love *narratives within modern *East Asian films. (Based on films assigned for viewing, with reference to this book as necessary.)

The above work is done through reading, occasional lectures, exercises, and discussions. Much of the work will be with your peers, in small group formations.

2.2. COURSE TOPIC AND THE PRIMARY COURSE ACTIVITY: *INTERPRETIVE PROJECTS

The content and activities in this course are built around this broad question:

> What is the *status of *traditional *East Asian *worldviews and *social values in modern cinema produced in China, Korea, and Japan—specifically

> *worldviews and *social values that are relevant to how stories of *love (broadly defined) are told and understood?

Or, put another way,

> To what degree should we deploy *traditional *worldviews and *values if we wish to interpret as accurately as we can *love *narratives found in modern *East Asian films?

Using what we call *interpretive projects, you will fashion credible position statements to specific areas of the *narrative (pre-determined or offered by you as *narrowly defined topics) designed to be relevant to the above topics, restated appropriate for the project at hand as overall guiding question (*framing question). Thus, the *interpretive projects in the class have this conceptual hierarchy:

1. Course topic — never set aside
2. Identification of the film or *narrative to be considered
3. Guidance question that creates appropriately or interestingly a bridge between the course topic and the film or *narrative at hand
4. Development of a much more specific topic that is relevant to some aspect of the broader question
5. Decisions about what interpretive perspective you will take (selection of a *ToM) and what *cultural contexts you will deploy
6. Tentative conclusions or statements of position

If it is a group project, you will also report who agrees, who disagrees, and other discoveries made as the result of group discussion.

2.3. THREE TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE PRESENTED IN THIS COURSE

2.3.1. Overview

"Knowledge" in this class is complex and, often, ambiguous. It might be helpful to organize under types of knowledge the types of things you are expected to learn in this course. This can help you understand that some things you might characterize as just "things to do" are seen by me as knowledge that is to be acquired and will be assessed. This understanding will position you best to learn efficiently and score well.

I will ask you to engage three types of knowledge.

The first type is obtained through reading: course materials, your own outside research, and the *CG-C-D-E-R reports of other students. All three of areas of reading are expected. Research will be initiated and designed by you and your group. The other two types are generated by you through acts of interpretive analysis, including the many discussions associated with them. Although the *interpretive projects will lead to a product (a report that might offer tentative conclusions), it is primarily the process that that should be considered the knowledge, not the product.

The content of the first type of knowledge could, in theory, be written down if you were asked to do so. There second cannot be easily written; it is a disciplined analysis—a skill in action, that is, executing *interpretive projects.

The third is a para-phenomenon arising from the second: *emergent knowledge related to understandings of what *love is, cultural content, and relationships between culture and interpretation. Some of this *emergent knowledge exists ephemerally, only in the moment of discussion or analysis, other aspects linger as traces of thoughts or conclusions, while

now and then there might be specific discoveries that you will keep well after the course is finished.

I regard all three of the above types of knowledge as equally valuable.

To restate these three types of knowledge in somewhat different language: You will learn from the reading, me, and your peers details about *East Asian cultures that you might not have known; by reading this book and practicing its principles in class, you will learn a specific analytic process that can be modified for your use in other fields or at other times; and, you will probably at times, in a self-aware way, situate yourself within webs of connected ideas, perhaps seeing how this type of knowledge has practical value in making judgments and decisions as well as re-fashioning your own ways of learning in the future.

2.3.2. First type of knowledge: Object learning where the objects are details of the course method and details of relevant cultural contexts

This first type of knowledge is what most students might intuitively think of as “knowledge” in that it is, in large part, “factual” information (such as the Buddhist idea of *karma), or premises and positions upon which the course is based (such as the working premise that *narrative progress should *make sense).

There are three areas of this type of knowledge that you will be asked to master:

- **terms** related to the assumptions, premises, and other theoretical positions that are the foundation of the interpretive method used in this course (for example, what we mean by *cognitive love),
- specific **standards**, **rules**, and **steps** of the interpretive

method used in this course (such as the *"always about high-order love" standard), and

- *__cultural contexts__ relevant to interpretations (such as love-related concepts associated with Confucianism).

2.3.3. Second type of knowledge: Active learning as analytic skill deployed in the process of completing *interpretive projects

The second type of knowledge is your ability to perform and complete *interpretive projects: identify areas of value to explore, construct a *Theory of Mind (*ToM) for a *narrative figure or individual based on a credible and skilled application of *cultural contexts, then, finally, draw conclusions from this process. The *interpretive method is predefined to produce concrete, credible, shareable analysis in the face of an extremely amorphous, vague topic ("*love").

Our object of interpretation is primarily, but not always, some aspect of a modern *East Asian film. You will be asked to generate your own credible interpretations then (in most cases) test them within your group. Your ability to perform the analysis according to the *course method, then the credibility, value and interest of your conclusions will be assessed. Your conclusions are not assessed as to whether they are "correct" — only whether they are the result of the method correctly done and credible, broadly measured. You are, therefore, free to accept or reject your conclusions and those of others as worthwhile descriptions of the situation or culture that was the topic.

2.3.4. Third type of knowledge: *Emergence and its place in this course

*2.3.4.1. What is *emergence?*

The third type of knowledge that I hope you grapple with in this course is best characterized as *emergent.

*In truth, *emergence can be either ontological or epistemological and so its placement here as a course type of knowledge is somewhat awkward. We include both types of *emergence in this course. Ontologically speaking, the concept of *emergence includes an assertion that some things exist as *emergent phenomena arising from the synergy of various elements interacting and exist only as long as that synergy is present in some way. Epistemologically speaking, *emergent knowledge is active networks of ideas and facts and is greater than the sum of those various parts. *Emergent knowledge perhaps cannot be fully articulated or even understood if we take ourselves to be members of the network but engaging it nevertheless has great value for us.

When we can more or less recognize the roles of elements in the production of the *emergent phenomenon, we call it a "weak" *emergent event. When it is very difficult or impossible to articulate fully what exactly are the roles the elements play in leading to the *emergent phenomenon we call it a "strong" *emergent event. This distinction is important to us in that most of the *emergent phenomena we confront for our analysis can best be described as "strong."

*Emergent phenomena can have a "downward" influence; that is, the arising of macro-level *emergent entities from micro-level elements or networks is not one way: *emergent entities, once they have come into existence, can influence the elements or networks that produced them. While it is not possible to see exactly why at this early point in the course,

remembering this "two-way" relationship enhances the credibility of our *interpretive project positions and conclusions.

For this course, as a type of knowledge, *emergent knowledge is networked knowledge engaged or perceived by embracing the dynamic dimensions among the diversity of details of our discussions and interpretive acts. This is in contrast to a standard "course mastery" process that is reductive—one that seeks to distill course details into sets of principles. To put it another way, the *emergent knowledge view allows or, better, expects the various moving parts to remain complex and interactive rather than believing they can be more accurately comprehended by consolidating or simplifying them towards essential statements. I ask you to attend to this complex, interactive, developing process of the many moments of knowledge we generate through analysis, to glean something of value that leads towards a larger view of East Asian culture. The skill is to reside in a networked activity that looks more like a web of small observations rather than build a package of principles to preserve after the course concludes. The language I will use may well be often essentialist (such as "the role of passivity" "the *status of *ren*," and so on) but this is a step at the micro-level of the class. It is how these various essential elements or principles play out in the ambiguity and complexity of specific situations and what this might suggest at a macro-level of culture that should be foremost in your mind despite that the work to complete and submit for the course is mostly at the micro-level of point-by-point interpretations.

*2.3.4.2. In what ways is *emergence important for this course?*

*Emergent knowledge is used differently and means somewhat

different things depending on the discipline. There are several reasons why it is important in our case.

To begin, as you will see when we discuss interpretation, I have a high respect (and suspicion) for the generative power of the cognitive mind. *Narratives themselves, and why they feel "real" to us is, in my opinion, a relatively strong *emergent phenomenon. Phenomena that can be traced directly back to the sum of its elements is not *emergent. For example, the total number of books on all the various shelves in my house could be called, collectively, my library. Weak *emergent phenomena have some meaningful explanatory relationship to the elements whereas strong *emergent phenomena might have an indistinguishable, perhaps mysterious, perhaps even ultimately unknowable relationship such as the relationship between brain neurons and consciousness. *Narratives, in my mind, are relatively strong: we encounter the elements of the story in terms of tone, characters, plot, and so on, yet somehow the story means more to us than the sum of these parts regardless of how detailed and insightful we are in describing those elements. Since our work is done in the environment of *narratives, your most promising analytic start point will be if you approach *narratives as *emergent phenomenon. Your interpretations will be more credible and more meaningful to you and others. You will avoid simplistic arguments that would draw a straight line between a principle discussed and an event in the story, statements such as "Chinese believe in Daoism and so when she turned her back on him and walked away, he remained passive and let her leave." We know the world is more complicated than that; indeed, one of the basic course rules is to offer "real" interpretations, not abstract ones. Preserving this rule requires that we remain aware of the complexities of the projects keeping in mind the *emergent nature of what we are analyzing.

Similarly, just as we use *narratives as the forum for

discussing the nuances of the culture of a group, this course assumes that a group's culture itself is a strong *emergent phenomenon. Social groups are more than just a lot of individuals—they have a new, *emergent, identity at the level of the social network, one that is not simply an averaging out or other calculation of its many individual members. We cannot just expect the individual to be a microcosm of the society's collective identity. The relationship between the individual and society is more mysterious than that. Our observations will be appropriately more accurate as well as more cautious when we keep this in mind.

Finally, the broad definition we use in this course for *love is also an *emergent phenomenon: "the strong *emergent effect of neurochemical, affective, and cognitive processes." In this view of love, the neurochemistry of one's body helps produce the affective emotions and together they influence cognition. However, there is a downward effect: cognition can generate emotions and emotions will trigger neurochemical changes.

This upwards-downwards model is also useful when thinking of culture: individuals collectively generate culture but culture has a downward influence on the qualities of the individual. When considering the influence of culture, as we do, we look mostly on how culture constrains individuals or how *cultural contexts lead and constrain interpretations. But, to keep things real, we should also remember that culture is not monolithic or static and continues to arise from and evolve as a result of the thoughts, feeling, and actions of the members of the cultural group.

Aside from viewing *narratives, culture, and *love as *emergent macro-phenomena that arise from the synergy of the elements at a micro level, I suggest that the course itself, as a result of dialogue and especially *bounded dialogue leads, collectively, to *emergent knowledge that helps us think about culture. The activities in the class are dialogue based but not

in debate fashion where two positions are tested against each other to find the best elements of each. Instead, dialogue is open and accepting to a wide range of observations which, when considered collectively, are meant to create webs of knowledge that helps us think about culture.

*2.3.4.3. *Connectionism, *Connectivism, *connectedness (musubi)*

With *emergent knowledge in mind, I would like to introduce two concepts that have significant background influence in this course: *Connectionism and *Connectivism. While you do not need to know the specifics of these concepts, knowing something about them will make certain parts of the course less puzzling and might help you be more efficient in matching your effort to the type of effort expected.

The first of these, *Connectionism, originated in the 1940s and involves mathematical models called connectionist networks. The second, *Connectivism, is the name of a pedagogical approach first introduced in 2005.

I would like to say at the outset that both of these concepts subvert, although not entirely, Theory of Mind (*ToM) theories, one of the most central elements of our courses *interpretive projects. This rupture in the theoretical foundations for the course has yet to be repaired and perhaps need not be. Nevertheless, I want to note it here since it can, indeed, cause some confusion along the way. By the way, we also learn a Japanese term—**musubi*—that will be translated as “connectedness.” It has nothing to do with these other two terms. The potential for confusion is unfortunate but inescapable.

*2.3.4.4. *Connectionism—*emergent knowledge & culture (here paired with Buddhist sensibilities)*

*Connectionism—when applied to neurobiology, cognitive science, and certain areas of psychology—suggests that behavior, indeed the mind itself, is not built upon the playing out of principles but is the result of the activation of networks of neurons. Rather than an "if … then …" cognitive framework that relies on logic, categories, and principles, the knowledge that is used to interpret all things around us is instead the (incredibly vast) arrays of neuron networks themselves in their synergetic moments of activation. We have 100 billion neurons and that allows for an astronomically large number of a neuron networks.[1]

*Connectionism seems to me to be relevant to our project of trying to understand the role of culture in human behavior because it raises a question about what happens (and so what we should do to learn effectively) when we become able to function in a new culture. Are we learning overarching principles of that culture and *applying*in complex ways those principles to all the little acts of the day, perhaps in ways we

1. The online abstract to Stephen J. Flusberg and James L. McClelland's chapter "Connectionism and the Emergence of Mind," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Science*, edited by Susan E. F. Chipman (Oxford University Press, 2017), is a satisfyingly clear description of *Connectionism in terms of cognition: "Connectionism is a computational modeling framework inspired by the principles of information processing that characterize biological neural systems, which rely on collections of simple processing units linked together into networks. These units communicate in parallel via connections of varying strength that can be modified by experience. Connectionist networks have a wide range of theoretical and practical applications because they exhibit sophisticated, flexible, and context-sensitive behavior that mirrors human cognitive performance in many domains, from perception to language processing. By emphasizing the commonalities underlying various cognitive abilities, connectionism considers how a basic set of computational principles might give rise to many different forms of complex behavior. Thus, connectionism supports a novel way of thinking about the nature and origins of mental life, as the emergent consequence of a system based around principles of parallel processing, distributed representation, and statistical learning that interacts with its environment over the course of development." ("Abstract and Keywords," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, accessed July 15, 2018, http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199842193.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199842193-e-5.)

ourselves do not understand? Or, instead, are we memorizing, one-by-one, appropriate behaviors and either only *reproducing*that behavior at the appropriate time or, more complexly, the synergy of our many learned behaviors generates new behavior that works appropriately within the boundaries of a cultural group? In other words, is culture generated by sets of *ideas*and sub-ideas, loosely interrelated and synergistically interacting? Or, is it better to think of culture to be just as soulless as we, too, would be with this biologically-based view of the origins of thoughts and behaviors—that is, as just exactly the plentitude of interconnected behaviors themselves, webs and patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions, observed or performed then memorized by neuron networks, to be constantly shared and reproduced within the cultural group as patterns activated? If it is the latter, then this course which posits *worldviews and *values as cultural-generating principles and so have value toward interpreting and understanding the character of a culture, may have little practical value, even if interesting. We do indeed intuitively believe that living in a culture is the fastest way to become proficient in it, in which case perhaps learning a culture is, indeed, the observation and memorization of a vast collection of behaviors.

On the other hand, when in Japan I have met Americans who have lived for decades in that country and yet still are not functionally proficient in the culture, and these individuals almost inevitably seem to lack reflection as to what Japanese culture is. This suggests that deducing principles from the culture around one is a useful, perhaps even necessary step towards cultural fluency. Additionally, I have observed that the combination of structured (principles-based) teaching of the Japanese language paired with real world exposure to the language leads to faster and more complete language proficiency than just being immersed in that linguistic

environment. Therefore, partially based on what I know of theories of learning and partially based on what I have observed, I am convinced of the approach of this course but recognize that there is much we still do not understand about how we learn anything, let alone something as subtle and complex as culture, or what is, exactly, the origins of social patterns of behavior.

We do not need to settle this issue. I have defined as a premise for the course that *cultural contexts exert pressure on *ToM and that *ToM of *narratives resemble *ToM of actual people and so learning and applying *contexts to construct the content of *ToM might help us understand members of that culture. Even if these premises are wrong, learning more about a culture is anyway a good project, and learning how attending to *contexts frees us from our own prejudices is a very good project.

Despite an inability to clarify whether it is more helpful to think of culture as *emerging from a complex interaction of principles or, instead, from simply highly complex and multitudinous neuron networks, the basic principles of *Connectivism are at the very foundation of my way of thinking about *cultural contexts, social and individual identity, and *love.

I definitely do not ask you to make my views yours. Nevertheless, many aspects of this course are designed around my belief that our interpretations will be more accurate, honest, and viable in real world settings if we observe a wide variety of disparate details rather than search out similarities, if we accept the unfinished and diverse qualities of our observations rather than push for essentialist statements. In my opinion, there is no “master at home” coordinating everything. Instead, people and their cultures live in day-to-day details as ephemeral, complex, and fluid forms. To restate this borrowing the Buddhist influence within me: There is no coordinating master (no-self

無我), only the “everything else”with *emergence an important epiphenomenon of these interactions.

This “network-first—don’t centralize around a grand central station of some sort, *ToM is not a snapshot of an enduring soul, it is for the moment, not forever” position, I would like to argue, better allows us to accept and consider the contradictions of the human (the push and pull between desires and *ethical values, indecisiveness, contradictory behavior—all of it) and similar contradictions and tensions within a culture. It definitely creates humble limits to our *ToM, preventing stereotyping and keeping our conclusions at the level of a description related to a particular instance rather than taking them to be enduring principles or steps towards them. We are most definitely blocked from aiming for dangerous and absurd conclusions that might look something like: “All Japanese are … ,” or “Every Korean will … ,” or “Most Chinese prefer … .” *Connectionist and *emergent descriptions—attending to complex arrays of networks of behavior or knowledge or attitudes that come into play—seem to me to be the most promising and accurate way of thinking about culture(s) and our culture-embedded lives in their complex, ongoing multiplicities.

*2.3.4.5. *Connectivism—a challenge to course premises*

Let us move on to the place of *Connectivism in this course. One of the key premises of *Connectivism is that the skills traditionally taught at a university do not always match well with the skills students need to be successful and happy in their work lives after graduation. *Connectivism argues that in a world of high connectivity and over abundant information, agility and speed and perceptive judgment at assembling in a practical way information within reach (and the reach is far), for a particular purpose, is often the best recipe for success.

The skilled and successful individual does this effectively over and over, based on the situation at hand. The process does not require that the same or even same type of knowledge be assembled by the individual each time, nor does it expect an internalization of knowledge (principles) that is kept ready to be applied consistently across various situations. This is a version of pragmatism and, in my view, the American higher education system is increasingly being measured by and moving towards behavior best described as prioritizing pragmatic directions.

*Connectivism does not just envision an individual who navigates the Internet with great skill in order to connect bits of data (knowledge) with the aim at making good decisions and judgments at a particular moment in time based on that assembled knowledge. It suggests something much larger: that successful human endeavor, the shape of knowledge itself, is collaborative, with networked humans acting in a networked world of information. The emphasis, therefore, is on developing skills in the effective use of digital reach, on the one hand, and improving collaborative skills, on the other.

I think *Connectivism has a point. Therefore, in this course, you will assemble working groups whose members hopefully have diverse opinions and different cultural backgrounds (reservoirs of cultural knowledge about *cultural contexts). These groups interpret *love *narratives then compare notes based on their skilled research, personal understanding, and their analysis derived from these. This process hopefully leads to a mutual diminishing of cultural blindness due to preconceptions. It visualizes students who make effective and intelligent use of the diversity of information accessible via the Internet. Unlike typical research prioritizing credible sources, this research contemplates various claims of what a cultural practice is, although of course the student needs to be aware of the nature of the information with which she or he is working, and duly note that so others reading her or his work knows that

as well. In my view of the course, therefore, students deploy critically *Connectivist skills to develop cultural knowledge and bring that knowledge to the group where collaborative skills enrich positions and help neutralize errors. This process (independent analysis brought to group meetings where it is discussed) is based on my belief that cultural “knowledge” is less a list of items to be learned as it is ideas performed through dialogue (a group manifesting as networked knowledge). The collaborative process begins with an *interpretive project and ends in a *CG-C-D-E-R report, where key aspects of the meeting are recorded and shared, to become the topic of further discussion by other working groups or in classwide sessions or among students of the next generation of the course.

Again, as with *Connectionism(*emergent phenomena arising from networks), the premises of *Connectivism (students need a different pedagogy that helps teach a different set of skills than are traditionally trained) seem to me closer to how we move within a culture where we make multitudinous decisions based on specific situations while principles might play a role but the specifics of the information at hand plays a greater role. Alas, as with *Connectionism, there is conceptual tension between the implications of a learning style centered on *Connectivism and our interpretive method which assumes that there are enduring *worldviews and *values informing *cultural contexts. In this sense, our method, in part, rejects the “flat” and pragmatic invitation of *Connectionist learning. But where it embraces it is in the emphasis on *instances rather than broad and sweeping topics, and in the commitment to collaborative learning (the class working on a project together, rather than individuals producing work for the instructor). We, as a class, are all in pursuit of a certain type of knowledge and share our discoveries along the way. The essential course structure is not instructor-gives-to-student, student-proves-reception but rather all class members explore and share,

creating ephemeral but important *emergent knowledge through those very and various actions of sharing.

*2.3.4.6. What you are expected to be able to use of *Connectionism and *Connectivism*

Again, as stated earlier, you do not need to know the above theoretical positions in detail.

You do, however, need to know my expectations for students derived from ideas related to *Connectionism:

- You are not expected to be in pursuit of "big" ideas, "meta" positions, or macro-level *emergent phenomena that might act as the most powerful explainers of the essence of a culture. This is not the practical content of the course, although it is, indeed, its idealistic goal. The scale of what we actually do is smaller and tied to *narrowly defined topics and *instances. You are expected to generate credible, useful, and hopefully interesting knowledge on narrow points (*instances and *narrowly defined topics) relevant to the course topic. This is sometimes difficult for students to remember in their wish to draw conclusions about the culture of an *East Asian country.
- You are, however, expected to remain open to taking complex questions as the start point of analysis, then fashioning something specific with that more complex question in mind. Conclusions, too, should be respectful of the complexity of our projects, meaning they will often be tentative rather than asserted with confidence.
- Your group is at its best when it is enabling a process where you create a space friendly to *emergent discoveries. While there is indeed value in simply discovering whether your group members agree with your interpretations or not, the *emergent knowledge that might result at times from your

group discussions is, hopefully, greater than just the sum (list) of the details of those discussions.

In terms of *Connectivism:

- You are expected to be dynamic, discerning, and effective as an independent researcher on the Internet, bringing together in meaningful, creative, but critically aware ways the information you discover.
- Collaboration at the group level means to interact energetically rather than divide the work to be done among group members to obtain an end project sooner. Good collaboration means honoring a *process*-rich discussion not seeking *product*-oriented efficiency with the rapid completion of the analysis in mind. The *process*of discussion itself should be the focus.

2.4. COURSE STRUCTURE

First segment of the course. Part Two of this book is the first portion of the course: we get comfortable with the interpretive method to be used and the theories behind it.

Next segment of the course. I begin introducing content of *cultural contexts: Greek thought, traditional views of love from (mostly) Christendom, ancient Chinese cosmology (Daoism, including Daoist sexual alchemy), Confucianism, and Buddhism.

Final segment of the course. Gradually we begin to place more emphasis on films as a way to both understand introduced *cultural contexts and introduce further cultural contexts. In this segment, with films as part of the discussion, a few more country-specific concepts are introduced, such as **han* and **musubi*.

In brief, we move from theoretical considerations to learning

the specifics of an array of *cultural contexts to the interpretation of *love *narratives in films.

This general structure is adjusted with every iteration of the class, based on the circumstances of that particular semester.

2.5. TEACHING ASPIRATIONS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

As already stated, in this course you are asked to offer your reasoning about love-related behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of fictional characters within *narratives. You explore these questions by learning contextual information (love-related aspects of Daoism, Confucianism, and so on) and using that information to fashion your interpretations as you judge appropriate, testing your ideas against others in discussion, as well as listening to theirs. What you talk about and how you talk about it is, to some degree, circumscribed by the specifics of the *interpretive method you are required to use because this brings us nearer one another in our analyses and, also, protects against just spinning our wheels given that "*love" is a large and ambiguous topic.

That is the thumbnail description of the learning activity of our class.

2.5.1. My teaching goals

What students should be able to do by the end of this course is listed next, as learning outcomes. Here, however, I would like to describe my "goals" (my hopes and aspirations for your learning on a long-term basis) because these are the basis for the overall directions of this course. Learning outcomes, described in the next section, are specific, attainable finish lines. These aspirations are open-ended, broader in their implications, and

not necessarily attained or attainable or perhaps can be attained only in degree.

These are my teaching aspirations for this course:

- I hope students can understand with greater sophistication how premodern *worldviews and *ethical values might be influencing modern cultures of China, Korea, and Japan. When students develop the ability to “tease out” (make explicit) these “background” influences, their understanding of a situation becomes less based on their own preconceptions and better grounded in an understanding of the actual situation. (An aspiration about reading cultural situations accurately.)
- I hope students become interested in the puzzle of what produces “culture.” (An aspiration about understanding where culture originate.)
- I hope students become more self-aware of how a culture has a startlingly large role in determining one’s own *worldviews and *ethical values. If this is accomplished, students will also have a better appreciation of how culturally embedded the experience of *love truly is, how great the gap can be between two individuals in their understanding of a relationship, and how misleading the phrase “true love” can be. (An aspiration about the enhanced self-knowledge of one’s cultural identity, as well as a goal about understanding what *love is.)
- I hope students become more self-aware of the role of preconceived notions (*models, *cultural attractors, etc.) in interpretive conclusions, and that they develop a crisper understanding of the boundaries of their own preconceived notions. This self-knowledge can enable helpful self-affirmation as one better knows what one believes and why one believes it. At the same time, I hope students develop

some expertise in noticing when their assumptions are dulling their ability to see a situation accurately (that is, that someone else might be thinking much more differently than one had assumed) and can catch the opportunity to invite new ways of thinking and perhaps even adjust their own *worldviews or personal *ethical values in some way beneficial to them (and perhaps those around them). (An aspiration about knowing one's thinking habits and thereby enhancing one's ability to expand one's thinking horizons.)

- I hope that this becomes a thinking habit: "That person did X. Do I really understand why? Are there *worldviews and *values behind that action and, if so, what might they be? Do I really understand or might I be missing something?" (A further aspiration about expanding one's thinking *horizon.)
- Also, I hope (for those interested in thinking about things like this) that students notice how—in considering the clash of *worldviews and *values between *East Asian *traditional thinking and Western views of *love—they also are able to gain a better understanding of the history of *East Asian countries' encounters with Western values, or the *status of these *values in contemporary *East Asia, or both. This is a very interesting area of thought but not an explicit course topic or a required line of thought. (An aspiration about East-West relations and the role of history in that.)
- Finally, I hope that those who already understand such things can reconfirm in this course the very difficult position women have held in traditional *East Asian cultures, and that those who have not yet considered these issues can come to a greater level of awareness. (An aspiration about deepening one's sensitivity to the challenges women have had and continue to have.)

2.5.2. Learning outcomes

By the completion of this course you will be able to do these things:

- State key *worldviews and *ethical values associated with the teachings of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism—while our focus is on *love-related content, in practice it is necessary to consider these three broadly.
- Explain the relevance to course topics of other key terms such as 情 ("feeling," "essence," "emotion"—**qing* in Chinese, **nasake* in Japanese, **jeong* in Korean), 甘え ("emotional dependence"—*amae* in Japanese), 親 ("familiarity," "intimacy"—**qin* in Chinese, **shitashimi* in Japanese, **chin* in Korean), and 恨 ("hatred," "resentment," "rancor"—**hen* in Chinese, **urami* in Japanese, **han* in Korean).
- Outline key features of "Western" love—including Western romantic love—as informed by Greek and Christian thought.
- Offer a more complex view of what *love is and was—one which includes a range of premodern, unfamiliar views, and, further, will better understand how *love is defined by the cultures in which it is embedded.
- Recognize some common features in *East Asian love-related *narrative structures such as the use of dreams, time, gifts, communication pathways, passivity, secrets,
- Employ disciplined analytic skills or, if the student already has good analytic skills, will have a new method to add to her or his repertoire of approaches.

2.6. LOCATION OF COURSE DETAILS

This textbook works in conjunction with our bCourse website and my public website: http://www.sonic.net/~tabine/.

Canvas, where bCourse resides, has an app for mobile devices.

PART II

A THEORY OF INTERPRETATION FOR CROSS-CULTURAL READING

This course asks you to utilize a predetermined method to interpret *love *narratives in *East Asian literature and film. The specifics of that method are grounded in a set of assumptions, premises, and theoretical positions that stretch across a variety of fields. This part introduces a theory of "making sense" of a narrative that is not of one's own culture.

3. *Overview*

Part Three contents ◆ evolving theory ◆ course content as problem-solution formula

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - no new terms
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - cultural contexts, East Asian, love

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter prefaces Part Two, which will outline the assumptions, premises, and theoretical positions of the course. The idea of this course began to take shape in 2007 and has been refreshed many times since then. However, two basic assumptions have not: how we understand both narratives about love and the experience of a loving relationship is embedded in cultural contexts, and, pedagogically speaking, the most effective way to explore those cultural terrains is through dialogue among a culturally diverse group. I state that the course is meant to enhance one's ability to keenly understand ("interpret") cultural situations with which one might not be familiar. In its drive to make meaning of incoming information, the cognitive brain selects, organizes, and interprets that information, but imperfectly. Although studying and living in a culture is extremely helpful towards understanding a culture, the course focuses on the perception

process that is at the foundation of benefiting from exposure to knowledge and real-life living situations, more specifically, the problems arising from complete cultural blindness, missed opportunities for acquiring cultural knowledge arising from hasty interpretation, and hobbled acquisition of radically new information. Taking narratives related to *love as our forum for learning, we focus on *East Asian *traditional *worldviews and *values that are relevant to their understanding. Put in terms of a problem-solution formula, the course takes imperfect interpretation as the problem and offers a specific interpretive method as the solution, one that takes disciplined, self-aware thinking and dialogue as its two key elements.

— Chapter Outline —

- 3.1. What Part Two introduces
- 3.2. The conceptual start-points of the course and its expanding theoretical range
- 3.3. The course's contents, framed as a problem-solution formula

3.1. THE CONTENTS OF PART TWO

The assumptions, premises, and theoretical positions supporting the design and content of this course are presented in this part.

3.2. THE CONCEPTUAL START-POINTS OF THE COURSE AND ITS EXPANDING THEORETICAL RANGE

This eBook, from beginning to end but perhaps more in this part than anywhere else, represents the current state of my thinking on a number of topics. Some early positions have remained more or less the same, but much has evolved, or has been disassembled and rebuilt, or has been entirely removed.

The initial framework of the course has not changed significantly since its inception early in 2007, namely, that we can create a forum to explore *East Asian thought and culture by interpreting *narratives that include *love stories because such stories, as all stories are, are embedded in specific *cultural contexts, but perhaps more than some other *narratives engage *worldviews and *values that we may or may not share but has strong opinions about. *Love stories give us a good opportunity to take a measure of a culture's *worldviews and *values, and challenge us to look beyond our own "natural" ways of thinking. I will argue that how *East Asian cultures give shape to *love, often include, to a greater or lesser extent, the ideals, *fragments, or *derivatives of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. This initial pedagogical assumption has also remained the same: peer-to-peer discussions among a diverse pool of enrolled students about how to understand (interpret) specific *narrative events is key to developing a sophisticated understanding of the course material. Finally, while it is not specifically the agenda of the course, it has always seemed to me that exposure to the spectrum of assumptions and core beliefs about *love leads us into a better understanding of our own love relationships as well as our relationships to what we might consider to be our "home" cultures.

Even with these fundamental constants, since the course was first taught in 2008, it has been refreshed at least a half-dozen

times and taught nearly a dozen times. While from its inception it has always engaged theories of perception, interpretation, and cross-cultural literary critical method, I did not foresee the number of fronts on which I would need to take theoretical positions. I have tried to characterize this growing and changing terrain in the following chapters.

3.3. THE COURSE'S CONTENT, FRAMED AS A PROBLEM-SOLUTION FORMULA

I begin with this teaching premise: Whoever enrolls wants to learn something new about *East Asian cultures but, on top of this, consciously or instinctively, probably also hopes that what is learned might enhance her or his understanding of, and effectiveness when working within, *East Asian cultures.

Taking this as the start point, I posit that better understanding and more effective action derive from one's ability to "read" well unfamiliar cultural situations. While I hope students take leadership in some way and act towards bettering society or advancing its knowledge, this course is specifically not about strategic action but rather my wish is to enhance the keen understanding the environments in which actions are embedded. In this course, we call this keen understanding "interpretation." Thus, the project of the course is to improve one's ability to interpret scenarios that can properly be identified as influenced or shaped by *East Asian cultures. In casual language, we might simply say "I know Chinese culture well" or "I have some familiarity with Korean culture." Such statements represent that we are able to operate effectively in Chinese or Korean contexts, to some degree. In other words, we believe we can correctly interpret situations. This course is about sharpening that interpretive ability, especially when one is in less familiar territory, and, also, I hope

to enhance the ability to notice when misinterpretations are occurring.

Our brains, consciously and unconsciously, afford meaning to incoming information by finding or creating patterns in that information that can reasonably match to known patterns. This is the essence of interpretation. When incoming information is incomplete (and this is the norm and only more so in unfamiliar cultural situations), the brain completes the information and generates meaning. When we are in an alien cultural situation, we are of course in situations with incomplete information.

We can ameliorate the limitations by gathering more information through living in the culture and formal study, including acquiring language skills. These are key to developing cultural proficiency. This course takes seriously the importance of expanding one's knowledge about a culture, and so a portion of our time is set aside to study Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism from the perspective of what these might still be contributing to contemporary *East Asian culture that, when kept in mind, help us understand situations and people. Additionally, class activities are designed to facilitate the sharing knowledge of contemporary *East Asian cultural notions and practices.

While it is clearly true that knowing a culture better through experience and learning is invaluable towards the goal of cultural proficiency, this is not the main learning objective of this course. Instead, this course takes on a set of challenging problems that sit at the process foundation of acquiring cultural knowledge. These are problems that usually occur in the early moments of cognitive perception (selection, organization, interpretation) in highly ambiguous situations typical of new cultural environments (narrative or real). All reduce or entirely block developing the cultural proficiency that should result from experience or study. We concern ourselves with three such areas:

- complete cultural blindness resulting in errors of interpreting a situation resulting from those times when do not even know we when do not know something (unnoticed misinterpretations);
- missed opportunities for acquiring cultural knowledge that arise from the hasty deployment of patterns when confronted with incomplete or ambiguous information ("jumping to conclusions," pre-conceived ideas, prejudices); and,
- hobbled acquisition of radically new information because that very newness makes it difficult to match to known patterns, so it is either ignored, replaced, or even entirely unnoticed (lack of imagination, interpretive blind spots).

This course posits that learning a culture requires attention to interpretive method, not simply gathering ever more information. We can live in a culture (encountering many things, accumulating experience) yet not acquire the ability to understand it. Why? I suggest that it because we are strongly inclined towards "nativizing" incoming information (altering it to an already known entity or discarding it when it does not match well with anything we already know), hindering the process of acquiring new cultural knowledge. In the view of this course, "correct" interpretation is the mental exercise of attempting to interpret events in the way that members of the culture would, so that your own understanding and actions based on that understanding are effectively harmonized with the cultural situation within which you are living, loving, or working.

For this reason, while our project is to interpret *East Asian love narratives, we do so not by the usual accounting of cultural history, literary history, or film history, or similar fields of knowledge. This course presumes that such knowledge is being elsewhere pursued—although, again, some information is offered through lecture, assigned readings, and peer-to-peer

discussions. Instead, we use a method that is meant to increase the chance of us encountering different ways of viewing things in order for us to use those opportunities to practice our interpretive skills. The interpretive method that you will be taught is hard-edged because I believe that our mind is very good at tricking us into old habits. I have chosen this approach because I am hopeful that what can be learned from the self-aware process of a disciplined, culturally-attentive interpretation of narratives in literature or film can be modified to use in real world situations, speeding the process of acquiring cultural proficiency.

As the analytic topic for this practice, I chose "*love" because in this area, in particular, we seem to be overly sure that our way of viewing something is the same as that of others. In other words, I have selected *love narratives as a forum because this area is particularly entangled in our personal *worldviews and *values. The *interpretive method requires precise statements on specific cultural points, under the assumption that articulating our positions helps us know what we do know, do not know, and thought we knew but have less clarity than believed. It also brings to our attention the unambiguous statements of others, enhancing differences that can be the basis for discussion. We focus on *worldviews and *values because:

- they are important components of any culture;
- when unknown, they frequently lead to misinterpretation and interpretation failure; and,
- they often operate at unnoticed levels or are otherwise deployed uncritically (with lack of self-awareness that they are not universal).

Put in the simplest of terms, the problem-solution formula of the course is that when confronted with the problem of poorly

interpreting unfamiliar cultural situations, we solve (or become better at solving) the problem not just with acquiring information but leveraging that information towards a more speedy and accurate ongoing acquisition of that information by practicing a method of disciplined, self-aware thinking and dialogue (both open-ended and regulated—called *bounded dialogue in this course)—both designed to help us notice our interpretive errors and hone our skills at applying knowledge, on the one hand, and increase our ability to acquire new information, on the other.

It is true that there is a short-term, more practical path to operating successfully in a culture: becoming someone that is highly skilled in strategic effectiveness who can therefore manage a situation based on manipulating it rather than fully understanding it. I would also agree that often this a good choice and sometimes the only choice. It is also true that one can learn to convincingly mimic a culture without fully understanding why there is such behavior in that culture in the first place. However, I would offer that if your emphasis is in understanding cross-culturally in a full and nuanced way, or if your desire is to grow in knowledge and power over the years, long-term learning habits based in part on the interpretive issues we take on are essential for expanding that knowledge, and are, in addition, highly effective for increasing the enjoyment and enrichment value of literature or film, and are good as well for developing satisfying, long-term relationships, cross-cultural or not. In my view, each person without exception is complicated and therefore can be difficult to understand and understanding is always a good thing.

4. *Interpreting data and code*

— Terms —

- Introduced:
    - code
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
    - none

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter offers examples of some of the key elements of perception and the mind's attribution of meaning including what we use to make meaning, our constant interest in generating meaning, how we fill in gaps with regard to incoming data, and that narratives are the result of the interpretation of code. This final point is the key point of the chapter: given how we arrive at meaning, if "texts" are first code that is converted to meaning by us, then the interpretations at which we arrive are open to the conundrums of the process of perception in general. Thus, it is clear that how we decide meaning of texts relies on already-known data and motivation, and thus is open to cultural influence. Beginning with the following chapter, these elements and others will be considered in more detail.

— Chapter Outline —

- 4.1. Signs and cafes
- 4.2. Selective vision and "That it is there"
- 4.3. Filling in the gaps and discomfort of the unknown
- 4.4. Process of perception / process of constructing narrative
    - 4.4.1. "The brain's relentless obsession with extracting meaning"
    - 4.4.2. Completing meaning across a haiku gap: of bush clovers and performers
    - 4.4.3. Where are narratives (texts)?

4.1. SIGNS AND CAFES

I would like to venture a guess that you are able to identify the sign in the middle of the below photograph. I think it is likely that your mind will complete the partial information through lightning-fast cognitive pathways that bring to bear visual memories (shape and color) and knowledge (what happens at intersections, what red lights on the back of a car mean, the title of this section of the textbook and that titles are meant to connect relevantly with content, and possible words that begin with capital "S"). The deductive process is quick, natural, and hardly noticed. While this particular sign is on my commute to work so my perception process is different—I already know what this sign is several blocks before I even see it—and although you may not have not seen **exactly** this sign, that causes no problem: I will still guess that you infer, with what is for all practical purposes one-hundred percent confidence, what sign this is. Many cognitive neurologists think Bayseian

logic that disambiguates situations based on probabilities is the process the mind uses to represent a perception conclusion (an interpretation) to our conscious awareness.

Completing information – Image 1

However, now consider the next picture. The percent of data that is visible of the total object is considerably more than in the case of the first photograph but now we lack both visual memories (unless we have walked past this actual business) and appropriate knowledge (vocabulary of possible words). We can guess that perhaps the name of the business is a non-typical English word because café is spelled with two "f"s. But, for me at least, this is not enough information to determine the language, so even if I am fully confident that the first letter is "s" and reasonably confident that the second letter is "t" and am willing to consider "r" as at least a possibility for the third letter, that simply is not enough. I do not even know the length of the word, which would definitely help me get closer to a

range of possible words. Here, Bayesian logic—at least in my case—cannot offer any word or even set of words that has enough probability to complete the interpretation. In common parlance we will just say, “I don’t know enough to make a good guess.”

Completing information – Image 2

With the first photograph, we conclude very rapidly that it is a stop sign, and for most of us, we will have a high level of confidence and comfort about the correctness of our interpretation. In the second, we might have some options but we probably conclude that we cannot be sure. The interpretive projects that we do in this course work between these two end points by asking us to be more cautious about those interpretations of which we are sure and extend our knowledge so that some highly ambiguous situations become solvable.

4.2. SELECTIVE VISION AND "THAT IT IS THERE"

If you have not already done this is a class somewhere, this visual test illustrates well the principle. Navigate to the below link. The YouTube link is probably fairly permanent: checking just now it has been watched 19,627,050 times and dates from 1999; however, if the link is broken, search "selective attention test basketball." Watch carefully the white team and how many times the team members pass the basketball. The correct number is in the footnote. The last time I gave this test in class only one of seven groups had the correct answer although two were within one point, and, at the "meta-level" everyone failed the test. (Usually groups do better than this.)

https://www.youtube.com/
watch?time_continue=3&v=vJG698U2Mvo

The answer is in the footnote to this sentence.[1]

Visual perception—from the arrival of light stimulus on the corneal surface all the way to the end-point of deciding what an object is—is a highly complex process. So complex, in fact, that "seeing" lags behind our audio stimulus and even more in the case of touch stimulus. In this way, stimuli require "back-dating" to synchronize what the ears and other senses of tell us. This is why, in track and field, races begin with a sound, not a visual stimulus. Our visual "perception" of (not reaction to, which is of course longer) even a simple event like the flash of a light is at least 80 milliseconds after the event has occurred.[2] The

1. Although the correct answer is 13, this is not the point. Did you see the gorilla? See, Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, *the invisible gorilla*, accessed August 24, 2018, http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/videos.html
2. George Musser, "Time on the Brain: How You Are Always Living In the Past, and Other Quirks of Perception," *Scientific American Blog Network*, September 15, 2011, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/time-on-the-brain-how-you-are-always-living-in-the-past-and-other-quirks-of-perception/

reason, when observing someone reacting to something (such as a punch thrown unexpectedly) that we have an impression that the reaction is slower than it would be in our own case is because two different perspectives are involved: in the case of the person at the receiving end of the stimulus that person must interpret the incoming information (and we take as our standard memories of our own reaction, which are from the same perspective) but in the case of the third-party observer, **both** the event and the individual's reaction are seen at the same time, that is, are both being interpreted at the same time. That sense of "Hmm, that reaction seems a **bit** slow" is the interpretive moment for the person receiving the stimulus, one that seems nearly instantaneous to the individual because of cognitive back-dating of the external stimulus. The more complex or ambiguous the stimulus, the longer that moment is likely to be and, of course, if it requires decision-making before a response, the time will be still longer. On the other hand, dangerous events, such as when one accidently touches a hot object, skip the usual cognitive pathways to the brain and instead go directly to the spinal cord in a reflexive arc that leads directly back to the muscle needed for the protective action. In martial arts, speed comes not just from mind and muscle being trained to react quickly and decisively but the ability to **anticipate** the opponent's act before it happens. Reacting to an event, once initiated, may not be fast enough. Soccer penalty kicks require a similar moment of anticipation. It is too late to decide which area to defend after the ball is kicked—thus the interesting mental game between the kicker and his or her faints, on the one hand, and the goalie and his or her best guess as to where the kicker *will* send the ball, on the other.

An image begins as a tiny, upside-down, two-dimensional phenomenon that we convert into a three-dimensional world full of understanding of the objects within our visual range. However, the processing of this enormous amount of data (the

first filter could be said to be the optic nerve from the retina to regions of the brain itself: the retinal cells transform data into a packet of about 100MB but the nerve can carry only 1MB of data[3]) requires a mental trick: we process visual information from only a narrow area of the world at any given time. The rest is generated by our brains as abstract representations of predicted objects and movements, and is represented only **that it is there**. We "know" a certain person is sitting at a certain place and can actually have what we think is a visual memory of that person but, when asked, we cannot say even what color of clothes that individual is wearing. There was the "placeholder" of the person in our constructed "visual" world, not the actual person.

4.3. FILLING IN THE GAPS AND DISCOMFORT OF THE UNKNOWN

In this way, we engage the world, necessarily, with selective attention—attending to and interpreting some things while letting large swaths of the world be taken care of more automatically by our perceptive mind. This works just fine most of the time. However, the cognitive drive to fill in the gaps is exceptionally powerful. This can populate our world with things that are not there and transform unfamiliar objects into more familiar ones that only represent with partial accuracy the actual object. Yet the cognitive mind is a pattern-seeking organ. When it cannot organize information, it releases stress hormones, so patterns it will find.

When Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* was first performed in May 1913, after just a few minutes of the performance, the audience rebelled, rioted, even striking one another.[4] Here are sound clips of two musical passages that challenge the reader

3. Fredo Durand and Julie Dorsey, "The Art and Science of Depiction: Introduction to Visual Perception," *MIT Lab for Computer Science*, accessed August 25, 2018, http://people.csail.mit.edu/fredo/Depiction/4_Perception/perception6.pdf

by departing from expected norms of ballet music of the time and scramble tonal patterns through dissonance. (A pair of YouTubes dramatically animate the music with abstract graphics that are remarkably helpful in drawing out the score's impressive complexities. See: Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring, Animated Graphical Score, 1/2 and Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring, Animated Graphical Score, 2/2.)

40-second segment from Stravinsky, *Rite of Spring*, Part 1 – Procession of the Wise Elder:

An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here: https://berkeley.pressbooks.pub/interpretinglovenarratives/?p=387

50-second segment from Stravinsky, *Rite of Spring*, Part 2 – Mystic Circles of the Young Girls:

4. "Musical Language," *Radiolab* (WNYC Studios), September 23, 2007, accessed August 30, 2018), https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91512-musical-language/.

An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here: https://berkeley.pressbooks.pub/interpretinglovenarratives/?p=387

One can argue that there was legitimate anger among the listeners as they listened while centuries of music tradition were trod upon or that the dissonant nature of the music was, in itself, drawing out the primal nature of the listeners. However, it is also true that when the electrical impulse sent to our brain via the aural never cells are regular, we perceive that as, emotionally speaking, a pleasant sound whereas when the impulses are irregular, we might perceive that as an unpleasant sound.[5] It is theorized that there is a cluster of neurons in the auditory cortex (which is responsible for high-order processing of sounds such as speech and music[6]) that are dedicated to finding patterns in sounds never before heard and that when these neurons fail repeatedly at that task, they release excessive quantities of the neurotransmitter dopamine. While dopamine creates a subjective sense of pleasure in small quantities, either too much dopamine[7] or a hyper-sensitivity

5. "Musical Language," *Radiolab* (WNYC Studios), September 23, 2007, accessed August 30, 2018, https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91512-musical-language/. The discussion begins around 28:12.
6. "Chapter 13, The Auditory System," in *Neuroscience*, eds. Dale Purves, George J. Augustine, David Fitzpatrick, Lawrence C. Katz, Anthony-Samuel LaMantia, James O. McNamara, and S. Mark Williams (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 2001), accessed August 30, 2018 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK10900/.
7. Philip Seeman and Shitij Kapur, "Schizophrenia: More dopamine, more D2receptors," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 97, no. 14

to dopamine[8] has been implicated as part of the chemical environment of the schizophrenic mind (and other mental disorders[9]) and certainly is capable of causing subjective feelings of discomfort and stress.

Rather than offer solely cultural reasons for the audience's remarkable reaction, which was indeed extreme (Stravinsky retreated to backstage), perhaps we should not put the cart before the horse. Perhaps the sense of indignity and the negative reactions that ensued were born of neurochemical stress rather than a cognitive appraisal of the music—"This is **not** music!"—leading to further neurochemical reactions. This alternative explanation is relevant to our course topic but nearly impossible to pursue. It is relevant because it raises the possibility that we uphold principles embraced by our cultural group less from a cognitive appreciation of the value of the ethical principle but rather that we choose to embrace it driven by a hardly perceptible chemically induced fear that is generated by anticipating the anger of the group or being dispelled from the group. In other words, are ethics upheld because of their content or simply because we understand that membership in the group is strengthened when they are upheld? How much of cultural complicity is grounded in avoidance of discomfort and negotiation of perceived threats?

(July 5, 2000): 7673–7675, accessed August 30, 2018, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC33999/.

8. Philip Seeman, "Dopamine and schizophrenia," *Scholarpedia* 2, no. 10 (2007):3634, accessed August 30, 2018, http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Dopamine_and_schizophrenia#The_dopamine_hypothesis_of_schizophrenia.
9. Dopamine irregularities are implicated in ADHD, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, depression, bipolar disorders, binge eating, addiction, gambling, and schizophrenia. Emily Deans, "Dopamine Primer: How dopamine makes us human," *Psychology Today*, blog post (May 13, 2011), accessed August 30, 2018, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolutionary-psychiatry/201105/dopamine-primer

4.4. PROCESS OF PERCEPTION / PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTINGNARRATIVE

4.4.1. "The brain's relentless obsession with extracting meaning"

When confronted with partial information, like the stop sign example above, consciously or unconsciously we complete it or establish meaning to some level. The information-puzzle is solved by our interpretive brain even if we have no immediate need for the information because the brain is in a constant state of motivated interpretation—situating us in the world and monitoring the changes in that world.

> When examining a healthy sample of human minds using techniques such as brain imaging and EEG, the brain's relentless obsession with extracting meaning from everything has been found in all kinds of people regardless of status, education, or location.
>
> ...
>
> Take words, for instance, those mesmerizing language units that package meaning with phenomenal density. When you show a word to someone who can read it, they not only retrieve the meaning of it, but all the meanings that this person has ever seen associated with it.
>
> The drive of humans to understand is not limited to just language, however. Our species appears to be guided by this profound and inexorable impulse to understand the world in every aspect of our lives. In other words, the goal of our existence ultimately seems to be achieving a full understanding of this same existence, a kind of kaleidoscopic infinity loop in which our mind is trapped, from the emergence of proto-

> consciousness in the womb, all the way to our deathbed.[10]

However, when the new or partial information demands greater cognitive energy to unpuzzle, motivation begins to strike a balance between the possible pleasure or need of the interpretation as measured against the difficulty or arriving at an interpretation. For example, some of us love abstract painting and will ponder its possible meanings. Others will first give it a quick evaluation, then decide it is fine to just pass it over. In either case, it is likely that the painting has begun to be given meaning by associating it with language.[11]

Motivated reasoning such as “there is something I want or need to know in that” or “there is something that will give me pleasure if I know that or go through the process of unpuzzling it” or “knowing that might help protect me in some way” comes up against interpretive resistance (the level of difficult of attributing meaning). We solve the formula either by creating a sufficient interpretation (general or detailed, partial or essentially complete) or simply setting aside the stimulus as not worth understanding.

10. Guillaume Thierry, “Life’s Purpose Rests in Our Mind’s Spectacular Drive to Extract Meaning from the World,” *The Conversation (blog)*, September 4, 2018, https://theconversation.com/lifes-purpose-rests-in-our-minds-spectacular-drive-to-extract-meaning-from-the-world-96665.
11. "Recently, we have been able to show that even an abstract picture – one that cannot easily be taken as a depiction of a particular concept – connects to words in the mind in a way that can be predicted. It does not seem to matter how seemingly void of meaning an image, a sound, or a smell may be, the human brain will project meaning onto it. And it will do so automatically in a subconscious (albeit predictable) way, presumably because the bulk of us extract meaning in a somewhat comparable fashion, since we have many experiences of the world in common. Guillaume Thierry, “Life’s Purpose Rests in Our Mind’s Spectacular Drive to Extract Meaning from the World,” *The Conversation (blog)*, September 8, 2018, https://theconversation.com/lifes-purpose-rests-in-our-minds-spectacular-drive-to-extract-meaning-from-the-world-96665.

4.4.2. Completing meaning across a haiku gap: of bush clovers and performers

The below is a Japanese haiku written in the 1690s by Matsuo Basho:

> Under one roof
> pleasure-girls sleep, too—
> Bush clover and moon.

Perhaps this poem attracts your attention. Perhaps it does not. In the world of the history of Japanese poetry it is famous, and those who participate in the world will be motivated to think long about it. People who have discovered the brilliance of Basho's work will be even more motivated because they know that there are rewards for time spent digging down into the meanings of his poems.[12]

I have selected this poem (which is one of my favorites) as an example of information completion for two reasons.

The first is that, as presented here—in translation and therefore disconnected from almost all context, including its own language's networks of meaning—the interpretive energy required to get farther than "Well, that is sort of a poem and has something to do with pleasure-girls and some sort of symbolism associated with bush clovers (whatever they might be) and the moon" will seem to many of you, I am guessing, not worth the cost of time and energy required. You will spend only a moment with it and move on. So, this poem serves as an example of the relationship of motivation to interpretive result.

The second reason I have selected this poem for consideration is because haiku, in their brevity, have special

12. See, for example, Christine Murasaki Millett, "'Bush Clover and Moon': A Relational Reading of *Oku no Hosomichi*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 327-356, accessed November 19, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2385632.

solutions for generating rich meaning with limited *code. Two of those are particularly relevant to our project of sharpening our ability to interpret love narratives not of our own culture.

The first of these special solutions has to do with the mutual understanding, an unspoken but very important contract, between the writer and reader that the words the writer will use are connected with networks of meanings of words that the reader can similarly deploy. In short, the writer will not be insensible—difficult to understand perhaps, but working with shared networks of word meanings. When this contract is broken, the object the writer has created makes little sense to the reader, and seems irrelevant (of another world, one not of apparent value to the reader). Those who wrote haiku in Japan in the 1690s had, as part of writer-reader contract, that they shared the highly complex network of certain poetic words that had been used in other poems across the world of the day's haiku and back into the centuries, too. Thus, the key words in a Japanese haiku are not just interesting words with simple meanings but words with long and rich histories that embrace a range of meanings. (In this particular case, "roof," "pleasure-girls," "bush clover," and "moon" are all such words.)

The second of these special solutions as that those who compose haiku, relying on the reader's natural drive to try to complete meaning, provide space for that construction by their very brevity. Further, most haiku have in them a conceptual gap between the first portion of the poem and the concluding portion. In English we see this translated as "!" or "." or "—" or ":" or some sort of indentation or other formatting choice. The logical gap in this poem is clearly: What is the relationship between the descriptive statement that pleasure-girls sleep here too and the flat presentation of two objects: bush clover and the moon. It is not easy to say—a familiar dilemma when reading Basho.

While the way "in" for this poem—even after learning the

history of the various words the makeup the poem—is to bridge the gap between the two phrases. Haiku push for a completion of interpretation, but do not provide enough information to finalize an interpretation—leaving that delightful work to belong to the poetic mind of the reader. A cognitive space rich in meaning hangs between the writer and the interpreting reader, with full cognitive-affective existence for the interpreting reader. Further—and not so unusual for Basho—while we might bridge the gap by equating the bush clover with the pleasure-girls, and the moon with the poet, Basho, in the richness of his mind offers a gap within the gap, inviting us into the depths of the poem with yet another relationship nearly impossible to parse: why are these two (a flower and the moon) placed side-by-side, in equality and without further explanation?

Here is another of Basho's poems where the gap is mysterious and—for me at least—breathtakingly so. I feel something very important is there, but I cannot say what. Written just shortly before he died, at a time when he knew he was dying:

> How is it that I have
> aged so this autumn?
> — Bird at cloud.

A haiku becomes more "haiku-like" when we encounter the gap. For example, if I simply write:

> I count on my hands:
> One, two, three.

The gap that should be created by the ":" and formatting is

mostly erased by the obvious logical connection to the next line. We might think, “This is a poem, there must be more” and perhaps try to create a new mystery to solve. But the poem is not very helpful toward that end. However, I invite you to complete in your mind this:

> One, two, three:
> A beloved baby’s hands.

Those who have raised children might recall, when they read this, how their baby, on her or his back in bed, just before falling gently to sleep, holds her or his hands in front of the face, playing with the fingers, learning what a hand is, what it does, learning while drifting into dream-worlds. It is a peaceful, charming, rare moment—definitely one of the pleasures of parenthood. If the reader arrives at this interpretation, we have shared a text. If the reader goes in another direction, we have shared the *code but our texts are different. Some writers expect a shared text (and in premodern times this was especially so); others are less concerned about this. Literary criticism, too, can have more or less concern about whether a text is shared. However, in this course, our goal is to create a shared text as much as is possible, given our limited understanding of the context of the *code.

Part of our work in this course, therefore, is to be motivated to not ignore the stimulus. To worry over it. To try to unpuzzle it. But, on the other hand, it is also to not relieve the pressure of its unknown status by just finding a solution that provides the satisfaction of an “answer” but, instead, work towards an answer that is well-matched to the networks of meanings belonging to the world of which the stimulus is a part. In other words, we should try not to allow our natural drive to complete information to lead us to hasty interpretations.

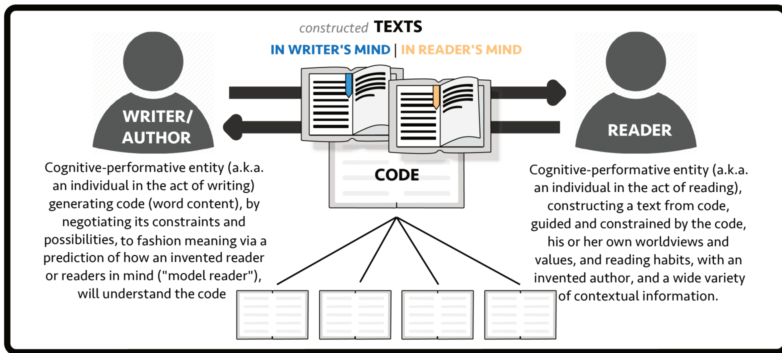
4.4.3. Where are narratives (texts)?

That we are driven to "complete" information—which really means to construct and provide meaning—lies at the very heart of narratives' success in occupying central places in human culture. Since the inception of language, "stories" have been important. Narratives, whether spoken or written, generate cognitive-affective worlds in which there are settings, actors, and events—environments with just a few symbolic elements that are then completed by us in our "that it is there" modality, people that we model and thus they become three dimensional or at least not just two dimensional, and chains of actions that we anticipate or not, with, then, temporality adding the excitement, regret, suspense, anticipation and many others elements.

We make the narratives we read in ways that include processes similar to the interpretations we generate during the various aspects of perception, that is, the hermeneutic evolutions of motivated selection, organization, and attribution of meanings (interpretation). Confronted with *code (letters on a page) we rapidly provide meaning through selective attention and organization of the information, basing our interpretations on specific memories (vocabulary knowledge, for example), schema (small and large such as grammar rules or how we think the world words), and logical inference. We generate fictional characters and their worlds, as well as sequences of actions both in the narrative past, present, and future.

This constructed narrative, this constructed *text*, is nowhere on paper or in film. It exists as an *emergent phenomenon in the "ether" of the triangle of writers who become authors once the reader's act of interpretation begins, *code, and readers both real and imagined. (In other words, when we read, we enter into "reading mode" and that reader is real to us, in a sense. However, we also imagine other readers and how

they might be interpreting the text. Those other readers may be actual individuals with statements about interpretation or merely modeled, imagined readers.)



The author-reader-text triangle

The author-reader-text triangle

The text is derived from a building out of ideas and emotions more or less within the constraints and promptings of the *code that a writer produced through pen or keyboard or voice. The *code used (the words of a language on their own and in patterned presentation) derives meaning from its networked epistemological status, as Derrida convincingly has argued, drawing its meanings in a fundamental way from the language in its larger sense). So, while it would be neatly simple to say that the *code is only the mediator between the meeting of two minds — writer and reader — in fact, the *code must be treated as an independent entity with its own force and claims in the process of interpretation. That is, what the writer has written, once released, becomes part of a community of other writings and establishes its own independent existence, capable of suggesting meanings not intended by the writer.

What is most relevant to the work we do in this course is

that readers have no powerful obligation to a large part of the constraints of *code or even the interpretations of it by others. In practice, it is often true — most especially in reading across cultural boundaries — that we may be entirely ignorant of portions, even large portions, of the promptings of the *code, and there is, anyway, much in the way of information left for us to fill in. And this we do. And a text arises in our mind, related to but not entirely beholden to the *code that the writer created.

To what degree our constructed text overlaps with the text the writer imagines we will likely build depends on many things, not the least of which is the cultural world of the writer and how much it resembles the cultural world of the reader. The "model reader" is what the writer imagines, predicting interpretations, modulating the *code to achieve certain results, or perhaps simply to provide the space for a range of possible results. The writer-text-reader contract invites us to lean towards the author's world because authorial intention is a powerful guideline for interpretation, but it does not require it. Thus, the *code provides direction and limitations but we may or may not be aware of those directions and limitations and, anyway, are not obligated to conform to them. It should be added, the text that we have once created in our readerly minds is far from stable. We recreate it, we later remember it, we rethink it, we alter it. The story of something once read but now only remembered, even if remembered dearly and frequently, is not the same story. Relevant to our course is our urge to nativize the unfamiliar, and so to some extent uncomfortable, knowledge: a text that was freshly challenging to our way of thinking at the time of reading may, with the passing of days or months or years, reformulate into something much less "different."

Oe Kenzaburo's 1989 novel *Relatives in Life* (*Jinsei no shinseki*, *Relatives in Life* with an English translation title of *An Echo of*

Heaven) is built around the theme of the difficulty of understanding another person. The narrator-protagonist has told of us all sorts of interpretations of the story's central female character, Marie Kuroki. Someone important to him. Someone he loved and lost. We watch as he, and many others, try to understand the life of this remarkable woman, feeling all along that somehow they have not understood her—that is, not interpreted her actions and words—well enough. In the last line of the novel, the author-narrator-protagonist (because the narrator clearly represents Oe himself) admits to the challenge and the problem of understanding:

> "They got together to fight back against someone far stronger than themselves. Have you ever done something like that?" a gentle voice might ask. And I would be obliged to say: "I have already written a novel about Marie's life, as 'my own story, one acceptable to me'. . . ."[13]

Has he, when all is said and done, interpreted her or just himself through her? And, when he ends with "'One acceptable to me …'," he lays out clearly the ultimate challenge of interpretation.

13. Oe Kenzaburo, *An Echo of Heaven*, trans. Margaret Mitsutani (Kodansha International, 1996), 204.

5. Selection, Organization / Matching (SO/M)

A schema for how we attribute meaning to objects ◆ patterns & models ◆ making sense ◆ interpretation and the outside world

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - instance
  - making sense
  - patterns and models
  - robustness
  - selection, organization / matching (SO/M)
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - code

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter introduces the fundamental elements of converting data or code to meaning (interpretation): selection, organization, and matching (to patterns and models). It argues that these elements are in constant interaction, each affecting the other and argues against the stability of meaning. It opens the door to external forces (culture) to affect the SO/M process, thus also concluding that one's interpretation (understanding) are not entirely one's own but inevitably connected to the

world. Put in simple terms, the overall intent of this chapter is to argue that how we see the world is influenced by our culture beyond the level that might be expected, and what the processes or influence that are involved might look like; that is, what we select to attend to, how we organize that, and how we attribute meaning to that are all bent by cultural forces, among other factors.

— Chapter Outline —

- 5.1. Three elements of the interpretive process
- 5.2. Selecting objects
- 5.3. Organizing objects
- 5.4. Deciding meaning by matching / constructing patterns and models
    - 5.4.1. Patterns
    - 5.4.2. Models and modeling
    - 5.4.3. Identification ⇄ Construction: the outside world and the disappearance of the interpreter

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5.1. THREE ELEMENTS OF THE INTERPRETIVE PROCESS

Interpretation occurs in response to the manifestation of data or *code, with the purpose of attributing meaning to it. It can be automatic or deliberative, exceptionally brief (milliseconds) or long (the span of one's cognitive life). It can be rapid and simple or highly complex. It might end, only to be restarted. It usually achieves its goal perfectly or sufficiently, but there are times

when the puzzle is never solved. In the case of "understanding" a book, the data is the *code in which the book is written and the understanding is an interpretation of the *code. In this course, we call this meaningfully converted *code—that is, the *narrative you construct in response to the *code and other meanings you attribute to the *code—the "text" or, more frequently, the "*narrative." (See: "The author-reader-text triangle" figure, elsewhere.) We premise that the work in this course is founded on the basic principles of sensory perception: "understanding" incoming sensory data such as a visual object or a sound. Sensory perception is a highly complex cognitive process that activates neuron clusters in many different areas of the brain with these multiple processes coordinated by yet another set of neuron networks. At least for the purposes of this course (although I also believe this is broadly true), we will view the process of interpreting written or cinematic *code as following the same basic pathways.

We label these basic movements of interpretation as *selection, *organization, and *matching: *SO/M. The more standard description of this process that you might encounter is slightly different: "selection," "organization," and "interpretation." Why I have changed the terminology will become clear as we precede.

In order to make it easier to distinguish these three aspects, they are sometimes presented as linear in process: the object or objects to be interpreted are selected out from other incoming information, thereby creating a focus of attention. Then, this information is organized in some meaningful way. Finally, that schematizing of the information enables interpretation (attribution of meaning: "that is a stop sign").

This schema is helpful for understanding hierarchies and phases of the process but it is insufficient for our purposes. In this course, we will view the elements of interpretive process—*selection, *organization, *matching—as in intensely

active, hermeneutic relationships with each affecting the content of the other, a process arriving at a series of interpretations and re-interpretations until an interpretation that "*makes (enough) sense" is accepted and concludes the process. To put it another way, we try various selection possibilities, organize them in a variety of ways, and see if the considered arrangement and conclusion *matches something we already know. Current scholarship suggests that we rely heavily on Bayesian probability colored with cognitive bias and pressed by practical needs to make efficient choices towards a "good-enough-for-the-situation" *selection and *organization. That is, we end the process when the level of certainty is acceptably sufficient for our needs or circumstances cause us to quit interpreting.

In this volume's theory, *matching does not function like a silent judge observing the work of *selection and *organization, to deliver a final, conclusive meaning. On the contrary, known *patterns have an enormous influence on what will be selected in the first place, and how such selected objects will be organized. For example, imagine that I go to the movie theater to see a romantic comedy. I already anticipate, correctly, that the narrative outcome will be, on the whole, a happy one. This pattern is active even before I arrive at the theater, and it will influence what parts of the film stand out to me (*selection) and how I *make sense of the story as it develops; that is, how I organize the *narrative around known principles of *narrative progress for this genre—some confusion and misunderstandings along the way, but of the sort that can be resolved.

This fully interactive view of the elements of interpretation will be a theme throughout this course and play a dominant role in how we look for, and decide interpretive positions. My thoughts on this have developed over the years.[1] As a practical

1. My first encounter was via Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka philosophy of the non-essence of things and their co-arising and I later revisited this through the Huayan Buddhist school's

matter for the purposes of this course, my view empowers the role of one's cultural group in interpretations, with the implicit suggestion that what you see and believe is more derivative from your cultural positions than your subjective sense of things would admit and that thinking independently of culture is exceptionally difficult and in some instances impossible. It is with that enormity in mind that I designed the interpretive method we use.

Having made clear my position on how *selection, *organization, and *matching relate to one another, that is, not a linear or even circular matter but with each continually changing the shape of the other in energized hermeneutic co-influence, with *matching appreciated as a fully involved arbiter, and (I think) Bayesian probability often or always short-cutting what would otherwise be a process too complex and time-consuming to allow us to survive in this world, I would like to make a few comments on each of the elements themselves.

5.2. SELECTING OBJECTS

Without returning to the page, try taking a moment to recall the image of the stop sign. When I do this, I remember first a partially obscured stop sign hidden by a "tree." The tree is abstract in my mind—I don't remember the actual tree, just "big tree with leaves, dark green." Do I remember whether it was trunk, branch, or trunk that obscures the sign? No, although I think it is leaves. I remember that there was an intersection, but I can say nothing of its details. I also remember the brake lights

subjective absolute positions of the inter-relationship of all things. (Soto Zen Master Dogen's chapter in his *Shobogenzo*titled "One Bright Pearl" was also, for me, a powerful metaphorical argument on this point.) I later was taken by Gadamer's very reasonable argument that the observer is involved in the observing experiment, and, later, was convinced by the arguments of semiotics and the more sophisticated postmodern formulation of meaning as residing only across networks—with Derrida probably the team captain for this, in my mind—as I encountered deconstructionist ideas being worked out and extended in later critical thought. These ideas converge in what I think interpretation is and how it is done.

of a passenger car. Were there buildings in the picture? I think so. Were there people? Maybe two, very small.

It is the selection processes of the act of visual perception and later memory construction that has made my recollection take this shape. Here are my primary objects then:

- very red, partially hidden stop sign
- street heavy with trees
- an intersection of some sort
- a passenger car with its brake lights on
- buildings in the distance, with two small figures walking uphill on the right and slightly top-of-center portion of the image. (I can't place them accurately though. They move around when I try.)

You might want to pause for a moment and play a game with yourself, creating your list of recalled objects, then return to the photo and check your cognitive (and interpretive) completed reconstruction against the original code.

In my case, I am writing this paragraph about six weeks after writing the passages that used the stop sign and I have not seen the image even once since then. This has given my mind plenty of time to reshape the image according to the objects I had selected then and which I select now, when "recalling" (probably actually constructing from a variety of memory fragments) the memory of it. Because of its redness, I remember the sign the best. Also, I had been looking for a partially hidden stop sign image for this course for a long time, so of course the sign remains the primary object for me. However, I had been re-searching for an image because the original one (here) I had used in class was from the web I thought might be copyrighted.[2]

2. The original image was in Section IX, "Preventive Maintenance" of the Federal Highway Administration's "A Guide for Local Highway and Street Maintenance Personnel," with this caption: The warning sign (circled) is only partially visible in the spring. By mid-summer, it

As it turns out, my “leaves” in the image are from that original image, which I had misremembered as a stop sign. It is a warning sign and my mind had simplified that to “stop sign,” the most memorable of traffic warning signs. This original image was chosen and used by me about thirteen weeks ago. I have not viewed it since the day it was presented in class. As you know, the actual object obscuring the sign is the tree’s trunk. The key point of the earlier image (heavy vegetation that needs to be clearly away) morphed in my memory image into the green leaves of the big tree. Also, as you know, there are no buildings or people. There would be if I had driven two more blocks and taken a picture of the sign at that intersection. A generic or actual memory of what the street looks like from that vantage point, a view I have five days a week on my commute, has taken over my memory, substituting out this less familiar part of the road.

tially visible in the spring. By mid-summer, it will

Obscured warning sign (FHA)

In this way, two key qualities of the *selection process have dominated what I end up keeping as the primary objects of this event: my motive, which was to find a partially obscured stop sign to use in this book, and object *robustness, that is, the striking aspects of the *code (here, the redness of the sign) and the vitality of the memories (here, another portion of the road has greater *robustness for me). If my motive had been as a city inspector reviewing parking conditions in residential areas I would have remembered more than the one car. I really did not care about the cars when I was fashioning how I would

will be completely hidden by vegetation. See Section IX of FHWA, “Maintenance of Signs and Sign Supports - Safety,” *U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration*, accessed October 26, 2018, https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwasa09025/

use the image, so my reaction when I looked at the image for these paragraphs was simply “Oh yeah, that’s right. There were cars. Maybe I can use that now somehow.” And if I had been looking for a specific car, I would have remembered that I whited out the two readable license plate numbers, concerned about privacy issues.

Motive and object *robustness (regardless of whether what is before us is image or *narrative) have powerful transformative influences on what we look at and so how we interpret the full scene (or narrative) before us. They will have profound influence on our initial selections. We cannot *select everything—we need to start somewhere, with a few things. But once this *selection is made, it initiates an investigative pathway that will cascade forward, leading toward other possible *selections but away from others so completely that their very existence is probably invisible to the interpreter.

Notice, too, that I have *selected out from the many possible objects not just one, but a few key objects. The point here is that, to establish meaning, we almost always must *select multiple objects and consider them collectively. Thus, besides *selection, *organization, too, is an essential element of the perception process.

5.3. ORGANIZING OBJECTS

If *organization in the interpretive process was only like a messy desktop with various objects that could be moved around to create workspace and a sense of cleanliness and control, it might be achieved by simple placement of objects according to a few rules that can probably achieve whatever the organizer desires. But it is closer to little busy-body creatures that move around on the desktop, interacting with one another. This is because the process of *organizing is the cognitive placing of *selected objects into relationship with one another

(or recognizing the relationships already manifest) to see what happens (what meanings are suggested) with that particular configuration. These relationships change or suggest what is the meaning or significance of the object or objects that have been *selected, which also then changes the relationship of that object to other objects. Thus, we *organize by trying out various configurations to determine significance and halt the process when we have achieved our goal or close enough to our goal for whatever purpose we have in mind. *Organization can be nearly instantaneous—"Ah, there is a stop sign at this intersection"—or exceptionally laborious, such as managing a large company. We use four schemas to give abstract labels to some of the basic possible configurations, calling them "*arrays"—*autonomous entities, *competitive multiplicities, *layered configurations, and *alternating contexts. (We will return to these later.)

In this view of things, "object" is a slippery term. We can explore how this changes by slowly developing a narrative scene. If I put a clean sheet of expensive paper on a tabletop I am not sure what comes next in the narrative, although the fact that it is not ordinary paper suggests some possibilities and eliminates others. If I add an expensive fountain pen to the scene, I postulate that a letter or manuscript or such is perhaps going to be started, and I postulate, too, something about the type of person who will do the writing. If I switch to a bluebook (the inexpensive type used in tests), pencil, and eraser these objects, collectively, afford me a high level of certainty that a test of some sort is about to start. While in theory there are three objects in question, these have been chunked together to represent "material for a test" and this becomes the object itself, measured now against speculations of time, place, and person, which are other objects. And if this happens to be the last test before graduation and a remembered day ten years later, the object is "that day I took the last test of my life"—itself

an object that can be put in relationship to something else. For example, perhaps one's son or daughter is about to take his or her last test before graduation. In the interpretive projects we complete for our course, we call this determined object an "*instance." The term (albeit a bit awkward) allows us to define and share the same portion of the narrative for interpretation when working independently of others but with the intention of sharing conclusions later. By its name, it also reminds us of the limited nature of analysis—we cannot make broad conclusions about a culture based on a single "*instance" of something. Finally, an "*instance" implies that it is part of a larger dynamic, developing narrative and so guards against us treating it as a static item outside of narrative time.

In these ways, the content and boundary of objects, and their relationships, is fundamentally dynamic and ever-changing. However, since most perception is conclusion driven, the interpretive process is halted by the interpreter at any point where the goal is achieved according to what the interpreter decides is sufficient for the purpose. This is one area of tension in the classroom, where my standard of "sufficient" is beyond what the student wishes to determine is sufficient because our goals are often different: complex understanding versus sufficient understanding for effective action. In a rapidly changing world where swift interpretation, decisive action, and productivity are highly valued, ponderous interpretive processes are one of the first things to be avoided. Once we have determined it is a stop sign, we really do not need to reconsider the conclusion. However, if we decide the meaning of a book, in fact there is always more that could be thought, and, as the reader's situation changes (other, different reading is done, one gets older, life events happen), the meaning of the book will almost certainly change.

So, while we talk about an object and its relevant contexts, since meaning itself is derived from context, the boundary

between what is the object (the bluebook-pencil-erase set) and what is the context (that it is the last test) is not always clear and, further, a context can be directly incorporated into the object to repackage the "object + context" as a single object, to be measured against other objects (my memories of my last test now giving special meaning to learning that my son or daughter is about to take his or her last test). If we take seriously the proposition that meaning is derived from networks of relationships rather than a single entity with ontological independence—as poststructuralists have expressed it, "All meaning systems are open-ended systems of signs referring to signs referring to signs. No concept can therefore have an ultimate, unequivocal meaning."[3]—then the issue of defining the final content of an object is neither useful nor possible, and boundaries are temporary, necessary delineations for a certain interpretive need, not fixed demarcations. This theoretical position has a powerful central position in our course, where my premise is that cultural influences radically influence interpretive outcomes due to the porous nature of the boundary of self/identity and how contexts are deeply involved, both consciously and unconsciously, in constructing or generating our identity in any given situation.

5.4. DECIDING MEANING BY MATCHING / CONSTRUCTING PATTERNS AND MODELS

5.4.1. Patterns

By "*matching" I mean that the *selected and *organized incoming information (data or *code) is compared by the

3. Quoted in Ole Weaver, "The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate," in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 171.

perceiver or interpreter to a vast storehouse of *patterns (and *models) that are known to the interpreter, who adjusts *selection and *organization until a meaning that meets the interpretive goal emerges. We recognize familiar faces this way.[4]

We deploy *patterns and *models created over time and stored in networks of affiliated neurons, erasing differences and supplying missing information. We construct and have represented cognitively to us "reality," rather than actually see it. Our brain brings us the world, but on its terms.[5].

That goal will be, in its barest formulation, an interpretation completed and with enough speed and certainty (stability) to adequately meet the interpreter's purpose. Conscious awareness of this process is not necessary and, in fact, usually is not part of the process. (Many aspects of driving a car, for example, are unconscious.)

*Matching enables inference about what is the missing information, contextualizes the *selected and *organized objects, and completes the process of attributing meaning, although how complete or finished that process is will depend on the situation. Meaning usually needs to be only sufficient, not thorough. ("I don't know if that is pistachio or mint ice-cream. Doesn't matter today. I like both. I'll eat it.")

Consider the below graphic.[6]:

4. Neuroscience News, "Never Forget a Face? People Know an Average of 5,000 Faces," *Neuroscience News* (blog), October 10, 2018, https://neurosciencenews.com/facial-recognition-9992/.
5. Odd fact: Because it takes us a while to coordinate and process visual and other sensory information because of its density and complexity, our brain post-dates our visual information to give us the sensation that we are seeing things in real-time. In fact, we are a bit late in our visual participation of the events of the "real world," by about 80 milliseconds. George Musser, "Time on the Brain: How You Are Always Living In the Past, and Other Quirks of Perception," *Scientific American* (blog), September 15, 2011, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/time-on-the-brain-how-you-are-always-living-in-the-past-and-other-quirks-of-perception/.
6. A still frame from Ion, "Displaced," Short video, *Vimeo*, 2014, https://vimeo.com/80267143.

Pattern matching

If I said this is a highly abstract representation of a common insect, you will begin to file through your knowledge of insects and their shapes and bring that to bear on the photo, but without much luck because this is not an insect. I tried to divert your brain towards an unhelpful set of possible *patterns for *matching. If I said it is a letter in the alphabet, you are likely to instantaneously (and probably unconsciously) conclude that I mean the Roman alphabet, not Chinese, Japanese, or Korean characters.[7]Having now narrowed down, dramatically, the possible *patterns you need to check the image against, it is not long before the "A" emerges. If you had found this "A" upon your first look, for whatever reason—and there are many possible reasons—you had found your way to the right *pattern very quickly.

The brain is a pattern-discerning, pattern-creating organ. The process of interpretation is one of positing possible objects and their *organization against available affective-cognitive[8]*patterns in the brain (from simple to complex—from

7. In fact, I had wanted to use Chinese characters because there is so much graphic playfulness with them, for example the representation of "音" ("sound") at Shoko Mutsuki (@shoko121), "Oto [sound]," *Twitter*, Sept 30, https://twitter.com/hashtag/花文字睦月. Mutsuki's style is to elaborate the Chinese character to a degree where it is just barely discernable as the original character.
8. Many learned patterns are tagged with some degree of emotional content by some not yet well understood involvement of the amygdala and hippocampus, which helps with the

what looks like clean water to typical endings of 11th-century Japanese fictional narratives), subtracting from, adding to, and adjusting the *selections and *organization until a plausible fit to known *patterns is found with the level of confidence necessary for the moment at hand: I can decide "Those are French fries" and begin eating them almost immediately but "Is this essay good enough to submit now?" is a more complex determination in a higher-risk, more ambiguous interpretive environment and it might take some time to achieve the level of confidence acceptable to decide the next action. When we decide the fit is "good enough" is highly relevant to us working interpretively in this course because our interpretive environments, being of cultures different from our own, may or may not be offering situations that *match known *patterns and if we decide too quickly to *match the event to something we know, we become inaccurate in our interpretation and, importantly, we fail to acquire new *patterns that will help us unpuzzle the objects and events embedded in that culture. In natural English we might say that "We remain stuck in our own beliefs," for example.

5.4.2. Models and modeling

Fields of research have various ways of defining and using the words "*pattern" and "*model." For this course, in terms of function, there is not much difference. Both are affective-cognitive objects that likely exist before encountering *code (such as a text) or sense stimulus (such as a sound) and have enormous influence of the interpretive outcome. Either can participate in this interpretive act with the interpreter aware of

retention or retrieval of the item. For this reason, I am inclined to leave open the possibility of an affective component to much of our knowledge and so prefer the hyphenated term. See, for example, Gal Richter-Levin, "The Amygdala, the Hippocampus, and Emotional Modulation of Memory," *The Neuroscientist: A Review Journal Bringing Neurobiology, Neurology and Psychiatry* 10, no. 1 (February 2004): 31–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/1073858403259955.

or not aware of its role in the interpretation process. Either can be derived from cultural group content (for example, red and white color combinations have a celebratory feel for Japanese whereas for Americans the combination is red, white and blue). So, in terms of the process of interpretation, these are of the same ilk. Both evolve through experiences and subsequent reflection on the success or failure of interpretive decisions. I like to think visually, so, for me, I “see” *patterns as “relatively non-complex, flat, static, and fairly stable” (like letters on a page) and *models as “complexly layered, fluid, and responsive,” (like the first draft of the curriculum of a teaching module)—but perhaps this is not all that useful a comment.

For this course, *patterns are closer to singular objects and *model are more complex arrangements of *patterns to create what is, essentially, a meta-pattern of some sort that comes into being more or less consciously or deliberatively. With this as a working definition, we are more often considering *models than *patterns.

*Patterns and *models can be *robust with powerful interpretive influence or weak, lending to only tentative interpretive decisions.

*Models can be constructed with a requirement for logic internally consistent within the *model (a person who is altruistic in something is unlikely to be selfish in her or his choices even when unobserved; a realistic novel will uphold the basic behavioral expectations of the physical world) or not (a person who is altruistic may well also be entirely selfish in some things—humans are not required to be consistent in their personality; a fantasy novel may treat the rules of the physical universe as flexible, even unpredictable).

For the purposes of our course, I would like to characterize *patterns and *models into these two categories:

- definitive *patterns (what something is), and,

- narrative *patterns (describing processes or time-progression in terms of why something happened or with a prediction of what will happen, or simply associating processes and states in sequences).

“That is the letter ‘A’” is essentially an act of definition—completing the partial information until it “*makes sense.” On the other hand, “That is a hornet buzzing around my lunchbox … and hornets sometimes sting” is a predictive *model that derives significance via a very short *cause-and-effect chain—a *narrative with a chronology of some sort.

This way of splitting *patterns into two major types follows a long tradition of classifying items as either—to put it in very casual language—”things” or “events.” In this course, culturally embedded *worldviews are one of our primary concerns and they are defined as *narrative patterns setting out “**how the world works**” both in terms of physical and social behavior. *Ethical values are also normative *patterns: they set out what **should**happen (as in, **what one or others should do**in a given situation). *Common practices are also *narrative patterns: they describe **what others usually think or do**. We will return to these later.

This distinction is important to us because our primary work in this course is to construct *Theory of Mind (ToM) *models of characters within *narratives that are built upon the principle of culturally embedded worldviews and values. We check the cultural accuracy of our *models by deducing causes of the *thoughts, feelings, actions or reactions (TF/A) of the character, basing our judgments on the premise that events in a *narrative are intended (by the author) to “*make sense” to the reader and that, if we cannot *make sense of the *narrative, we have not yet constructed a culturally accurate *ToM for the *instance. Thus, our *models are almost all of the causal type—they are intimately involved in cause-and-effect chains

or, to put it another way, time. That being said, these *models are deduced from a good basic understanding of the *narrative itself and such an understanding relies heavily on knowing the right defining *patterns for many elements of a *narrative, such as, as one example, that the ninth day of the ninth month is not just any day but, rather, carries significance for many East Asians and that perhaps this should be factored in (yet perhaps not, it will depend of the *instance of course).

Just to be clear so as to avoid a possible misunderstanding, "*model" is not meant to include the nuance of "what is ideal" or "what should be" or "advice for behavior" such as "Use this as a model for writing your essay." Some *models are indeed engaged in ethical assertions and such, but the word itself, in the context of this theory, is not meant to suggest that *models have imperatives associated with them.

Finally, it should be noted that *patterns and *models can become a part of one's repertoire of affective-cognitive interpretive tools of their own, through experience and association, or from deliberative acts of learning. That has already been stated. What I would like to add is that *patterns and *models, even if first consciously produced, can begin to have an ontological persistence on their own, whether that is the wish of the interpreter or not. In short, I wish to avoid suggesting that we are in full control of our *patterns and *models. On the contrary, I view interpretation as a constant struggle to navigate preconceptions, prejudices, thinking habits, persistent moods, false assumptions, and so on. In this course we take these on directly, sometimes successfully. Sometimes not.

5.4.3. Identification ⇄ Construction: the outside world and the disappearance of the interpreter

Importantly, *matching is not a mechanical process of simply

comparing information to *pattern or *model. To achieve satisfactory *matching, the partial information is shaped and reshaped (*selected and *organized) in a series of hermeneutically driven hypotheses governed by many things but especially these: one's interpretive goal, and the working out of the dynamic tension between *robustness of the *pattern in tension with the *robustness of the information.

*Robustness is a key word for this course and we will return to its implications later. For the moment I would just like to say that *robustness of *pattern can include the level of certainty we have of the knowledge (*pattern) that is deployed to determining meaning. That certainty comes from many things including deductive reasoning, inference, the number of competing possibilities, personal experience, a sense of how relevant others might think, and the quality of the "match" itself. *Robustness of information includes how complete and free of corruption the information is, including duration and degree of repetition of the information. Also, I all aspects of the *SO/M process can be and probably usually are affected by the interpretive environment itself–its "noise" level (interference, concentration level, competing cognitive needs, cognitive strength at the time of the process, and so on.)

The dynamism of *matching in its shaping and informing of *selection and *organizing phases, **and** vice versa (thus "*SO/M" as the formulaic shorthand), means that the *matching process might be described in some cases as "identifying" *patterns in the incoming information (accurately completing the octagonal shape of a partially visible stop sign) and, at other times, as "constructing" *patterns (seeing playful animals in cloud formations). In complex interpretive situations, the distinctions between found and constructed *patterns are blurred and might even be indeterminate.

That meaning can be attributed to objects as a result of *patterns that "are not actually there" (that is, constructed

rather than identified) sits at the crux of the problem this course presents: two students with different cultural backgrounds view the same scene in a film and are both sure as to the thoughts, feelings, and reasons for the actions of a certain character but their conclusions are not just different in terms of coming down on different sides of a debatable point but, instead, entirely different with each not being able to "see" what the other "sees." The objects have been shaped differently due to very different "ways of thinking" (cultural or whatever); that is, different *patterns have shaped the process and what seems to be "in" the film and obvious is actually a shape arising from object *selection and *organization influenced by different pre-existing *patterns: although actually "constructed," meaning subjectively feels to have been "found" and is "there" for everyone to see because the *pattern-matching process including interpretive movements that operated automatically or in event with the interpreter not fully aware of the influence.

"Understanding" is not simply collecting or receiving information. It is a cognitive but unnoticed act of completing meaning via *pattern application. That constructed meaning except for complex or unfinished act of interpretation seems to reside in object—we know "what it is." This can become a critical, decisive start-point for chain of further interpretive decisions, a process that subjectively presents itself as ensuing from "the facts at hand." Our *pattern has possessed the object. "Understanding" a situation can appear to be based on "empirical" aspects of the object when actually those very aspects were placed there by us. In such a scenario—one that I think we engage in every day—it is easy to see how different ways of thinking (different *pattern databases, different choices in *matching, different interpretive chains resulting from different start points) can populate the cognitive space of different people with quite different meaning-bearing

objects—the same *code is in front of us but our "texts" different, that is, we "see things differently" but each have confidence the difference is self-evidently there in the object, not our understanding of it. Each interpreter subjectively feels she or he is "just seeing" the situation but, in fact, in part, is seeing "data + themselves" in the objects they have constructed. The border between original object and chosen *pattern blurs or disappears entirely and interpretive prejudices gain an opportunity to prevail. "Cultural misunderstandings" arise. They can be difficult to sort out or adjust.

When interpretive outcomes include constructed components by individuals "on their own" do most interpretations settle on more or less the same outcomes because of the powerful influence of *robust information? Clearly this is not the case. Interpretive decisions involve more than analysis closely tied to the information at hand. Imagine two people crouched and shoulder-to-shoulder, with a cat in front of them who seems nervous, distrustful, back arched. One person says to the other, "Don't put you hand out—you'll get clawed." This speaking person has actually experienced such clawing in the past. The other has not. Yet the second person believes the first (accepts the interpretation of the speaker). Why? Perhaps the person is thinking deductively, drawing on the *model: "Frightened animals, and people, can be unexpectedly aggressive." Or, perhaps the person is extending knowledge deductively from a past experience when her dog or bird also did something unexpectedly aggressive when in a similar (apparently) mood. Or, perhaps the person has seen something online like this, or read something, or heard something. Or, perhaps this second person simply trusts the first.

All of these scenarios have this in common: most of what we know comes not from direct experience of that actual situation

but rather by deciding similarities (not a neutral interpretive process of course) or learning from being of the world, which includes the multitudinous cultures which flow through all of us. This participation of the outside world, of others in their direct voices, or remembered voices, or simply imagined voice ("What would my mother say if she knew …") is key to this course. This is where culture has the opportunity to shape interpretation. We look at different interpretations of narrative situations and ask whether a culture—via its worldviews, values, and common practices (with roots in history but ever-evolving)—has bent the interpretation in a particular direction.

Some might consider the following assertion to be too extreme, but it is the logical implication of the above: the world decides for us some or much of the meaning in our life—what we think we are "seeing," what significance we think it bears, even who we are. These are all connected to webs of significances stretching dynamically across social groups as they are represented in affective-cognitive formations in our brain.

If interpretation is the result of an interpreter drawing on socially supported *patterns and *models, then in complex interpretive situations where the interpretive result obtains validity through social consensus of support or when the interpreter seeks such validation, the door is open for all of society to flow through the interpreter, shaping interpretive outcomes. High-order interpretation (constructing *ToM, analysis) can be said to be in active tension with a community of interpreters all considering the same certain object (such as a literary text) by acts of explaining to others what meanings and significance the interpreter attributes to the object after *SO/M processes, and why. Members of the community might also "see" what the interpreter describes, or not, finding the interpreters comments plausible, or not, based on whether they can recreate and agree to aspects of the interpreter's

conclusions. Further, this is more often than not no real event but rather a cluster of imagined events within the mind of the interpreter as she or he measures interpretive results against predicted reactions. That a dialogue does not, empirically, take place makes it no less real in the mind of the interpreter as subject measurements are paramount to concluding interpretations. In this way of looking at things, “insights” are interpretations relatively independent of the socially constructed knowledge environment while “group-think” is closer to a faithful representation of the attitude of a social group. From this, it should be is clear why I think culture can have powerful influence (conscious and not) on interpretive outcomes

Finally, although it might not necessarily be relevant to our course’s content, since, when all is said and done I have a Buddhist view of the self (that is, there is no “self”), the above interpreter-interpretation representation is, for me, reversed. That is, there is no interpreter. There are only interpretations that produce the emergent effect of an interpreting self. Identity is the shape of those interpretations. We do not need to debate the veracity of this view. All of us will find identity and a sense of self in the ways that work for each of us. However, this is a good indication of how powerful I think the influence of culture is on how we think and who we think we are. Culturally embedded *patterns lie at the very foundation of how we experience the world and move through it over time.

6. SO/M, "the (cultural) world," and "horizon of expectation"

Turning from perception theory to interpretation ◆ horizon of expectation

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - horizon of expectation
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - patterns and models
  - selection, organization / matching (SO/M)
  - thoughts, feelings / actions (TF/A)
  - Theory of Mind (ToM)

— Chapter Abstract —

This short chapter serves as a bridge between an introduction of SO/M elements and a consideration of a wide variety of patterns involved in the matching process. It restates that our course goal is a better other-culture grounded understanding (use of selection, organization, and matching) of a narrative or the TF/A of a ToM and further makes the argument that culture (the transpersonal worldviews, values, and common practices of a group) is mobile, travels between ToM via, as one pathway, the gifting and appropriation of patterns.

— Chapter Outline —

- 6.1. The key questions of this course
- 6.2. Understanding first, practical matters follow
- 6.3. “Horizon of expectation”

6.1. THE KEY QUESTIONS OF THIS COURSE

The previous two chapters outlined how we are driven to make meaning of incoming data and described schematically a set of cognitive processes for doing so: object *selection, object *organization, and *matching these organized objects to *patterns or *models.

Now we enter a more complex arena.

This course’s two key questions—both designed to discovery important cultural—are:

1. What cultural *patterns and *models influence the love-related thoughts, feelings, and actions (*TF/A) of a character in a story (*narrative figure) or its author, and, second
2. What cultural *patterns and *models influence how we should understand why the story develops as it does (*narrative progress, its *cause-and-effect chains)?

As for *patterns and *models themselves, we are most interested in those that are entangled in the (cultural) world as we can reconstruct it by thinking about worldviews, ethical values, and common social practices (*WV/CP).

In pursuit of these two questions, we are transported from a theoretical and schematic discussion of perception and significance-attribution processes to the open sea of

speculation about the origins of identity and causes of social behavior. Even when limited to the one angle of the role of culture in these speculations, our deliberative space is exceptionally complex and ambiguous. We are inviting “the world” into our theoretical discussion and in so doing have lost the ability to control the boundaries of the discussion in the way that theoretical inquiry is able to do.

6.2. UNDERSTANDING FIRST, PRACTICAL MATTERS FOLLOW

Though we have left a limited, figurative and theoretical discussion, this does not mean we have swung over to the other end of a “theory-practice” spectrum. This course does not seek to identify, with practical agenda or goals in mind, the most strategic or effective ways we, or others, might move in the world in the ways we wish, armed with greater cultural fluency. Our goal is not directly practical in that it is not focused on outcomes. Often the best strategic choice in a situation (or a relationship) does not need cultural sensitivity or wisdom or even understanding. And, when it comes down to making choices and decisions, very frequently the most important factors are personal attributes of the actor that may originate more relevantly from elements that have for all practical purpose distant relationships with culture, such as that individual’s age, training, interests, and status in the relevant context (brother, foot soldier, car designer, ex-partner . . .).

Instead, our course work is located at a half-way point between theory and practice, namely, to develop a better understanding, one derived of theoretical investigation (and so limited to within narrative boundaries, not the “real” world), of the role of culture in *TF/A. This understanding, achieved through the interpretive analysis of *narratives, often does provide practical benefit: while ours remains a course with a

solidly theoretical character, the practical reward is that we can, in some situations, do better when dealing with other people due to our better understanding of the individuals we are working with, including their cultural perspectives.

This course assumes that we will think more differently from one another than our casual assumptions suggest. It further assumes or at least aspires to the idea that our interactions can be more successful when we develop the talent to notice and understand non-obvious differences between individuals. This exercise in imagination (constructing accurate *ToM [*Theory-Theory] rather than assuming an individual's *ToM must be more or less "like us" [*Simulation Theory]) comes up against practical needs that are constrained by goals and circumstances, including time. For example, I will not take a long time deciding whether a certain driver is going to run a stop sign or not. If it is an intersection I know, I have a sense for the likelihood of that and that sense can be helpful. But it might be easier to not bother with complex calculations and just drive defensively. In this way, we strike a balance, all the time, following, as we should in most circumstances, a "good enough" (highly practical) standard. This course is **not** about striking that balance. Whether or not cultural differences are actually key to a situation, they are our object of study. We will dive directly into the complex issues of how culture does or does not influence *TF/A. While our goal is better understanding, it is also true that the "good enough" standard can be shown to be exceptionally narrow in its perspective, and vulnerable to culturally-bound wishful thinking and in ways that might even go so unnoticed as to **not** good enough.

And so, although I say that in after this chapter we will now begin to consider "the world" in our ruminations, in fact, as suggested in the final part of the previous chapter, we have already been doing so. "The world"—for us, a cultural group's *worldviews, *values and *common practices—is baked into

our cognitive biases and has a hand in object *selection and object *organization. But in my view, there is more.

6.3. "Horizon of expectation"

I arrived at Stanford as a graduate student proud of his academic record at the University of Oklahoma. For better or worse, I saw myself as an open-minded, caring individual who also was smarter than most others—if not all others—in the room. (Probably we were all thinking the same thing.) In the first week of classes at Stanford I learned, with a bit of disconcertion, that there were other people smarter than me. And, over the next few years, I became self-aware that I was more competitive, and less caring, than I had thought. For me, since I had core *values of being generous, thoughtful, and not competitive, these realizations were profoundly disorienting. But, in my new cultural contexts, I was learning important lessons about my identity.

So as not to dwell too much on personal matters, let me boil things down to just one example: male chauvinism. I have changed on matters related to this. Initially, I was someone who truly thought he was not chauvinist (and was proud of it) but who was, in the eyes of others, rather completely chauvinist. Although it took a few years, I finally fully perceived this cognitive dissonance for what it was. Becoming **not** chauvinist is much harder and, in ways, although we learn to rise above some of our prejudices and dispositions, perhaps they never fully go away and we have to "rise above" them over and over again. In any event, the point here is not about personal change but the first early moments of personal discovery, the rare and surprising "ah-ha" moment, the "Ohhhh, now I get it!" moment of actually understanding something new.

Given that our interpretive projects are meant to understand someone in terms of their culture, not our own, this is

essentially our course goal: to leap past comfort zones and horizons and think un unfamiliar ways, with the goal of thinking more closely to how another person thinks. This way of describing what we are attempting is my extension of Jauss' idea of the "*horizon of expectation."[1] By my definition anyway, a true cultural *horizon of expectation cannot be seen by members of the culture; that is, to be in a culture is to accept certain things and be blind to others. Except that, as you will see, I argue for the plurality of the self so, more accurately stated, that part of us that is a member of a culture cannot see what is beyond the horizon or even know what might be there. But, since we are multicultural creatures, we instead experience these *horizons as "some think like . . . but I am aware that others think . . . ". In this way we move the *horizon or travel beyond the limits of thought. That being said, we are still trapped. At some point, no matter how many identities we construct for ourselves, we are still living within the limits of our understanding. This course, in this sense, is asking for travel past the *horizon and that, I would suggest, is sometimes mentally (privately) represented to oneself as an "ah-ha" moment, as new territory suddenly unfolds before one.

A few weeks ago, during my university's spring break, I took a walk in the beautiful redwoods of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. My wife and I were on the Redwood Grove Loop Trail. Almost no one was there, but there was one very heavy man who seemed to walk with difficulty and was taking a number of bench breaks along the way. Since we, too, were walking slowly, sometimes we would pass him and sometimes he would pass us. We came upon him in front of an especially enormous redwood, at which he was staring. He turned and said something like, "It's a very special tree, isn't it?" We said we

1. For a discussion of this concept see Ormond Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine: An Appropriation of Hans Robert Jauss' Reception Aesthetics and Literary Hermeneutics* (Georgian University Press, 1997), 79–82. https://books.google.com/books?id=KfZeoo0_ULgC&pg=PA79&lpg=PA79&dq=horizon+of+expectation&source=bl&ots=bhFMpTpzFi&sig

thought so, too. Then he said, "Do you see how the ferns there look just like low clouds drifting above the ground? They are so beautiful." We smiled and nodded and he walked quietly away. I regret that I did not take a picture of those ferns because I have thought about what he said often and now would like to share the moment. I know myself well enough to know that whenever I see young, fresh green ferns like that again, I will think of little low, drifting clouds and I am very glad to have this image now in my mind. I had been looking at clouds, but in an entirely different direction (looking up through the grand trees at the gaps between them). My object selection was following a concept of "soaring / imposing" while his was "drifting / gentle." Or, to put it another way, I was walking the trail with a Redwoods = power = enormity line of thought while he (perhaps?) was thinking Redwoods = power = a shield for smaller living things. I am glad our different cultures crossed-paths and his way of thinking made the leap from his mind to mine. The first image below is one I took a few minutes before that conversation. The second, since I do not have an image of what he was looking at, is a cropped image taken from the park's trail guide. The ferns he noticed were not at trailside; they were farther way, at the base of the tree, and somewhat younger, fresher and more numerous than these but the image is close enough.

Henry Cowell Redwoods – upwards (clouds)

Henry Cowell Redwoods – downwards (ferns)

There are several reasons I lingered on this episode. First, it is an example of how social we are as creatures. A man had come upon a scene that delighted him, and he wanted to share it for no other reason than to share it. “Seeing,” in my opinion, is often seeing “with someone else”—imagined (such as “I’ll tell my wife later about that”) or real (such as in a movie theater, with others)—or seeing “through the eyes” of someone else (such as when we wonder how others see us, or when we think something is beautiful because someone else has declared it

so). When this man told me of the ferns, and I looked, and I smiled, I do believe that the moment has gained greater meaning for him, and of course for me, too.

To be entirely frank, I have a very extensive view of this type of phenomenon, believing that our very sense of existence derives from being visible, actually or just affective-cognitively, to others. Jean-Paul Sartre's assertion in *No Exit* that "Hell, it is others (*L'enfer, c'est les autres*)" is often on my mind.[2])

Second, this episode is a good example of how two people move in different cultural worlds and object *select differently because of it. I had noticed the ferns, but not really. They were just green accents in the scene. He had noticed the wind gently stirring them, and their horizontal shape hovering over the ground. I was looking for grandness, he was of a different mind. Yet, within the fifteen seconds or half-minute of the exchange of words, our worlds overlapped, his vision leapt to me, and remains.

And so, finally, I think perhaps this brief episode is a good cautionary tale of how mobile ideas are and so how possible it is for culture to be transported cognitively. Cultural membership is not residing within a particular country, or having a certain circle of friends, but it is rather the acceptance and identification with a collection of worldviews, values, and common practices, though I would add that these are entirely entangled in linguistic formations (languages and expressive practices).

While I cannot say with certainty, I am fairly sure that my interest in the size and mass of the redwoods is inherited from my interest in Rodin's sculptures, probably most obvious in his sculptures of hands (such as "Large Clenched Hand / La grande

2. This often misunderstood quote should not be taken to mean that being with other people is hateful or that unkind people are the main problem of the world but rather that being in the gaze of another is oppressive. There is a thoughtful discussion of this at Kirk Woodward, "The Most Famous Thing Jean-Paul Sartre Never Said," *Rick on Theater*(blog), July 9, 2010,http://rickontheater.blogspot.com/2010/07/most-famous-thing-jean-paul-sartre.html.

main crispée“). He taught me a way of cognitively “feeling” mass and volume that is still part of my daily way of looking at things. But, in any event, a Rodin “*pattern” is very active when I am attributing significance to massive objects. Whether or not the man on the trail knows or cares about Rodin I have no idea of course. But it is clear that, at that moment, some *pattern having to do with “floating” or “lightness” was enriching the significance of what was before him. This is a round-about why of saying that while object *selection and *organization are indeed touched by “the world” in many cases, perhaps all cases, it is in the power and turbulence of cultural *patterns and *models that should be seen as something like a direct doorway in which the world can pour into our interpretations and conclusions. And so, I think it is not a bad idea to consider some of the various shapes and sizes of *patterns and *models that participate in the interpretive process.

7. A closer look at patterns

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - none
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - making sense
  - patterns and models
  - selection, organization / matching (SO/M)

— Chapter Abstract —

This is a brief introductory chapter to the following chapters. It classifies some patterns into two types: static and associated with the progress of time. It further suggests that culture can influence interpretation through its entanglement with patterns.

While successful completion of the interpretive projects for this class require some theoretical consideration of how *patterns are the foundation of interpretations, our primary concern is whether the cultural elements of those *patterns have an

important role in *matching, and so in interpretive outcomes. Put more specifically, when we decide the significance of something—what it is, what it means, how we should engage it, and so on—does culture, as entangled in *patterns and *modeling, participate importantly in the process? I suggest that this is the case. Further, because of their social origins, the cultural aspects of *patterns themselves have independent dynamic power in the process of interpretation, a power external to us as interpreters. We are not free agents in the *matching process.

There are a few things I would like us to consider with regard to *patterns that insert into the interpretive process "alien" (anything "not me") cultural elements as well as the "me" arising from a cultural identity of its own.

The issues of the next chapters are presented as, on the one hand, patterns with gravitational power (*attractors, *cultural attractors, and *mimetic desire) and, on the other, patterns with time-leaps (memories, and narrative questions of why something happened or to imagine what might happen). This order of presentation treats patterns either as "static" (objects) or "in progress" (narratives)—patterns of "What is that?" and "What has/is/will happen?" However, whether we are considering the cultural component of *attractors, desire, memories, or "*making sense" of the narrative, all have another important aspect of their status: whether a pattern is subjectively (by the interpreter) perceived as internal (personal), external (arriving to the interpreter via the thoughts and opinions of others), or, transpersonal, (where internal content more or less matching external content—shared values, for example). However, given my general distrust of the accuracy of self-awareness, I suggest that the interpreter may not know well the origin of *patterns and so the hand of culture is quite often invisible to the subject who believes to be thinking independently and freely.

The *patterns and *models to which we *match our *selected and *organized data, I hope to show, are deeply connected with the interpretations of others and, as a consequence, cultures in their complex variety.

8. Patterns with gravitational power

Implicit and cognitive bias ◆ mimetic desire ◆ attractors ◆ cultural attractors

— Terms —

- Introduced:
    - cognitive attractors
    - cultural attractors
    - mimetic desire
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
    - patterns and models
    - thoughts, feelings, and actions (TF/A)

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter lists various patterns and their attributes that tend to bend interpretation in a particular direction beyond our conscious intentions and which can include cultural positions: subliminal priming, implicit bias, cognitive bias, prior interpretations, mimetic desire (selection of what is desirable based on others), and attractors (patterns towards interpretations drift).

— Chapter Outline —

- 8.1. The “gravitational power” of patterns, and some elephants

- 8.2. “Early decisions”—subliminal priming, biases
- 8.3. “Settled law”—the heavy influence of past interpretations
- 8.4. Interpretive decisions made for one by others: cultural membership, mimetic desire
- 8.5. Attractors
- 8.6. Cultural attractors

8.1. The “gravitational power” of patterns, and some elephants

“Gravitational power” as I am using it here is a metaphor for the invisible ability of some elements (*patterns but not just *patterns) to draw us towards or into certain interpretive conclusions, a scenario which stands in contrast to one where we consciously choose to arrive at an interpretation, which common sense suggests is the more usual process. Of course, we are aware that we make a number of decisions “unconsciously” and that how we see the world is affected by our cultural and more immediately personal identities, as well as the context of the situation. But I would suggest that we are wrong in our intuitive understanding that, if it matters, we can think something through with more care and objectivity and arrive at a sufficiently accurate interpretation. The argument I offer in this book is that we are far less free and “objective” than we think and that, if we are better informed of the processes of interpretation and develop different interpretive habits than those which come more naturally to us, we can indeed mitigate our cultural prejudices, biases, and blind spots and better

"learn" another's world, that is, the way someone else, and in particular someone else of a culture different from ours, is thinking.

I will detail below some of the key elements in interpretive conclusions but before doing so there are some "elephants in the room" that need naming.

To begin, it is our "hardwired" (neurological, not simply psychological or cognitive) tendency to be narcissistic in our interpretive perspective. This seems intuitively correct to us, based on our own experiences in life, but various studies have supported this view of self. One I find particularly intriguing is the ability to notice our name mentioned in complex stimulus environments even when we are not anticipating it.[1]. This tendency 1) affects selection in the SO/M process since we are most interested in what seems relevant to us, and 2) strongly predisposes us toward *Simulation Theory over *Theory-Theory *Theory of Mind (*ToM) construction, noted below, and which is contrary to the course goals. (*Simulation Theory and *Theory-Theory will be discussed later. Very briefly put, when we are imagining the thoughts, feelings, or actions of another we can use our broad knowledge of psychology and culture to make our conclusions—*Theory-Theory (A *ToM model based on theoretical speculation) or we can imagine what we would think, feel, or do in that situation—*Simulation Theory (we simulate the situation internally, with us at the center of the situation).

Second, we have a drive towards simplicity in interpretation, allowing considerable free play to cognitive habits that askew nuance or differences.[2] We can offer a number of evidence-

1. Shouhang Yin et al., "Automatic Prioritization of Self-Referential Stimuli in Working Memory," *Psychological Science* 30, no. 3 (March 1, 2019): 415–23, https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797618818483.
2. "...the mind seeks the simplest available interpretation of observations— or, more precisely, that it balances a bias towards simplicity with a somewhat opposed constraint to choose models consistent with perceptual or cognitive observations." From the abstract to Jacob Feldman, "The Simplicity Principle in Perception and Cognition," Wiley

based explanations of this tendency—discomfort with unfinished interpretations, the utilitarian efficacy of Bayesian inference for quick perception, or the power of the matched patterns themselves—but in any event we all have experienced times when our perceptions or understandings were off-target because of details missed or lost over time, to be replaced by a restructured, more patterned, simpler understanding. I would like to mention, in a speculative vein, one further possible reason: cognitive laziness. My sense is that, as we further probe the nature of cognitive processes we will discover that energy conservation is a component of many choices, including when we need interpretive results. A recent study, for example, has identified a resistance to intellectual effort as a factor in whether or not someone will feel empathy.[3]

The third "elephant" is *Simulation Theory (discussed later)—by far the usual way we model the mind of another, based on a principle of "What I would do in that situation." We will discuss this in detail later but, as one can imagine, if oneself is the model for interpreting the thoughts, feelings, and actions (*TF/A) of another, if that individual is not of one's cultural group, this approach can be a short path to misinterpretation. A large part of what we do in this class is to make us more aware of when and how we use this approach and when it might be better to replace it with something else.

Finally, my view of the "self" is that it is a collection of willed, semi-autonomous, and entirely autonomous cognitive processes, some of which we are fully conscious of, but with many operating subliminally or unconsciously. All of us have prejudices and all of us have only limited knowledge of the individuals whose thoughts, feelings, and actions we are interpreting, and most of us, I think, would agree that this is

Interdisciplinary Reviews. *Cognitive Science* 7, no. 5 (September 2016): 330–40, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1406.

3. C. Daryl Cameron et al., "Empathy Is Hard Work: People Choose to Avoid Empathy Because of Its Cognitive Costs," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, April 18, 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xge0000595.

so. Nevertheless, when it comes to actual interpretations, we often downplay this reality and have a certain level of subjective certainty that our conclusions might not be perfect but are more or less "good enough." The argument I am offering is that 1) often the interpretation falls short of the "good enough" standard—we are simply unaware that that is the case—and that, 2) with training, we can do better. We can become more aware of our semi-autonomous and autonomous cognitive processes. We can also, to some degree, reshape those processes through training and practice.

These elephants—cognitive self-centeredness, reluctance towards complex interpretive work, and situations where "we don't know that we don't know" (and think that we do) or do not know that much of how we decide the meaning of something operates in subliminal, pre-conscious or beyond-consciousness territory—are part of all the following comments on *patterns and, for that matter, are part of most of the assumptions that form the basis of this book.

8.2. "Early decisions"—subliminal priming, biases

By "early decision" I mean when perception or interpretation is predisposed towards a certain direction even before an encounter with the data or code. For example, the famous "hollow-face illusion" refers to a perception error where my eyes tell me I am looking at a face with a normal convex, 3-dimensional (protruding) interpretive conclusion that it is indeed a face but, as the image rotates, I realize that I am instead looking at a concave (receding, "hollow") modeling of a face that my brain has interpreted, in its stubbornness, as a convex object. The below is a screenshot from one example of this illusion[4]

4. Screenshot from "The Rotating Mask Illusion"at: eChalk, "The Rotating Mask Illusion," accessed April 27, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKa0eaKsdA0&list=FLECaZdrUhWI0VfE_pY6BHaA&index=19&t=0s.

Rotating Mask Illusion

Even after I realize the actual nature of the object, my "eyes" continue to insist it is a face, not a hollow mask. My logic tells me one thing, my eyes another, and I am surprised at how insistent my eyes are in suggesting it is a face with normal convex contour even when I try to "tell" my eyes to see it for what it is—"conceptual [our conscious interpretive cognitive steps—"logic"] and perceptual [our "eyes"] knowledge are largely separate."[5]Our brains are hardwired to view faces as convex and will convert, unconsciously, information that contradicts that expectation. This is a simple example of what I am calling, playfully, an "early decision"—I have decided the interpretive outcome even before the facts are in.

Another example of "early decision [influence]" is subliminal priming.[6]Various experiments have explored the degree to

5. Richard L Gregory, "Knowledge in Perception and Illusion," *Professor Richard Gregory on-line*, 1997, http://www.richardgregory.org/papers/knowl_illusion/knowledge-in-perception.htm. There are many examples online of this animated illusion. One I accessed while writing of this paragraph is at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKa0eaKsdA0&list=FLECaZdrUhWI0VfE_pY6BHaA&index=19&t=0s.
6. For a review of the current state of the research, see Mohamed Elgendi, et al, "Subliminal Priming-State of the Art and Future Perspectives" *Behavioral Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)* 8, no. 6 (May 30, 2018), https://doi.org/10.3390/bs8060054.

which a stimulus so brief (for example, less than 500 milliseconds) so as to not reach as far as consciousness can influence interpretive outcomes. For example, in terms of influencing object *selection, police officers were subliminally primed with words like “threat” and “anger” in one case and “happy” in the case of another, then shown two neutral-expression faces side-by-side, one of an Afro-American man and one of a Caucasian man. Using eye-movement tracking to measure attention, the police officers spent, on the whole, more time looking at the black man’s face in the first scenario and more time looking at the white man’s face in the second.

Subliminal priming is widely used in advertising in an attempt to pre-decide our emotional reaction to products. What is relevant to us here is whether cultural content can be subliminal—and it would seem reasonable to think that is possible—and then whether its subliminal presence is sufficiently relevant in a *SO/M process when interpreting narratives so as to warrant our attention. I can imagine a few ways where this would be the case, but I feel this leads into highly speculative territory, and would, at this stage in the research, just like to present this as something to consider.

Expanding from the idea of subliminal stimulus that might bend interpretive conclusions, we can consider the effect of elements so pervasive and persistent that we are no longer aware of their participation in the interpretive process: implicit bias. In this book, implicit bias derives from the worldviews, ethical values, and common practices of a cultural group but of which the group lack self-critical awareness. [7]Cognitive bias is a broader category of interpretive inclinations and refers to tendencies in the cognitive processes that attribute meaning to incoming data.[8] Many of these involve simplifying that

7. See: “Understanding Implicit Bias,” accessed April 23, 2019, http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/. The definition of implicit bias given there is: "Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner."
8. For a list of 25 cognitive biases see, for example, “25 Cognitive Biases Home Page,” *25*

information and of course that includes an unnuanced used of patterns which, as I believe you can expect me to say, allows for cultural bias to overshadow the actual details of the data.

This, to me, fits in with many other areas of research indicating that cognitive processes seek high-value, low-energy expense solutions as the default mode. Thus, we will use predetermined outcomes (*patterns and *models) or the interpretive conclusions (opinions) of others first and only generate greater details when necessary. We will instinctively interpret along known lines rather than embrace the discomfort and energy required for new thinking. Learning is that effort to develop new thought but in most situations what we already know works well enough. On a day-to-day basis our approach is practical, not scholarly.

When teaching the Japanese aesthetic term "*sabi*," for example, the challenge is to push students to think beyond the truly inadequate English translation of the term ("rustic beauty") or (misleading Chinese character—寂—for those students whose first language is Chinese), and ask them to engage more nuanced and challenging definitions such as the famous, "*Sabi* is the color of haiku. This is not the same as haiku of tranquility."[9]Even when we have discussed in some detail the important element of time implied by the term (*sabu* means "to rust") and the aura of elegance that hovers around the concept, by the time a few weeks have passed, students have drifted back to the simpler formula "*sabi* = the lonely and sad, yet beautiful" which is almost, but not quite, true and misses the point of having the term at all.

In this way, newly learned content tends to devolve into simpler, more familiar concepts. This phenomenon is very important to our concerns about understanding narratives embedded in cultures other than our own: even when we

Cognitive Biases - "The Psychology of Human Misjudgment," accessed June 9, 2019, http://25cognitivebiases.com/.

9. *Kyorai's Notes*[Kyorai sho], ca. 1702-04.

expend the effort to understand unfamiliar interpretations, the achievement is not stable; rather, it is likely to devolve to a concept better known to "us," or one whose nuances and details have been lost.

8.3. "Settled law"—the heavy influence of past interpretations

Settled law" is, again, a playful way to refer to another factor that can have enormous impact on an interpretive outcome. "Settle law" is similar to "early decisions" in that the interpretive disposition exists before the data or code is encountered. "Settled law" means, essentially, that a similar situation has been encountered in one's personal past, an interpretation was made at that time, and for this new occasion the past interpretation is simply reused, slightly modified or not at all modified. "Settled law" in legal parlance means that a case has been debated at length and with care (perhaps even multiple times), a legal position (opinion) has been reached, that judgment (legal opinion) becomes precedent, and the precedent will not be overturned without good reason. This is a metaphor for the tendency to "jump to conclusions" based on previous experiences and have, sometimes, insufficient interest in adjusting one's interpretation precisely to the data at hand.

8.4. Interpretive decisions made for one by others: cultural membership, mimetic desire

We understand that membership in a group is defined in part by our willingness to confirm the *WV/CP of the group. To what degree we will accept these worldviews and values is a shifting, complex phenomenon but we sense some boundary beyond which it is likely not safe to venture. To receive the security and benefits of group membership, a group member will tend

to think what others think (normative and informational influence), to some degree at least. “Group-think” as suggested in the famous “Solomon Asch Conformity Experiment” is a symptom of delegating judgment and interpretive conclusion power to others.

“*Mimetic desire” was offered by the philosopher Rene Girard as the root of all desire; that is, we desire what we think others desire not simply what we personally think we want. His position is a careful one, supported by extensive philosophical consideration, and is grounded in the ethos of his day in Western Europe where identity is seen as arising from one’s social networks. This was of thinking can be found everyone in the theory offered in this volume.

8.5. Attractors

The concept of “*attractor” is a mathematical concept but it has found use in other fields, including cognitive psychology. As *Wikipedia*defines it: “In the mathematical field of dynamical systems, an attractor is a set of numerical values toward which a system tends to evolve, for a wide variety of starting conditions of the system. System values that get close enough to the attractor values remain close even if slightly disturbed.”[10] Or, as put succinctly elsewhere: “The most important thing to understand about attractors is that they are islands of stability in a sea of chaos. … Dynamic complex systems are inherently chaotic and unstable, but, they usually settle down into one of a number of possible steady states. These steady states are called “attractor basins . . .”[11]

*Cognitive attractors are networks of neurons that communicate with one another when information that is

10. Wikipedia contributors, "Attractor," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed January 8, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attractor.
11. “Attractors in Complex Systems,” accessed May 31, 2019, http://www.stigmergicsystems.com/stig_v1/stigrefs/article6.html.

similar to the network is being processed. This will be represented to our consciousness as familiarity with the incoming information. Such *attractors, as neurological processes, participate in the SO/M interpretive process outside the boundaries of consciousness.[12]

8.6. Cultural attractors

While most *attractors interpret for us simple things that we should be very grateful are being interpreted rapidly and unconsciously by our mind, such as stop signs, the microbiologist/software engineer/philosopher Graziosi applies convincingly the concept onto the problem of the persistence of preconceived notions that block our accurate understanding of something. He offers a sustained consideration of how such *cultural or *cognitive attractors form and congeal into prejudices that can be exceptionally difficult to neutralize. As Graziosi observes, “the influence of reality is [unfortunately] indirect” and “the effort required to break the model attractor is guaranteed to be bigger than what’s required to affect the model contents, and because of this hierarchy, challenging a fundamental view (such as the validity of one religion or the other) is extremely difficult… .”[13] (Graziosi’s “model attractor” would be, in my terminology simply “attractor” since I would like to maintain the distinction between “patterns” (his “model”) which provide interpretive options during a matching process of incoming data to cognitive patterns constructed or already present and attractors, which have greater power of pulling partial information into them. Graziosi’s “fundament view”

12. “How can the events in space and time which take place within the spatial boundary of a living organism be accounted for by physics and chemistry?” Karl Friston, Biswa Sengupta, and Gennaro Auletta, "Cognitive Dynamics: From Attractors to Active Inference," *Proceedings of the IEEE* 102, no. 4 (April 2014): 427-445, http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/6767058/.
13. Sergio Graziosi, "Cognitive Attractors," *Writing My Own User Manual* (blog), August 3, 2013, https://sergiograziosi.wordpress.com/2013/08/03/cognitive-attractors./

would be my "worldview" or "core value"—aspects of our affective-cognitive self that we are unconscious of but have fundamental shaping power for our interpretations, or such aspect that we are aware of but embrace unquestioningly, or aspects we are exceptionally unwilling to alter.)

It may be that one reason for the resistance I have encountered over the years in the classroom when asking students to "think like a premodern Japanese" (for example) was a key element in the advent of this book. The reluctance seems to go beyond a simple lack of knowledge of or interest in premodern Japanese culture. My observation is that some students could not be motivated sufficiently to do the heavy-lifting of looking past their own known patterns to construct new ones for reasons beyond just the difficulty or apparent irrelevance of the task. As I think will become evident, I am offering an interpretive theory that posits that to "think like a premodern Japanese" is subversive to one's very sense of identity and that protective resistance is a natural reaction to the request. In other words, when we are confronted with something that seems to be familiar, attractors can cause us to conclude that it is in fact the familiar object we are associating with it.

This comes up often in my premodern literature classes where the complex emotion called by the Japanese *aware*, often translated as "pathos," becomes just the usual vanilla-flavored emotion "sadness" or when a complex manifestation of a honne-tatemae expression, makoto, usually translated as sincerity, becomes, in the mind of some students, "saying what I want" as it is swept up in liberating, individualistic notions of self-determination rather than premodern Japanese notions of deference to social demands. The difference here is "being true to oneself" versus "being true to social expectations and norms"—a dramatic difference that matters when interpreting. However, the familiar-sounding word "sincerity," split away as it

becomes from the foreign word "makoto," located the concept too close to Western notions of sincerity which revolve around being honest to something with that something, in the minds of some of my students, being oneself first and foremost. "Makoto" is pulled into the orbit of the cultural attractor "one should care for oneself" (itself a post-romantic derivative, perhaps, of Socrates "know thyself") or "society can limit one's freedom of expression and it is necessary to push back with courage" or such.

And, in a sense, this is "culture." Instead of a cascade of random events in a region (linguistic or geographic), events repeat with great similarity because, as Sperber argues, "*cultural attractors" insure the fidelity of the repetition of the event. "Cultures do contain items— ideas, norms, tales, recipes, dances, rituals, tools, practices, and so on—that are produced again and again. These items remain self-similar over social space and time: in spite of variations, an Irish stew is an Irish stew, Little Red Riding Hood is Little Red Riding Hood and a samba is a samba."[14]

Of course, for us involved in this course, the problem is that we end up perceiving as familiar something that really is, importantly, unfamiliar—we see it from within our culture, with our *cultural attractors nativizing it, rather than from within the culture to which it is "home."

14. Dan Sperber, "Cultural Attractors," *Edge—2011: What scientific concept would improve everybody's cognitive toolkit?* (response), accessed January 8, 2018, https://www.edge.org/response-detail/10950.

9. Patterns with time-leaps

Memories, shared memories, cause-and-effect in narrative segments

— Terms —

- Introduced:
    - cause-and-effect chains
    - narratives (texts)
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
    - worldviews (cosmic and social), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

— Chapter Abstract —

This chapter explores the role of memories (including patterns associated with or derived from past events) in the interpretive process and offers four types of memories: subject (self)-based memories, quasi-shared memories, shared memories, and extra-personal memories. The line of argument offered is that memories extend beyond the boundaries of the individual and, in so doing, are social entities which means that they are entangled in culture. In a second consideration of time elements in patterns, narratives are described as cause-and-effect chains and that their progress makes sense to us when these chains follow lines that meet our understanding of

worldviews and values. This in this case as well culture provides the context for a narrative to “make sense.”

— Chapter Outline —

- 9.1. Memories as doorways to cultural influence
- 9.2. Cause-and-effect chains

9.1. Memories as transpersonal doorways for cultural influence

Memories are complex cognitive events. Since this is a course about interpretation, we would travel too far from our topics if we become over-involved in the neurological structures and processes that support memories. Rather, for the purposes of this course, we need only to understand how memories are a component of a cognitive pattern (as object or process) that brings meaning (including affective meaning) to the selected object.

In this role, memories are the lifeblood of “understanding” in two ways. First, and importantly, memories allow us to bring to bear on the object previous understandings of similar objects, making our interpretations often nearly instantaneous (whether accurate or not). We know a mosquito when we see one (memory of our interpretation of a previous “thing”) and we know that, if it lands on our hand it might bite (memory of a previous “event” / process). Roughly put, memories are not just memories of static objects but also of events that play out across time and often include a *cause-and-effect interpretation. Memories are the crucial elements of an interpretive moment that un-freezes us in time and allows us to bring to the brief interpretive moment an expansive cognition

of time, giving dimension to the object and situating it within a narrative, however complex or simple: "that is my friend, who also waved hello yesterday," "this is where the tree fell last week and those flowers must be in memory of the person killed by that tree," "this coffee is good right now but I should drink it soon because it is the type the gets sours quickly," "I can only see the back of this person but I know the face because I've seen this person before," and so on. Second, when we encounter something unfamiliar to us either because the object is poorly or only partially within perceptive reach (the object is not *robust), memory allows us to coordinate data we gather from one moment to the next (such as various visual angles of a mysterious object) until we have enough data to settle on an understanding, or a deeper understanding, of what the object is, an understanding that often includes future prediction.

Considering how memories deliver meaning to objects of the moment (and usually without a critical reconsideration and perhaps even unconsciously), it is not difficult to see how misinterpretations can gain a hold on an interpretive process: we decide what an object is, then next time we encounter a similar object we rely on the previous memory to determine what this new object is, and after a few events like this our understanding of such objects begins to have a sensation of certainty—a misinterpretation becomes a confirmed understanding that is no longer critically evaluated. In this way, memories both enable, shape, or derail accurate understanding.

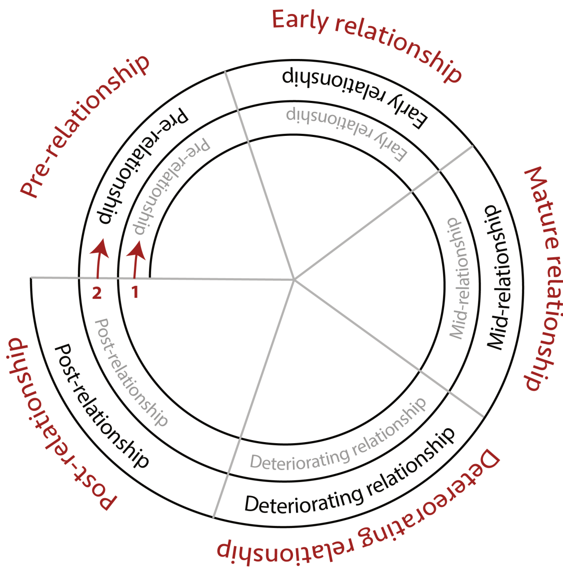
But memories do not simply arrive at the "end" of an interpretive process, as in "What is that? Oh, I remember it is a …." Rather, memories are hermeneutically and profoundly involved in object *selection and *organization. What we remember can be the guide to what we will notice of an object or how we array objects. What we remember and what we "see" before us are intimately entangled. Memories, being

themselves the products of interpretive processes, already have encoded in them cultural *worldviews and *values. As hybrids of selective object details, generic pattern components, cognitive habits, and tested interpretive outcomes, each with a vital relationship to time, memories are encoded perspectives and opinions fully incorporating cultural influence.

One way to sharpen our thinking of how culture participates in interpretation via memory deployment is to generate a simple typology of memories that might carry cultural positions. We can set aside the consideration of relatively culturally neutral memories such as where I left something yesterday, or that I teach at 8:30 on Wednesdays, or that I need to buy something for dinner on the way home. Because this class focuses on cognitive representations of cultural differences, we can also set aside, for the most part, memories that are highly charged with primal emotions that are common to us all, such as traumatic events. But if the memories are populated by human subjects, and if human subjects are shaped in part by the cultures they are in, then all of the below memories, if recalled as part of the interpretive process of a current event or constructing identity are already laced through with cultural bias that work, probably unconsciously, in determining the interpretive outcome. We might want to keep these four types in mind (below, “subject” means the individual recalling the memory):

1. Memories where the subject is the center of the event or narrative and any other human has weak or no representation: “things that I did or happened to me.” For example, one might misperceive a fly is a bee because one fears bees and tends to worry they are there when they are not, thereby warping the pattern matching. Closer to our topic, one might conclude not to trust someone because of one’s current constructed memory of past

events (that may or may not have warranted the conclusion that people cannot be trusted but that interpretation is already associated with the memory). In this way the past, or at least our current understanding of our past based on how we recall it now, colors the present in increasing layers of complexity the more the past penetrates into the present. For example, if we are early in a relationship we might recall what it was like to be early in a prior relationship and it might change how we interpret our current situation including our predictions of the future of the current situation. In this simply schematic diagram, “1” represents the first relevant relationship, while “2” is the current relations and the spiral shape is meant to suggestion the on-going production of memory layers as we become involved in still more relationships.



Layering in relationships via memory spirals

Memory spiral as schema for layering

2. Pseudo-shared memories where the subject is engaging in or being affected by others: “our day at the beach” “that you never answered my email” and so on. These are “pseudo” in that it does not matter if the other persons represented in the subject’s memory even remember the event, or remember it in the same way. Though not necessarily the case, these can be powerful representations of cultural values. For example, one might remember one’s father might be a white-collar crime prosecutor and is as always warning never to trust people who have a lot of money. This is a worldview of how the

social world works and is often deeply colored by an individual's cultural memberships.

3. Shared memories, such as a couple's history of their time together or family memories: "our day at the beach." In this case, whatever happened at the beach is an "official" part of the couple's history. They have discussed it and decided how to remember it: "Yeah, we left because the wind was cold and the sand was blowing into our food but we still had fun trying." Now the memory is something like a memory-contract between them. Each knows this is how it is supposed to be remembered. The dissolving of a couple can involve rewriting of these shared memories. "I always thought it was a stupid idea but he insisted that we go." In this case the worldviews and values of another person have, by mutual agreement, been accede to partially or wholly, becoming part of the "world" of those individuals. Your interpretations follow pathways that have been mutually determined.
4. Extra-personal memories, that is, memories that belong to a group even if the subject never actually participated in the event, such as a country's collective memory of the Japanese occupation during World War II, or the shadow of American segregation practices on current race relations: "these things happened to us" (rather than "these things happened to my parent's generation"). I once had an Armenian student who said he would feel dismay if his son did not embrace his own resentment of the Armenian genocide of the early 20th-century because it was an essential part of Armenian identity.

These types of "memories" do not personally belong to the interpreter. Most of us learned the meaning of a stop sign either through a written definition of it or watching the behavior of others. We learned the full, 3-dimensional shape of it

through direct observation from many angles, collectively remembered as “the various way a stop sign might look.” However, when I was in graduate school, I bicycled to classes. I was told by others that there were certain intersections where police stationed themselves during the first couple of weeks of the new academic year so as to ticket people like me for running the stop sign. This is a “collective memory” developed through the personal observation of some and passed around within the cultural group. Personally, I only saw this once but I still had the benefit of increased certainty based on repetition of the event via the collective memory of others. Memories can exist as interpersonal networks of meaning and, in so doing, can contribute powerfully to the content of a cultural group. Culture spreads horizontally through a group and vertically down through time via these extra-personal memories appropriated as one’s own memories with one degree of separation. (The premodern auxiliary verbs “ki” marks that an event has occurred in the past. However, while “ki” is for personal memories of events if the information is heard from a source taken to be sufficiently reliable “ki” might be used anyway, as if it was one’s own personal memory.) In this way, what one thinks of as “my” memory or purely “what someone else remembers” is subjective. This is not about whether one is actually in the memory in some way. The point here is about how subjectively “close” one holds the memory to be. In that category, the “my” of “my memory” does not have all that distinct a border between “me” and “others.” The occupation of one’s country, current or as a past event, can be held close (and so influence interpretations) as one’s own relevant memory, via a close identification with the occupied group.

While memory is key to interpretation, memories (as touched on above in the discussion of object selection) are subject to drift—the memory we have now of something is not the same as the memory we once had of that same thing, nor is it the

same as the thing itself. This drift is not simply the product of the memory fading; rather, who we are now, including our moods, and the cultural environments that provide the contexts for our thinking are involved in our "recovery" of a memory which in many cases would be better described as a reconstruction of a memory. (In terms of the actual brain processes, memories do not reside in a single location but are recalled by the coordinated activation of networks of neurons across various areas of the brain.[1]) Memories can overcome the interpretive bias of a present situation or participate in that bias.

Further, we may or may not know that a memory is involved in an interpretation. For example, one explanation for the subjective sensation of déjà vu is that we have encountered a new situation so closely matching a past memory-pattern that we feel we have already experienced that space and what is happening or about to happen. According to this hypothesis (tested and supported by experiment), a spatial pattern very close to the actual environment we are in is in the background, affording an eerie sense that we have been here before, and, sometimes, also feel we know what will happen next.[2]

9.2. Cause-and-effect chains

As suggested by the discussion, memories enable us to store and perceive patterns that stretch across time segments. Movement, repetition (and discontinuity), and processes are all

1. "Therefore, contrary to the popular notion, memories are not stored in our brains like books on library shelves, but must be actively reconstructed from elements scattered throughout various areas of the brain by the encoding process. Memory storage is therefore an ongoing process of reclassification resulting from continuous changes in our neural pathways, and parallel processing of information in our brains." Luke Mastin, "Memory Storage," in *The Human Memory*, 2018, http://www.human-memory.net/processes_storage.html.
2. Anne Manning, "Déjà vu and Feelings of Prediction: They're Just Feelings," *Colorado State University: College of Natural Sciences*(blog), March 1, 2018, https://natsci.source.colostate.edu/deja-vu-feelings-prediction-theyre-just-feelings/.

patterns with time elements. Of these, our course most closely looks at cause-and-effect pairings and chains of theses. Our brain anyway is naturally very interested in these since an understanding of cause-and-effect gives us strategic advantage, leads us to pleasure, helps us avoid pain and danger, helps us understand current and past events, and so on. such as movements and processes. However, our analytic interest in them is more specialized than this.

The definition of "narrative" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* begins, "A telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events …"[3] There are many different ways of thinking about narratives. If, for example, we were to focus on the "telling" portion of *Oxford*'s definition, we become involved in issues of narrative technique as we explore how and by whom the narrative is delivered to us or others. "Interpreting narratives," for this course, is primarily as follows. We provisionally accept two pre-conditions: first, that a narrative "event" has a non-absurd (non-random) framework of cause-and-event. That a writer is motivated to construct narratives that make sense to the reader and so will create code that are amiable to the reader's repertoire of cause-and-effect sequences. If I read, "I flew an elephant to work today," I might struggle to situate this within my repertoire of cause-and-effect sequences (because I believe flight cannot be enabled by elephants) if determining sense is important to me for some reason. Is it metaphor? Is it code? Did I misread? (Perhaps I'm reading in another language.) Is the speaker making a joke? Or demented? I have options and I will settle on a range of possibilities and have a sense of how likely my interpretation is. However, if I was told that sentence was the output of an AI program being built by a student who is still working on getting the program right, I'll just dismiss it as an absurd narrative

3. Chris Baldick, "Narrative," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2008), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-760.

that doesn't require a good cause-and-effect explanation. In this way, we are interested in "making sense" of the narrative and what we use to arrive at a sensible interpretation includes our worldviews and values. Thus, seeking to "make sense" of a narrative along lines that we are comfortable with explores our own way of seeing the world while "making sense" of a narrative from the author's perspective, as we can best guess it, asks us to have an understanding of the author's worldviews and values. Thus, exploring cause-and-effect chains is a good exercise is identifying, articulating, and measuring worldviews and values, both of which are fundamental components of a group's culture.

Imagine that we encounter this sentence: "Caring is an advantage." To interpret this sentence, we want context. Did a student say this? Was it spoken in a horror film? Was it the first thing one of the two lovers-to-be in a romance film said to the other, over a drink? ... These questions seek to identify a culture group and a specific situation, so we can try to deploy some of the values of that group to establish a plausible meaning. That is, we are exploring a cause-and-effect relationship: why were these words uttered? (The meaning of the words themselves is not difficult.) Actually, sentence was generated just now for this paragraph, via a bot[4] that uses, as part of the algorithm to generate apparent wisdom, the principle that juxtaposition creates an effect of mysterious or deep meaning.[5] That it is bot-generated does not make it random. The computer program team that created the website was trying to create a program that would imitate what these two Norwegians saw as some of the stock inspirational quotes that were often passed around on the internet. So their perception of the world suggested, collectively, by these types of quotes plus their own Norwegian ways of seeking things, plus each engineers personal view of

4. "InspiroBot," accessed January 29, 2019, https://inspirobot.me/.
5. Ira Glass, "Why I Love InspiroBot: Prologue," *This American Life*, December 5, 2018, https://www.thisamericanlife.org/extras/why-i-love-inspirobot.

things have mixed together to give, as they say, a “personality” to the quotes generated. Further, this context could be ignored entirely and you, as a reader, could attribute your own significance based on either your best guess of context or your own way of seeing the world, or, most likely, some blend of these. In any event, speculating about plausible cause-and-effect sequences is our primary way of trying to ferret out the possible worldviews and values of a narrative or, more specifically, the worldviews and values of a character within the narrative, the narrator of the narrative, the author as constructed by us, or model readers as posited by us, or ourselves.

10. Ending an interpretation

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - none
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):
  - worldviews (cosmic and social), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

— Chapter Abstract —

This brief chapter notes ways that interpretation falls into culture-defined conclusions whether noticed or not, then reminds us of the goal of our interpretive projects.

— Chapter Outline —

- 12.1. Interpretation interruption in hurried environments
- 12.2. Choosing to end an interpretation: remembering the course goal

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The process of interpretation itself has no built-in endpoint. Interpretation ends most frequently because the process was interrupted by the next thing, whatever it may be. At other

times, it ends because we have decided to stop interpreting. Both of these are relevant to our interpretive projects.

12.1. INTERPRETATION INTERRUPTION IN HURRIED ENVIRONMENTS

Most of the time, we operate in information-dense environments, where newly arrived information makes a demand for our attention, pulling us to it often before we are finished with what is at hand. While this condition of life is worthy of extended attention there are the following two specific aspects of this that are particularly relevant our interpretive goals.

First, all of us but perhaps especially students, are time-pressed and, in order to manage this, for the most part we make rapid interpretive conclusions rather than ponder many possible interpretations. Or, we are forced to move on to the next thing before understanding fully.

To achieve a sense of certainty (conclusion) when operating like this, we rely on prior conclusions with which we are comfortable, stereotypes that have the support of the majority opinion of cultural groups with which we associate, stock interpretations, and so on. We do not need to invest, or cannot invest, the considerable amount of time needed to ferret out the newness or strangeness or something or, (even more time-intensive) create the space where those insights might "come to us." We do not or cannot allow for our mind, either consciously or semi-consciously, to engage exorbitantly the fullness of the data or code.

At times, we manage the time-energy demands of new, subtle, or complex information by deciding only whether we "like" it or not, whether it is "relevant" or not and ignore many unfamiliar things (including aspects of the object involving unfamiliar cultural information) using this determination. At

other times, in order to streamline interpretation, we “nativize” something into something less complex and more familiar for the sake of cognitive speed. (The “silo” effect of how we navigate the web—actually are navigated by algorithms, we are not truly in control—encourages this choice-habit of leaving aside what is unfamiliar or challenging.)

All of the above interfere with discovery of something new, or challenging a *horizon of expectation. Shifting from this hurried way of navigating the world to a slow and careful interpretation can be difficult, even emotionally taxing.

Second, film-makers understand that the film narrative will be consumed in “real time.” Content needs to be able to be absorbed as it happens, not through pausing and thinking, reviewing, or such. Therefore, narratives tend to rely on likely audience expectations, well-focused themes, and easily accessible emotions. These story-telling, strategic choices often reinforce the *WV/CP of the target culture (the primary culture at which the film is to be marketed) or, by focusing on visceral emotions, create an open space when everyone, with their own cultures, feels the film is accessible. To achieve broad appeal, movies tend not to be hyper-embedded in the *WV/CP of a narrowly defined cultural group—”everyone loves a good love story” vs “those worried about climate change” for example.

In short, on the one hand, we need to allow time to discover cultural differences and, on the other, we should not over-expect a film to provide unusual perspectives (and so we will tend to treat them as engaging without a great deal of self-awareness some of the broadest *WV/CP of a cultural group).

12.2. CHOOSING TO END AN INTERPRETATION: REMEMBERING THE COURSE GOAL

If we end an interpretation because we are satisfied with the interpretive conclusion, that is likely due to a “cost-benefit”

process: the interpretation is **sufficiently likely** to be true or **sufficiently useful** that there is little value in looking further. Deciding "likely" is of course subjective and context0relevant. The situation as well as the self-reflective predispositions of the interpreter come into play. To uncomplicate interpretation, we make assumptions about the situation and draw heavily on past experience. Clearly these can and do invoke all sorts of cultural elements that may not be valid if the situation is other-cultural.

If the point at which we end an interpretation depends on whether the outcome is "good enough," then that conclusion is tied to the initial purpose of the interpretation ("good enough" for what?). Most interpretations are goal-oriented to help us remain safe, find pleasure, confirm things, or achieve things. These are common, natural goals for interpretation. "Is that apple spoiled?" "Should I trust in that person's promise?" and so on.

That may be but, as stated earlier, the goal of this class is to better understand cultures with which one is less familiar. Our goal, therefore, could be stated:

> Interpretation ends when we have some certainty that we have discovered something essential of *WV/CP that help the narrative "make sense" within its own culture, not ours.

This is an other (not self)-oriented attempt at understanding a culture better, in sharp contrast to a pragmatic approaches to interpretation. It is an unnatural approach and difficult to keep in mind. Yet, this is what we do. We analyze narratives to discover cultural knowledge that might be otherwise unknown or underestimated in its importance. Our interpretive goal is to understand the *WV/CP of the cultures within the narrative and of the narrative.

PART III

METHOD—ELEMENTS OF (COURSE) INTERPRETIVE PROJECTS

This part introduces the primary components of the interpretive projects that aim to construct what are plausibly—in terms of the home culture(s) of the narrative—the thoughts, feelings of characters in a narrative and/or explain why they act and react in the ways they do.

11. Dialogue, bounded dialogue, and emergent knowledge

Expanding understanding through dialogue ◆ emergent knowledge

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- bounded dialogue

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- attractor
- emergence
- “horizon of expectation”

11.1. DIALOGUE TAKES ON “HORIZONS”

There are three reasons dialogue is at the center of this course: If we take the concept of “*horizon of expectation” seriously, and if our course goal to find ways to adjust these *horizons, then one of the most efficient methods to accomplish this is through being open to the ideas of others as encountered through dialogue. On our own, we are at risk of the gravitational pull of *attractors: we can read a narrative or view a film but we do not notice the” new” (not our usual, personal) ideas that are forming it. But when we can hear in the voice of another the “you just don’t get it do you?” signal, perhaps we can avoid cultural-derived misinterpretations. Our discussions (group and class dialogues) are meant to challenge our interpretations

when they are perhaps not quite right. We are not in the socially tactful business of politely confirming another's misunderstanding. Tension in the discussion is good. A bit of discomfort among group members means that the differences of ideas are out for view, for everyone to encounter and consider. If everyone agrees, it might mean that everyone is right but it might also mean that everyone is wrong, all unknowingly trapped on this side of the same "*horizon."

11.2. DIALOGUE, DISCURSIVE DISCIPLINE, AND COMMUNITY

The second reason dialogue is central to this course turns on the practical benefits of it. Our topic, *love, is incredibly vague and slippery. My decision that we will do analysis for the benefit of others (that is, analysis grounded in the process of dialogue), leads to a cascade of other decisions:

- for comparison of interpretations, we need well-defined, shared topics . . . and →
- we need shared terminology for accuracy in understanding one another (for example, what "he is *faithful" might mean) . . . and →
- we need shared method so our observations and conclusions are based on the same analytic processes.

This series of consequences from the first decision (to put dialogue at the center) leads us to what I want to call *bounded dialogue: discussion that operates under certain rules. *Bounded dialogue is our term for dialogue carried out with predetermined constraints in discourse as defined by the course rules and standards and pursued with the objective of understanding others, not as a one-way affair where we simply state our opinions. The purpose of dialogue is for several

individuals to construct a ToM based on Theory-theory ("What do you think might be the TF/A of the ToM based on its cultural context?") not Simulation-theory ("If it were me, what I would be thinking in this situation is . . .)

That being said, some of the best moments of being a part of this class for any one of you will, instead, be a random moment that none of us could have predicted or caused by any particular method to happen. You might hear someone say something that surprises you. One semester, for me, it was when a student used the term "*Natural Love" and that suddenly opened up a whole new line of thinking. Another was when a student said to the class that he did not see a problem with beating a woman when she needed "correction." Another was when a student told me he was taking this class to learn how to treat women well because he had not dated anyone yet. Another was when, in tears, a student told me that an author we were reading seemed so honest to her but others were laughing at that author, and she wondered whether there was a place for honesty in love. And so on. All of these are moments that have become important to me, and none were part of exercises or were invited in any way other than through a general sense that the student could speak openly in class (or in office hours). So, there will also be times of "open" discussion, to make space for the possibility of these random, invaluable encounters. But, for the most part, we analyze, and we do so via a method and that method has, at the center, *bounded dialogue, or work (independent analysis and research) in preparation for it.

There is another practical value in this dialogue-centered approach. Most of you, once graduated, will be thrown without support into working group after working group, where the purpose will be to generate ideas or produce other objects that benefit some other someone, not you. The basic strategy of "impress the teacher by reflecting her or his ideas, and reap the

grade benefits of that" more or less entirely disappears. You will rarely be rewarded for it. Instead your rewards will come (and they will be considerable) when there is a happy answer to this question, "When this person is part of a group does the group become better or worse for it?" I know this to be true by talking with employers, and I have seen many students be hit with this challenge, some responding better than others. Although I do not feel exactly duty-bound, I feel some sort of level of obligation to offer chances to develop these skills while still in the (somewhat) safe zone of the university system. So, again, instead of practicing just expressive skills (knowing your own position and clearly stating it), or rhetorical skills (winning over others with the logic or evidence of your opinion), we practice "thinking together through dialogue"—a much more difficult and humbling process, but one that if you can learn to do well will be of immeasurable benefit for many or most of you.

Finally, because you are in my course, you have little choice but to deal with me and part of my view is that the university should endeavor to create better citizens. For my little corner of the teaching world (appreciation of *East Asian traditions and Japanese literature, mostly) this means engaging in research that benefits the community as a whole rather than indulges merely in one's own private interests. I think research directions should be the result of a negotiation and compromise between your personal enthusiasms and the interests of the group that is the destination of your research results. I agree that we need specialists whose work is so focused that it seems to be only talking to itself but does, indeed, go very deeply and insightfully into a topic. On the other hand, we also need scholarship that crosses boundaries and looks for discoveries that bring diverse research together more generally. I am of this latter type and it is what I can teach most effectively. And so my courses are full of assignments that include the requirement "credible and

interesting," which means credible and interesting to imagined others—not only to me as the instructor.

11.3. DIALOGUE AND EMERGENT CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

The third reason for dialogue being at the center of this course is more abstract but, ultimately, perhaps the most important of the three. Just as I see my identity as residing in the web of people who know about me, I see "culture" as living in these endlessly many moments of talk about something. We encounter culture not by reading but by being situated in the world as it happens through actions / reactions (past, present and future), and the give-and-take of conversations remembered or happening or expected. Through discourse we generate this sort of ephemeral, but essential, *emergent knowledge that is the result of a complicated web of meanings stretched across the event of the discussion itself, not as any result that can be encoded and kept in written words. While you will make *CDE reports, some of the most important "knowledge" in this course flows past you while you engage in the act of analysis during discussion, not in the products of that analysis.

12. "Love" as we will view it

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- love
- neurochemical love
- affective love
- cognitive love

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- emergence

12.1. THE PROBLEM OF “SAME YET DIFFERENT”

Early in my teaching career, as I developed some skill in reading 10th-century Japanese narratives and wished to convey as accurately as possible how I thought they should be understood, I noticed that my reading of those texts had evolved by stumbling through a series of misreadings, and that more often than not this was due to a misapplication of context.

A simple example of this would be my interpretive assumption that:

> Heian women are unhappy because they do not have equality in their marriages.

A more informed reading position for Heian period narratives written by women, I came to understands was:

> High- and mid-level aristocratic Heian women become anxious when their social rank or standing seems at risk, given the public shame that might ensue but, more importantly, what this might mean for the future promotions (career) of their children.

The first assumption was an extension of what I had originally felt was a universal principle, one that could be applied across cultures and times:

> When people lack equality, they are dissatisfied.

As time went on, I discovered how unaware I was that I had affiliated myself with what is basically an American political creed affirming the often-quoted passage in the Constitution:

> "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, ..."

although I would suggest that it is culturally present now mainly as the *derivative:

> Everyone should be treated with equality and fairness.

As the culture of Heian Japan—as best as I could recreate it with fidelity—became more "second nature" to me, I could apply, and with better nuance, more appropriate contexts of the narrative. That women were discontent was accurate, but the reasons for their discontent were entirely different and had nothing to do with equality or even want of respectful treatment by their spouses.

As I tried to convey to my students the importance of constructing and skillfully using appropriate contexts to better read a situation or text, it seemed to me that many of them believed with considerable comfort and certainty that the experience of *love is universal, being the same in its important

points across cultures and times just as they had been (erroneously, I would argue) taught that "music is a universal language."

In other words, they were not too concerned about contexts and the game-changing power of them.

Yet my career in interpreting texts that are embedded in a plethora of difficult cultures has shown to me time and again that despite my best intentions of reading with care, misunderstandings are a constant for my own readings and those of my students. Although in this course our objects of analysis are *narratives, it might also be worth noting that this difficulty is most definitely not limited to the act of trying to understand the *code that will become a text. It is, I suggest, endemic to one's daily life—especially if one works in a culturally diverse situation. Whether we are discussing narratives or "real life," some of these misunderstandings are minor but some result from profoundly different views of *love—so different, in fact, that one of the individuals in the relationship could never guess, or perhaps even understand, what the other individual is thinking.

So, how do we explain the apparent contradictions suggested by, on the one hand, a "gut-level" sensation that we all know what *love is and that in essence it need not be defined and that love stories can be more or less understood and enjoyed across cultures, while, on the other, discovering and overcoming misinterpretations?

My thinking on this conundrum led to the broader question of the nexus between body and culture.

12.2. OUR METHOD PUTS HIGH-ORDER COGNITIVE LOVE FIRST

Research suggests (though not without controversy) that there are basic, primitive emotions in humans that are recognizable

across cultures, emotions that produce universal facial expressions that members of significantly different cultures can recognize.[1] Research into microexpressions (fleeting expressions on the human face that communicate emotional states unrelated to the will of the individual with the expression) is grounded in this premise.[2] It is possible that dopamine is involved in the interpersonal harmonization of limbic systems of face-to-face communication, especially when looking into another's eyes.[3] Similarly, contagious scratching produces the appearance and sensation of interpersonal harmony or empathy arising from free will (cognition) but which may be only chemical or hardwired and neurological in basis.[4]

Vertebrates share a similar primal brain structure and mammals share a complex emotional life supported by the limbic system; but, complex cognitive perception of all these more basic feelings is generated by the cerebral cortex that is by far most highly developed in humans.[5] Some brain

1. Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003), https://zscalarts.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/emotions-revealed-by-paul-ekman1.pdf. Ekman asserts that there are six such primal emotions: "happy," "surprise," "fear," "disgust," "anger," and "sad." Ekman showed photographs of human facial expressions to members of various cultural groups around the world to determine whether an emotion could be identified without explanation. The results showed that expressions associated with these emotions were, more or less, universally recognized. Panksepp would add to Ekman's list a seventh: "agony." See, Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), ProQuest Ebook Central. He also would like to point our attention to seven "Primary-process affective systems," namely, "seeking," "anger," "fear," "panic-grief," "maternal care," "pleasure/lust," and "play." Meanwhile, Jack recently argues for just four, ignoring "agony" and collapsing four on Ekman's list into two: "surprise-fear" and "disgust-anger". See, Rachel E. Jack, Oliver G.B. Garrod, and Philippe G. Schyns, "Dynamic Facial Expressions of Emotion Transmit an Evolving Hierarchy of Signals over Time," *Current Biology* 24, no. 2 (January 2014): 187–192, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2013.11.064.
2. Wikipedia contributors, "Microexpression," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed Oct 6, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microexpression.
3. Wikipedia contributors, "Limbic Resonance," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed Oct 6, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbic_resonance.
4. This contagious itch behavior is actually coded into your brain," he [Zhou-feng Chen] says. "Contagious itch is innate and hardwired instinctual behavior." Ben Panko, "Why Is Itching So Contagious?" *Smithsonian.com*, March 10, 2017, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-itching-so-contagious-180962484/#kXmTilqdMQIYivli.99

structures, including structures that generate sensations of love, are not shared just among humans but all mammals (and in some details beyond mammals to other vertebrae) and feelings of love that would be familiar to us may be more widely distributed among mammals that we generally assume. For example, while most of us would probably be ready to grant to other primates the ability to love, it is also scientifically within the range of the credible to say that your dog really does love you rather than just appears to love you (if we take love to mean an emotionally meaningful connection or bond). It has been shown that dogs generate and respond to levels of the neurohormone / neurotransmitter oxytocin—identified as key to sensations and behaviors of bonding—in ways different from wolves.[6] Dogs might also engage in contagious yawning, another indicator of empathy.[7]

The nexus between the incredible experience of feeling love for another (or for anyone or everyone for that matter) and the body and mind that are home to that event is just exceptionally interesting. Research in this area is developing so rapidly that my comments here can be called the results of recent research but certainly not the newest research. For example, we have known for some time that oxytocin in important to sensations of intimacy and bonding, but, puzzlingly, it seem also to be produced in times of separation.[8]

5. For basic information on brain anatomy, see, "The Human Brain," *Annenberg Learner—Discovering Psychology*, accessed December 27, 2017, http://www.learner.org/series/discoveringpsychology/brain/brain_nonflash.html.
6. See, Miho Nagasawa, et al., "Oxytocin-gaze positive loop and the coevolution of human-dog bonds," *Science* 348, no. 6232 (April 17, 2015): 333-336, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1261022. See also, Mia E. Persson, et al., "Intranasal oxytocin and a polymorphism in the oxytocin receptor gene are associated with human-directed social behavior in golden retriever dogs," *Hormones and Behavior* 95 (Sept 2017): 85-93, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yhbeh.2017.07.016.
7. Jason G. Goldman, "Contagious Yawning: Evidence of Empathy?" Scientific American (May 17, 2012), https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/thoughtful-animal/contagious-yawning-evidence-of-empathy/.
8. Tori DeAngelis, "The two faces of oxytocin—Why does the 'tend and befriend' hormone come into play at the best and worst of times?" American Psychological Association 11, no. 2 (February 2008), http://www.apa.org/monitor/feb08/oxytocin.aspx.

I hope you can see how quickly the topic of "the affective neuroscience of love"[9] branches into many directions. Such research as the above strongly indicates that there is an essential, important, and powerful aspect to the experience of *love that is indeed universal and recognizable across cultural boundaries, even easily.

While I want to acknowledge this and fully support that if we are to truly talk about *love in a significant way these aspects must be included. However, for the purposes of this course we must make this choice in our focus:

> If we are to understand cultural differences in how love is narrated and perhaps even experienced, we should NOT focus on the biology of love.

Therefore, for the purposes of this course and the project it takes on, we avoid analyzing *love in its powerful physical manifestations of desire and bonding, and the primal emotions that can go with the experience, such as joy and fear. If we analyze these, we go opposite the direction that the class should proceed—we end up collapsing and erasing cultural and individual differences in articulating, understanding, and experiencing love to arrive at the simple "everyone feels love."

That does not help us much. Therefore, we lean away from the corporal experience with its hormones and affect to focus almost exclusively on the high-order cognitive representations of love. Our course standard is "*always about high-order love." In our exploration of *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices (*WV/CP), using love narratives as the place in which we do this, we want to have in the background as a guide for our analysis attentive concern to this question, even if it goes, ultimately, unanswered: "How do cultures encode, articulate, understand, and experience love through the signs

9. The phrase is borrowed from Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), ProQuest Ebook Central.

and various meanings that are dynamically alive within that culture, embedded within that culture?" When stated as a standard, this is called "embracing cognitive love." It is true—such questions do not capture the power of the love experience, or the joy of reading love stories, but they do allow us to consider cultural differences and how cultural differences lead to different ways of interpreting, understanding and experiencing what we so easily and naturally call "love." We do not have to solve the thorny question of how, in fact, does something corporal, such as affective experiences of love, interact with something that is a social construct: culture? Nevertheless, we must be aware of it.

12.3. FOCUSING OUR ANALYSIS — A LOVE LEXICON FOR THIS COURSE

Bonding with another engages the mind and body in broad and complex ways. The affective components of love such as desire, longing, disorientation and distraction, urge to nurture, urge to make gift, sense of security, urge to protect, pleasure of giving and receiving attention, feelings of intimacy all manifest to us as somehow true, deep, and real and, further (or because of that), have a presence in culture associated with authenticity. It is, therefore, normal when we talk about *love to gravitate towards these highly accessible, culturally affirmed components. Descriptions of "real" or "true" love insists, I would suggest, on an affect component—not necessarily in the world of theory but in the practical, "on the street" way of considering these things. Love without the warmth or turbulence of affective states seems to be missing something.

If our goal, then, was a full or authentic study of the texts we read and the films we view, I would suggest than an affect-centric approach may well indeed be one of the best critical approaches. However, that is not what we do in this course.

Instead, we are asking how culture—at multiple levels, some of which we are aware and others which go unnoticed—shapes our experience of love. And to that end I have created the following lexicon to help us sort out the directions of our investigations into love narrative and have a shared set of terms for doing so. These terms describe physical and mental states that *mix into one another, produce and alter one another, and, taken as an interactive set with tensions and harmonies both, can represent much of what we call love for the terms of this course.

**Neurochemical love.* These are neurohormonal cascades and systemic responses that alter the state of our body toward or away from bonding, harmonizing with another, intimacy, sexual arousal, and so on. These neurochemical activities help preserve memories by associating them with specific emotions (and physical location, too, but this is beyond the scope of our course). They originate in non-discursive areas of the brain, especially the limbic system (and in particular the amygdala, hypothalamus, and hippocampus), but seem also to be dynamically linked to the makeup of the bacterial flora in the gastrointestinal tract. They are outside of the reach of our consciousness, manifesting instead as bodily sensations, bodily changes, and supporting, causing, or influencing affects (emotions).

**Affective love.* These are emotions and emotional sensations related to love. We will use the term broadly. Examples would be swooning, yearning, familiarity, jealousy, impulses to nurture or protect or possess or dominate, impulses or sensations of receiving nurture, or being protected, or being possessed, or submitting, urges toward gift-giving,[10] desire for attention, sexual attraction, "nesting" instinct, and so on. Affects are an

10. Male Eurasian jays, for example, are known to give gifts to female jays that they have estimated would be the preferred gift. See, Brandon Keim, "Gift-Giving Birds May Think Much Like People," *Wired* (Feb 4, 2013), https://www.wired.com/2013/02/jay-theory-of-mind/.

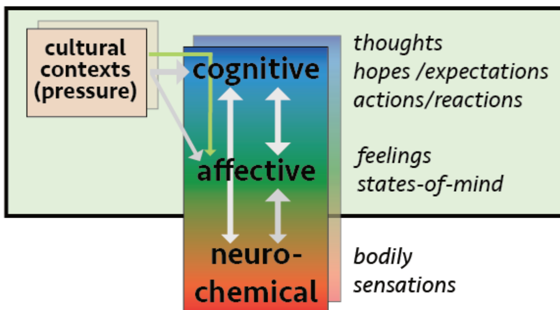
extremely important context for cognition (interpretation, decision-making, and so on). When discussing these in our analysis, we refer to them as "feelings" or "states-of-mind."

Cognitive love. These are our conscious thoughts about love such as future-looking strategic thinking (such as "Should I accept the job offer or move to Bali with this guy?") and mental processes of decision-making (such as "Should I admit I have slept with someone else?"), and present-time ruminations such as the interpretation of situations and individuals (such as "I think he likes me as much as I like him"). These cognitive processes turn on expectations (such as "She will call again today") and aspirations (such as "I hope this lasts forever") that draw heavily on memory. These are also the narratives (stories) we tell ourselves about love: "I am in love." "My partner will leave me just as my previous partner did." "We are star-crossed lovers." "It was during that fantastic in Hawaii that we became close." Cognitive love sweeps up into it other desires that might, of themselves, not seem like love but are a very important part of partnering. Examples would be the desire for *status that might be derived from a relationship, seeking consolation from loneliness or grief, the pleasure of sharing, and so on. Cognitive love is so involved in affective states (generating them and being generated by them) that it might be more accurate simply to talk about "affective cognition". However, this would take our focus off the role that the external features of *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices play in shaping our aspirations, expectations, actions (and reactions) and general interpretation of situations and people (construction of *ToM).

The below chart relates the above three categories of love in a *"high order" / "low order" schema, with neurochemistry applying pressure from below,[11] but with the higher emotional

11. Jaak Panksepp, "Primal emotions and cultural evolution of language: Primal affects empower words," in *Emotion in Language: Theory – research – application*, ed. Ulrike M. Lüdtke [Consciousness & Emotion Book Series 10] (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 27-48, http://www.jbe-platform.com/content/books/9789027267658.

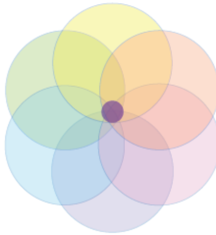
and cognitive states producing their own pressure back down through the system. It indicates how an individual (and a cognizing, conscious entity) receives influence from the body, the emotions and cultural contexts. The cultural contexts box, as well as the love aspects box are shadowed with a second box behind, indicating that there are multiple contexts and multiple states of the individual. These may be contradictory or work more in tandem. The green arrow passing through "cognitive" and then heading down to "affective" is, in my opinion, the more likely pathway that culture affects emotions but there is no need to decide this for the purposes of the course. Finally, the green framed box indicates the range of our analytic exploration, but, it should be noted, with an emphasis towards cognition.



Three types of love with course analytic boundary framed

**Emergent love*. I would like to add one more term to our lexicon: emergent love. *Emergence is an important concept for this course. It is part of the *CDE reports, names the primary benefit of our many class discussions, and, in this case, attempts to give a "location" for love within a narrative. Each of

the below spheres can indicate something related to love—they need not be of the same type or intensity. So, for example, one sphere could be "this new partner looks just like my previous one:" and another could be "our country is at war, and I am so afraid and in need of support:" and another "whenever she looks into my eyes my whole body shakes;" and another "we have broken up and gotten back together three times now …. ." The point is that collectively these all work upon each other and that the dynamic generates something that is not any one of them and that is not just a sum of all of them either, but it, instead, is its own "entity" or, rather, "something." That "something," I would like to suggest, is the best definition of love in a sentence like "I am in love" or "I have loved deeply once in my life." We tend to measure love in terms of its affective intensity ("I can only think of my lover these days"), or trust/reliability ("He has been true to me all these years"), or its parental-like aspect (unselfish, giving love). This, often, is our measure of a "good" love or a "true" love. But I would like to suggest a broader understanding of it, one that includes many aspects of our life all colliding with one another. Then there, at the center, is the emergence of something that is more than any one of the circles. While these are my thoughts, we do not explicitly analyze this sort of emergent love in this course. I am outlining it now because it often seems like we are not talking about the heart of the matter of a narrative when discussing just one of the spheres, such as whether a person's actions are trustworthy in terms of a traditional Confucian understanding of that term. We work with highly defined bits-and-pieces of the total experience of love, to explore cultural *worldviews, *values, and *common practices. In the below graphic, the dark spot at the center symbolizes "emergent love".

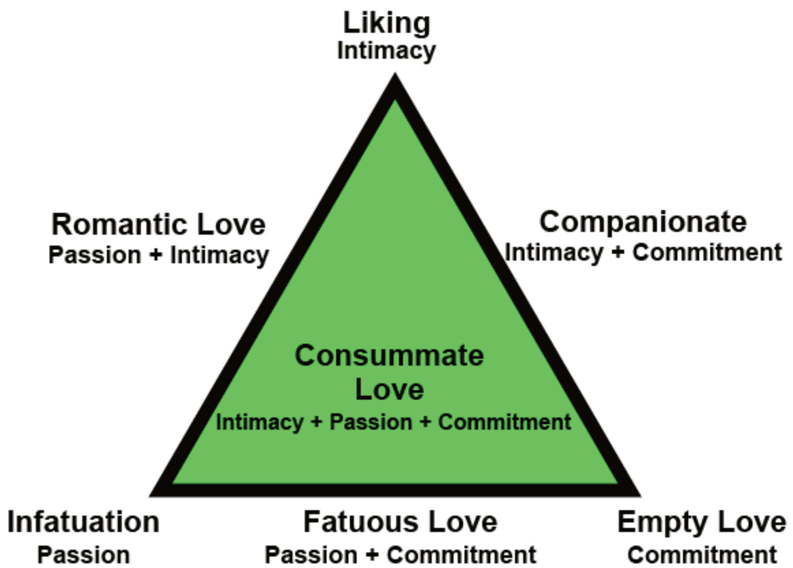


Concept of "emergence" graphically illustrated

I would like to share here one other schema. It can be useful as a way of thinking about love, but I would also like to measure it against the schema just offered, as a way of better understanding *emergence.

This other schema is usually called "Sternberg's triangle" or "Sternberg's triangular theory of love," after the Cornell professor of Human Development, and is part of a larger theory of love that he offers.[12] His theory distributes three primary modes of loving—intimacy, passion, and commitment—to the three apexes of a triangle, then categorizes love by combinations. In the previous chart's way of distinguishing aspects of love, Sternberg's "commitment" would be primarily cognitive and based on an affirmation of *ethical values, while his "intimacy" would be primarily affective and neurochemical, and his "passion" would be primarily neurochemical. His consummate love would be the organic whole of when all of these are fully present or an emergent effect of them, it is not clear. The schema has the power of simplicity but seems primarily meant to explain "bonding" of different types rather than the full range of experiences that seem relevant to love (when offering a model that has broad descriptive intent).

12. Robert J. Sternberg, "Robert J. Sternberg," accessed December 27, 2017, http://www.robertjsternberg.com/love/.



Sternberg's triangular theory of love

13. Cultural contexts as worldviews, ethical values, and common practices (WV/CP)

Introducing instances of cultural contexts via 5 Centimeters Per Second ◆ resources for interpretation ◆ worldviews ◆ ethical values ◆ common practices ◆ situational factors

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- cultural contexts
- ethical values (values)
- common practices
- instance
- mixture and mixing
- situational factors
- worldviews (cosmic and social)

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- horizon of expectation

13.1. OVERVIEW: CULTURAL CONTEXTS AS WORLDVIEWS, ETHICAL VALUES, AND COMMON PRACTICES

13.1.1. The central interpretive question of the course

What *cultural contexts might be relevant to a person's actions, thoughts, or feelings? This is the fundamental question of this

course. We begin with the premise that we want to know, with as much cultural accuracy as is credibly possible, a range of plausible answers to this question.

Much of the time this is not difficult to answer. If a person smiles after taking a bite of something, our first interpretive guess is that the food tasted good. In practical situations, this will usually be enough of an answer. However, we are using situations as interpretive opportunities to explore further. There may or may not be something more to consider, but our task is to find out one way or the other.

13.1.2. Interpreting an instance in *5 Centimeters Per Second*

In the Japanese film *5 Centimeters Per Second* (*Byosoku go senchimetoru*, 2007) there is a scene in the first segment where a boy and girl eat together a box lunch that the girl has made for them so he can have something to eat when he arrives at the train station. He arrives late. They briefly talk and then she offers him the box lunch.

Let us take the following as the *instance we will analyze, the situation that offers us an opportunity for interpretation:

> “What is the boy thinking while he is chewing on the riceball she made for him?”

A moment from the scene looks like this:

5 Centimeters Per Second
(*Byōsoku Go Senchimētoru*, 2007) — from Segment One

Sharing riceballs—film still from 5 Centimeters Per Second

We can collect a large amount of useful contextual information relatively easily from the story itself and how it is presented.

- In terms of narrative (story) development, the boy has arrived very late to a cold train station in the dead of winter. He has traveled far (and with considerable nervousness because he has never traveled alone before) to see his school girlfriend. He is so late that he does not expect her to be waiting for him still, or half believes she will not, but there she is.
- The setting also contributes to our interpretation—a train station so late at night that no one else is there. While it is true that it is a cold and empty room at this point, train station waiting rooms are very familiar to Japanese and there is some additional sense of comfort from the

familiarity of the setting. That it is late and no one else is waiting for a train helps provides an intimate environment for their time together. (There is also a fatherly train station master within viewing range of them who serves as a counterpoint to their young age.)

- The music is thoughtful and a little sad while the dialogue is somewhat sparse and tentative (slightly formal) but gentle:

An audio element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can listen to it online here: https://berkeley.pressbooks.pub/interpretinglovenarratives/?p=41

Sharing riceballs—sound file from *5 Centimeters Per Second*

- The body-positioning of the two is significant. They are not turned toward each other but are definitely "together" in their seats as they both face forward while fully aware of the other. There seems to be harmony between them.

We can also think of the director and consider what her or his artistic vision might be. In this case we come across very useful information. The director is Makoto Shinkai, who also directed the commercially successful (in Japan) animated film *Your Name* (*Kimi no na ha*, 2016). That film explores the challenges of two young people who love each other and are looking for a way to be together. The film is heart-breaking and rather pessimistic. If we return to our box lunch scene we can now reinterpret this as possibly that the boy is "happy for the moment but aware

that they will need to say good-bye again very soon and will live far apart from one another." This, of course, would be an extension based on the assumption that the director upholds a certain view across his various works. The style and content of the two films would suggest this but it should probably be further checked if we plan on relying on this other film.

Most of the above conclusions do not require Japan-specific cultural knowledge for reasonably good accuracy. The *model narrative is familiar, namely, "love stories are often about the difficulties of two who care for one another but are prevented from being together for some reason." The affective components (pace, "camera" angle, the emotional feel of the music, the sense evoked by the visual look of the scene, the qualities of the speaking voices, and the body language) are also not very culturally specific although that the two youth are not looking at one another directly might be misinterpreted by some not familiar with Asian body language as somewhat odd or unfriendly or indicative of tension.

Although with the contextual information so far I think we have already arrived at a sufficiently powerful interpretation of the boy's thoughts and feelings, our goal in this course is not that. Understanding the basics of the story is just the first step. We are using the scene as an interpretive opportunity to explore *cultural contexts which I have defined, for the purposes of our method (rather than some theoretical position) as representations of *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices. (In this course we focus on the first two of these. In real world situations the third is of course equally important to understand if one is to operate comfortably or effectively in any given cultural environment.)

So let us continue exploring the *instance, keeping in mind our conclusions up to now.

If we look carefully at the contents of the box lunch, and if we know something of Japanese culture, we see that: 1) it has been

made with great care, and, 2) it is full of all the favorite things that someone like the boy would like. In short, it has been put together with considerable attention and thoughtfulness. We should take this as representing the girl's love for the boy since there is a cultural *model of Japanese women waking up early every morning to carefully make box lunches for their children and husband. These children and husband then open their boxes at lunchtime, see the careful work, and feel the love that it evidences. Further, we can conclude that the boy will be thinking this as well, and that the girl knows he will think this. In the scene he confirms it, as he should. When she asks how it tastes, he answers that it is the best thing he has ever eaten. The box lunch and the boy's response can both be credibly interpreted as confessions or confirmations of *love.

Of course, we already know that they love each other—nothing in the film so far has suggested that this is about one-sided love, lukewarm crushes, or anything like that. We are not trying to prove that point. Instead, what does this *instance suggest of how the film defines love? I would like to suggest that there are numerous Japanese *values about love that are being affirmed in this capping-moment scene:

- Love is the thoughtful and attentive consideration of another's needs supported by careful actions to serve those needs (the making of the delicious box lunch, one he would truly enjoy).
- Love is nurturing or perhaps more specifically when a girl nurtures (box lunch making) while a boy shows happiness and appreciation for the nurturing (box lunch eating).
- Love is to sacrifice for the other and is enabled when one has the courage to do so (he takes on the frightening challenge of the train trip, she sits for hours at a cold train station).

- Love is being trustworthy (he never gives up finding a way to get to the train station, as promised; she waits no matter how long, as promised).

The above obviously are not exclusively "Japanese" *ethical values. Our considerations of culture will indeed usually end up with this type of destination, that is, not necessarily the discovery or deployment of different *values but rather concluding that there needs to be different emphasis among possible *values.

For example, it seems that if this were a Western film about high school love rather than a Japanese anime borrowing from the genre of "pure love" (*jun-ai* 純愛) films, the first thing these two would do when they finally meet is at least hug and probably kiss. But in this scene, eating together is their way of hugging hello. We should not decide that they care any less for each other because they have not hugged. One reason is that physical contact is less common among "typical" Japanese and this film wants a universal quality to it (this story about this boy and girl is really a story about every boy and girl) so the waiting scene is common (almost cliché), the making and eating of a box lunch is common (and also cliché),[1] even the body language of the two also indicates "these are typical examples of a good, innocent boy and a good, innocent girl" who are learning slowly the first steps of love. Another reason is that the film wants to separate physical attraction from feelings of the heart. Western narratives are more inclined to treat these as two sides of the same coin: feelings of friendship or love will naturally find expression in hugs and kisses.

Ultimately, interpretation draws on a complex calculation of a vast array of things. This is my interpretation of the scene:

The boy is holding back the essential loneliness of life for

1. FN: *Dolls* (*Doruzu*, 2002), which we usually view in this class, builds an entire painful sub-story around this concept of love expressed as box lunch but ultimately the two are separated.

> a brief happy moment with the girl he loves. His heart is full to bursting with the painful contradiction of two facts: he can be with her now but soon will be separated from her. Yet, being young, these painful feelings are strong but still somehow vague. He is learning about life.

I have deployed a wide variety of experiences:

- that I have seen this film several times and discussed it with students for several years,
- that I have also seen the director's other film *Your Name*,
- that I have lived in Japan numerous times and been married for many years to a Japanese woman,
- that I speak the language,
- that I study literature of love in this and other countries but especially Japan from 9th to 21st centuries

and predispositions:

- that I tend to view things darkly.

13.1.3. Resources for interpretation

Generally speaking, a reader's or viewer's interpretation of a narrative moment arises out of complex (and mostly unconsidered) tensions among his or her own *worldviews, *values, and many other things including what can be imagined are the *worldviews and *values of the *narrative figures themselves and/or the author/director of the work. "Other things" include, in fact, an exceptionally large number of factors. For example, we could add to the above list the narrative situation, memories of similar events in our own lives, genre expectations, and so on. For any interpretation, the reader or viewer quickly gather contexts from a wide range of sources,

sorts through them, decides what she or he thinks is a good mix of factors to weigh, then makes interpretive conclusions. This process happens rapidly, naturally, even easily.

What this course attempts to do is build an interpretation more slowly and with greater care so as to collect better contexts and apply them more critically. Through directed study and lively discussion with others in the room, we extend the range of contexts we can consider (press against the "horizon of expectation"). We manage the application of the plethora of possible contexts through the *course method.

I am deploying in the case of the box lunch scene a certain Japanese *worldview (one with which I do not agree by the way) that I have encountered frequently in the literature of that country, and definitely in *Your Name*:

> This world is not a place that supports love. People who are in love are usually separated by circumstances. If we want to think about, talk about, or experience the most authentic feeling of love, it is best described negatively, that is, in the moments of yearning when lovers are apart.

This view, I would suggest, bears down on our box lunch eating scene heavily, making it (and the whole film for that matter) heartbreaking.

While this course is not just about arriving at an interpretation but being able to identify to some degree the factors involved in that effort, we are not trying to do everything. We ask only the specific question of What *worldview, *values, and *common practices seem relevant to consider and to what degree might they be in play. And, since we analyze *instances, which are narrowly defined areas at which to point our interpretive energy (in this case, the boy's thoughts over a few seconds of time), we are rescued from some of the seeming endlessness of the analysis.

Again, if this were a film studies class and our project was to

bring out the details of the scene, a very good interpretation of the boy at this moment would be:

> The boy is happy to finally see the girl. His heart is joyful that she waited and that she made lunch for him, both indications of her love. He expresses his own love for her in delightfully eating her food and his gentle speech. However, he also feels somehow the bitter-sweetness of the moment.

However, we have looked past that (but kept the conclusions at hand), to ask the more culturally specific questions: “What are some of the ways that love is expressed, given, and received between members of a Japanese subculture (Japanese high school students in private) in a case like this?” and “What is the *worldview that hovers around the story at this point, and is it generic or somehow specifically Japanese in content?”

13.2. CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND WORLDVIEWS (COSMIC AND SOCIAL)

13.2.1. Defining “worldview”

The English word “worldview” is ill-defined and loosely used. Thank goodness for the flexibility of language. It is what gives it expressive power. However, for the purposes of this course, we need a working definition:

> Worldviews are assertions or notions of how the world works. A worldview might assert something about how the Universe itself works (cosmic worldviews) or more specifically about the makeup of human nature or how people will behave (social worldviews).

An example of a *cosmic worldview would be the Buddhist *principle that everything in the Universe, without exception, changes. It is the first of the four Noble Truths: “This

conditioned world is characterized by *dukkha* (impermanence)." (This is also a Daoist assertion, but one based on entirely different reasoning.) Another example would be the Christian view that God, who is all powerful, has the ability to forgive and cleanse someone through that individual's sincere act of confession ("My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. ...").

An example of a *social worldview about human nature would be the claim by the Chinese ancient philosopher Mozi: "Supposing people see a child fall into a well — they all have a heart-mind that is shocked and sympathetic."[2] Mozi is making a claim about human nature, "how people are." Another later Chinese philosopher, Xunzi, challenges this with an entirely different *social worldview: "People's nature is bad. Their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort. Now people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit in them."[3]

If someone says in a film "Doesn't everyone cheat?" she or he might be simply making a statement based on observations, in which case that person is claiming that the behavior is *common practice for the cultural group to which she or he belongs. (We will discuss *common practice later.) On the other hand, that narrative figure might be asserting something about the very nature of our social selves—that all humans are evasive and duplicitous.

13.2.2. Why we care about worldviews

Our interest in *worldviews is in part because of their powerful universal, unchallenged presence across a culture in its many situations, on the one hand, and, on the other, because their

2. Jeffrey Richey, "Mencius (c. 372—289 B.C.E.)," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed January 9, 2018, http://www.iep.utm.edu/mencius/.
3. Xunzi, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton, (Princeton University Press, 2014), 248. Kindle Edition.

early association with a culture buries them deep within it, to generate thereby all sorts of cultural elements.

For example, we might be able to say that people sometimes cheat and some more than other, but we cannot challenge the Buddhist *worldview of impermanence with such a "sometimes" description, that is, we cannot say "things sometimes change and sometimes do not" without rejecting the very premise of the *worldview. In this way, the *principles within the accepted *worldviews of a culture are very firm. Their consistent presence in a wide variety of situations can have a large impact in shaping our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Worldviews are universally present, in part, because many of them developed together with the inception of a culture and are indeed part of what makes a culture what it is. While I accept the postmodern, posthistorical claims of many post-1960s theories that we are in a new zone so to speak where "organically whole" theories and traditional influences have lost their grip, I do take as a premise for this course that history matters and that early cultural positions have diffused throughout the membership, to be handed down over the generations in some form or another.

It is not that modern Chinese, for example, are Daoists, but learning some of the propositions of Daoism, I would suggest, will indeed provide a vocabulary for identifying aspects of Chinese culture. For example, social harmony, balance, and patience are all Chinese cultural ideals. Traditional Chinese medicine is based on the *cosmic worldview of harmonious balance among the various parts of the body, a *worldview that is distinctly Daoist in origin. Few will say, "Be a good Daoist and drink your tea because the *yin* qualities of the tea will cool your fever." Instead, now, there is probably not much conscious content of the *worldview beyond the simple suggestion that tea is healthy and one should drink it. Nevertheless, most definitely this conclusion is grounded in Daoist arguments

made centuries ago but now forgotten. The statement feels “clearly true” within the cultural group of certain generations of Chinese. Even if one does not like tea the assertion would be difficult or impossible to challenge successfully to this group. It originated out of a *worldview, then just became an enduring cultural feature, it became “common sense.” Most Americans *can* be convinced that tea is healthy but perhaps only those who have embraced a certain *worldview associated with health food culture will think this claim so naturally true that it is not open for challenge, that it is just “obvious.”

We have another reason to pay close attention to *worldviews. *Worldviews are so widely held within a group that, besides being almost unassailable, they are also often almost invisible. Everyone is sipping the same drink. Again, we encounter here the concept of *”horizon of expectation” where some notions are entirely unnoticed, or entirely unconvincing to a certain group. *Worldviews do not change easily. If you say that true love is eternal and I say reject your claim by saying that no love, even “true” love, lasts forever, then we might be making our respective arguments based on two different *worldviews. Greeks and others will assert that the enduring nature of an object or idea is a mark of its truthfulness and goodness while Buddhists will say that there is no such thing as enduring nature. Claims such as “happily ever after” which assert that the outcome of a narrative is good and enduring sound naïve to a Buddhist.

The Korean film *Chunhyang* (*Chunhyangdyun*, 2000) has a happy ending but then chanter-narrator sings at the very end, “… but who knows what will happen after this story?” The Korean film *3-Iron* (*Bin-jip*, 2004) also seems to conclude with the lovers united but then these white-lettered words appear on the black screen after the final scene: “It’s hard to tell whether the world we live in is a reality or a dream” and by so doing the sense of closure is completely subverted. I would

like to suggest that these two Korean films make their rhetorical nods to Buddhist truth for the same practical reason: both director's wish their films to be taken as making serious statements about the world and both feel the credibility of the content of the film is enhanced by touching bases with widely accepted Buddhist notions of impermanence, thus side-stepping a possible (and possibly devastating at the box office) criticism that their film content is naively over-optimistic.

*Worldviews (how the Universe works, how people can be expected to behave based on their essential nature, and how societies made up of such people function) then, tend to be widely held, relatively unassailable, highly influential, and often unnoticeable.

13.2.3. Discovering relevant worldviews

In our work of cross-cultural interpretation, *worldviews are exceptionally important but, unfortunately, they usually cannot be deduced from the text. Because the author and the audience share the *worldview, it needs no gestures to it, no explanations. “All men are created equal ...” makes a regular appearance in American discourse, I would suggest, not because it is our *worldview but rather because it is not — it is an aspiration, not a description of how things actually are. Contrary to this, it would be rare these days to find any statement that attempts to convince the reader that children have rights. But, in fact, this is a relatively new *social worldview of what childhood actually is. If I had to reconstruct a Japanese 11th-century aristocratic *worldview for children it would probably be “they are things that—if they do not die while still young—confirm family alliances, are to be taken care of by others, kept out of sight, educated to be marriageable, and then promised into marriage at an early date (say 12 – 14 years old) to strengthen certain political positions of the family.”

These attitudes are nearly invisible but, across hundreds and hundreds of pages of premodern texts with the occasional appearance in the narrative of children, I think this is a reasonable description. (Actual children in empirical Heian Japan may well have a different status. I am talking about within narrative.)

Here is a practical matter: If *worldviews are difficult to find in a narrative because on the one hand they are beyond your own "horizon of expectation" and on the other bereft of narrative clues bringing attention to them but nevertheless the *course method requires that you find the *worldviews of cultures unfamiliar to you, what are you to do?

Indeed. What I think people usually do as a pragmatic practice is put little effort towards engaging this conundrum and just push forward with a range of small fixes of issues as problems arise, thus treating the symptoms more than the cause, patching things together with band aide like compromises. And if, still, things are not going smoothly (an interpretation, a job overseas, a marriage) we accept the ongoing discomfort, or if things fall apart, we accept the loss and label the cause as "cultural difference." Certainly, when asked to generate an interpretation of a text well outside our comfort zone in terms of *worldviews in order to complete an assignment, I find that students solve this by deploying his or her own opinion rather than trying to meet the text on its terms, a much more difficult and time-consuming project whose usefulness pales in the face of a deadline. And, if it is not an assigned text within a class, all of us most of the time simply avoid such texts (or films) as irrelevant, puzzling, troublesome, or all of the above.

In this way, *worldviews invite our participatory resistance if they are different from our own and so they are one of the ways we can discover or feel differences in culture. Texts that operate founded on unfamiliar or unacceptable *worldviews

seem irrelevant or irritating. We may find that we "don't like" or "don't understand" narratives that are grounded in *worldviews we reject.

And this is where we find perhaps our best help for the discovery of an unfamiliar *worldview. Difference and diversity are our best hope of catching our own *worldviews in action and thus becoming better able to articulate them, providing us then with interpretive choices.

13.3. CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND ETHICAL VALUES

13.3.1. Defining "ethical value"

First, a quick definition:

> Ethical values proscribe behavior—they tell members of a cultural group what they *should* do.

In other words, *worldviews state how things *are*, how things work (what are the *expected cause-and-effect chains*) while *values state what *should be done* and indicate cultural pressure to *behave* in certain ways. For example, it would be very odd to say "One should be impermanent." *Worldviews state how things are, not what one should do.

13.3.2. Determining relevant ethical values

But identifying *values and using them for interpretations is, as you can guess, no simple matter.

To begin, I would like to establish a rule to help with clarity in our discussions. When we use the word "value", I would like us to take care and phrase things as necessary to make sure we are not confusing the various meanings of "value" which include: an *ethical value (a *principle), something that is widely regarded as desirable (such as "independence" in sentences

such as "Americans claim they value independence"), and a measurement (such as "the value of that house is now almost nothing").

Then, we should be clear that there are *values and then there are *values. What I mean is that there are ethical ideals (principles) that a cultural group might uphold as an aspiration (such as "one should always be honest") which are often considered but not, in the end, all that active in deciding behavior (although they might generate guilt or shame about behavior), and there are *values that really must be kept, such as *loyalty to one's mafia boss if you are a member of that cultural group. So, when we identify a *value in a film, we also need to consider where it might be on the spectrum that has "that is a great idea but" at one end and "that is something I really must do" at the other. Values *do* proscribe behavior but that does not necessarily mean they *lead* to behavior. Some *values do, some do not. It depends on many things. We identify *values regardless of whether they are near the "must do" end, because we are trying to construct not just reasons behind the actions or reactions of a narrative figure—we are also interested in that individual's thoughts and feelings, including the confusion that might be the result of the belief that X should be done but Y happens instead.

Furthermore, most interesting narratives deal with conflicts and some of these conflicts are the result of conflicting *values. In other words, it might not be enough to identify the dominant *value that leads to the thoughts, feelings, or actions of a narrative figure. It might be a better interpretation to know from among what *values a selection has been made because such alternative *values rarely disappear. They continue to be in the environment, putting pressure on or informing the narrative. For example, the central female protagonist of *3-Iron* mentioned above feels duty bound to be a good wife but her husband abuses her. She has strong thoughts to escape this

situation and some degree of a wish to seek revenge. These three conflicting *values—a wife *should* be a good Confucian wife no matter the situation, a modern woman *should* take action to improve her personal situation, and a person who has done something bad to you *deserves* to be the object of revenge—play out in complicated ways in this film.

13.4. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN WORLDVIEWS AND ETHICAL VALUES

13.4.1. Exploring differences of worldviews and values via the interpretation of the *5 Centimeters* instance

I would like to return to my interpretation of the *instance in *5 Centimeters Per Second*, which was:

> The boy is holding back the essential loneliness of life for a brief happy moment with the girl he loves. His heart is full to bursting with the painful contradiction of two facts: he can be with her now but soon will be separated from her. Yet, being young, these painful feelings are strong but still somehow vague. He is learning about life.

What part of this interpretation is derived from considerations of *worldviews, of *values, and what part results from other random considerations? The short answer is that it is almost entirely written with what I believe to be modern, common Japanese *worldviews in mind because, I believe, keeping these "not naturally me" *worldviews clearly present in my mind as I arrive at tentative conclusions is my best hope of staying culturally close to the text rather than projecting my personal *values and personal cultural predispositions on it. Of course there is still a considerable amount, perhaps too much, "me" in the conclusions—it is not that easy to escape one's culture.

When I wrote the above interpretation, I felt I was sort of

writing in a foreign language, but I also felt some intuitive sense of “accuracy.” That sense, I believe, comes from an internal “check, double-check, and then conclude” process. I ask myself:

- whether I have aligned the interpretation (and the exact working of it) with *worldviews that I think are legitimately there,
- whether I have deployed a credible blend of *values, and
- whether I have, in the end, “stayed real” by considering:
    - the narrative as it is delivered in its totality (the narrative context, all the multimedia information, what I know of the director), and,
    - my “common sense” (which needs to be used with great caution since it is overloaded with cultural assumptions).

If I am lucky my conclusions have been tested by sharing them with others (usually my students) and observing their reactions.[4]

Here is my interpretation, broken down into parts based on different sources for what I concluded. I did not write from these sources. I considered all types of things, wrote an interpretation that I was comfortable with, and have only now gone back to see if I can determine what is behind my conclusions. Starting with the *worldviews and writing something that upholds or reveals or restates them is likely to lead to stilted, unnatural sounding, unconvincing observations. Please keep that in mind.

4. Interestingly, it is often the case that "natives" of the target culture (in this case Japan) who are class members will not weigh in as to the accuracy. Most of my overseas students consider it rude to "correct" the interpretations of non-natives to the culture or, sometimes, have a surprisingly high level of self-doubt about their own ability to understand their culture. This, I think, derives in part from their knowledge being instinctive and intuitive rather than discursive. They just "know" whether an interpretation is or is not on target but cannot necessarily say why they know that.

Here, again, is the interpretation, followed by explanations as to the concepts behind some of the phrases:

> The boy is holding back the **essential loneliness of life** for **a brief happy moment** with the girl he loves. His heart is full to bursting with the **painful contradiction** of two facts: he can be with her now but soon **will be separated from her**. Yet, **being young, these painful feelings are strong but still somehow vague**. He is learning about life.

***essential loneliness of life**. This comes from Heian period literature's extensive discourse on separation and waiting for lovers and post-World War II "I-novel" expressions of loneliness and isolation of the protagonist, and probably a general hyper-awareness of relationships and lack of them that I sense in Japanese narratives. *Japanese social worldview.*

***a brief happy moment**. This comes from a particular *value, expertly articulated in Oe Kenzaburo's novel about a woman who experienced all manner of horrible things in her life, *Echo of Heaven* (*Jinsei no shinseki*, 1989). He described her smile as always *akkerakan*, by which he means to be cheerful when confronted with dark and depressing things. We see the same smile in the Chinese film *2046* (*2046*, 2004) as defining Lulu's approach to her bitter life, and (somewhat more ambiguously) in many other of the narrative figures of that film, particularly Chow and Bailing. I do not consider this sense of being positive as specific to Asia (think of British "stiff upper lip," for example) but this particular *mix of awareness of the bitterness of things plus "continuing on" (*gambaru*) is, I would suggest, very common in Japan. *Japanese worldview (life is bitter) plus Japanese ethical value (one should show outward positivity regardless of what you feel inside).*

***painful contradiction**. Freud, literature, my study of religions (confronting the pervasive human urge to find answers to things), and life in its many challenging twists and

turns, all tell me that the human condition is almost always one of painful contradictions. *Personal social worldview.*

*__soon will be separated from her__. Japanese embraced very early in their cultural history Buddhist impermanence, change, and that change is perceived as painful by those of us who are enlightened. It has left a mark. It has been immortalized in the "beauty of the cherry blossoms which will soon fall" cultural meme but is broader and deeper than that would suggest. *Japanese cosmic worldview.*

* **being young, these painful feelings are strong but still somehow vague**. This is my nod to much about this film that takes up, in my opinion, the theme of the process of "what it is like to have a first love, and how things change after that" as well as the fact that nowhere in the scene (or elsewhere) does this boy articulate with clarity his feelings of this moment, nor does it look like he is experiencing them with much internal clarity. They are just, in my opinion, sort of washing over him. That's how I read his expressions and comments during this scene. *The literary critic inside me asserting itself.*

My final comment just steps back and looks at the whole of what I just asserted, and reacts to it in a summary way.

13.4.2. Worldviews and values mixtures

What I would like to point our attention to now is the interpretation resulting in "a brief happy moment" because it is a good example of one typical challenge when using the *course method, namely, a *mixture of *worldviews and *values. While it is not that difficult to offer distinctive definitions for "*worldviews" (how things *are*) and "values" (what one *should do*), *values are probably in almost all cases, in their essence, the result of *worldviews: *because* of how things are, one should .... . In asking yourself the source of your interpretation you might find that you are not sure whether you

are dealing with a *worldview, a *value, or both and probably it is both.

13.5. CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND COMMON PRACTICES

Our thoughts, actions, and feelings are heavily influenced by the "*common practices" of the group in which we feel we have cultural membership. It is the law, when driving, to come to a full stop at every stop sign. However, "we" (the cultural group that could be defined as "American drivers under the age of 80") can say that the "common practice" is the "rolling stop."

Arguments over what is and is not a *common practice are probably arguments about either the defining characteristics of the group or one's membership in it. It may be a Japanese *value to always gargle when coming in from the outside to one's home but is it "common practice"? The outcome of the debate on that is likely to determine one's action. "I don't gargle" can mean "our group doesn't do that anymore" or "I'm not that sort of *traditional Japanese man." Christianity might teach "turning the other cheek" but many people who also call themselves Christian might not look too harshly on little acts of revenge. And so on.

*Common practice can be the result of basic "common sense" ("It is common practice to avoid a dark alley") or more culturally-bound ("It is common practice, among some in Japan, to send a thank you card when you receive a birthday card.")

We take this position for the method of the course: We recognize that common practices might be the single most important set of contexts to consider when building a credible ToM and we will duly note their influence. We will *nevertheless* look beyond them to see what *worldviews and *values might have a role to play, even if, by comparison, that role is much less. We do this because our project is to explore the impact of premodern cultural positions on our modern thoughts,

feelings, and actions through constructing *ToM about love. Again, we are not simply trying to produce a meaningful interpretation of a text or film. We take that as an opportunity to think culturally.

That being said, we will definitely take notice when common practices are ignored. They are likely a signal of something. If you do not know me well (for example, let's say we have offices on the same floor of a building but have never had a true conversation) and say to me, "Good morning" and I answer, "It is not good!" I have stepped outside a *common practice. It would be natural and correct for you to wonder why I did so. This might be a clue that leads to other discoveries.

13.6. A NOTE ON SITUATIONAL FACTORS

Just for the sake of preserving perspective, when we begin to "make sense" of a narrative, that is, offer explanations for the thoughts, actions, or feelings of a narrative figure or speculate on the *worldviews and *values of the author/director, *situational factors that are often not cultural are actually more dominant. The particular situation of the story, the genre of the work, all sorts of things, actually have the greatest influence and are the best predictors of thoughts, actions and feelings. We might need to draw on these to arrive at a firm and credible understanding of what we are discussing but we cannot stop with just these contexts for interpretation since our interest in, again, in whatever *cultural contexts might be present, however unimportant. We will discuss the relationship of *situational factors to our *interpretive projects later in the book.

14. Reconstructing culture through Theory of Mind (ToM) and narratives

Constructing ToM ◆ seeing ourselves and others in narrative figures ◆ making sense of narrative developments

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- bumps
- “making sense”
- model reader / model viewer
- narratives
- narrative figures
- narrative progress / cause-and-effect chains
- scholar-beauty / caizi-jiaren storyline
- Theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- attractors
- Connectivism
- cultural contexts
- common practices
- East Asia
- ethical values
- “horizon of expectation”

- models
- worldviews

14.1. MINDREADING / THEORY OF MIND (TOM)

We explore the cultures of *East Asia by looking at what *worldviews and *ethical values might be present in stories and films. We try to identify these *worldviews and *ethical values by constructing plausible *ToM for narrative figures (*mindreading)—work that is not much different than what we would do about others in our daily lives. We try to understand narratives when they move forward in ways that feel unnatural to us by checking whether different *worldviews and/or *ethical values could explain the developments better.

14.1.1. Mindreading: Constructing ToM

Early in the Chinese film *House of Flying Daggers*, Jin (one of the two key male protagonists of the film), dressed in disguise, forces his way into that part of the prison where Mei (the female protagonist) is held. In a dramatic fight sequence, he frees her and they flee together. In a scene before this one, Jin and his comrade soldier Leo had secretly decided that if they free Mei, she will return to her rebel group (the Flying Daggers), thus revealing their location. in and Leo ill thus be able to collect a

reward for their work, and, too, government troops will be able to mount a successful attack on the rebel group.

Once safely deep in the forest, Mei has an opportunity to ask why Jin freed her. He answers that because she is exceptionally beautiful he would do anything for her, and that, anyway, he hates the government and respects the Flying Daggers.

As we watch this scene wondering whether Jin has just lied to Mei or revealed a twist in the narrative, we are making these mindreading calculations:

> Based on the film so far, the exceptionally handsome Jin should be taken to be a playboy. We factor that in. Jin appears to be loyal to the government but not so very loyal. We keep that in mind, too. Given these things and the exceptional beauty of Mei and the warm that seems to be between them, plus our knowledge that films like this enjoy having twists and turns in the story, it seems unlikely but within the range of possibilities that perhaps he really would prefer to escape with, and take ownership of, a beautiful woman as opposed to continuing to labor as a soldier—a role he does not seem excessively proud of. Further, we have already encountered instances of deception in the film and so that should be on our mind. Some viewers at this point will decide one way or the other on the point of Jin's truthfulness while others will be more tentative and continue to wonder about his faithfulness which is, indeed, one of the themes of the film.
>
> What of Mei? Does she really believe him? Is she so confident of her beauty or cynical about the intentions of men to believe Jin's explanation? Perhaps she has decided only to appear to believe, in order to trick him for her own reasons? Her verbal and facial expression and body language are all convincingly one of trust. Because she is a sympathetic (and beautiful) and blind woman, many of

> us will identify with her and think of her as in need of protection at this point and conclude that she is indeed trusting him. Other viewers might be more cautious but will not be able to decide whether the caution is warranted of just a result of a naturally more cynical approach to film narratives.

The information we draw in our attempt to mindread these individuals is surprisingly extensive: What sort of film is this? Is it a “straight” story or will it have lots of twists and turn? Since it is a martial arts film, we rather suspect it will. And, since it is a martial arts film, loyalty to one’s fighting group probably is an *ethical value that we need to give some weight to. But since it is in epic Hollywood style perhaps, we wonder whether it could just be more “American” in its approach, whether, for example, it is a film more about choosing what is good for yourself than submitting to the demands of a group? Should we, in other words, deploy some set of Chinese sensibilities or some selection of American sensibilities in predicting plot development? We might ask ourselves again what type of person do we think Jin is. (We go back in our mind and review his past actions and attitudes.) And do the same for Mei, too.

We can do such mindreading in an exceptionally brief period of time—seconds. It is what we do with regard to the actions of others all the time, a secondary nature habit of calculation that gets us through our days and is key to how we will interact with others. This film is designed, in particular, to invite us to mindread. If it has captured our interest, we are watching and thinking of both Jin and Mei “Why did you do that?” “What will you do next?” “How will you react?” “What are you feeling?”

We are engaging in something that we will call “constructing *Theory of Mind (ToM).” We are guessing what a person might do based on what we know of that person, including what we

think that person believes, what state-of-mind is in play, the immediate demands of the situation, and so on.

Let us consider a passage from "Journal of Bleached Bones in a Field" (*Nozarashi kiko*) by the 17th-century Japanese haiku poet Matsuo Basho:

> I was walking along the Fuji River when I saw an abandoned child, barely two, weeping pitifully. Had his parents been unable to endure this floating world which is as wave-tossed as these rapids, and so left him here to wait out a life brief as dew? He seemed like a bush clover in autumn's wind that might scatter in the evening or wither in the morning. I tossed him some food from my sleeve and said [composed this haiku] in passing,
>
> > those who listen for the monkeys:
> > what of this child
> > in the autumn wind?[1]

The reader might feel something odd or strange in this passage. The generic *ToM would suggest that a poet (a person with deep feelings) who is bothering to tell us of an abandoned child, would do more than toss the child some food, write a poem about it, and move on. We can, at this point, just conclude Basho is a cold person, or we can conclude that there is something more to understand about him. We know we lack sufficient information to decide which, so usually, unless there is a good reason to do otherwise, we will just move on, but with some unfinished business in our mind and some doubts about him. Our operative *ToM might be something like: "Hmm, I don't know what to think. Maybe he is cold. I think I would have tried to help the child or at least tried to ask someone something."

If I were to assert that Basho is illustrating the Buddhist truth

1. David Landis Barnhill, trans., *Basho's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Basho* (State University of New York Press, 2005), 14. ProQuest Ebook Central.

of karma (he showed interest in Zen Buddhism all of his life)—that our current condition is one of fate that we must accept—, it might change how we construct our *ToM. If I were to assert that, based on his writings, it is clear that he is deeply interested in and informed about Chinese Daoism, that, too, might change our construction. Initially, most of us probably did not think to deploy Buddhist or Daoist *values as key to the passage. We have perhaps important new details about Basho's *worldview or *ethical values. But, still, the revised *ToM would be something like: "Basho probably is someone more interested in narrating a moment of Buddhist truth or an affirmation of Daoist **wuwei*, than exploring the possibilities of action-from-compassion (which is better associated with Western notions). Yet, if that is true, what sort of person is *that*?" Puzzles remain. We haven nogt *made sense of the narrative yet to our full satisfaction. That lack of satisfaction is either marking undecidedness about the *ToM or disagreement with the *values needed to make sense of it, or both.

If we want to construct a *ToM that best matches one a reader of the day might have constructed, we should keep gathering contextual information. We might learn, for example, that it was a time of famine. This abandoned child may be just one among many, too many, abandoned children. Now we might be able to forgive Basho his actions, deploying the generic principle, "Sometimes there is no solution to a problem. At least he offered some food" or use to that same end the more Japan-specific notion of **akirame* ("giving up/letting go"—based on the Buddhist and Daoist wisdom of accepting fate).

But that he *wrote a poem* still strikes a somewhat dissonant note. If we learned that Basho devoted his life to writing haiku and continued to do so even on his deathbed, and at every significant moment of his life (and many that were just casual moments), we could further revise our *ToM to something like

this "Basho's most sincere and deeply felt way of expressing his thoughts and emotions is through poetry. Perhaps he is truly distressed, but understands that there is nothing he can do."

Now we have constructed a Basho that "makes sense" to us—we have assembled sufficient contextual information and applied it in a way that puts his actions within reason even if we feel we might behave otherwise. But perhaps we have gone too far in reconstructing a Basho that comfortably matches our own *values. Perhaps we have been unaware that we have deployed an assumption: "A poet is someone who has sympathy and empathy." Or perhaps our preconceived idea of children is that they are small, helpless creatures whom we are duty-bound to care for. Perhaps, on the contrary, Basho really is just a cold poet. Perhaps he thinks, "children are just really not that much my business."

I hope you can see how, in this case of Basho's tossing of food, we are shuffling around *worldviews (the Buddhist concept of **karma*) and *ethical values (starving children should not be abandoned except in certain cases), measuring the against each other, in an attempt to "*make sense" of a narrative moment rather than just leaving it as "somehow odd" and that you can see, too, the perils of simply deploying one's own *values onto the narrative moment. We are engaged in a similar balancing act with Jin: Handsome men who seem to love women are not that likely to take their loyalty oath to a government as the primary deciding factor. Is he really a playboy? Is he really a good soldier?

Compelling narratives often offer up these "in the balance" situations where we want to understand but are not sure. *ToM remain interestingly unsettled and we keep reading or watching to see how things will play out. We are constantly presented with the undecidedness of a *ToM, the possibility that we have calculated incorrectly based on lack of information or through error in applying context. While in the real world it can matter

when we are wrong, luckily for this course the very act of building a *ToM is the point. If we consider one possibility then change to another and end up not being sure it is not a problem as long as we have traveled the road of asking what *worldviews, *values, and *common practices should be considered. By doing so, we are sharpening our interpretive skills, discovering what others think, and learning (usually traditional) cultural content that might be more relevant in our daily lives than initially thought.

14.1.2. Some words of caution about ToM

Constructing *ToM is one of the key activities of our *course method of interpretive analysis. (Another is identifying a useful instance to analyze. Still another key activity is assembling—discovering and mastering to some degree—relevant contexts, such as the Buddhist *worldview that ours is a world of illusion.)

There are two basic types of *ToM and both are important to us, though for different reasons. In the discussions about these two general types a variety of terms are used but commonly one set is termed "simulation-theory" (or "mental simulation") and the other "theory-theory." These are shorthand appellations to suggest that one develops a *ToM—a "theory" (that is, a predictive model) of how a person is thinking, feeling and acting—either by running a "simulation" within one's own mind, or building a "theory" based on basic principles of psychology. (So, yes, "theory-theory" is oddly redundant. The somewhat humorous name arose during the debates and criticisms around these theory, in order to distinguish it clearly from "simulation" approaches.)

When one tries to predict another (construct a *ToM) by asking the question, "If it were me, I would .... " what we are doing is simulating the situation within our own cognitive space

and projecting those results onto the *ToM we are building. "If it were me, I would be angry if the professor would not let me make up the assignment, therefore, I am sure my friend is angry, too." "Simulation theory" actually works very well in most situations and is also, I would suggest, at the root of Freud's idea of "projection" and (later) "transference" (where a patient projects onto the analyst also sorts of emotions, good and bad). Obviously, the danger is that I can easily over assume that someone will think and react similarly to myself. Clearly, this is especially true in cross-cultural situations.

"Theory-theory" argues that what is a better approach is to use principles (suggested from a range of sources, including basic psychology, social practices, and so forth) rather than our own minds ("me") as the modeling (making a "theory") material. The criticism is that such principles might be overly simple, even naïve.

"Simulation theory" helps us get our bearings in a situation, and probably is important to "locking down" the basic cause-and-effects chains that are the progress of a narrative. (We read and the narrative develops in ways that "make sense" to us.) However, "theory-theory" allows us to consider a person from a different angle. If we are not Confucian but the person whose *ToM we are trying to build is, it might be very useful to ask "What would a good Confucian think she or he should do in this situation?" We are applying a principle, not just asking ourselves what we should do.

*ToM theories has been challenged in the past couple of decades with a powerful argument that human behavior arises less from large meta-positions than from situational sequences.[2] If I sit at a table for a party, I might engage in friendly conversation with the person next to me not because of a principle or because I think this is what I imagine others might want me to do, but in simple reactive response to the

2. "Theory of Mind," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy IEP*, accessed December 27, 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu/theomind/#H3 .

immediate situation, namely, that the person is talking to me in a friendly way and I am responding to that warmth with my own friendly banter. This behavioral argument has the advantage of simplicity and explanatory flexibility: the line of behavior is situational, not derived from *ethical values or simulations that are based on, well, what exactly? And, the argument goes, if we observe carefully we see that much of our daily behavior is just like this. I find this criticism of *ToM to be convincing, and it is in line with my pedagogical interest in *Connectivism. But this actually is not relevant to the course because we are not trying to be cognitive psychologists; we are borrowing the act of interpretation (gathering and application of contexts) to explore the *worldviews and *values of *East Asian countries. To that end, the practice of constructing *ToM remains a powerful way to explore aspects of a culture.

So, for this course we engage in *ToM construction but with a heavy emphasis on double-checking as to whether some overlooked traditional *cultural contexts might be meaningful. In other words, we gather together, as best we can, what might be the relevant *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices for the instance we seek to interpret. This is the heavy-lifting part of the course analysis, since in many cases we simply do not yet know or know well enough the cultural context (such as the main *ethical values of Confucianism). Much of the work of this course is discovering, learning, and retaining awareness of cultural context to construct *ToM that show due appreciation and respect for the role of cultural elements in forming one's thoughts, actions, and feelings.

14.2. NARRATIVES

14.2.1. Narrative figures

14.2.1.1. Narratives and "us"

I will admit to a split interest in authoring this book and this course. I really like narratives and I enjoy trying to figure them out and make them interesting to others. (And love narratives are by far the most interesting to me.) On the other hand, I am fascinated with how people think and why they do what they do, or, perhaps more honestly, how our psyche works in all of its confounding complexity and what this means of the "human condition" and how understanding better might lead to kindness, thoughtfulness, and a peaceful, rich life. In terms more specific to this class, I see us all as trapped in our *cultural contexts, being more followers than leaders in life as we are guided by forces we are hardly aware of, forces that divide us and foster suffering of all sorts. I think humans are capable of good acts but more capable of them when they are aware of the forces around them rather than just letting situations decide their actions and moods. My interest in culture comes from a desire to understand more accurately ,and gaining freedom through that awareness, letting confidence and knowledge dispel fear and invite happy thoughts and good acts.

I would also like to put aside any niceties on this point: those who think literature, the topics of literature, the events in narratives—all of that—cannot lead us into meaningful thought about and the experiencing of "real life" are just, simply put, wrong. I would like to argue that the narratives of fiction are not very different from your very selves. That the boundary of our identity is most definitely an open border when it comes to narratives. That narratives, rather easily, "crossover" and reside

in us, giving "us" fundament shape and substance. We absorb narratives. Reading narratives changes who we are.

I will offer three reasons for this line of thought: object relations, identity via narrative, and the special ability of artifice to capture reality.

14.2.1.2. Object Relations Theory

"Object relation" is a key element in the theory of self offered by the mid-20th-century psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. She was primarily interested in the development of the self and how it builds internal structures that overcome self-destructive tendencies present from birth (Thanatos) in order to live healthy and full lives. Essential to this process is the development of internal representations of objects and the integration of them. While I find Klein exceptionally pessimistic in the same way Freud was pessimistic late in his life, I am convinced by her assertion that we interact with the world through the mental images that we create and maintain: I do not have a direct relationship with "you;" rather, my internal image of "myself" relates to the internal image of "you" that I have. Of course, this image is not static (or should not be static) but it is not a real person. It is a construct. (You can see, perhaps, why I feel *models and *attractors have such interpretive power.) From this view, it is not far to the conclusion that images constructed by me of you, and the image I construct of a narrative figure, are both of the same substance. Both are images, cognitive constructs. Of course, there is a huge and important difference: you are living and as a living entity you can smile at me, yell at me, give me gifts, steal my car, all those sorts of things. But it is undeniable that viewers can fall in love, to some degree, with movie actors never met and readers can fall in love with characters in a novel whom they have never seen. We can celebrate when "our"

team wins as if we, too, have somehow won. These mental images matter to us. Not just a little bit. A lot. And thus, our interest in celebrities, film characters, and the "people" we meet in literature is when the stories of those "people" somehow capture our loving attention and become, as internal mental images, invested with sufficient substance and vibrancy as to evoke thoughts and emotions about them. The positive way of representing this is to say that consuming narratives can be a hugely satisfying and enriching experience. The negative way of viewing this is to ponder how we are never anything more than an image to another person. I would venture to guess that many of you reading this paragraph have felt that, as some point in your life, you were treated more as an "object" than a person. But, to balance that, being with someone *does* matter. In person we communicate with each other through the chemistry of our bodies. In digital conversation we engage in complex communication that creates complex, subtle, and powerful understandings of one another. But, either way, my position is that narrative figures and those we personally know have, in some way, common representations cognitively.

14.2.1.3. Identity (definition) through narrative

Rightly or wrongly, Freud believed that although the unconscious is truly unconscious and cannot be articulated discursively, telling a therapist about one's fears and aspirations, dreams, childhood experiences, and current relationships can outline problems that would otherwise be out-of-reach and that, even with just these slim outlines, progress can be made at toward ameliorating mental anguish. This came to be called the "talking cure." Its fundamental element is sharing the narratives one has about oneself: "I am a wounded person." "I am a young scholar." "I was happier when I was living in Montana." "My dog loves me." Given my

rather complete acceptance of the Buddhist position of no-self, I find this way of thinking who "I" am to be convincing: "I am who I tell myself I am." This is narrative pure and simple. Originally, I was just interested in how psychotherapy might be able to unearth old ways of thinking about oneself (myself). That, if the old narratives could be unearthed, the unnecessary or outdated an inaccurate story loops could be turned off. But, as my involvement in literature deepened, as I saw that reading Heian literature had changed me in truly substantive ways, I turned this around: having a self is not living out a life formulated by childhood experiences but rather my life, my "self," is the result of all the narratives pouring into me all the time. Some are shrugged off; others dive deep into my mind and lodge there. This view—that the self is a thin consciousness bobbing about uncertainly on top of a body and all sorts of cognitive processes never consciously represented—harmonizes well with my Buddhist conviction of "no-self." "We" are the stories we encounter and consume. The psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva wrote in *New Maladies of the Soul* that her patients were becoming harder to cure because they were losing the ability to tell stories about themselves with affect (emotion) that they — the "inability to represent."[3] This sentence was life changing for me, at least in terms of my professional life. I began to "see" how, in fact, my students were also becoming, over the years, less fluent in the stories of themselves. Or so I thought. And it was this that made me believe that teaching literature was the teaching of a fundamental skill: making one into a rich, interesting, satisfying self. I taught in this vein for more than twenty years. My view is different now—I think students tell complex stories of themselves in postmodern ways that Freud could not imagine, and that they are not affectless but the widely used posture of cynicism or disengagement can make them look so. But this has

3. Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, translated by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9.

not changed my fundamental view that the boundary between the world of stories “out there” and the world of stories about myself “in here” is highly porous.

14.2.1.4. Artifice and metaphor

Recently an ex-student of mine shared with such enthusiasm his newly found interest in a certain poet that I bought the most recent volume by that poet and reread the poem my student had recited to me in the café with such feeling. It was titled, “The Moon from Any Window:”

> The moon from any window is one part
> whoever’s looking.
>
> The part I can’t see
> is everything my sister keeps to herself.
>
> One part my dead brother’s sleepless brow,
>
> the other part the time I waste, the time
> I won’t have.
>
> But which is the lion
> killed for the sake of the honey inside him,
>
> and which the wine, stranded
> in a valley, unredeemed?[4]

A couple of things about this. First, I sleep within view of a skylight and see the moon at night very often. Nights with the moon and nights without the moon are, indeed, very different. Recently there was a total lunar eclipse. The room darkened and became like a different country. The moon at the window is indeed something to write about. And now that I have read this

4. Li-young Lee, "The Mood from Any Window," in *Book of My Nights*, American Poets Continuum Series, 68 (Rochester: BOA Editions, Ltd., 2001), Kindle Edition.

poem, the moon at the window has become more "something" about my life. Narrative has poured in. Second, when he was reading this out loud and reached the line "is everything my sister keeps to herself" I privately thought "Exactly!!" and began to listen with great care. I knew I was in the presence of accurate language. The best poetry is most definitely not vague language. It is accurate language that exceeds the ability to fully articulate it with ordinary discursive statements. It is metaphor that names something exactly, not metaphor tossed into an ether with the hopes that it will generate some sort of meaning or response.

Although there are many ways to talk about how art can represent life or "truth" more accurately than "life" itself can, for me the path to this view was through the 18th-century master playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon who wrote for the puppet theater and the kabuki state and said:

> Art is something that lies between the skin and the flesh, the make-believe and the real.

Also:

> Art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal. [....] It is unreal, and yet it is not unreal; it is real, and yet it is not real.[5]

A scholar comments on Chikamatsu's approach to art and appreciation for the evocative power of puppets like this:

> As a human figure, the insubstantial puppet is simply unreal. When not actually performing on stage, it hangs on a nail, reduced to a pathetic and insignificant object. However, as soon as the puppeteer sets this pathetic figure in motion, it becomes a human figure that appears more real than real human beings. The otherwise empty outer layer of skin (*himaku* [skin membrane]) appears to

5. Chikamatsu Monzaemon, "Chikamatsu on the Art of the Puppet Stage," in *Anthology of Japanese Literature, from the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, ed. and trans. Donald Keene (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 389.

> envelop real flesh (*niku*). The puppet begins to possess both skin and flesh (*hiniku* [skin and flesh]). Chikamatsu competed with *kabuki* because he always wanted the performance of puppets, which consist only of *himaku* [skin membrane], to surpass the performance of kabuki actors, who have *hiniku* [skin and flesh]. Behind Chikamatsu's way of reading the kanji for "skin membrane" as *hiniku* [skin and flesh] rather than *himaku* [skin membrane], we can see his decisive and enthusiastic attitude as a playwright of the puppet theater.[6]

Those who have seen a traditional Japanese puppet (*bunraku*) performance might be more convinced of these words that others. The puppets of that theater truly have a disturbing amount of "life" in them.

14.2.1.5. "Reading" culture through narrative figures

And so, yes, we are "only" talking about characters in films, narrative figures. Narrative figures are artifices, partial representatives of real people but not randomly constructed. They do indeed have some sort of life within us and it is indeed legitimate to construct for them *ToM. The course is founded on this premise but I think it is reasonable because we interact through the world anyway through cognitive images, we identify closely with narratives, and art manages to explore in accurate and powerful ways aspects of the human condition. My view of the writer-reader (director-viewer) contract include that part of the artistic activity is that the author, of whoever, puts before us a proposition: Here is my view of an aspect of human thought, feeling and behavior. This is what we humans are. Have I convinced you? And with these narrative figures as

6. Ryosuke Ohasi, "The Hermeneutic Approach to Japanese Modernity: 'Art-Way,' 'iki' and 'Cut-Continuance'," in *Japanese hermeneutics: current debates on aesthetics and interpretation*, ed. Michael F. Marra (University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 29.

mediators between the way the author understands life and the way we understand it we have, at hand, the possibility of discussing our differences in worldviews and ethical values. We can answer, "Yes, I see it that way to" or "No, I am not convinced." Either response embraces our measurement of our own worldviews and values and those that we think the author, or the narrative figure (if at the level of the story) is engaging (where "engaging" is accepting, ignoring, or resisting — all work just as well for exploring differing *cultural contexts.

14.2.2. Building sensible narratives

14.2.2.1. Interpretation as the building plausible and likely cause-and-effect chains (narratives)

A work of literary prose is, empirically speaking, just words on a page. It is in our mind, through cognitive processes, that they become narratives. (Thus, the relevance of *attractors.) No matter how many words there might be on the page—no matter how specific, detailed, rich, and complete that code might be—it is still a code, a system of signs. Narratives are born of the reader's cognition. They do not reside in the page. The code content does limit our possible interpretations but this system of signs does not do the work of narrative building for us.

In this course, we call such building of narratives "interpretation." Essentially, we are consuming the code of the written word or the many codes delivered simultaneously in film (sound, image, dialogue, and so on) and deciding, *according to rules of plausibility and likeliness*, the thoughts and feelings associated with the narrative figures as well as what might be the meaning of the sequence of events. We check this understanding with others to see if they agree. Our rules of plausibility and likeliness include our estimation of how others

with whom we share our thoughts will think. The process is the same whether there is little code or much code, although how much we are limited by that code can differ greatly from work to work, even within a single work in its many passages.[7] A "right" interpretation of a work is one that others also find credible, and an "interesting" interpretation is one that others find interesting.

In our class, the "others" in the above sentence are, ideally, culturally well-informed, competent in building narratives, members of the relevant cultural group or groups (usually the target audiences of the film). When our interpretation seems at least *plausible* and, better, *likely* to them, we have succeeded in seeing the narrative from their cultural perspective. While this is the definition of interpretive success in this course, please note its Achilles Heel: If *everyone* in the group to whom you have offered your interpretation does not know well the culture that is the target audience, then simply because everyone agrees with your interpretation does not mean others more culturally competent will also do so. Put bluntly, your entire group has generated an implausible or unlikely interpretation. Yet, we can only make our best effort, and leverage the cultural knowledge of our group as best we can. We do not need to worry much—the process itself has great value, even when the results come up short.

I would like to continue this consideration of building narratives with a short exercise in such building. Here is a famous, short (code-sparse) sentence: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."[8] Please think for a moment and build a narrative based on this sentence. Then, when ready, keep reading.

We have only one moment in time. All the rest of the story is constructed by the reader. Why were the shoes never worn? Why are they for sale? We provide possible scenarios and in so doing, we create causes for the effect, narratives are born. The

7. See, Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
8. Sometimes attributed to Ernest Hemingway.

many *plausible* chain of causes that I might consider to get to the above result are drawn from my total experiences of the world (including the literary world) that I think will also make sense to whomever I plan to offer my interpretation (real or imagined). If I am serious about asserting my interpretation in a way to convince others, I will further narrow these chains down to those that are *likely*, as understood by me and whomever I plan to offer it to. The lack of sequential details (the moment itself is quite specific), which if present would be important for selecting down to a single or plausible few narratives, causes (or allows) us to consider all sorts of stories. This short story is not just one narrative. It is many.

But it is not *every* imaginable narrative if I limit myself to *plausible* cause-and-effect chains. Further, the list becomes even shorter if my standard is *likely* chains. I file through various possibilities in my mind, instinctively following basic narrative rules relying on an unspoken contract between the writer and reader: that the cause-and-effect chains will more or less make sense based on the rules of the genre, and the widely held *worldviews of physics and psychology *as represented in narratives* (because we know to suspend strict rules of physics and such for the purposes of the fictional world), even if there are some surprises along the way. I also know that, if the context is not stated (as is the case in this example) then I should probably deploy likely, “normal” contexts rather than outrageous ones such as “these are the shoes of an android only thought to have been a baby.” Were my literary critical posture to be grounded in a view of the text as *separated* from the author and its initial cultural context, I can make whatever interpretation seems intriguing. But since, as a class, we are using narratives to explore cultural milieu, we are committed to imagining the author or director’s cultural contexts and those of the intended audience. This is the basic interpretive posture for the *course method (and is also the usual posture of the casual

reader and viewer). I just think it is good to note at least once that this is not the required posture of many literary critical approaches.

Given these basic rules for narrative context and narrative progress, I think many would accept this as a plausible narrative built from our short sentence: "A couple was looking forward to their child's birth but something happened and the baby died. In despair (and perhaps in poverty), the grieving parents decided to sell the shoes." Statistically speaking, I think it is unlikely that this was the narrative you created but I also think you are likely to be willing to accept mine as a plausible option. However, similarly, I believe few of you would be comfortable with this: "A professor stole a parents' newly bought baby shoes and put them up for sale on the black market." It is not that this is outside the realm of possibilities but rather it seems somehow pointless (implausible), and based on *unlikely* contexts. That being said, if the sentence were not stand-alone but rather part of a longer work, one with a dystopian *worldview proffering a theme of the callous, selfish behavior of its inhabitants, now the narrative just offered is indeed plausible enough to deserve consideration.

Please read the following invented initial lines of a short story and continue the narrative in your mind: "Early in the Ming dynasty there lived in a lovely and elegant estate a beautiful young lady. That year, the new magistrate of the province moved into the grand estate of the previous magistrate, together with his wife and intelligent, handsome son."

In extending the narrative, I am guessing that many of you, especially those of you who have seen a great deal of East Asian TV drama, have already probably decided that the narrative will be about the man and woman, and that they will eventually get together although there might be some challenges along the way. If so, you have (probably automatically and unconsciously) deployed as a reading hypothesis a common narrative *model

already learned elsewhere: the "talented man will get beautiful girl" plotline. This *scholar-beauty (*caizi-jiaren*) storyline was particularly common, almost cliché, in China's Ming dynasty (14th-17th centuries) love stories. We encounter it everywhere in our analytic work for this course, sometimes just as it is and sometimes as a baseline from which a narrative deviates.

Here is another narrative fragment to complete: "I once had a boyfriend who, whenever he would come to pick me up, would say, 'Here's Johnny!'" Do you think this the first line of a happy, young-romance story about a cheerful young man? Or, rather, do you think it might be the first line of a horror film? Your choice will turn on whether you know about the film script line "Here's Johnny" *and* whether you think knowing that is plausibly relevant or not. In this case, your interpretation turns on whether you build the narrative (or not) based on what might be (but might not be!) essential inter-film contextual information.

How quickly do we decide plausible contexts? Usually it is during the realtime exposure to the code. Often it is reconsidered and refashioned after consuming the code (after finishing viewing the film and thinking about it). Here is an exercise using a film trailer that might indicate at what point you decided you had gathered enough contextual information to settle on a plausible narrative. The film title is removed, since it would give away the context. (The title is in a footnote if you want to check it after the exercise.)

View the clip while at the same time trying to correctly answer this plot outcome question: "What will *likely* happen between these two?" Watch yourself as you build a hypothesis of narrative outcome. What are you relying on to give a good reason for your narrative? As the clip provides more and more information, how quickly are you readjusting your possible plausible narratives? When do you arrive at an answer that you are comfortable with? (If you want, you can stop and note

the timestamp of that moment.) When did you arrive at the "correct" answer? Or, do you never get to that answer? Think back: What did you do or not do, know or not know? I hope this is an opportunity for you to learn something about how you, personally, approach building narratives.

Here's the link to the clip. (This clip, by the way, is not on the multimedia list at the beginning of this book or part of the bibliography at the end.)

Build-narrative-exercise [9]

Finally, similar to the baby shoes example, I would like to offer another very short set of words that generates a large narrative, in this case a 18th-century Japanese poem by Yosa Buson:

> They changed the wardrobe to spring clothes —
> this couple once sentenced to death

This is a powerful narrative but inaccessible to many because the cultural information is not widely known. At this time in Japan couples who had committed adultery were both sentenced to death. Couples in such situations sometimes ran away (indeed, were sometimes allowed to run away). This couple has done so. Now it is spring. They are living together in hiding somewhere. As is the usual custom of any household at that time, once spring comes the winter clothes are stored away and the spring / summer clothes are brought out of storage, to be placed in the drawers and such for ready access. This simple act is not at all ordinary for a couple who had expected death, for a couple so in love they had taken the risk of death to be together. They are now safe, but perhaps not. They could still be discovered.

In this way, we complete narratives following a wide range of guidelines: how people usually behave, the expectations of a particular genre (for example, in horror films when someone evil dies we are half-expecting him/her/it to jump up

9. This is an edited trailer from *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996, Los Angeles).

again—death in horror films does not necessarily come easily), the mood of the story (for example, if my above story has started instead "Early in the Ming dynasty there lived in a lonely and dark estate a beautiful young lady…"), our own personal interests, and, yes, cultural information. We are constantly "running" (simulating) cause-and-effect chains in our mind as we read, generating stories by identifying how Event or State B relates to the preceding Event or State A.

14.2.2.2. "Making sense" of narrative progress: The logics of getting from Event A to Event B

When my brain interprets information, it first tries to match that information to known patterns. This is fast, efficient, and fully sufficient in most situations. We have discussed this in terms of *attractors and *models. This matching is essential for completing *narratives, too. We use matching processes to build the worlds, people, and events that we find in narrative. Our reading sense that "we know that person will die" or "we are sure this will turn out okay" comes from how we have matched the current stories to our previous reading experiences, at all types of levels.

Our challenge when reading cross-culturally is that the brain is strongly inclined to match rather than revise or build and does this automatically without notice. And, in a practical sense, this is going to be just fine even if we bumble around a bit. But for this course we are emphasizing the other end of the spectrum. Our task, instead, is to revise as frequently as seems necessary in order to achieve a best understanding of cultural differences large and small.

The ability to suspend the urge to match and instead engage in the greater effort of revision and construction is a skill set that does not come easily. I have found at least one practical way of helping one notice when the model is not quite close

enough is when *narrative progress seems out of sorts for some reason. In other words, when it does not "*make sense" to us. Of course, sometimes this is just subpar story-writing by the author or director. Of course, sometimes it is because the nature of that type of narrative is to be disconnected and puzzling. But for the most part we assume that most *narratives, most of the time, have their meaning determined by a collection of *worldviews and *values shared with the culture of the target audiences. If the story moves from one event to another in a way that does not plausibly "*make sense" to you, it is possible that there is a *worldview in play of which you have no knowledge or which has not occurred to you, or a missing *value from the array of *values you have considered, or simply a different hierarchy of *values.

This, then, will always be our start point: "making sense" of a person's thoughts, feelings, or actions, and the way a narrative moves forward as best we can by assuming the *worldviews and *values of the target audience. Dialogue within class and among team members around these issues is a good way to notice cultural differences, to get past "*horizons of expectation."

For the purposes of this course, I would like to posit that, for commercial reasons, most films are indeed familiar-feeling in the progress of their stories. Put another way, it is the premise of this course that audiences prefer films with familiar *worldviews and *values and eschew films that mount fundamental challenges to their way of thinking about the world through the film's difference, strangeness, or sincere rejection of the culture's *worldviews or *values (which of course is sometime exactly, and wonderfully, the project of art in contrast to purely commercial endeavors). Additionally, theater-going viewers (an important first-time audience for films) must consume the film's story in realtime without pause or a chance to repeat (reread) a segment, and most of these

viewers would, frankly, prefer not to work hard in the process. They want to enjoy the film, not feel tired by the end of it. Therefore, storylines that cannot be easily consumed because of unfamiliar *worldviews or *values are at risk of becoming box office disasters, even if critically acclaimed. There are, of course, exceptions to this standard movie-making approach. With that in mind, the films selected to be viewed in this class are—for the most part and quite intentionally—films that had a large budget when produced and were therefore required to appeal to a large audience once released. This situation forces the director (and others involved in production) to fashion the film to have at least a somewhat broad appeal, that is, understand and work comfortably with the *worldviews and *values of its target audiences.

This "making sense" of a *narrative is a key component of the course's interpretive method. The premise is that when some content of a *narrative, and in particular the cause-and-effect link between Event A and Event B, seems difficult to understand, the "puzzle" presented suggests that there might be something missing in our array of *worldviews and *values, since the premise is that the *narrative will, whenever possible, "make sense" to the *model viewer, that is, one who can deploy *worldviews and * ethical values that closely match those that the director and others would hope would be used for understanding the film. This "something missing" is an indication that we have matched the event to an inappropriate *model and need to revise or build a new *model. Normally, when consuming a *narrative, we would just ignore these *bumps along the way. I ask in this course that you notice them, ponder them, and seek to remove them where possible via a contemplation of the possible *worldviews or *values that might plausibly be present.

14.2.2.3. Bumps in the road—What are plausible logics that support narrative progress (cause-and-effect chains)?

What happens when the process does not go well, when we lose a sense as to what is happening or why it is happening, when our idea of what has just happened does not match well with others when we "explain" the story (offer our cause-and-effect reasoning and thus also our conclusions as to what happened)? In practice, usually we just move on and do not worry about the *bump in the road. It if gets too bumpy, we stop reading or viewing and are more or less "done with that."

In this course we see these *bumps as opportunities. We first start with the premise that the narrative does indeed make sense to someone (that is, it is not a failure on the side of the writer / director, although it may well be, in truth). Then, our task is to try to puzzle our way through, checking to see whether we, or the people we are talking to, are missing cultural contextual information that adjusts the interpretation to within the range of what plausibly "makes sense" without just reinventing it to match our world. Good stories engage in interesting ambiguities and have tensions among possible meanings. It may be that is what is going on. But it may not be. It might be there is no real ambiguity, just lack of cultural understanding. We try to determine which it is. This is difficult, but it is what we do.

Bumpy roads as a result of unfamiliar *worldviews. Over the years I have taught this course, resulting in the analysis of dozens of films, I have noticed that the range of *worldviews in recent films does not differ greatly, that there seems to be something close to a universal language in the global film industry in terms of *worldviews. (I do notice more country-to-country *worldview differences in early films, say from the 1960s or before.) *Worldviews make expansive, authoritative claims on how the world works, so when the *worldview of

the viewer does not match that of the film, the disconnect is distinct and the film probably seems too distant and irrelevant to bother with unless it has other saving features. Viewers, even cross-culturally, can be quite willing to amend worldviews when necessary. For example, East Asian martial arts films, with their impossibly long flying leaps, strike the uninformed viewer as absurd (*implausible* according to the laws of physics) until that viewer "learns" (accepts) the physics of the genre. Once the genre rule is learned, plausibility returns and the *worldviews are back in alignment—comfort is restored (the *bump is smoothed out) with the new law of physics being, "no one can leap in slow-motion through the sky for long distances unless you happen to be a martial arts master, then you can, so let's stop worrying about that and enjoy the film."

Bumpy roads having to do with *ethical values. Unlike *worldviews these differences are everywhere. Some *values are unknown, while others that the viewer thinks are important are treated lightly, while still others that the viewer thinks are not important seem to have exaggerated presence. Sorting out the *values is very much an exercise in understanding the texture of the cultural context. But we should note that this "cultural context" is not just simply an extension of realworld *values. It is the *values the audience is willing to embrace as a member of a realworld cultural group *plus* a member of a filmworld cultural group. If one takes as the sole source of *values one's realworld *values when watching a horror film, there is simply too much death and destruction to accept comfortably. However, if one says, "Well, yes, that is certainly quite a few dead people in the last five minutes but, hey, this is how it works in the world of horror films," one has semi-suspended one's realworld *values for a different set. When one can no longer do this (perhaps the film has become too "realistic" or you are simply the type who is uncomfortable in

adopting horror film viewer *values) the discomfort level, the *bumps, become quite sharp and distracting.

With the above in mind, I would like to make the below few observations with regard to areas where Western viewers of East Asian films sometimes experience *bumps, according to my experience of teaching this course:

Cause-and-effect chains that include, as a plausible cause, the idea of “retribution” are not uncommon in East Asian films because of the influence of Buddhism and its theory of karma. In its pure teaching karma does not mean if I do something bad now something bad will happen to me later. However, it offered this formulation as a way to offer an ethical teaching and has been widely embraced and remains an active *fragment in East Asian cultures at a general and sometimes active level. “Retribution” and “paying for one’s sins” and “God’s judgment” are also Judeo-Christian principles, so there is not a great deal of dissonance felt by the culturally Western, East Asian film viewer. But where the interpretation gets off track is that “punishment” in East Asian films is not the result of original sin or sinful acts, but rather an impersonal law of metaphysics. The impersonal and unchangeable nature of karmic law is, I would suggest, one reason “confession” plays a less important rule in East Asian narratives as a cause that could neutralize a cause-and-effect chain where bad action invites painful event. There is no God who can forgive and relieve one of the approaching results (karmic punishment or retribution) of a bad act. This “missing confession moment” or diminished weight placed on the value “one should forgive” sometimes puzzles Western viewers.

Cause-and-effect chains that show a high degree of instability are part of the *worldviews of both Daoism and Buddhism. No state is permanent. Change is everywhere in the air. These are typical aspects of the *worldviews of East Asian films. If that change seems to be one that is causing suffering, or will, then

it is also drawing on the Buddhist teaching that we experience change as suffering (the second Noble Truth of Buddhism). Movie viewers with Western worldviews that uphold linearity as a truth—that things can move towards the good or the bad but, once arrived, can stay that way—sometimes show an impatience with the "round and round" feeling of East Asian narratives that are more cyclic in their view of how the cosmos works.

Fate and free-will. Western morality places a high degree of emphasis on choice as a way to morally judge an individual's actions. Plato's chariot allegory from *Phaedrus* and the Biblical story of Adam and Eve make this quite clear and this is born out endlessly in the progress of Western narratives where courage and sufficient will-power to do the right thing are viewed as moral assets. This view, actually, does not sit well with worldviews that place the human into the natural world as one element of it rather than a special, semi-divine entity meant to rise above the natural world. All East Asian ways of thinking view man as between heaven and earth but that these three are all part of a single cosmos with a single set of universal principles. This subverts the special qualities of individual acts of free will. Instead of being viewed as godly progress towards individuation, or "owning" one's actions, are any number of other ways of thinking about this, acts of free will can seem uncooperative and uninformed about the nature of the current state of affairs. In the same vein, bending to the conditions of a situation can be viewed as passive from a Western perspective but an intelligent recognition of the power of fate from an East Asian perspective. That a given situation includes factors beyond one's control and to which one should harmonize or submit fit well across the spectrum of East Asian *authoritative thought systems: Daoism argues for the correlation of factors so the nature of a given condition has broad influence on the course of all events, Buddhism argues for karma as

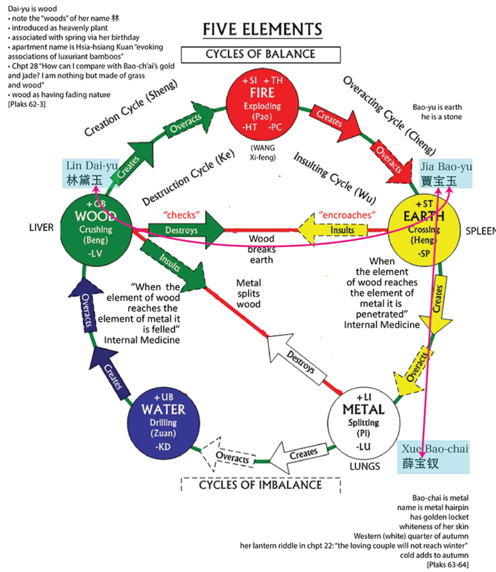
predetermining outcomes, Confucianism places value on social harmony asking the individual to submit to authority and larger social needs.

Most Western films subscribe to a post-Freudian view that is in fact naively hydraulic and not supported by current science but still widely embraced because it matches so well with subjective feeling: an emotion builds up, the person feeling the emotion finally explodes thus releasing the internal pressure of that stress or emotion, and this explosion is in a sense healthy by returning the psyche to some sense of equilibrium. This type of explosion is viewed less positively in East Asian narratives that are less steeped in a post-Freudian world. Explosions are often viewed as a failure of maturity or a disruption of social harmony rather than a healthy release of pent-up tension. Put in the language of cause-and-effect, East Asian narratives recognize this as a cause for actions (result, effect) but are somewhat less likely to consider it a *forgivable* cause for the effect.

Predicting personality types and how specific people will interact. Blood type is not important in the West as a predictor of personality or successful partner combinations but it is very popular in Japan and attracts some interest in South Korea and Taiwan. From our perspective, as we look for “causes” for actions, or relationships, perhaps we should keep in mind that blood type might be somewhere in the background, that the narrative figures are displaying stereotypical features of certain blood types, and the director expects the audience to factor this in. Cosmological factors such as zodiac signs or the year in which one is born, or the current year on the 60-year calendar (“Stems-and-Branches”) might also be at play as causes. These are probably not major factors in most cases (although at least Japanese anime sometimes leans heavily on these types of things) but they are good examples of worldviews that are sometimes more powerful in the fictional world or a filmworld

than the realworld. *Story of the Stone* perhaps deploys ingeniously a Daoist cause-and-effect world based on the five elements (*wuxing*). At least this is the credible assertion put forth by a scholar who analyzed the medicines, symptoms, and doctor's diagnosis of the novel's three main narrative figures Daiyu, Baoyu, and Baochai who form something of a love triangle.[10] His argument offers a different cause-and-effect set than what reader's might ordinarily deploy. Below is a graphic representation of how he views the relationship among the three figures. While this will make the most sense to those who know this novel well and something about the five elements, it is nevertheless for anyone a dramatic, premodern example of a departure from contemporary worldviews and their support of cause-and-effect chains:

10. Chi-hung Yim, "The 'Deficiency of Yin in the Liver': Dai-yu's Malady and Fubi in "Dream of the Red Chamber," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 22 (Dec., 2000): 85-111, doi:10.2307/3109444.



Daiyu, Baochai and Baoyu of Story of the Stone with relationship explained using the five elements of ancient Chinese cosmology

16.3. Film narratives as objects of analysis

Given the nature of the course's analytic method, we take various film content as our primary objects of interpretation. As works of art and works of entertainment, films can be delightful to work with, but it is not for these reasons that they are at the center of the course. This is not a course in film study or film appreciation. Instead, we practice interpretation of narratives based on our understanding of the *cultural contexts provided by *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices. It is for their interpretive potential that they are the focus of the course.

Film's rich multimedia aspects—music, cinematography,

fashion, body language, tone of voice, expression, and so on—all can help toward an interpretation. Further, most films also need to deliver and complete a plot within a specific, relatively short, period of time. The steps in plot development and plot outcome are, again, exceptionally useful to us when trying to reconstruct *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices, and estimate their *status.

This requirement—to "tell a story" in a short period of time without affording the reader or viewer the opportunity to pause or reread (re-consume)—as well as the general tendency for films to honor affective content over cognitive complexity, bring tremendous pressure to bear on the film's creators to simplify themes and other content. Most films are meant to be more or less consumed in realtime without a lot of audience effort, as they stream on the screen. Narrative structure will be fairly straightforward, unlike some written works. Given the already complex nature of our topic, these simplifications can be helpful.

Film is collaborative. A film's message and impact ultimately is a meta-effect after the soundtrack and musical score have been added, the visual effects completed, the extensive editing approved, and so on. Often hundreds or thousands of individuals contribute to the final product. The viewer, immersed in this wash of information, will be heavily influenced toward certain interpretations to what she or he is seeing, but this very collaborative complexity also "opens" the film through its contradictoriness and tendency to evoke rather than state. In these gaps and suggestive spaces, the viewer's own *worldviews, *ethical values, and sense of *common practices can heavily guide interpretation. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons films feel "intimate"—a story we can relate to—because they are designed to be broadly appealing by being open to our *values.

It is true that the reality of a film's collaborative origins will

complicate things for us as we try to sort out all the various *worldviews and *values that might be in play. Because of their commercial concerns, films, I would suggest, are more or less committed to reflecting the *values of the audiences they seek to gain. (Box Office Mojo provides ticket sales information for most of the movies we view, both domestic and international data. If we accept my assumption that audience size is determined in part by how familiar the *worldview and *values of the film are to the audience, the following numbers, for example, become interesting: *Dolls* (*Doruzu*, 2002), one film often viewed in this course, grossed $4,067 in the United States, $886,615 in France, and $4,123,035 in Japan.) Some directors are more interested in pulling everything tightly together so that it all works under a single vision. Others just allow a range of content for "effect," intuitively (or strategically) doing so to appeal to a range of audience types.

While the complexities of film's collaborative origins and the split and its uneven allegiances to artistic vision and commercial success make our investigations dauntingly complex and our conclusions tentative, there are also two potential advantages. First, when everyone seems aligned behind a certain *value that in-and-of-itself is a fairly strong indication of its *status. Second, the messiness of films mimics the messiness of our real-world, multicultural situations that we wish to navigate. Interpreting films and sorting out our own situations are, of course, different in many ways, but in the layered, contradictory, and complex nature of films, we are not so far from the conditions of our real-world interpretive imperatives.

The *course method allows interpretations of love narratives in films in four areas: what a film means to us personally, what we think the director might be trying to say about love, how various audiences might appropriate its content, and the constructed world internal to the film itself. All of these are excellent opportunities to explore *worldviews, *values, and

*common practices through the construction of *ToM. We can concern ourselves with trying to reconstruct *worldviews and *values of the director, the audience, or the fictional characters within the narrative. Any of these paths is potentially rich in terms of sharing interpretations. All we must do is agree to look at the same area: personal reaction, director, audience, or fictional characters. The essence of this course is the collective attempt to construct a specific *ToM or set of possible *ToMs through appropriately applying our outside knowledge of film's cultural context and leveraging the full range of information offered by the film itself.

I have situated this work within narratives to give us a controlled space to discover our differences and, if lucky, something about the roots of why we think as we do. We could, in theory, just sit down facing each other and share our opinions of love, but such discussions will lack productive focus. By introducing a common object that we all interpret, we anchor our opinions on something, thus making them accessible to one another for close consideration and comment. But this is also where my study in Buddhist psychology intersects with my interest in the functional *status of narrative. Bluntly put, I think one's identity is a complex, contradictory, puzzling but somehow more-or-less functional web or temporary assembly of narratives that one tells oneself over and over. Intimate relationships start a "history" and that, too, is a powerful set of narratives: how one thinks of the relationship, how the other thinks of it, a "shared" view of it, and how many others view it. Private thoughts such as "You and me are like star-crossed lovers" or "I have discovered my soulmate" import into a unique relationship between two specific people a narrative idea on how to view the relationship. These narratives already exist, embedded in and supported by a culture. Who "we" are as a couple is grounded in visions of what couples are that are upheld by some, or many, others. In other words, the

boundaries between who “I” am, who “we” are, and what culture thinks “I” am and “we” are is oh-so-porous—even dangerously so.[11] Because this is how I view the formation of the self and identity, it is then obvious that I think an understanding of *cultural context and its dynamic relationship to an individual is absolutely key to ferreting out our different ways of thinking.

11. This basic position, for me, comes from Jacques Lacan's theory of how we derive identity. Lacan was a mid-20th century French psychiatrist and critical thinker who extended and altered some of Freud's standard theory of the self. It isn't possible to summarize in a footnote his complex view of the origins of self, but I feel compelled to at least note that it is a more complicated process than what I suggest in the statement just made because, while we "appropriate" narratives from others to give substance to our identity, these appropriations are actually mirrorings of our own desire, and since everyone is similarly constructing identity with the same process, everyone one is, in essence, mirroring everyone else. This transforms "narrative" into an ephemeral but on-going process among members of a culture, not a static object—although, because of its persistence, it exerts influence as if an object of substance. We will leave aside this more nuanced treatments of narrative and treat them as cultural "objects," but I want to be on record here that this is a simplification of the state of affairs in order to serve the practical needs of the course.

15. Context pluralities and their importance

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- pluralities

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- attractors
- Connectionism
- cultural contexts
- emergence
- mixtures
- ToM

15.1. KAREN OVERHILL'S CROWD OF SEVENTEEN

I would like now to take a moment to offer the case of Dissociative Identity Disorder (Multiple Personality Disorder)[1] of Karen Overhill and her seventeen personalities. After working with her therapist over an 18-year period beginning in 1989

1. "Formerly known as multiple personality disorder, this disorder is characterized by 'switching' to alternate identities. You may feel the presence of two or more people talking or living inside your head, and you may feel as though you're possessed by other identities. Each identity may have a unique name, personal history and characteristics, including obvious differences in voice, gender, mannerisms and even such physical qualities as the need for eyeglasses. There also are differences in how familiar each identity is with the others." "Dissociative Disorders," *Mayo Clinic*, accessed January 29, 2018, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dissociative-disorders/symptoms-causes/syc-20355215.

to help "her"—the "Karen" meeting regularly with her therapist—become more directly aware of these multiple personalities, one of her personalities drew a portrait of all seventeen and placed it in an envelope for her to give to her therapist:

> *The next session Karen brings an envelope. I'm stunned.* Inside is a drawing of seventeen faces. I'm amazed at the quality. I assume it is a picture of the parts inside Karen, but I'm not sure who is who. I can identify Holdon, and Jensen, because he is supposed to be black, and he is holding paintbrushes. I can only guess at the others. I show it to Karen. She shrugs her shoulders and turns red, but smiles a little.
>
> "I don't know what to say," Karen says, holding the picture away from her with discomfort. "I guess I must have done it." She hadn't opened the envelope, and hasn't seen the picture.[2]

2. Richard Baer, *Switching Time: A Doctor's Harrowing Story of Treating a Woman with 17 Personalities*, "Chapter 13: Family Tree," New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007. Kindle Edition.

1. Claire (sweet, 7, appeared after Communican Day rape)
2. Karl (boy who absorbed abuse pain, 10)
3. Elise (made school focus, 8)
4. Julie (disabled due to abuse, 13)
5. Karen 1 (Karen, 10, appeared after rape)
6. Karen 2 (fun-loving boy-dating, 21)
7. Karen 3 (suicidal, 30)
8. Julianne (abuse journal, 15)
9. Sandy (junk-food suicidal, 18)
10. Katherine (mother figure, 34)
11. Ann (empathetic Catholic, 16)
12. Miles (abused and angry boy, 8)
13. Thea (absorbed pain of two childhood surgeries, 6)
14. Holdon (father figure, 34)
15. Karen Boo (abused, 2)
16. Jensen (artist, 11-year-old boy)
17. Sidney (mischievious thief, 5)

Karen Overhill's color-pencil self-portrait

Karen Overhill's color pencil self-portrait

15.2. EMBRACING PLURALITIES

It is debated as to what degree and frequency Dissociative Identity Disorder is actually present in people,[3]. However, we do not need to concern ourselves with sorting out the various points of view. I offer Ms. Overhill's case only as a startling illustration of an important set of principles for when we are considering the level of influence of specific *cultural contexts and motivations that we can attribute to *ToM, namely, *autonomous entities, *competitive multiplicities, *layering, and *alternating contexts. I would like to call these, collectively, *pluralities.

3. Paulette M. Gillig, "Dissociative Identity Disorder: A Controversial Diagnosis," Psychiatry (Edgmont) 6, no. 3 (March 2009): 24–29, accessed January 29, 2018, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2719457/

Like *mixtures, including *pluralities in our analysis helps us avoid the temptation to over-simply the highly complex nature of our relationship to *cultural contexts. The fundamental difference between them is simply that in the case of *mixtures, different aspects or factors have so blended that it is impossible to meaningfully analyze them as separate entities. For example, in some narrative cases “insecurity” and “jealousy” should be simply a blended unit as we put together a *ToM. Trying to decide which came first or which is the lead element is a hopeless venture. *Pluralities are also multicomponent entities but unlike *mixtures each remains, to some degree, distinct from the other. I will offer four types of *pluralities in a moment.

Although we are quite comfortable with fractured and shuffled experiences in many ways, our pattern-oriented, egocentric brain wants to be the boss of the shop. Karen’s case upends a natural, intuitive assumption that we have, namely, that there is just one “me” in life, in this body. Freud (though he was not alone in the research) successfully fractured the human into two: the conscious and unconscious, positing that there is part of “me” that I can never directly observe, communicate with, or control. But even in the face of this assertion, we continue to think of “me” as essentially one “me” even if I am sometimes “at odds” with myself. It is just our normal operative position: “I” do things, decide things, feel things. This is the intuitive feel of consciousness. It is supported by a wide range of religious perspectives: the *atman* of Hinduism, the *psyche* of the Greeks, and the soul (English term) of religions arising from the Mesopotamian region (the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Buddhism, which asserts that there is no self (*an-atman* / “no *atman*“) explains this (false) sense of continuity as karmic effect. (Daoism recognizes different entities but puts them in a dialogic relationship: one cannot exist without the other.)

If our arm moves "on its own," this is troubling. If we have seventeen personalities within us, each not communicating well with the other, it is a mental illness. (As one newspaper article reports the "solution" to Overhill's problem: "Baer and Karen agreed to heal her disorder by *integrating* the personalities."[4] Emphasis mine.) Isn't there a "me" in command of it all?

But it seems fairly evident that postmodernism, networked life, and even the expanding knowledge of physiology are taking us in a different direction, suggesting we are a conglomerate of systems that are highly interactive but often through competition among systems rather than harmonious coordination. This is my view of the human body, the human brain (and the *emergent "mind" of it), and cultures: they are fractured entities with a variety of autonomous systems (most unconscious to us as individuals, or, in the case of culture, unspoken and never critically examined behaviors, practices, and opinions) in messy interaction. *Emerging from this is a "me" or sorts. *Emerging from this are cultures in their reality: fluid, evolving loosely associated constellations of opinions and practices with no essential identity to be fully discovered or fully defined. Thus, if we want some comprehensive and open consideration of the complexity of culture, I believe we need to accept that it is not just one thing, it is many things all mashed together into a complicated experience of life. If we ask the question, "How much Buddhism is there now, really, among 20-year-olds living in Seoul Korea?" we do not need to worry as keenly about *pluralities (although I would venture that *mixtures remain a necessary consideration). But, that is not what we do. Instead we are contemplating the more complicated question: "For this person (*ToM, actually) in this situation, at this moment, what is the array of cultural contexts

4. Pam DeFiglio, "Doctor helps woman with 17 personalities on 'long path of healing'," *Daily Herald*, October 8, 2007, accessed January 29, 2018, http://prev.dailyherald.com/story/?id=53173 .

that bear down up and help information her thoughts, feelings, and actions? What matters and what doesn't?" That question most certainly needs to embrace the notion of *pluralities, even if it makes our task considerably more difficult.

15.3. PLURALITIES AND INTERPRETIVE BALANCE

How do we deal with *pluralities?

In the real world I think we just accept a certain level of confusion, indecision, inaccuracy in perception, and so on. Part of getting the business of life done is to not get stuck on each contradiction that comes along.

However, in the case of analytic projects, we are tempted to untangle, clarify, solve or dissolve contradictions that the multiplicity of cultural contexts bring to the situation. As our first movement in managing this, we work with *instances rather than extended portions of a narrative. We use the full narrative to help us understand the *instance, but we keep our analytic conclusions focused on the *instance. This helps considerably but the task remains daunting in its complexity and it can be hard to share analytic results with others.

I would like to suggest that the most authentic and useful analysis will strike a good balance between accepting the many bits and pieces of ourselves and our cultures just "as they are," on the one hand, (this is, by the way, a Buddhist position) yet, on the other, find common, simple denominators when they are plausibly there (the Holy Grail, perhaps, of Western analysis). Simple descriptions sometimes appear to be the most forceful ones but in this we should be cautious. I believe It is unwise (leads to misperception) for us to push too energetically this process on finding the "essentials" of a cultural moment. Ultimately, we are dealing with messy topics. When it comes to living culture, and living in culture, Occam's Razor (a very wonderful concept to be sure) is less helpful as an analytic tool

than embracing the subversive positions towards predictability and repeatability that chaos theory, game theory, and such suggest.

One more point on this — besides asserting that we interact with *cultural contexts in a huge range of ways, I would like to add one more theoretical position that warns against finding singular answers to human behavior—Freud's fondness in his *Interpretation of Dreams* regarding "overdetermination." The assertion is that we cannot assume that a person's particular behavior or reason for a particular dream can be traced back to a simple cause but rather that behavior (or an explanation for a dream) is "overdetermined" — there are more reasons than necessary to explain it. In short, Freud wants to sweep aside the idea that, when it comes to the human mind, the least complex explanation should be taken as the most likely explanation.

Where does that leave us?

As you can guess, I believe we need to have a certain level of tolerance towards the contradictions of our conclusions. We should not seek air-tight, fully defensible descriptions of cultural influences. ("He did that because he is a Buddhist at heart.") But more importantly, I would like us to be careful not to over-use or over-extend an explanation: "Well, if X person thinks this, then X person will *also* not do that." That can be easily inaccurate.

For example, imagine that you have noticed that Japanese usually take their shoes off before going into private living spaces and later you notice that they do this for many places where one would think it is nice to have clean floor. You deduce: "Japanese like cleanliness." Then you visit a national park and see a Japanese throwing his food trash along the side of a trail. You sense a contradiction because you assume that national parks are in the category of "nice places" but now you wonder: What is the difference between homes and other nice places and national parks? Am I missing a category somehow?

But maybe that is not the best line of thought. Perhaps more accurately you should think simply, “Japanese like cleanliness except when they don’t” and leave it at that. Going back to our earlier argument as to whether culture is a collection of principles or just a million memorized behaviors (*Connectionism), this could be reframed as just this interpretation: “Japanese like cleanliness but this person saw someone else toss trash and so decided to do that same.” (We will later call this type of behavior and its influence on decision making *common practices.)

This is the tension in the effort to interpret (or at least in building a theory behind the effort): Is “I saw someone else do it, so I can do it” a principle or just learned behavior? To me, there is no definitive answer and so, in short, while we can and should attempt to sort out principles toward understanding, a good dose of caution should be including in the process. This is the main point of the reason I have introduced the idea of *pluralities: Without leaving the door open to contradictions when considering culture, that is, without embracing *pluralities and the incompleteness in analytic description and conclusion that they will ultimately demand, we will miss too much. The “blindness” discussed in the chapter on misunderstandings was said to be the result of “horizons of expectations” creating limits to imagination, on the one hand, and attractors or models offering to rapid and complete answers, on the other. Here I am arguing that in a desire for simplicity in argument or conclusion, or simply the desire to get to some sort of conclusion, we feel dismay at the added layer of complexity that *pluralities impose. A less conflicted way of saying this might be: *Culture (life, for that matter) is the texture of *mixtures and *pluralities that are so complex as to escape full capture in any descriptive effort. Cultural can be lived but it cannot be spelled out in its every detail.*

16. Arrays of cultural groups and their WV/CP

Autonomous entities ◆ competitive multiplicities ◆ layering ◆ alternating contexts

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- autonomous entities
- competitive multiplicities
- context-to-Tom distance
- layers and layering
- alternating contexts (spatial and temporal)
- pluralities

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- attractors

- cultural contexts
- ethical values
- narrative figures
- ToM
- worldviews

16.1. ARRAYS OF CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Imagine that I have one sister and she is sitting in front of me and making a suggestion as to what I should do. If, alternatively, that I have six sisters and they are all in the same room with me and all talking at once and all making different suggestions. Well, that is an entirely different situation. Finally, if I have six sisters but they live in different parts of the world and I visit them one at a time, that is a still different situation. The advice of my sister or sisters has a different impact on me based on these various situations. This chapter organizes this variety into four common configurations and calls them "arrays."

Part of determining exactly how we should characterize a credible relationship of our constructed *ToM to a *cultural context is determining how that *context fits among all the other *contexts we consider are (or ultimately conclude to be) relevant to the *ToM.

First, understanding a *cultural context's place among other *cultural contexts helps us decide "*context-to-ToM distance."

This "*distance" is not an indication of the degree of acceptance of a *cultural context, because a *ToM might be in a posture of resistance or acceptance of a *worldview or *value which is part of the *context. This is instead a "strength" factor. (*Status is the term we use to describe a *ToM's relationship to a worldview or value on the acceptance-rejection spectrum.)

Second, keeping in mind how a *cultural context fits among other *contexts facilitates the broad and successful gathering of *contexts that need to be considered because, I will argue in this chapter, contexts can not only be present in their obvious multiplicity (side-by-side so to speak) but might be absent-present *sequentially*. Thus, we should look beyond the present moment of our *instance to consider whether there are relevant contexts from the past or "just around the corner" influencing the current moment. Further, it is definitely the case that *cultural contexts can be present, even powerfully present, as a hidden component of another *context or "behind" (*layered behind) another context. In other words, we cannot just stop our gathering when we find what is obviously before us but must take time to consider the possibilities of arrays of sequentially present *contexts, or *layers of *contexts.

Third, understanding arrays affords complexity and realism to the constructed *ToM. In the real world we juggle *contexts all the time and our mind pays attention to some more than others, switches back-and-forth among them, measures them against one another, and so on. In truth, when we are determining arrays of *cultural contexts, we are not just acknowledging empirical arrays (an example of the first array described below, "*autonomous entities," might be: grandmother is in the living room, my father is in the kitchen, my partner is back at home waiting for me) but also how they are represented *in my mind*. Karen was offered as an example not only because of the way her case dramatically represents autonomy among various entities but more specifically because

these are *mental* entities. I suggest that our cultural influences can be similar in their autonomous and contradictory presence in our mind—except that grandmother can *actually* become sour if I do not accept her view of things and I must *actually* deal with it, and so on. Thinking of cultural contexts as arrayed in different ways helps us accept and explore the contradictions of a *narrative figure's thoughts, feelings, and actions—something we are quite used to in the real world. *Narrative figures tend to be not as complex, but they can be, and thinking in terms of possible *cultural contexts anyway creates complexities which might not otherwise be there if we were just consuming the *narrative "naturally" without constant analytic interventions.

Having previously made an argument for the importance of *pluralities and why we should embrace them, I would like to now offer my view of the types of plurality arrays we encounter as we gather *cultural contexts while asking the litmus test question of which might in fact be participating in the formation of a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Our analytic focus is, after all, on the composition and influential power of the cultural contexts.

While the below list might seem simply to be based on a mathematical shuffling of the most probable ways that entities relate to one another, in fact they have more organic origins in psychology, neurobiology, narratology, and religious ideology.

I will outline four basic arrays of *pluralities. Please keep these in mind when you are using the *course method because I believe it might help untangle some of the confusions that will arise, as well as help determine the best direction of your analysis.

16.2. AUTONOMOUS ENTITIES

Autonomous entities can refer either to *cultural contexts or to *ToM. I would like to make two different points.

First, *autonomous entities as *cultural contexts are extremely common. Pressure to have nationalist pride, on the one hand, but, on the other, to behave with humility in your social relationships is an example. These two cultural pressures are separate from one another, with separate origins and separate imperatives. They do not coordinate, nor can they be reconciled meaningfully. Yes, you *could* create a bridging concept. You could argue, for example, that "the culture in question seems to value hierarchies and when at the top of the hierarchy one can or is encouraged to express pride and when at the bottom one must take care and express humility." That solves the problem logically but does not seem like a good representation of what is really happening in actual situations. Instead, it seems, members of this imagined culture probably simply pay little attention to the contradiction of embracing both and unless a specific situation forces them to, will not make an attempt to reconcile them. In this way, the concepts are autonomous: they do not need one another in order to fully exist and are probably not acting in a coordinated way together. The concept of *autonomous entities frees us from needing to explain the many contradictions of a culture and allows us to ponder many contexts without feeling required to prioritize them. They are autonomous and come into play, well, when they come into play.

Second, in the manner of Karen Overhill, it is better to think of *ToM as complicated, rather than one rational, coordinated, organically whole entity. "On most days I'm a Buddhist but when I am around my Christian friends I notice that I am thinking pretty much like them." This is an example of multiple *ToM, where the subject is self-aware of the multiplicity. But more common is perhaps blindness to one's autonomous parts. It is not hard to imagine someone who has power harassed an individual to later, in some discussion, make the comment, "I respect her." Or, as another example, one might

behave differently around one's parents and one's friends but not really notice the difference until someone points it out. So, the concept of autonomous entities allows us to build a more complex *ToM, one that has fractures in it. The *ToM is in pieces, with these pieces not logically fitting well together but when articulated in their full, contradictory complexity approach being a very good description or explanation of a person's thoughts and behaviors. Obviously, this is not an invitation just to make a shopping list of all of manner of behaviors and avoid the hard work of seeking some larger principles that can explain some or also of them at a meta-level. But, again, it is a question of balance. It just seems reasonable to not expect someone to be a logical, coordinated whole with one set of logical ethical values.

16.3. COMPETITIVE MULTIPLICITIES

I want to steal a cookie. It is there on a plate. The person has left the room. There are others nearby but they are not looking at me. If I steal the cookie the person, upon return, will not know who took it. …

So, I'm thinking a lot of different things:

- "It is wrong to steal"—an ethical value.
- "It is not so very wrong to steal when it is a cookie"—an ethical value (ethical principles should be applied proportionately and with flexibility, not as absolutes).
- "I really want the cookie." (Hmm, I am not sure there is an ethical value here. I guess we could said the "right to pursue happiness," a hedonist argument. But I think this is better thought of as a low-order, corporal desire that impels action.)

- "I won't get caught." This is where situation meets culture. We will encounter this over and over.
- "Most people would steal the cookie so it is okay for me to steal, too"—common practice argument, again pushing aside ethical principles.

I steal the cookie.

The situation is such that the cultural contexts (*values) that tell me I should not are pushed aside by the immediacy of the situation. That does not present an analytic difficulty for us in this course because we are not trying to prove that ethical values result in actions. We will only be arguing to whether or not the value passed through the mind, and what is its *status.

This last reason above *might* be an operative principle (follow *common practices) but it is not an ethical one. Ah, but it *could* be! If you are in a group (and you probably are) that presses you to do things as the group does them, then there is something of an ethical principle involved: follow group practices to reinforce the stability of the group / honor the groupness of the group.

*Competitive multiplicities arise in situations such as the above when there are many sources of contexts (these might be internalized *values or external entities such as different friends, or one's parents and one's friends suggesting or explaining things differently)—and there usually are—which are competing for different results in the same *instance, about the same thought, action, or feeling. That an individual selects Choice B instead of Choice A does not prove that there never was present the *value associated with Choice A. It just did not win the day. However, next time around Choice A might be the result. If that is the case, then we might be able to say this person is split between these two *ethical values, takes both seriously, and may choose one or the other, depending on the situation. One can embrace the Buddhist moral imperative of

non-violence / no-killing yet still take the spider outside in a jar on one day and just smash it on another day.

Narratives frequently use *competitive multiplicities to explore internal and interpersonal conflict. Narratives that invite us to ask while we read (or view) "What would I do?" are giving us a chance to think about the *competitive multiplicities in our own lives. ("Should I be a good son or daughter and spend some extra time with my parents? Or, should I be a good student and stay on campus to study for the final? Or, should I be a good friend and listen again tonight to the romantic troubles of my roommate?") Competing ethical choices can be the result of contradictory ethical principles. More commonly in our films *values are in competition with *common practices and situational factors.

16.4. LAYERS AND LAYERING

Ariwara Narihira, we surmise from the many poems left by him and comments about him scattered across early Japanese texts, was a man who was easily caught in the thralls of love. Elegant, sensitive, handsome, deeply moved by women, he is a 9th-century icon of a man whose heart led his actions. Of the women he loved there was one (at least) he should not have loved, a woman of higher status who then was called into service by the emperor for his private pleasures. At his command she relocated to the palace. As the story is told, Narihira, heart-broken, visited her now empty bedchamber, laid down in the moonlight, and wrote a poem that has puzzled Japanese literary historians for more than 1,000 years.

There are many ways to translate the 10th-century Japanese that we find in *The Tale of Ise*, Episode 4, which describes this love affair. Here is one:

> Long ago, a lady was living in the western wing of the

> residence of Her Majesty the Empress Mother on the eastern side of the Fifth Avenue. In spite of himself, the man could not help but fall deeply in love with this lady and began to frequent her apartments. However, around the tenth day of the New Year, she suddenly vanished. The man discovered where she was, but it was not a place where ordinary people could go, so he was deeply unhappy.
>
> At the beginning of spring in the following year, when the plum blossoms were at their peak, the man's heart was filled with poignant memories of the year that had passed, and he returned to the lady's former apartments. He gazed intently at his surroundings, now standing, now sitting down, but nothing looked as it had the year before. Bursting into tears, he lay down on the bare floorboards and remained there until the moon sank low in the sky.
>
> Recalling the events of the previous year, he composed a poem:
>
> > Could that be the same moon?
> > Could this be the spring of old?
> > Only I am as I have always been,
> > but without you here
> > ....
>
> Then, in the faint light of dawn, he returned home, weeping bitterly.[1]

Here are two other versions of the poem, translated by me while making no effort to "fix" the opaque quality of the original:

> Is this not the moon?
> Is this not spring as spring always is?

1. Peter MacMillan, trans., *The Tales of Ise* (Penguin Books Ltd., 2016) 7. Kindle Edition.

> One "me,"
> the "me" as before …

and,

> Ah, this moon!
> Ah, this spring is not past springs!
> One "me,"
> the "me" as before …

The first takes the grammar of the first two lines to be rhetorical questions. The second treats the same two lines as exclamations. I am not offering this as a puzzle in interpretation, rather just the opposite. Even with very different treatments of the grammar the *layering is the same: "I have come back to 'our' place and though inside 'me' our love continues as before, things have indeed changed and you are not here …" This is a *layering of time: "time" inside me is still living our relationship but 'real time" has progressed and taken you from me, and I feel that gap, and it makes me cry. Memories play a huge role in love narratives, so much so that at times it seems like the painful memory of love is the only authentic expression of being in love. But I would like us to handle memories more complexly when possible. There is "living in the past" where one is lost in a memory and temporarily (or radically) disconnected from the present. This is familiar to us because it is a common mental state. But there is also "past-in-the-present": we are in the present moment but a past moment is profoundly affecting it. This is of course at the core of perception itself and it is also where *attractors are active. But, as a narrative technique, it sometimes has a more prominent role.

The Hong Kong film *2046* (*2046*, 2004) is the third film in a trilogy that follows several narrative figures across long stretches of time and place while constantly inviting the viewer

to consider all these different times and locations when trying to understand the present moment thoughts of feelings of its characters. One example of this is the unfortunate woman Mimi of the first film in the trilogy—*Days of Being Wild* (*Afei zhengzhuan*, 1990, Hong Kong). She returns in *2046* as two characters, a woman named Lulu and a nameless android. Mimi was passionately in love with the central figure of the first film, Yuddy ("York" in some subtitles). In the third film Yuddy's essential characteristics and problems of love find a new home in Chow Mo-wan (who makes a puzzling cameo appearance at the end of *Days of Being Wild*, which was completed, by the way, fourteen years before *2046*). This Chow meets Lulu, whom he "remembers" as Mimi, although she will not confirm his memory for him. Lulu is murdered early in *2046* and continues her presence in the film as an android. Through the *layering of times and identities, Mimi-Lulu-Android becomes less a narrative character than an idea: what it is like to devote one's life to love when one tends to love bad partners and does not protect oneself in them. It is this layered history that gives the scenes their poignancy.

- Mimi-Lulu's smile in the Chinese film *2046* (2004), Clip 1:

  Mimi-Lulu as Lulu in 2046

- Mimi-Lulu's smile in the Chinese film *2046* (2004), Clip 2:

  Mimi-Lulu as android in 2046

This "idea of a person" supports effectively one of the assertions of *2046*, namely, "All memories are traces of tears." But, at a higher level, it is brilliantly supporting a more powerful theme of *2046*, that we do not just love a *person*, we love a "someone + all the memories of other lovers that this person calls forth" entity.

*Layering in *2046*, then, blurs the distinction between the boundaries of identities. It turns out that this is more common in East Asian love narratives than one would expect, given the Western emphasis on "soulmates" (two distinct entities who are a perfect match for one another).

In early Japan, there was a woman named Izumi Shikibu who was known for her passionate poetry, exceptional rhetorical skills, and many love affairs, some of them scandalous because she was a commoner and her lovers were royalty, and married. Although it is told in third person, it seems Izumi Shikibu wrote a memoir (*The Story of Izumi Shikibu*, ca. 1007?) of her love affair with one of these princes. The story is about the first ten months of the relationship with older brother of her former lover, who died while still in his twenties. At the first anniversary of the death of his younger brother, Sochinomiya, the older brother, makes an offer of romance to Izumi. He sends a branch of orange blossoms, known as flowers that bring back memories, to indicate that he realizes Izumi must be sad at this time of year. This expression of sympathy is also an invitation for love. She responds to his flower branch with a poem, expressing her vulnerable longing for being able to once again talk to her dead lover:

> rather than cloaking me
> in the sweet nostalgia
> of this fragrance
> —little warbler—
> how much sweeter
> to hear again
> that song

and he responds strategically:

> wing to wing
> the little warblers

sang in turn—
how could someone not know?
my voice
is now and ever
his match[2]

In other words, his argument for why he should love her as she loved his younger brother rests on bloodline similarity: we are of the same family "tree" since both sat wing-to-wing on the same "branch" and I "sing" just as well as him. The American in me says, "No, you don't get to claim a woman just because you are a brother" but the Japanese premodern scholar reminds me, "It was the day's custom for an older sibling to take responsibility for a wife were she to be widowed unexpectedly" and "Family-to-family alliance, status, and security, are all stronger reasons for romantic bonding than 'chemistry' or individual feelings of love." The *layering here is: "Older brother, younger brother, what's the difference? Let's not worry about the details. They are both princes, and related as full blood brothers." *Layering in East Asian love narratives often challenges our Western high valuation on individual-to-individual love as the fundamental structure of "true" love.

Narihira's poem about the moon, Mimi-Lulu of *2046*, and the older brother = younger brother love offer to Izumi are examples of *layering that engage "past-in-the-present" moments and/or blur identities. As noted, these are very common in love narratives. Memories (or anticipation, which is essentially a "future-in-the-present" moment) and entity associations (person A is like person B) generate complex identities and slippery narratives. Perhaps this is the place to also note that secrets are another common love narrative technique to *layer identities. A powerful example of this is the South Korean film *Shiri* (*Swiri*, 1999) where a North Korea spy and a South Korea spy fall in love, not knowing the "true"

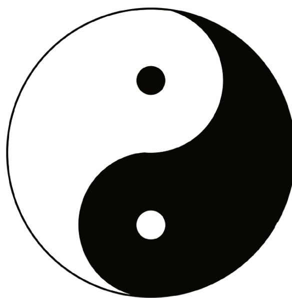
2. Both translations are mine.

identities of each other. In the climax of the film, the spy from North Korea, Myung-hyun (the name her lover knows) / Bang-hee (her government agent name), is attempting to kill South Korean government officials that her lover is tasked with protecting. The two face off, gun-to-gun, and their *layered identities as lovers and government agents clash:

The climax scene from the Korean film Shiri (1999)

We will discuss later the major role that secrets often play in *love narratives.

There is another important type of *layering that we must consider: hidden entities that are nevertheless powerful. The essential principle of ancient Chinese cosmology—that there is always *yin* inside *yang* and always *yang* inside *yin*—is represented with the symbol:



Traditional yin-yang symbol
with yin inside yang and yang inside yin

Traditional yin-yang symbol with yin inside yang and yang inside yin

The *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), portions of which are very, very old (11th-5th century BCE), is built on the principle of ever-changing states with the seeds of the upcoming state hidden within the current state. Only two of the sixty-four hexagrams around which the *Book of Changes* takes as the fundamental states of things are "pure." All others include some aspect of *yin* or some

aspect of *yang*. Further, the *Book of Changes* is built on the assumption that the true model of change is that the upcoming state pre-exists as a seed inside the current state. Thus, to be attentive to the occulted, hidden, and secret next-state gives one an advantage in understanding the current situation and what best actions should be taken. Put in the language of *layering, the occult is *layered behind the visible; it is invisible but very powerful.

This very old way of thinking, I would argue, underlies measurements of wisdom and sensitivity we can see in East Asian narratives: those who only notice the obvious or think that the obvious as the most important thing to attend to do not understand how the world works (the *worldview represented by ancient Chinese cosmology adopted by Daoism). This high value placed on the occult, I would argue, "spills over" into a high tolerance for layeredness (especially in the form of memories, complicated labyrinth-like timelines, blurred identities, multiple identities, and secrets) in narratives in all of its varieties. Thus, going back to the young brother / older brother duo, the "hidden" connector of bloodline actually had a strong claim to authenticity for readers of the day. It helped make the new relationship feel "natural." Rocks in Japanese rock gardens are positioned using this same idea, where the rocks seem to connect along hidden lines with one another, evoking the sense of natural placement, of a microcosm of the larger universe.[3]

16.5. ALTERNATING CONTEXTS (SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL)

With *alternating contexts I only wish to make a simple but important point: *narrative figures / *ToM / people move and

3. Gert J. van Tonder, "Eight lessons from karesansui," In *Proceedings of The First International Workshop on Kansei*, Fukuoka Japan (February 2-3, 2006), http://www.zen-garden.org/documents/8lessonsfromkaresansui.pdf .

pass through time, and in so doing, constantly change cultural contexts. If these entities were simply perfect mirrors of their environment, this would make interpretation easy: we match the *ToM to the current cultural state, for example. But this is not how it works. Instead, narrative figures, *ToM, and people all bring the prior and future locations (in time or space) to bear on the current situation. When I moved to Kyoto, I brought "America" with me. And when I moved back to California, I brought "Kyoto" with me. Here at Berkeley, I am mostly a Berkeley person. But not entirely, of course: there is some Oklahoman in me, and Tokyo, and Kyoto, and Bodh Gaya, and so on. There is my visualized past and my expected future. There are the cultural environments created by my circle of friends, circle of colleagues, imagined and real. As we think, feel, make decisions and predictions, we often measure these many contexts against one another consciously, but no doubt they continue to influence us even when we are not particularly paying attention.

16.6. IN SUM, HOW DO WE DEAL WITH PLURALITIES?

When analyzing we cannot possibly make a catalogue of all possible contexts, whether *autonomous, *competitive, *layered, or *alternating, and collectively called in this chapter *pluralities. They are outlined to eliminate some of the confusion that arises when we begin to explore contexts, and to energize our curiosity toward identifying a range of contexts rather becoming satisfied with just the most obvious, and because I want to make a statement as to what I think is really going on when we talk about "cultural influence."

However, as a practical matter, we should neither seek the simplest of answers nor consider things so endlessly that our analysis collapses under the weight of its details and tentative

conclusions. We should, in short, use good judgment in deciding what matters.

Finding balance among many possible scenarios and conclusions is probably the essence of all good analysis.

PART IV

METHOD—DESIGNING AND COMPLETING (COURSE) INTERPRETIVE PROJECTS

This part lays out the principles, rules, guidelines, and workflow (procedure) of the course's interpretive method. It is designed to work with in-class presented material, not stand on its own.

The principles, rules, guidelines and advice are first given as quick reference lists.

Following these simple lists is a brief chapter that introduces the overall principles of the rules, guidelines and advice. These principles are: **practicability, shareability, credibility, discovery & insight, accuracy, equality, diversity, and liveliness**.

Course rules are described. Rules are policies that every student must follow.

Then, various guidelines and advice are stated. Some

guidelines are achievable, others are aspirational. All advice is the result of watching the success and failures of student analysis done over the years in this course.

17. Building interpretive projects: Theory meets practice

White noise ◆ common practices ◆ love narrative circle ◆ the focus of interpretive projects ◆ steps and elements of the interpretive project: film, instance, ToM, narrowly defined topic, cultural context, context-to-Tom distance, outcome ◆ topical intensity spectrum ◆ status spectrum ◆ context robustness and ToM receptivity

— Terms —

- Introduced:
  - derivative
  - fragment
  - framing question
  - love narrative circle (love circle)
  - narrowly defined topic
  - receptivity
  - robustness
  - situational factors
  - status and its spectrum
  - topical intensity and its spectrum
  - white noise
- Mentioned and should now be familiar (review if necessary):

- array
- authoritative thought system
- bounded dialogue
- CG-C-D-E-R report (Interpretive Project Group Report)
- common practices
- Connectionism
- Connectivism
- context-to-ToM distance
- course method
- cultural attractors
- cultural context
- discovery
- East Asia
- horizon of expectation
- instance
- interpretive projects
- narrative figures
- ToM
- traditional

- values
- worldviews

This chapter makes some final statements that sit at the border between theory and practice, with the various complications of practice being the primary source for its content. As I sometimes tell the class before we begin actual interpretive projects, the actual process is much messier that the theory would suggest. All sorts of conundrums and confusions arise. Indeed, the entire theory itself is meant to limit these to a reasonable extent but also leave space for discovery which, in my experience, has often arisen from the less constructed, messier, unbounded aspects of the work.

Given this "borderland" positioning of the chapter, it is one of the chapters most likely to be in constant evolution, as practices in the classroom suggest new wording, changed directions, warnings, explanations, and so on. Much that is in the chapter could be in the chapters on method and much that is in those chapters could be here. What follows is my current decision as to where is the best place the locate material but it is a close decision. It is probably best to think of most of the below content as some hybrid of theory + practice.

17.1. DEALING WITH SITUATIONAL FACTORS: "WHITE

NOISE," COMMON PRACTICES, AND THE "LOVE NARRATIVE CIRCLE"

I have explained elsewhere that what we do is construct plausible content of *ToM, that is, the model of an individual in terms of the best guess as to her or his thoughts and feelings as well as the best guess as to the reasons for her or his actions or reactions. Since our *ToM are those of *narrative figures these "best guesses" are offered as plausive constructions of their thoughts, feelings and actions since, empirically speaking, they do not exist and thus cannot be tested except to the extent that when offered to others those others find them convincing.

There are a few things about such *interpretive projects worth restating here in the final chapter on theories and assumptions of the *course method and before we move into the templates and other mechanics of the projects themselves.

17.1.1. Avoiding "white noise" and focusing on worldviews and values

First, I acknowledge that if the question were not "What *worldviews and *values might be worthy our attentions as we work towards a plausible *ToM that is embedded in a specific culture, not our culture necessarily?" but rather "What is someone thinking, feeling and why do they do what they do?" we are in an entirely different analytic environment. (Our interest in talking about *ToM rather than *narrative figures or people in their totality is not just jargon—it is designed to draw us away from the more fleshed out presence of the full figure.) If our concerns were to explore the mind and heart of an individual, and ponder the causes for his or her actions or reactions, the most useful elements to consider would include strategic concerns (*situational factors and strategic considerations arising from them), natural visceral reactions

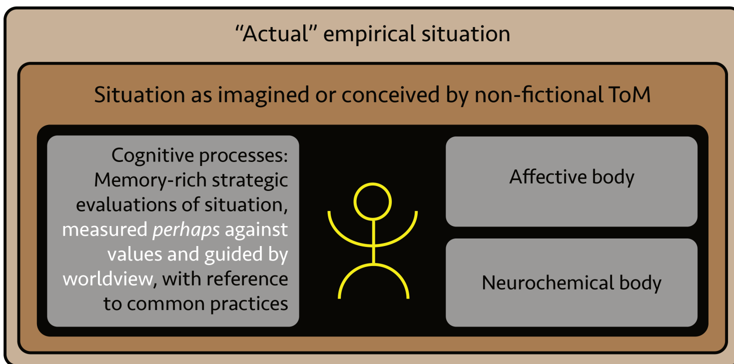
(real people have bodies with affective and neurochemical aspects), habits, *common practices ("What does everyone do in this sort of circumstance?), and patterned behavior (behavior patterns learned from others and just repeated without any extensive thinking about entering into that pattern).[1] Nearly all of these, in many cases, will have a more important role in determining the thoughts, feelings and actions of someone rather than the values they hold or aspire to. It is less clear to me whether it is as easy to set aside *worldviews or have them trumped by these other elements because *worldviews are the very basis of strategic thinking ("Since the world works like this, if I do that …") and also are deeply involved in generating the *horizon of expectations that presents some options and makes others never even known to have been options. Deciding this question is not necessary for our purposes because we are in any event already pre-positioned to ask questions about *worldview and *values and set to the side these other considerations.

These important *situational and other considerations are prominent and distracting and, based on a casual conversation in the hallway with a student in 2018, I have decided to give them, collectively, "*white noise." (However, while that conversation was about possibilities *white noise afford to draw out textual[2] features, I am using it metaphorically as an overabundance of randomly present features that makes it more difficult to "hear" specific notes or melodies clearly.) Functionally speaking—that is, in terms of achieving good

1. FN: You might recall that one of the large unsettled issues that subverts the premises of the *course method is whether knowledge is derived from principles or simply memorized patterns and how we make decisions. See the discussion of *Connectionism and *Connectivism.
2. If you are interested in algorithmic-driven literary criticism, here is an article that uses differential equations to model love narratives: Mikhail E. Zhuravlev, et al., "What Issues of Literary Analysis Can Differential Equations Clarify?" *International Journal of Applied Evolutionary Computation (IJAEC)* 6, no. 3 (2015), accessed February 22, 2018, https://www.igi-global.com/article/what-issues-of-literary-analysis-can-differential-equations-clarify/136069.

interpretation—what I will call *white noise is any or all prominent features of an *instance that are important for understanding the non-culturally specific *basics* of the *ToM's situation but in their prominence and familiarity distract us from finding more nuanced cultural insight. They can impede interpretation by their very presence.

So, we recognize that in the real world, thoughts, feelings and actions / reactions arise from complex interactions of many levels of our being:



"All politics are local, all decisions are personal"
ToM (of a real person), residing in a body, negotiating cognitive, affective, and neurochemical pressures in relation to the situation as imagined by the ToM, with the defined target of the course's interpretive method in white font so as to indicate the limits of what we analyze

A "real world" ToM with a body, in a situation, whose thinking, feeling, and action content is determined by a wide variety of factors

This graphic illustrates an individual, not a *narrative figure, amidst a plurality of forces: hopes, wishes, worries, fears, health, cognitive calculations based on the *ToM's best understanding of the situation (which might, by the way, not be very good), referencing memory and the behavior of others. From this complicated situation we make two decisions from the purposes of manageable analysis: we limit ourselves to

the less complicated constructions of *narrative figures and we further limit our scope to simply asking what role, if any, not just *values but the subset we can call *traditional values might have in such a complicated environment. We turn away from an essential interest in the individual to an interest in how *traditional *values have or have not survived, have or have not transformed themselves. We are not trying to explain the individual, we are interested in the *values.

I would like to say that there is wisdom in limiting the scope of our project so as to make is manageable enough for meaningful discussion. Discussion is not just a beneficial activity for this course; my assumptions about *cultural attractors and *horizons of expectation make discussion the single best antidote for these errors in judgment, in cross-cultural interpretation. I would also like to offer my considered opinion that while considering what role *worldviews and *values have in determining thoughts, feelings and actions might not be the key factor in making final determinations about these things, the process itself is the same. The ability to set aside one's preconceived views and consider the environment of the *ToM from the perspective of the *ToM, especially when it might require learning something new to do so, is exactly the right process for making sense of one's world and puts one on a fast learning curve toward sorting out the puzzles of a new cultural environment in determining why others behave the way they do and how oneself should behave as well. This understanding is undeniably powerful. (I would hope that individual would use this understanding for the good but it is, in fact, a morally neutral understanding in my opinion and can be used just as easily for selfish or unkind success.)

However, among features that might act as *white noise, there are two that we do, indeed need to pay close attention to. The first, "*common practices" deserves our attention because these may well be culturally specific and so are likely to help

us understand the cultural terrain of the *instance. The second is narrative progress location. We need to know "where in the story, at what point in the storyline" our *instance is happening. This is the chronology generated by the narrative, the "time" of and in the story. We also probably need to consider "where in the text" the *instance is: First paragraph? Last sentence? Beginning of the most critical scene? And so on. Where an *instance is located in a narrative matters tremendously in our understanding of it. In this second category, we will consider in more specific terms just one type of location in particular, that of where an *instance is on what I call the "*love narrative development circle" or just "*love story circle" or "*love circle" to keep things simple.

17.1.2. Common practices

If this class was not squarely pointed towards asking questions about the *status of *traditional *worldviews and *values in contemporary cinema, *common practices would be a good way of exploring culture. I settled on this term because of the gap we all know and understand between the ideals of a culture (its ethical principles) and what really happens in the world. For example, a core Christian principle is "love your neighbor as you would love yourself" and the *value that this represents is to some (including me) beautiful. But we all know that this is not the actual *common practice. The *common practice is closer to a *value that could be phrased "try to be a bit nicer to your neighbor than your natural impulses would lead you to act." It is fair to call this a *value, too. It is just not an idealistic one; it is a practical one. Originally, I split ethics into three types: ethical principles (ideals), *ethical values (widely upheld and maybe not usually in reach but in principle practical reformulations that are achievable), and *common practices (what people actually do and do so commonly and widely that

one would not be very criticized if one follows the practice, even if it is not very nice as an action). This discontinuity between ideal and practice is very important: rules need gaps, gears should not fit very tightly together, the imperfections, secrets, and “convenient” decisions around the edges of things are part of how society remains functional. Because of this original three-part scheme, you might still encounter the word “principles” here and there in this text. It is a good schema. But I try to slim the theory when I can.

We decide whether or not to treat *common practices as *white noise based on whether we think including it or excluding it is the best for drawing out the cultural features of the *instance. I would also ask that you keep in mind that it is all too easy to project one’s own *common practices into a narrative and thereby miss its cultural differences from you.

17.1.3. The “love narrative circle”

Understanding an *instance almost always requires considering where it is in the development of the story. We use a template called “*love narrative circle” (“*love circle”) so that we have shared language when discussing our various interpretations of an *instance. It is not unusual that different groups will plot an *instance differently on this circle. That is a good thing to know. It clarifies where the disagreements between the groups are.

The typical Western view of love (and many other things having to do with narratives) does not often use a circle. It is more likely to be linear: lovers are challenged and either fail to overcome those challenges and are forever apart or do overcome those challenges and live “happily every after.” I will argue in the discussion of Daoism that cycles are the foundational geometry of *East Asia and since we are talking

about *East Asian love stories, I have selected the circle as the shape on which to plot various stages of a love relationship.

The *love circle is a narrative development map where we plot an *instance on a narrative event chain that is the love narrative. Its five main phases are: pre-relationship, early relationship, mature relationship, declining or deteriorating relationship, and post-relationship. This is a basic conceptual structure / formula: birth–life–death of a relationship + a "before" and an "after" stage. I believe this is the minimal structure one can offer for any narrative that has temporary existence. For example, this segmentation is followed in the five books of love of the *Japanese Poems Old and New* (*Kokin waka shu*, 11th-century Japan).

We plot an *instance on the *love circle as best we can to better understand its situation and for purposes of more meaningful comparisons with other love narratives.

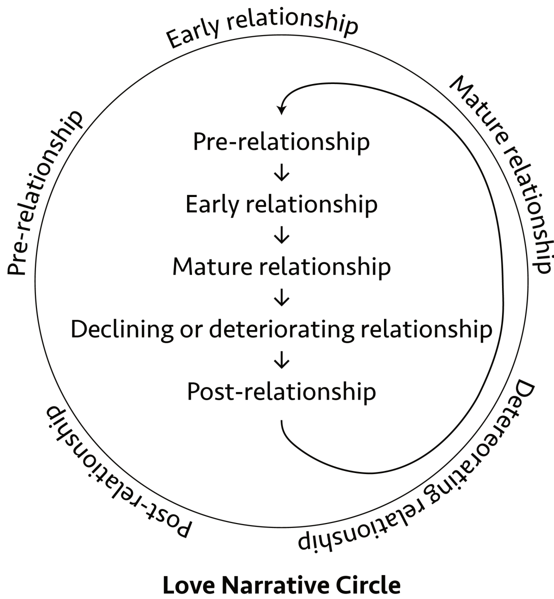
Please note these features of the *love circle:

- Clearly, the five main phases themselves can have subdivisions. For example, if the relationship "seems like it is beginning to fall apart" that would be an early moment within the declining phase.
- The content of these phases is not necessarily obvious. A "mature" relationship might be one that feels stable and secure. Or it might be a time of conflict after the initial phrase of falling in love fades and the couple realizes they are in a long-term relationship.
- It is likely that the *ToM does not have one fixed mental location on the circle. For example, "I think I have stopped loving this person … but maybe not." Or, "Yesterday I was sure I was in love, but today I feel nothing or seem to be going back and forth. I'm not sure."
- It matters a great deal whether this is the "first" circle that

the ToM experiences or instead a repetition of the love cycle (a second or third or still more cycle of love).

- Finally, there is no reason to assume that the two individuals in a relationship perceive the relationship in the same way and so would say the same thing, if asked to plot it on a circle. Consider this example:
    - In *House of Flying Daggers*, Xiao Mei's love towards Jin remains in a pre-relationship phase longer than that of Jin, who has accepted her I his heart. However, in a more general way, this couple can be seen as being in the aspirational and hopeful stages of early love more than the Xiao Mei-Leo pair, which is fully mature and is probably in the early stages of decline. The tension in the film surrounding her inability to decide between the two men is not simply because of the differences of values of the two men or her different feelings toward them. It is, fundamentally, a tension of two love relationships at different stages.

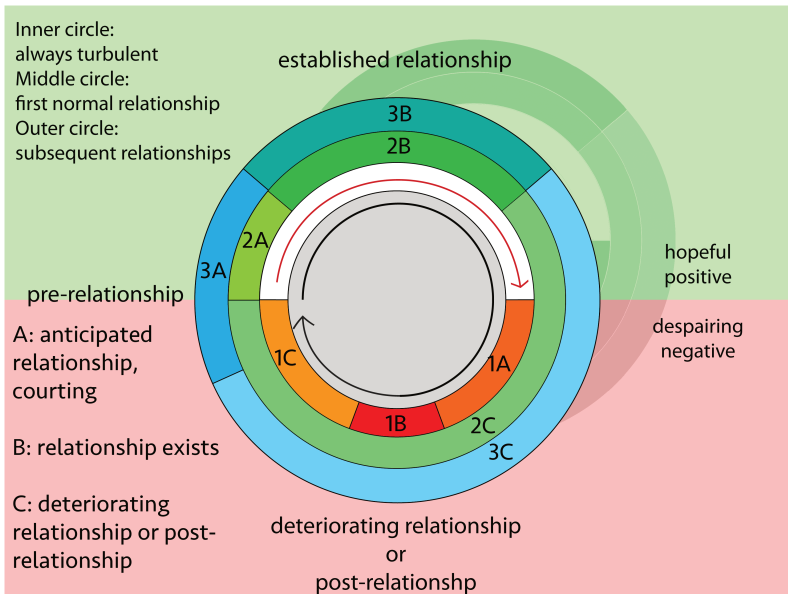
Here is the love circle in its basics:



Love Narrative Circle

Sharpening the description of a love narrative's progress location using the narrative love circle

However, I would like for us to keep in mind the implications of love cycles and repeating love cycles, as well as some variations:



Variations of the love narrative circle

The above is a diagram made several years ago, when I had a three-part rather than five-part phase system, but it is still relevant in a number of ways:

- It represents the memories of previous circles with the shadowed circles behind the main image.
  It suggests that the basic environment for a love narrative is either optimistic or pessimistic, which is often but not always the case. The graphic offers this as something to think about, not insist on.
- With the innermost circle it suggests that it is possible to be pessimistic about a relationship right from the beginning.
- It suggests one way that a second cycle might be different from a first. This is of course just one of many, many ways a

first love and a second love can be different in terms of narrative progress.

17.2. WHAT ROLE DO AUTHORITATIVE THOUGHT SYSTEMS HAVE IN SHAPING CONTENT OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL GROUPS?

This course was originally designed with the first half of the semester spent reading premodern texts. That was primarily a way to inculcate against overly modern, overly ethnocentric interpretations of love stories. I believed that if we had a stronger and better-formulated understanding of Confucianism and such in their classic, early forms then those alien-feeling and crisply defined features—should they exist as traces in modern situations—would be easier to notice and tease out of the text of film, helping us read with better cross-cultural accuracy.

While we no longer spend extended periods reading premodern texts, this basic position is unchanged—the emphasis has remained on *traditional *worldviews and *values. I continue to believe that knowledge of them helps us notice and understand cultural differences worth noticing, despite our postmodern relationship to traditions, despite globalized culture, despite the spread of individualism around the world, despite many things. Among this crowd of modern ways of thinking and among our fractured cultural terrains, these *worldviews and *values, I suggest, have indeed retained a place and it is perhaps these, rather than a wide range of other social practices (common practices), that generate significant misunderstandings and misreadings.

And so we circle back to the basic question: What role, if any, do *authoritative thought systems have in shaping culture and cultural differences (.... in *East Asian films)?

This is a way of asking how relevant a *cultural context is. We

try to locate *cultural contexts and suggest their interpretive relevance via *interpretive projects.

We try to determine a disciplined measure of this through a triple-faceted process where each area of consideration interacts with the others until we find a balance among them that seems, above all, to be the best in terms of credibility, but also, hopefully, of interest to others. In this case, “of interest” means either observations of culture that seem promising for further analysis, or things that had gone un-noticed and once identified, erase a “blindness” of some sort. These three facets are: refining what of a *cultural context is relevant, deciding “distance” between the *context and the *ToM, and deciding the *status of the *worldview or *value.

1. *Deciding specifically (refining) what of a *cultural context needs consideration*. The interpretation is grounded on the best possible estimate of what needs to be considered, that is, whether we should keep in mind the full *authoritative thought system, or recognize what we need to work with is really only a *fragment of it, or, finally, deciding that the object is only a distant *derivative of an original system.
2. *Deciding the “distance” between the *context and the *ToM*. We must take up at the same time considerations of “*distance” between a *cultural context and a *ToM which is a way of measuring the ability of the *context to press the *ToM into certain thoughts, feelings or actions/ reactions or, alternatively, the level of willing interest of the *ToM in engaging the *context. “*Distance,” we will see, can be the result of many different factors but as a simple description it is the dynamic of a *context’s *robustness and a ToM’s *receptivity.
3. **Status of a *worldview or *value or perhaps a *context in a broader formulation and its topical intensity.*

- We need, of course, to consider whether the "object" under consideration is viewed by the *ToM to be affirmed, or resisted, or perhaps there is a more conflicted or ambiguous *status. (In other words, does the *narrative figure residing inside the story appear to affirm or reject a certain *worldview or *value? Has the director constructed a world where it seems she or he affirm or reject the *worldview or *value? And so on.) The "object" here most often means a *value, since *worldviews tend to be unconsciously upheld and not often the direct topic of a narrative. (Nihilist works or hyper-religious works, however, challenge widely held *worldviews.) We call whether a value is accepted or rejected or something else "*status." We plot *status on a spectrum across the range "affirmed-conflicted-rejected." We need to keep in mind, however, that there are many ways of affirming something and, similarly, many ways of rejecting something. For example, in terms of affirmation, there is overt affirmation, complicity, passive acceptance, and many others. In terms of rejection, there is active and full denial, or changing the object to more acceptable forms, or ignoring the object at times when it should be the topic, pretending to misunderstand the topic, and so on. Further, the "conflicted" designation is meant to be vague and include not just "undecided" or "switching back and forth" or "unclear" but also when a value has been modified in a way that seems to suggest "the value itself is good but for it to be viable in our modern world it needs to be adjusted somewhat." While one could see this as a type of affirmation, in a sense it erases the original when it modifies it so, in a pure sense, it is a rejection. Because of this difficulty, I feel it is better to leave it at the center. I think the spectrum schema is

useful so I have decided to collapse it into the mid-point and include it with other “conflicted” positions.

- Onto this complex spectrum—which should be considered very carefully when building an interpretation because it is in this area that a great deal of narrative slipperiness occurs—we place as well a spectrum of “*topical intensity.” That is, to what degree does the narrative *engage* the *value or other cultural object? Finally, it should be further noted that *status needs to be calculated for multiple levels of the text because they influence one another. The basic levels are the *status of the object as it is from the perspective of the *ToM, its narrative world, and that of the author / director. How the *ToM thinks of a *worldview or *value, how broadly society embraces that *value, what seems to be the *status of that *value in the full environment created by the narrative (the narrated world), and how we imagine the author or director really feels, as this can easily influence content in both obvious and non-obvious ways.

The above three are developed contemporaneously, as we try different combinations until we are satisfied with the accuracy of the description and conclusions. Such interpretations, observations, and conclusions will of course be a matter of judgment and they may well change later when reconsidered, or upon hearing the thoughts of others, or when learning new and relevant information. Most of the conclusions in this course are tentative in this way although when many groups conclude along similar lines (within the class or across multiple iterations of the course), such conclusions might become a more solid conclusion. Nevertheless, the danger of “group-think” and “group blindness” needs always to be kept in mind.

Essentially the analytic destination of this course is to make

credible suggestions as to what cultural features are worthy of note or what cultural features are interestingly absent, whether such features are being accepted or rejected, ignored or something in between, and with what degree of energy all of this is happening within the narrative.

We will now consider the elements and steps of an interpretive project, one at a time.

17.3. OUTLINE OF AN INTERPRETIVE PROJECT

Interpretive projects are the core activity of the class. It has multiple steps, some done by individuals, others by groups, and results in reports that are usually shared. It requires awareness of the rules, guidelines and specific terminology of the course, as outlined in the follow book part. The basic pattern is first to create a binding contract as to what will be analyzed (something like a prompt), then work through an analysis-outcome phase (hyphenated because of its hermeneutic nature: each of these develops together with the other), and finally sharing of the analysis-outcome. If the interpretive project is the work of a group instead of an individual, there is a second outcome phases where the analysis-outcome results of individual interpretive projects are debated and consolidated.

More specifically, an *interpretive project begins with the selection of film or text, a determination as to the *ToM, and an *instance within the narrative, then sharpening the focus of the work by defining a *narrowly defined topic. This creates an interpretive contract that, once fixed, cannot be independently altered or deviated from. The contract is a set of boundaries (film, *ToM, *instance) and defined focus (*narrowly defined topic). The *narrowly defined topic is broad enough to allow for exploration but narrow enough that if interpreters work independently they can later compare meaningfully their results since they are essentially working to answer the same

interpretive question or questions. The *narrowly defined topic obviously must be devoid of prejudicial language, hypotheses, or conclusions in order to suppress *cultural attractors and other preconceived notions, on the one hand, and, on the other, create space that might allow for "ah-ha" moments that succeed in extending past one's typical *horizon of expectation.

Once the contract is decided, interpreters gather *cultural contexts, *array them, and make succinct statements that represent their interpretive conclusions. They share these with their work group members. Group members' conclusions are debated within the group and a *CG-C-D-E-R report is composed. The report is usually shared with the class.

The above is an overview of the basic workflow of the course *interpretive project. This work and the theoretical positions supporting it, are what I call the *course method.

In an earlier chapter, via an interpretation of an *instance in the Japanese film *5 Centimeters per Second*, I laid out course definitions for *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices. In another chapter, I made suggestions on how to gather *cultural contexts and manage the complexity of such a harvest of possible contexts. Now, as we conclude this part of the book, and before we move into the specific rules, standards, and processes of the interpretive project itself, and thereby encounter the practical problems that *interpretive projects will bring, there remain a few more theoretical issues to address.

17.4. ELEMENTS OF AN INTERPRETIVE PROJECT

17.4.1. The list of project elements

The elements of an interpretive project are:

Contract construction phase

- Framing question

- Film
- Instance
- ToM
- Narrowly defined topic (NDT)

Analysis-outcome phase

- ToM location on love circle
- Cultural context content
- Context-to-Tom distance
- Cultural context status
- Cultural context topical intensity
- Outcome (individual)
- Outcome (group)

Report phases (sharing)

- The individual or group engaged in interpretive projects reports to me, group members, or other groups, or the class as a whole through three report templates: project contract, individual project report, and group project report. (There is a fourth report sometimes requested which askes the group to report to me details of their meetings. This is for assessment purposes, not carrying out and sharing analysis.)

17.4.2. Framing questions

The "*framing question" is the start point of any *interpretive project.

*Interpretive projects work in narrow spaces in order to enhance the chance of discovery through *bounded dialogue. This narrowness, therefore, has an advantage but can lead to

pointless debates if larger issues are not kept in mind. Interpretive projects are most powerful when they have a well-defined contract that captures into it a large and interesting issue and has found a way to explore that issue through a *narrowly defined topic. These larger issues are conceived by the individual and group and articulated and given direction through a *framing question. The authors of an interpretive project then "translate" this general idea, as posed by the question, into something that can be explored via the course method, with its terminology and specific process.

The *framing question, then, is:

- a question that is interesting, relevant, or otherwise useful in some way toward considering cultural differences and similarities among our *East Asian countries or exploring the fading or persistence presence (*status) of traditional worldviews and values—but is, itself, too large to have any realistic, credible conclusions only tentative ones,
- something that an interpretive project can offer insight towards,
- free of course jargon but instead is general, intuitive, casual, natural, or conversational in its language.

Interpreters then fashion defined areas of analysis to contribute focused thinking toward these sorts of broader questions.

Here is an example of a framing question:

> "Is it useful or just a waste of time to consider Buddhism to help interpret the Korean film *3-Iron.* Might it be better to consider the angst in the film to be more about Korean 'han'?"

This would generate two projects that could be compared.

One might have a contract such as:

- Film: *3-Iron*,
- Instance: Outcome of the romantic relationship in the film,
- ToM: Director,
- NDT: “What is the *status of a *Buddhist-like *worldview that change is experienced as the physic pain of unreliability and existential thinness?”

Such a project could then be paired with:

- Film: *3-Iron*,
- Instance: Outcome of the romantic relationship in the film,
- ToM: Director,
- NDT: “What is the *status (with special attention paid to *topical intensity) of the *worldview that is the foundation for ‘han’?”

Both of these projects, by the way, engage three things mentioned elsewhere: 1) that an *instance is connected to its surroundings (therefore, to discuss outcome well the interpreter needs to think of the entire plot line); 2) a necessity for interpreters to engage in outside research in order to understand what ‘han’ is; and, 3) thought and debate around what exactly the outcome is—in other words, interpreters almost certainly will engage in the hermeneutics of using possible *worldviews to decide basic story meaning while at the same time using basic story meaning to decide what are relevant *worldviews.

17.4.3. Films: audience considerations and working with slippery content

The selection of the film is, for the most part, a practical matter. However, there are some theoretical points I wish to note.

First, thoughtfulness as to the author-text-reader (viewer) relationship is, in my opinion, paramount in any good interpretation and, when doing so, it can be a determining factor in film selection. There is much that could be said, but at this particular juncture I want to note that the commercial aspect of films is something we are unable to ignore in our interpretive projects. Because of a course premise (unproven, but nevertheless a premise by which we work) that one factor in box-office success or failure is whether the audience can accept the *worldviews and *values of the film, we need to ask—when deciding cultural contexts—the question of whether the *worldviews and *values primarily emanate from the personal vision of the director or his or her intention to reflect back to the audience what he or she perceives to be *worldviews and *values with which the audience is comfortable or enjoys. Of course, this is no simple matter since the director is, indeed, embedded in a culture regardless of how much he or she may wish to think otherwise, and, in addition, the director's understanding of the audience is, itself subject to misinterpretation. Further, there is, in fact no single "audience" and films may well be targeting multiple audiences with different values. Much of this is, ultimately, undecidable and, in the end, a "best guess" or "one good guess" position must be taken simply in order to undertake at least one plausible line of analysis. Whether this is a final answer or not is not important since the goal of interpretive projects is not to generate answers but rather generate well-considered positions around which thinking can occur.

Second, because of their interesting in feeling "current" films

have a convoluted relationship with almost anything that is *traditional and so not only may they have low *topical intensity (almost invisibly so) they often either contort the *traditional *value or have a contorted relationship to it (affirming it and denying it at the same time), or both. While this makes getting to the end of an interpretive project difficult, just that act of trying to carry out a project while being aware of these challenges teaches us something about the place of *traditional *values in current situations. So, in this particular case the struggle is what success looks like much of the time.

Students usually learn right from the first of their interpretive projects that the director's view (or the "emergent" view of the film as a result of all of its collaborative elements) in slippery or sloppy or both with regard to *worldviews and *values. This is just a feature of the medium. Few directors enter into film-making because of an interest in philosophy or ethics (although some of the best do), but are instead more interested in the affective power of film, a topic we set outside the boundaries of our interpretation. Further, even if the director has a clearly defined set of *values, he or she is constrained by commercial pressures and the messy, collaborative nature of the art form. Besides box-office audiences, for example, there are those who fund the project and put their name on it. Still further, since the purpose of most films is, above all, to entertain not educate, *values, if they get in the way of an entertaining moment, show of predilection of temporarily and conveniently disappearing.

Finally, there is the very interesting nature of comic (wry, sardonic, cynical) expression: through humor one can be entirely ambiguous as to one's position. In other words, the content of a comment can be real and "just a joke" at the same time, that is, in an undecidable replacement pattern where we can no longer say that, ultimately, it is one or the other. This type of comic or wry expression is exceptionally common in film—in comedies obviously (so beware of selecting comedies

for interpretive projects) but in just about any film at some point.

17.4.4. Instances and their interconnectedness with what is beyond the instance

An *instance can be any aspect of a film or films that “freezes” the discussion around a particular “moment” or feature that allows for an exploration of the thoughts, feelings, actions / reactions of a *ToM.

In its simplest form it can be a moment in the narrative with a question such as “When X learns that her lover has been killed by her son, why does she choose to continue to protect her son?”

However, it can reach beyond a single film or a moment of the narrative time: “The director uses the color pink in all of his films at moment of violence. Is this tagging a specific *worldview outlook or *value?”

The hallmark of an *instance is not that it is a brief moment but rather has a single feature so as to avoid the fog of considering many things at the same time. That I have settled on the somewhat awkward term “*instance” is because I wish it to always suggest, in the very word itself, that it is dangerous to draw sweeping conclusions from interpretive projects since we look only at a limited “instance” of something, not a frequent feature or recurring event.

That being said, good *instances do suggest that the outcome positions arising out of them may well suggest something larger and, in fact, the hope is that they do. However, we simple remain on this side of caution and refrain from claiming that they indeed do.

“*Instances” are expansive in another way as well. In the vein of Derrida arguing for significance of words coming from the networks they belong to, the significance of narrative moments

similarly derives from the larger narrative and the place of the moment within that narrative. This is the point of the *love circle: we cannot truly understand how the *ToM is thinking, feeling, or planning action without deciding where the *ToM sees itself as being on the *love circle.

In the same way, even in above simple example of the mother and her son cannot be asked without awareness of the full film. Her decision might be at one moment but we learn of it through larger narrative chains of her man actions towards her son and, indeed, there may never have been a moment of decision. Perhaps she is acting "naturally" and "instinctively." If this is the case, our *instance has created an artificial moment in order to discuss the *values we think might be in play. As with much in this course, this sort of analytic movement points us toward a discussion of *values and away from an interpretation of the film. Considering the *status of *values trumps generating the best analysis for the film although clearly these two are deeply involved in one another.

17.4.5. ToM: two basic levels, "shadow ToMs" and other imagined objects, and the complicated relationship of ToM and its cultural contexts

Of course, what a *ToM is, why we discuss *ToM rather than *narrative figures or actual individuals, why we limit our investigation to *cognitive – (and some) *affective love within them, and the difference between real world *ToM and our made-for-interpretive-projects *ToM have all been taken up at various points in the book. *ToM is at the center of our work.

Here I would like to add one simple consideration and two not-so-simple considerations.

First, I would simply like to say that the selection of *ToM determines our analytic perspective: the world as seen from with a *ToM is always true but if it is a character in the story that

world is quite specific and limited whereas if it is the director of the film, we are working at something of a “meta” level and considering all corners of the film. These are the two “levels” of *ToM but in truth the director’s level is never absent. That *ToM affects the way we should evaluate *ToM of the character level and that *ToM is, in many cases, the one we want, at some point, to end up thinking about. That being said, there is much good work to be done at the character level.

Second, when we watch a film we are often asking ourselves “Would I do the same thing in the same situation?” or “How would if feel if I could jump over a building like that?” or any sort of view reaction that places us inside the film. While this is a rich way to enjoy a film, even to think about it, it can also generate “shadow *ToMs” where we have not noticed that instead of trying to think of a *ToM on its own terms, we have taken residence inside it. This is a deployment of simulation theory (see the chapter on ToM) that corrupts the selection of *cultural contexts and *outcome statements of *interpretive projects. When we take up residence, we create a modified (shadow) *ToM that is less purely derived of the narrative and is instead some modification of our personal *ToM, clothed in a character that is embedded in a story. To the extent that we can avoid this, our chance for discovery and accurate interpretation is enhanced.

Finally, since I view identity as a socially derived object, that is, who we are is what others think we are and what we think others think we are, there is not real border between a cultural context and a ToM. Since we want to think about *worldviews and *values we separate the two but another way of thinking about this is simply “a ToM’s identity is the *status of relevant *cultural contexts.” In other words, to create a silly example, if one hates chestnuts and one discovers there is a secret society around the world of chestnut haters, part of one’s identity can very easily become “I am a member of the World Chestnut-

Haters Association." Or, conversely, if one wants to have the identity of being a member of a worldwide secret society, one can chose to hate chestnuts to gain legitimate membership.

.... And that leads to the most complicated portion of this line of thought: One's identity is not enwrapped with the content of a cultural context, one's identity is enwrapped in the content of a cultural context as one understands it. If one does not think you truly hate chestnuts that person will not consider you a member and your identity, to that person, is a "fake chestnut hater" whereas your identity is "full and legitimate member of secret society." So, when we are positing cultural contexts and how ToM relate to them, for the sake of simplicity, we usually treat these contexts as floating independent of the way the ToM perceives it but in truth this is never the case and, in some situations, it is important to remember this.

In sum, one's relationship to cultural contexts, as I will argue below, is a function of group membership and group membership is not just a part of identity but rather, is, identity. It is just that identity is not stable: depending on the perspective from which it is being considered ("how I, named X, think of myself" "how others think of person named X") it can, probably does, change. We have limited ability to control how the way our identity resides in the minds of others.

17.4.6. Narrowly Defined Topic (NDT)

A *narrowly defined topic, together with the film selection, ToM determination, and wording of the *instance, completes the contract that individuals and groups will adhere to where carrying out interpretation. It identifies the topic that will be considered and is often in the form of a question and is, indeed, often in the form of a question with this pattern: "What is the *status of ....?"

The *narrowly defined topic supports a key assumption of

the course: we all work with cultural blind spots and limits in our cultural knowledge and our best hope at noticing them or extending our knowledge is through dialogue. The *narrowly defined topic allows individuals to think about the same topic completely independently, then compare notes and thus, through the independent points of views, discover interpretive prejudices, failures and perhaps even dangerous "group-think" when everyone comes to the same conclusion.

Fashioning a good *narrowly defined topic is key to a successful interpretive project, but it is very difficult to achieve. Or, more precisely, the **instance-**NDT pair is difficult to create. One of these requires insight into locating a rich area of the film for successful bounded dialogue around issues relevant to the course. The required features of a *narrowly defined topic will be given in the next part of the book. I would only like to note here two things.

In terms of theory, it has long been recognized that how one frames an inquiry will have enormous impact on what the results of that inquire will looks like: bending meaning towards it, emphasizing certain things over others, entirely eliminating discursive space for other things, and so on. Please be aware how powerful, indeed, is the *narrowly defined topic you are fashioning.

The purpose of *narrowly defined topics is to set out a discursive space within which one can, through bounded dialogue, evaluate and discover something about the *status of *traditional *worldviews and *values. As such, it is a practical step in the process and must not resemble or invite, in any way, a thesis statement.

I have found that the composition of the *instance-*NDT pair is frequently a rich moment in the interpretive project that revealing the interpreter's own *worldviews and *values as well as often reinforce *horizon's of expectation rather than allow pathways beyond them. To be able to compose excellent

*instance-*narrowly defined topic pairs is perhaps one of the best ways to assess whether a student has mastered the content of this course and has a basic understanding of the film for which the *narrowly defined topic is being written.

17.4.7. Cultural contexts: Defining a cultural context as descendant of premodern worldviews and values—Authoritative thought systems, fragments, and derivatives

When we are considering *traditional *thought systems such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, it is too clumsy a tool to import all the various *worldviews and *values of the *system simply because one of its *worldviews or *values has been credibly identified. For example, even if I accept that all things change, it is not fair to say that I also subscribe to the Buddhist teaching that all aspects of the Universe are reflected in all other aspects of the Universe (the doctrine of co-dependence) even if, were I to follow the logic of my belief, I might need to accept this. The logic of the *system is not the point. As a living, breathing member of a culture I simply do not think about co-arising and you cannot predict my thoughts, feelings, or actions/reactions on something that I never think about.

On the other hand, if I learned that someone came up through the Catholic school system, I can reasonably take as an initial working assumption that the individual has probably been exposed to many of the doctrines of Catholicism and knows something about original sin, confession, and grace. In this case, the original *system is close and extensive and probably helpful for interpretation.

In this way we need to decide how much of an *authoritative system seems to be credibly relevant. When we interpret a *love narrative in film, to what degree do we need to reference the full teachings of an *authoritative thought system? This is a

technical way of asking commonsense questions such as, "How important is Confucianism to someone living in Seoul who is twenty?" This is too general to be useful for focused discussion so we could create, for example, this *instance: "In the Korean film *My Sassy Girl*, Gyeon-woo often refuses to accept his mother's efforts to find a good girl for him." The *narrowly defined topic might be: "Is he being presented as a bad Confucian son or does the film seem to celebrate his independence, thereby dismissing Confucian *values?" Now we have something specific enough to generate a productive group discussion.

For the moment I would like to focus on the last word in the *narrowly defined topic: "*values." There seem to be two *values at play and it seems reasonable to include both in our considerations: **xiao* (filial piety, not as submitting to the authority of the parent but showing appreciation to the parent by being cooperative and receptive to suggestions), and respect for authority (one should obey one's parents and at least show respect towards others higher in a hierarchy). So, should we stop there or should we make broader assertions that the whole of Confucianism is being called into question? It we just stay with these two *values, we are treating them as *fragments because they are indeed identifiably part of Confucian *values and Gyeon-woo, our *ToM, (and movie viewers) are likely able to label them as such. But the entire environment of the film while relatively strong in a variety of Confucian *values, also makes room for, and supports, a range of *values that are distinctly not Confucian. My interpretation is that the film should be seen as taking up the question, "Is *filial piety* a good thing?" rather than the broader question, "Is *Confucianism* a good thing?" I think we can credibly say that the film answers the first question as: "Yes, filial piety is good. Mother does indeed know best." It also suggests that: "Some aspects of Confucianism are indeed good but we need to make

some distance from other aspects so that love can blossom in a modern and satisfying way." Ultimately, in my opinion, *My Sassy Girl*, is a film with conservative Confucian *values but reduces the oppressive feel of the Confucian *system in is full weight by also asserting the beauty of considering the individual as sometimes more important than the group. In this way, treating filial piety as a *fragment of Confucianism is more useful than asking the sweeping question, "Does *My Sassy Girl* support Confucianism?"

In our modern films, *fragments are far more frequent than full-fledged *authoritative thought systems, but reference back to the original *system can add precision to our understanding of the *fragment. And, of course, if we are reading a premodern text from, say, 14th-century Japan, we should take seriously the possibility that Buddhism is present (to the *ToM) in its full and broad scope as an *authoritative system.

On the other hand, *3-Iron* ends with a stock phrase: "It's hard to tell whether the world we live in is a reality or a dream." Movie-viewers will most likely find this to be a familiar-feeling phrase because many versions of it appear in various places at various times. But some might say it is a Buddhist phrase. Others might say it is a Daoist phrase. Others might just nod, feeling it is "wise" but having no sense of its source.

One can argue that the source is the ancient philosophy Zhuang zi (later considered to be a Daoist):

> Once, Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering about, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know that he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming that he was Zhuang Zhou. Between Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things.[3]

But one could argue that the source is some stock wisdom floating around in premodern Korea and Japan as evidenced in this 9th-century Japanese love poem:

> Was it that you came to me?
> Was it that I went to you?
> Was it a dream? Was it real?
> Was I sleeping? Was I awake?"[4]

The only relevant answer to this question is how does the director of *3-Iron* think of this concept and/or what does he expect his audience to think of it?

I would like to argue that the answer has nothing to do with either Buddhism or Daoism but is rather:

> True love happens in a dream-space.

If this is correct, then the phrase is a *derivative: it is less meaningful to see it as Daoist or Buddhist as it is to see it as a common cultural position that "dreaminess is the place of pure emotions" or something along those lines.

I hope you can see how whether or not to position an object inside an *authoritative system, or position it as a descendant of the *system where recalling the *system helps understand it (a *fragment), or conclude that knowing the origins might be interesting in some ways but it is not directly relevant to an accurate understanding of the *ToM (a *derivative) is a matter of opinion and depends on your larger interpretations of the narrative. For example, imagine that I re-watch *3-Iron* and begin to notice references to Buddhism everywhere. I might in that case rethink my conclusion and treat the last words of the film as a *fragment of Buddhism, not a *derivative, and will suggest that the Buddhist teaching "this is a world of illusion, which means this is a world of suffering" is relevant. Small changes like this can cascade through interpretations in much larger

3. Burton Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 44.
4. *Japanese poems new and old (Kokin waka shu)*, no. 645, based on *Tales of Ise*, episode 69.

ways: if I make that assertion, the end of the film is also more depressing.

In sum, the content of the *cultural context we are considering expands or contracts depending on where we place it on the below spectrum—plotting something near the *authoritative thought systems requires that we think of more elements of that *system. Further, the farther to the left we plot an object the more *robust it tends to be as a result of the weight of its institutional constitution and theoretical / ideological power as a fully recognized *system.

Authoritative thought system	**Fragment**	**Derivative**
should evoke other aspects of the system	Probably don't need to evoke other aspects of the system	Probably misleading to evoke other aspects of the system
•	•	•
system's presence is authoritative	system's presence is dim	system absent

Authoritative thought systems, fragments, and derivatives fall on a spectrum with no distinct demarcations. What term is best is tied to credible interpretation.

The difference between authoritative thought systems, fragments, and derivatives is a question of degree and need for most credible interpretation

17.4.8. Cultural contexts: ToM perspective, group representation

17.4.8.1. Cultural context from the perspective of ToM

When we begin to define the content of a cultural context, we do not ask a regional or historical question such as "What is a prominent or representative or definitely present *worldview or *value that we can associate with the time and setting of the narrative? Instead, our search travels in a specific direction:

From the perspective of the *ToM, what might be relevant *worldviews and *values and how are those represented to the *ToM via groups?

Thus, we do not take an omniscient perspective such as, should the setting of the narrative be the American Deep /south, "one should remember and respect the Confederacy." Instead, one says "Social Worldview: *ToM holds as a *worldview that there remain two United States—the Union and the Confederacy. These two nations still exist even if victory was with the Union and even if it appears that the Confederacy is gone." In other words, we are not in the business of describing cultural contexts that empirically exist but rather contexts that the ToM believes exists.

17.4.8.2. Cultural context as represented by social groups

As indicated by the second half of the above statement about our search direction ("What is a prominent ..."), when possible we articulate the *context-to-ToM relationship in terms of a cultural group-ToM relationship. That is, rather than think of *ToM relating to an abstract idea, we give that abstract idea a social body, a group, of some sort. The puts the analysis in line with the assumption that the **context-**ToM relationship is essentially one of identity and identity is essentially the function of how one thinks others think of oneself. Cultural contexts may indeed be highly abstract and only have an imagining group, such as when a ToM believes itself to be immortal (a member of a special elite of Daoist superiors of have attained immortality) or a "warrior of God" and, at the other end, contexts may indeed have empirical groups representing them, such as the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. That being said, most fall somewhere in between. The full spectrum should be kept in mind, as well as the theoretical possibility that there is no group at all. Keeping the spectrum in mind encourages

discovery. However, stepping away from the view that cultural is represented to individuals through groups—even if the group is abstract, ill- or weakly-formed, or transient—is stepping outside the framework of the *course method, even if justified at the level of theory or for other analytic purposes. For the purposes of the course, culture is visualized as raising issues of identity and issues of identity are visualized as being resolved through the social being of the *ToM. In the case of this approach, culture is a non-entity if it is not associated with some sort of group. Groups by the way can be very small (Berkeley first year students from southern California, for example) or very big (all humans across time) and, as already state, real, ideal or just imagined in some way. They can even be provisional ("What if there is, was, or will be a group that believes ...").

17.4.8.3. Cultural context as represented by social groups but still called "contexts" not "groups"

Even with the above theoretical positions, I still wish to call a *cultural context a "context" not a "group" for several reasons.

First, the group itself will think of its *worldview or *value as something beyond it, perhaps even with metaphysical existence.

Second, "context" embeds the *ToM in the *cultural context which is closer to how ToM thinks of it, rather than a part of its imagined identity. The ToM views a *value as something that it cannot change (interact with) but only accept, modify or reject. If the term were group it raises the (what I think is false) expectation that perhaps the ToM thinks it has the power to alter a value since it is human(s) rather than an idea.

Third, "context" evokes somewhat better the possibility of a web of *values that, as a total effect, generate culture which might be closer to an accurate description of the ontology of

*cultural than an emergent phenomenon associated with the interaction of many groups. But perhaps both of these are true. It is not entirely clear. However, the theoretical point does not have much governance over the playing out of an interpretive project so, for these other reasons, I prefer to stay with the word "context."

There is no reason that a *cultural context cannot have intermittent or contradictory existence during the course of a narrative. It is for this reason that we tie a *cultural context to an *instance. We ask the question of *status about a particular *instance rather than giving a full description of the fluctuation of *status. That being said, since the significance of an *instance is derived from the larger narrative, it follows that the significance of the *status does as well. We reduce complexity by tying it to an *instance but it we do this too fervently, we lose sight of the bigger picture and the analysis begins to diminish in value.

17.4.9. Context-to-ToM relationship ("distance")

17.4.9.1. Context arrays + context robustness

A description of the relationship between a *ToM and *context of course includes the refined content of the *context, as just considered above. It also includes a measure of the *distance between the *context and the *ToM. That *distance is a result of a dynamic combination of the *robustness of the *context, on one side, and the *receptivity of the *ToM, on the other.

However, since *contexts exist in a plural environment, the way the interpreter *arrays the multiple *contexts influences this *distance. *Contexts in competition for the attention of the *ToM might have greater "*distance" than those that are sequentially present.

One might feel the full force of one's parents' cultural worlds when at home for the holidays whereas if one is sitting with one's friends while on the phone to one's parents the impact of the parental cultural viewpoints might be less. "*Distance" is ultimately an *internal* representation of the context within the *ToM but its *empirical* (figuratively speaking, that is, "empirical" within the world of the narrative) conditions are not to be ignored: When one is on the phone with one's parents with friends nearby the impact of the parent's world might be less because of one's *consciousness* of one's friends and the *values they embrace. On the other hand, if one's parents are especially important to one's way of thinking, one might be less conscious of the empirical presence of the friends when on the phone. Conversely, when visiting at home one might "bring one's friends along" in one's mind as a way to gain *mental* support for ways of thinking different than those of one's parents. In this way, the *array of *cultural contexts is a hybrid result of *actual* presence-absence factors and *mental* presence-absence factors.

For our interpretations, we not only collect *contexts but *array them according to our interpretation and construction of the narrative world. As outlined earlier, *contexts might be discretely present (*autonomous), in competition with one another in simple or complex ways, sequentially present-absent, or *layered. A *ToM may or may not be fully aware of the *array configuration—it is common to encounter *ToM that just seem confused and undecided.

*Robustness refers to how forcefully or fully present the *system, *fragment or *derivative is to the *ToM. If I know that some people on campus carry concealed guns, those guns are weakly present to me. If I encounter someone pointing a gun at my face, the gun is fully, *robustly present. This is what I am calling "*robustness" and it is meant to indicate how fully and significantly present a *cultural context is. Again, this is

"*robustness" as understood and experienced by the *ToM: If the *ToM is very fearful of guns, once it hears that some on campus are carrying them perhaps it worries about this all the time. In such a case, the guns are indeed *robustly present to the *ToM even if the reader, even many readers, even the *model reader would say that concealed guns are not something worth worrying about.

It is not really possible to offer a list of factors that add up to the *robustness of a *context because it is complex, highly situational, and truly a matter of judgment, often based on thin evidence. For example, as I sit writing this sentence, Catholicism is not *robustly present to me. However, when I visited the Pantheon in Rome and sat under its majestic dome, I felt a reverence for the Catholic Church, and its power, and most definitely its presence was very *robust.

However, even if we cannot generate a check list of factors, the *robustness of the *system as an institution and the degree that you are in an environment that embraces that *system (its *robustness to others, not the *ToM) are two things that often need to be considered. Narrative *status is another. We will discuss *status shortly.

17.4.9.2. ToM receptivity

The *robustness of the *context is very important. However, the degree to which the *ToM is or is not interested in or engaged with the *context is also clearly important. It is this combination—*robustness to one side (with considerations of *arrays in mind) and *receptivity to the other—that offer a dynamic picture of the *distance between *context and *ToM. We should keep in mind, of course, that this can and probably does change over the developments of the narrative. (Narratives, in part, are the telling of changes in this dynamic.) However, since we limit our investigation to an *instance, we

are not compelled to measure and re-measure this distance for each step of a story's progress.

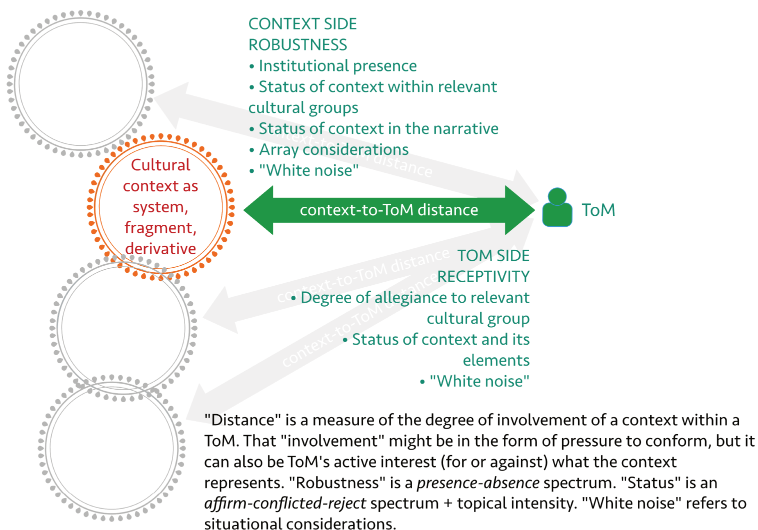
*Receptivity, the word itself, suggests a passive ToM and so, in this way, is unfortunately misleading. "Affinity-receptivity" were it not such a mouthful of a word, be a better term for indicating a ToM's *positive movement toward* a cultural group, on the one hand, or, on the other, its *willingness to allow* the insistence of the cultural group to inform its thoughts, feelings, and actions. It works both ways. Further, in terms of the passive receptivity, this can be the result of something in the nature of the group itself or a third factor such as a ToM that upholds a more general principle such as "the *values of a group should be upheld whenever possible." In this case it is not the content of the groups *values but simply *that it is a group*, which becomes the deciding factor.

Therefore, one leading factor in *receptivity is the degree of allegiance of the *ToM to the group belonging to the context. If that *ToM sees itself as a member, and wants to remain so, the *values of the group have greater persuasive power than if that *ToM feels little toward the group or is considering leaving the group.

Similarly, another factor that often deserves attention is the degree to which the *ToM follows the cues of its environment or, instead, tends to be a "loner" in this regard. As a general working rule in our *East Asian narratives, the impulse to accede to social requirements to uphold social order tends to be reasonably strong, but that does not mean that they are always strong. It is just a reasonable analytic start point.

As with *robustness, there is no fixed list of factors to add up that would result in some precise measure of *receptivity.

Here is an overview of the basics considerations in deciding context-to-Tom *distance:"



Deciding distance between a cultural context and a ToM

17.4.10. Describing via spectrums status and topical intensity

*Status refers to a spectrum where at one end of the spectrum a *worldview or *value is accepted and at the other, rejected. The mid-range represents ambiguous territory.

*Status resides at multiple levels. The key levels are *ToM, narrative world, and author / director world. There are others.

Statements about *status are presented together with statements on *topical intensity. In usual cases of analysis, thought is clustered around important elements of the object. That it is being discussed in analysis implies that it is an important element for the object. However, since we are interested less in the object than the *worldview or *value that is contained within it, “faintly” present *values can be interesting to us. The *topical intensity spectrum makes space

for us, permits us, to talk about things that are not very central to the *object* in the big picture but have something interesting to say about the *status of a certain *worldview or *value.

It should be noted that middle ground here needs some careful consideration before deciding that a *value falls into it. If I can't decide whether or not to pick up and keep the $100 bill that someone in front me just dropped but is unaware that he dropped it, that is not a middle group *status. It is clear that I should tell the person he dropped money. That I hesitate does not weaken the *value itself; in fact, my moment of indecision is probably a narrative moment that further strengthens its affirmed *status. There is a middle ground on the spectrum where it is unclear exactly where the *ToM or narrative stands, or when the position is overtly in conflict, or when the ToM seems to switch back and forth, or when the *worldview or *value seems to have been edited, amended, mixed, or otherwise altered for some reason.

It is common that there is *status clarity as to *worldviews and *values, even if they are in conflict and competing with one another. This is part of what make narratives accessible and compelling. Here is an example of two *values both having the *status as affirmed, that are in *conflict.* A crowd is throwing stones at a dog. Our *ToM, Maddie, is trying to decide whether to follow the *common practice of the crowd and thrown stones at the dog or to uphold her personal *value of not hurting animals. It is not that there is *lack* of clarity and that we should consider the *status as somewhere between affirmation and rejection. On the contrary, it is *quite clear*: the crowd wants Maddie to join in the stoning and Maddie, personally, does not wish to. These are two *values, both clearly expressed in the narrative. If Maddie resists the crowd and is later rewarded for that resistance in some way in the course of the narrative, the *status of "don't throw stones at dogs" as a *value is affirmed at the level of the narrative. The narrative position and Maddie's

position are aligned. Narrative progress or outcome is one of several ways to deduce *ToM *status, when used carefully. But, to further pursue the example: If later in the narrative Maddie needs the help of the crowd for something—let's imagine that she is hanging of the edge of a cliff and hopes for a helping hand—and the crowd does not even notice her plight, then perhaps we can say that at the narrative level "putting your own views ahead of those of the group" is being partially or fully rejected. If Maddie is presented as a sympathetic figure and we viewers are sorry that she will fall and die, Maddie's *value, which is also probably the *value of the director and viewers, has not been rejected, of course. But if Maddie has been presented consistently and unsympathetically as a stubborn fool and the dog was one that had attacked and killed a child and was rabid, then, yes, perhaps the *status of "standing by your dog principle even when the group says otherwise" is being actively challenged.

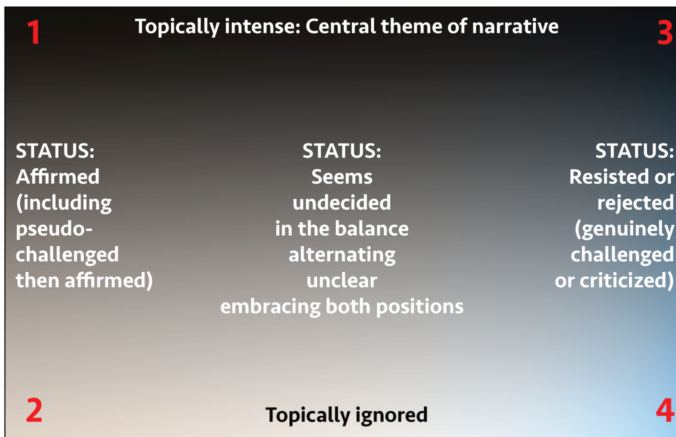
In this way, *status appears at multiple levels in a narrative: whether a *narrative figure accepts or rejects a *value, whether the narrative world seems to suggest that the view is, generally, accepted or rejected, whether the author or director seems to agree with the views of her or his own narrative, and, finally, whether the *model reader or viewer accepts or rejects it. Clearly, we are in the world of speculation. But it is relevant and interesting speculation, and is necessary for conclusions, and is not as arbitrary as it might seem.

In addition to a affirmation-conflicted-rejection spectrum, we also need to consider how important the topic seems to be to the *ToM or narrative in general. I will call this "*topical intensity." This means "the degree to which a topic is actively engaged by the narrative," not "superficial intensity."

*Worldviews tend to have very low *topical intensity because they are widely adopted by all members of the object of analysis: the *ToM, the other characters, the narrative

perspective, the author / director, and the reader / viewers. They do not bear mention. For example: "I will now make this incredible leap from one rooftop to the next. You should feel worried because there is such a thing as gravity that might pull me down. But you should not feel too worried because I am the hero of the film and it is too early (probably) for me to die. We are only 5 minutes into the film after all. ..." We don't encounter film dialogue like this because all of the comments are part of a *worldview that we expect. So, low *topical intensity can be (but is not necessarily) an indication of *worldviews and *values so completely accepted that they do not need prominent mention in a narrative, or any mention. As earlier argued, if a narrative does not "make sense" it might be because the assumption of shared *worldviews or *values is off-target.

We can plot the *status spectrum horizontally and the *topical intensity spectrum vertically as follows:



The affirmation-rejection spectrum plotted horizontally with the topical intensity spectrum plotted vertically

Plotting in this way implies, correctly, that the *topical intensity

and *status spectrums are independent with a large range of possible combinations. It also depicts how the two combine dynamically, giving a full picture of the interpretive relevance of *status.

Formulaic Hollywood films that noisily affirm "family values" which everyone already agrees to, could be plotted near the red number "1" on this chart. *Worldviews and *values that both the writer and viewer agree to (probably even unconsciously), and so it never occurs to anyone to bother to articulate them (there is no need to do so) could be plotted near the red number "2." "Radical" art that strongly challenges a *value would be near the red number "3." Finally, what we might be tempted to call "timid" art that just lightly suggests resistance to a *value might be near the red number "4."

We encounter tension between narrative characters when the two of them would plot a certain *value at different locations either in terms of whether or not to affirm it or simply whether or not it is important to think about it. We can also find dissonance across levels. For example, if viewers would plot a *value differently than the director, that director might be widely described as "controversial."

17.4.11. Outcomes: individual and group

Outcomes are simple, one sentence statements that answer or otherwise respond to the *narrowly defined topic. Sometimes, beneath this single statement will be a more extended explanation of it.

I require that outcomes be compact and single-parted (avoiding "X and Y" constructions, for example). This requirement is to constraint the interpreter to a specific position (which she or he may or may not be comfortable with), not for the purposes of achieving final, firm conclusions but rather so that there is a clear statement around which a debate

or further thinking can occur. For this reason, I try to avoid using the phrase “interpretive project conclusion” since outcomes are more like start points for further thinking.

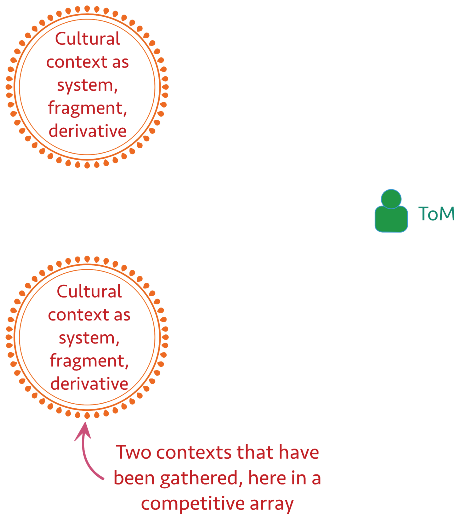
Outcomes are entangled in the fashioning of *cultural contexts and their relationship to the *ToM. Often the outcome is a description of what seems to be in the narrative (as *ToM content), with the *cultural context found and fashioned in order to explain the intuitive sense of plausibility of the outcome already decided upon. However, there is a high expectation that interpreters maintain the integrity of rethinking and discovery rather than fall into the trap of making a strong rhetorical argument to prove a point. Therefore, in the process of matching *cultural contexts to outcomes, often the outcome becomes less plausible and the interpreter begins to consider a fuller range of possible *cultural contexts in order to rethink the interpretation of the *ToM.

17.5. REVIEWING ELEMENTS OF THE INTERPRETIVE PROJECT WORKFLOW VIA GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Let us reconsider through a series of graphics the three key facets of interpretation described in this chapter: refining *cultural contexts and *arraying them, deciding *distance (through *context *robustness and *ToM *receptivity), and *status / *topical intensity as it operates at multiple levels. While the graphic representations take up situations one at a time for the sake of clarity, in practice all of the above are being considered, adjusted, and balanced against one another more or less at the same time.

One aspect is to gather *cultural contexts—being generous and ambitious in the scope of the collection but ultimately limiting them to what is meaningful to the *ToM. One process of this limiting is to determine what is plausibly relevant. For example, perhaps not all of Buddhism (an *authoritative

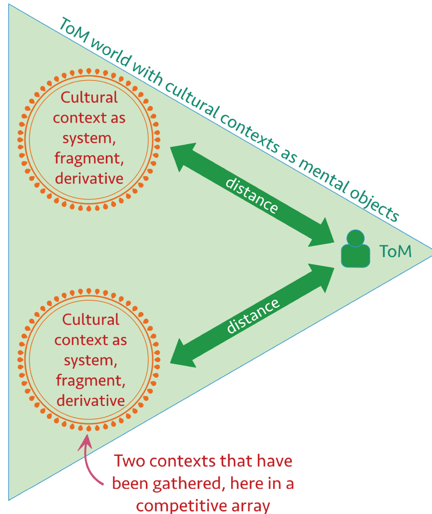
thought system) needs to be considered. Perhaps only a portion of it, a single idea associated with it (a *fragment) is all the really matters. Perhaps the cultural object (a *worldview or *value) truly stands on its own and now has little or nothing to do with Buddhism (a *derivative). In addition to refining content in this way, *cultural contexts should also be appropriately *arrayed. Gathering, refining, and *arraying are all done from the perspective of the *ToM, who, in this graphic, hovers off to the right as the point of reference. For the sake of accuracy, it should be noted that this is in fact two different states: an actual *ToM with actual *contexts with which she or he engages and a cognitive self-representation of him or herself "inside" her or his mind, a *ToM imagining her or himself, contemplating or sensing the presence of *cultural contexts. I have not complicated by the graphic to represent this dual state of things.



Arrayed contexts as systems, fragments, or derivatives, determined from the perspective of a ToM

Having refined the content of the contexts and decided how they *array in their relationships to the *ToM, we are in a better position to decide how relevant the *context is by settling on a credible *context-to-*ToM distance, a technical way of expressing things such as "Honest seems really important to him" (a short distance) or "If he had to choose between an easy life in a beach house or marrying her, he is going to drop the beech idea and go for the marriage .... but he is never going to forget that he gave up one for the other" (two competing *values at nearly the same distance) or "Although all her friends see the world as a cold and competitive place, her grandmother always told her that kindness should be put first and it seems

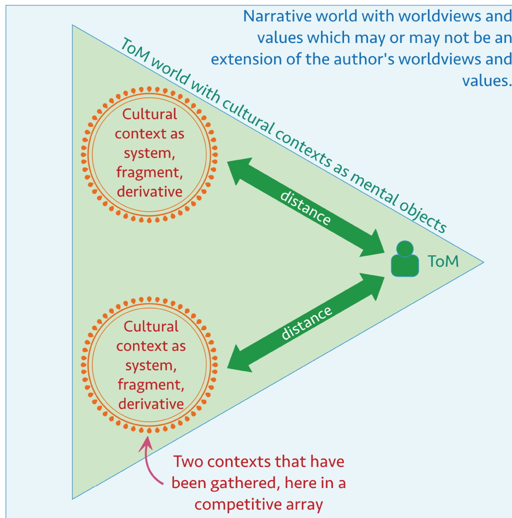
that this is her guiding principle" (two competing *values with the grandmother's cultural world at the shorter distance).



Part of ToM's cognitive-affective world, showing two arrayed cultural contexts, with distance not yet decided

Part of ToM's world showing two cultural contexts at equal distance, in a possibly competitive array

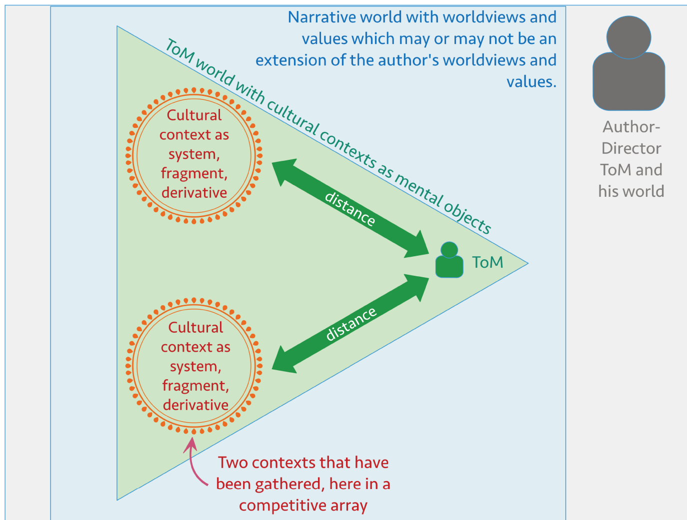
However, we need to remember that we are not talking about the real world. We are making interpretations of a world that has been constructed through a joint effort of the author / director on the one hand and the reader / viewer on the other. Whatever that world turns out to be, it strongly influences how we should consider the *ToM in multiple ways. In any event, we need a clear picture of this world, otherwise our *ToM analysis is flawed, perhaps extremely flawed, at the level of method.



ToM's world as embedded in the narrative world that is constructed by the author / director but completed by readers / viewers

The narrative world in which we place a ToM and its cultural contexts

And, finally, just as a *ToM inhabits the world of the narrative (no matter how it ends up being constructed), the *worldviews and *values of that narrated world may or may not be the same as that of the author / director. It is very likely that the best interpretations have explored the similarities and differences between the author / director and the world that she or he has invented. It should be noted for the sake of accuracy, however, that this is our understanding of the author / director's world. We may or may not be well aligned with her or his own understanding of it. Sometimes this matters, other times it does not. Regardless, the graphic simply reminds us that the author / director's world embraces everything else:



Author / director ToM influencing to some degree all aspects of the narrative

ToM's world as embedded in the world of the author / director

18. Quick reference list of principles, rules, guidelines, and advice

18.1. PRINCIPLES

- practicability
- shareability
- credibility
- discovery & insight
- accuracy
- equality (for rich analysis)
- diversity (for rich analysis)
- liveliness (for rich analysis)

18.2. RULES

- "equal interest" rule
- "in good taste" rule
- tolerance
- respect for group members' sensibilities
- understanding before deciding
- persuasion, not preaching
- English as official language

18.3. GUIDELINES (STANDARDS) AND ADVICE

18.3.1. Class discourse rules

- "Equal interest" rule
- "In good taste" rule

- Critically aware tolerance and the CG-C-D-E-R schema
- Respecting group member sensibilities
- Understanding before deciding
- Persuasion not preaching
- English is the official language (and other language issues)

18.3.2. Limiting the scope of interpretive projects

- The "always about high-order love" standard
- We analyze narrative worlds, not "real" worlds
- ToM as litmus test
- Short-listing

18.3.3. Achieving outcome credibility and interest

18.3.3.1. Credibility

- Analysis begins with a basic understanding of the story or film
- Using secondary sources effectively begins with wise selection and an understanding of its key ideas
- academically credible
- understanding what you are reading
- use the idea(s) effectively
- Being real in discussions and interpretive conclusions
- Critical judgement
- Time investment

- Rhetorical and logical missteps: overreach, false equivalents, term slippage

18.3.3.2. Interest

- Time-investment: The "Beyond-First-Thoughts" standard
- The "Content-Rich" standard
- Lively dialogue, bounded dialogue

18.3.4. Discursive rules and shared terminology for precision in communication

- Shared terminology
- Managing complexity by avoiding compound statements created by "X and Y" and "X or Y"
- Accuracy in specific terms
    - "premodern" and "traditional"
    - "Buddhist" vs "Buddhist-like" and similar structures
    - Special course requirement when using the word "fate"
    - "loyalty," "faithfulness," "fidelity," and "devotion"
    - "true love" and thoughts on "natural love"

18.3.5. Before you begin

- recalibrate
- resources: knowledge, research, dialogue

18.3.6. During the process

- together-separate-together

18.3.7. Before you conclude

- one-more-time check

19. Introduction: Rules, guidelines, advice, and the principles that govern them

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- equality
- practicability
- shareability
- term slippage

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- bounded dialogue
- CG-C-D-E-R report

The purpose of course rules, guidelines, and advice is to give specific content as to how *bounded dialogue and the

- instance
- interpretive project
- narrowly defined topic
- ToM

*course method are to be carried out.

The difference between rules and the rest of the content of this part — the guidelines and advice — is that rules are practices all students can do if they choose to do so and, if not followed, have an unacceptably strong subversive effect on course content, or threaten to have a negative impact on the grades of other students (not oneself), or could be personally hurtful to someone. Because of this, rules, when not followed, have an immediate and serious impact on your grade, including that it is likely you will be unable to pass the class regardless of the scores you might have successfully achieved for the many evaluated events.

In order to separate rules distinctly from guidelines and other advice, all rules are collected into a single chapter.

The rules, guidelines, and advice related to *bounded dialogue and *course method are all governed by a set of principles that seek to make the results of analysis useful, credible, and insightful. If you are having difficulty remembering or understanding the various rules and guidelines described in this part of the book, recalling these

basic principles might help. Similarly, the principles are dynamic components of all grading rubrics whether that is explicitly stated or not; therefore, these fundamental principles can help in submitting material that scores well, or might help you understand scores you have received.

The principles are: practicability, shareability, credibility, discovery & insight, accuracy, equality, diversity, and liveliness. Let us look at them one at a time.

19.1. PRACTICABILITY

When setting out to design an *interpretive project (selecting a film, deciding the *ToM and its *instance, and fashioning the *narrowly defined topic) or in the process of your own research where you have arrived at a crossroads, or during a discussion that seems to be devolving into generalities, you should look to *practicability to be a key factor in making your decisions:

> *Practicability as "doability." Given the situation at hand, is the project as you visualize it doable in terms of size and scope? Sometimes students are not strong in developing focused projects because developing this focus requires considerable time invested in visualize lines of inquiry and trying to guess where they lead, or because of unfamiliarity with the territory to be explored. This analysis needs to conclude with a short list of *content-rich, specific, and concrete interpretations, observations, or conclusions (however tentative). Can the project as you visualize it cross that finish line?
>
> *Practicability as *shareability. Your analysis is deemed practical when it has value to others. First of all, is it in line with the overall questions of the course or the more specific areas of culture that might be the current topic at that point in the semester? Second, will its final shape

be one that can be easily conveyed to others for their information and use?

*Practicability is at the top of the list of principles because of its powerful contribution to two key aspects of this class: as a question that is very effective at limiting the scope of and focusing its goals projects it is very helpful in managing the complexity of a project. By emphasizing the usefulness of the work, it reminds individuals that they are members of a group, and reminds groups that they, too, are working units with other groups, all of whom collectively seeking answers to the same questions. The narrowness of a group's results become less narrow when it joins the results of other groups. This structure provides a textured view of the object being analyzed.

19.2. SHAREABILITY

Analysis in this class always has this basic structure although depending on the project some stages might be omitted:

1. The project is defined. Everyone takes up the same project.
2. Separation of members. Analysis proceeds either as individuals belonging to groups also working independently, or the various groups of the class themselves working independently. They do not contact one another during this stage. They develop their own interpretations, observations, and tentative conclusions.
3. Collective work. Individuals unite with their groups to hammer out group positions based on these various independent discoveries and insights.
4. Reports. The various discoveries and insights of individual members are collected into a *CG-C-D-E-R report.
5. Sharing. In the abstract, results are always shared. In practice almost all results are located in a place that others

have access to them. Sometimes results are more actively shared in class or via assignments that work with the results of others.

Given this basic structure, projects clearly should be of use to others. This means interpretations should be credible, intelligible, and useful. Shareability turns on questions of whether the work has followed the method in its generalities (procedures) and specifics (the *interpretive project as defined, so "staying on topic"), while keeping in mind the needs of one's group and ultimately the class in general. Timeliness is another factor of shareability since your group members or other groups need your results by a specific time.

19.3. CREDIBILITY

Your work does not have value to your team members, or group work does not have value to the class as a whole if it is not credible. *Credibility is achieved through good critical judgment, research and listening to others, avoiding rhetorical missteps or false logic, and the investment of time. Except for the investment of time, these are all discussed later in this part of the book.

As for the investment of time, analysis is always asymmetrical: the one doing the analysis puts in considerable care, effort, and time to produce results that are useful and easily consumable by those interested. Generating analysis should involve considerable time-investment; consuming analysis should be efficient and take less time. Credibility evaporates when it seems time has not been invested. The consumer of the analysis believes that the necessary amount of time has been put into the project to think it over and resolve the problems that arise. If it seems like this is not the case, the results have little value. If you are pressed for time, narrow the

scope of the project rather than rush a larger project. Due times in the course are firm so proceed without an expectation that you can go overtime. Design a project and budget your time to allow for the necessary time investment.

19.4. DISCOVERY & INSIGHT

This class does not practice developing strong rhetorical arguments to prove a position (as might be the case in debate). In fact, this is an unwelcome format for any report in this class.

Nor does the method lean heavily on evidence-based argument although "close reading" of a narrative and being well informed about a cultural situation is a type of evidence-based analysis that gives your interpretation substance and accuracy. However, in this scenario, the goal is in credible conclusions that are useful to others, not the actual practice building of the argument itself.

It is more productive and accurate to think of the course as providing a structured and disciplined way of interpreting narratives for the purposes of "discovery and insight" about cultural features of *East Asia by leveraging one's perception through questions built around the *status of *traditional *worldviews and *values. That is, the basic intention of this course is to be a forum in which students share when they expand their understandings of a culture, or refine those understandings, or as a way to notice and correct misunderstandings that they or others might have. This means, essentially, that students try to discover what they do not know (limits of understanding and misunderstandings) and take action to obtain that knowledge through reading and discussion and benefiting from the review by others of their work.

They take actions that lead to discovery and insight rather than argue points. This "action" comes in the shape of:

- research initiated on your own as appropriate to your need to expand your understanding,
- listening to others,
- thinking through interpretive problems (surpassing the *First-Thoughts Standard),
- delivering those opinions, observations, and conclusions to others for them to check, and
- trying to notice your own blind spots or when you have jumped to somewhat incorrect conclusions (the danger of *attractors).

19.5. ACCURACY

Accuracy should be the part of all work for this class because it is one of the bulwarks that holds back uninformed, misinformed, or prejudiced conclusions about cultural terrain. There are many situations where the desire for accuracy requires certain approaches or actions. For example, investing time in analysis clearly helps with accuracy. While accuracy should be on your mind for most of the work done for this course, many inaccuracies result from the undisciplined use of language: drifting from the course definitions of our lexicon of specific terms, falling into "term slippage" expressive patterns, and observations that are not *content-rich. Each of these is discussed in this part.

19.6. RICH-ANALYSIS THROUGH "EQUALITY"

*Equality points to a series of important practices in this course.

First, from project-to-project or within a project when it is comparative in nature, subject matter—whatever it may be—is approached with an equal level of curiosity and energy devoted

to understanding it. If the interpretation involved the comparison of two films, for example, each is treated with equal care and interest.

Second, within a project details receive an equal degree of scrutiny. This does not mean that everything needs to be discussed with the same amount of depth or detail. That would be both impossible and distracting. Instead, what I am suggesting is that many aspects of an *instance should be considered. ("Interpretation begins with curiosity"—wanting to know what something means and looking actively for clues in many places.) This is a way of enhancing the possibilities of discovery and insight. For example, imagine that you have come to a conclusion about an instance based on the spoken dialogue. Before finalizing your report you should ask questions such as, "But what about the soundtrack? Does that suggest something else?" Or, "But what about the facial expressions that accompanied the script. Does that support or contradict the script's content?" In other words, there should be a certain amount of care in considering a wide range of aspects of the *instance since it is my belief that those areas that you overlook are probably areas you regularly overlook and they might have new information in your particular case. Or that some cultural attractor has already decided an issue for you so you do not see any need to consider that type of detail. *Equality here means: "a thorough consideration of a wide range of aspects of the instance with an open-mind that there might be something to discover, and carried out with the same amount of energy as other lines of thought were carried out." Clearly *equality as visualized in this way can have a frictional relationship with "practicability. Use good judgment in finding the balance.

Third, in *bounded discourse and report construction a variety of ideas should have been weighed against one another to help with the best possible interpretation in terms of identifying cultural terrain or the *status of *traditional

*worldviews and *values. To achieve this, each idea put forth and each team member putting forward ideas, has an equal place at the table. (The *CG-C-D-E-R schema is designed to support this concept of equality.) This *equality should not be achieved only through the efforts of the speaker or author of the idea. It is incumbent on team members to monitor the treatment of ideas and each team members and take actions that help create a level field of ideas and member participation. This might mean asking a member who has been silent for a time period what she or he is thinking. It might mean temporarily defending or holding on to an idea that seems to be under rapid dismissal until it can be confirmed that there really is nothing there of substantive value. So, everyone is expected to contribute in a genuine way, all ideas should receive scrutiny, and actions should be taken to insure that this happens. Members should look for ways to contribute or take action to draw out the contributions of others when they are not forth-coming. This idea of equality is echoed in the principle of lively discussion and liveliness of discussion and debate is always a strong grade positive. Thus, there is a reward system in place to encourage teammates to value the ideas of each team member as well as encourage team members to bring ideas to the discussion.

19.7. RICH-ANALYSIS THROUGH "DIVERSITY"

I feel I have succeeded in the formation of a group when it is diverse not just in its cultural knowledge but in its basic intellectual approach to understanding things and even work styles. It may be that such membership will be personally challenging and frustrating at times. However, all of these differences help put the work of analysis in a different perspective which enhances the chances of discovering something that might otherwise go unnoticed. Thus, in its

crudest form, it is a design meant to counter the possibilities of group-think. But it is better thought of as leveraging the unique talents of each group member. Time should be spent understanding and appreciating what each person knows of culture and how each member is approaching the *interpretive project. If the group becomes goal-oriented (product-focused) rather than willing to spend time exploring and considering various possibilities (process-focused) two things result: 1) errors in interpretive conclusions that should have been corrected were rushed passed and then found their way all the way to the end product, and 2) as a grader I conclude that the discussion was not lively.

Learn to love the diversity of your group, even though as a unit engaging in a process towards an end-product it is not efficient. However, it is invaluable as a team that can carry out a process open to discovery and insight as well as the cross-checking of those discoveries and insights.

19.8. RICH-ANALYSIS THROUGH "LIVELINESS"

Liveliness is the rich exchange of ideas during a discussion or *bounded discussion. The two element are, obviously, a diversity in the content of the ideas and a back-and-forth quality to the discussion. It is not unusual for "lively" discussions to also have a degree of friction to them. However, fiction or disagreement itself does not mean the discussion was lively. A wide variety of interpretations around an instance, or a wide variety of ideas, or anything along these lines, when engaged in with keen critical thought, even if all members were doing little more than whispering, would be called, under this definition, "lively". Liveliness is a common feature of grade rubrics.

20. Discursive rules and shared terminology for precision in communication

shared terminology ◆ compound statements ◆ specific usage requirements for certain words and phrases

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- devotion
- fidelity
- faithfulness
- loyalty
- premodern / traditional distinction
- propriety
- true love / natural love
- “X” and “X-like” (-like)

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- authoritative thought systems
- derivatives
- fragments
- interpretive projects
- love

Shareability is enhanced when we use a lexicon that we have mutually agreed upon. This practice also improves accuracy in communication which is important because of the complexity

of our topic. In the real world we want—we need—"I love you" to be ambiguous. We need some "working room" in our intimate discussions, even though it is also true that this can cause some serious misunderstandings. But when we are testing various interpretations against one another, or when we are comparing results, it is helpful when the language is as accurate as possible.

20.1. SHARED TERMINOLOGY

To that end, the course has a shared terminology. Students are to learn it and use it. If a term has been identified with an asterisk as a course key term, you are to use it according to the class definition.

20.2. MANAGING COMPLEXITY BY AVOIDING COMPOUND STATEMENTS CREATED BY "X AND Y" AND "X OR Y"

Statements build around the conjunction patterns "X and Y" and "X or Y" should only be used when truly necessary.

In practice, I frequently encounter these patterns in student submissions when they are unsure of their own position or want to create an effect of complexity rather than introduce actual complex thoughts.

If you wish, read these sentences from old student essay submissions and decide whether the conjunction structure enhance clarity or fogs the expression. I list my reactions after the examples. Or, if you wish, just think, "Is that extra element necessary enough to out-balance the complexity it brings?" — Our work is already complicated, so we should keep things simple whenever we can. It is better to introduce and discuss one point at a time. That affords to others the opportunity to react to the points on a one-by-one basis. If I say, "I think that

film is prejudiced, intriguing and poorly made" I have tossed a lot on the table all at one. Anyone in the group might begin anywhere and the conversation can become muddled quickly.

Here are the sentences. Afterwards, I will say "yes" or "no" to indicate whether I think these compound phrases are useful or not. I will also offer a reason:

- The aesthetically conscientious art form of Japanese papermaking derived its fixation on purity **and (1)** strength from Shinto beliefs.
- Religion also became a valuable domain for establishing Japan's independent ideals **and (2)** beliefs.
- He is very charming **and (3)** never misses opportunity to meet a beautiful **or (4)** interesting lady.
- Knowing, **or (5)** accepting that sumo was a direct descendent from accounts in premodern history was important in particular to the upper-classes of Edo period Japan.
- In the rare instances when they went out, their faces were hidden behind the fans they carried **or (6)** the curtains of their carriages.
- If they were able to keep the affections of their husband **or (7)** lovers, then they would be provided **and (8)** cared for.
- 1: Yes. This is a list of equally important qualities that are more meaningful when side-by-side in the same list.
- 2: No. What is the difference between "ideals" and "beliefs"? There are indeed differences, but they are not necessary to the conversation. The analysis is just as successful by listing one.
- 3: Yes. This is connecting two sentences in a logical conceptual that makes the description content-rich.
- 4: No? As a casual comment this works, but we do not make

casual comments in *interpretive project reports. If there is something in a report, we assume it is there for a reason. When reading seriously like this, it is fair to ask, "What is the difference between wanting to meet a beautiful woman or an intelligent woman?" Does the write mean to make a distinction or not? This is good English and works pretty well but I would rather we tighten our comments better than this.

- 5: No. Just one of these is a good observation. When they are both here, I begin to wonder if we are supposed to worry about a difference between "knowing" and "accepting." That just seems to be a confusing question to raise in the middle of describing something else.
- 6: Yes. This is like the first one—a necessary and useful list.
- 7: Yes. This is like the one just mentioned.
- 8: No. I am not sure what the difference is unless one is financial and the other is emotional. If that is the case, then it is better not to make the reader guess. Say it. And if spelling that out creates too much language in terms of words or clauses, drop one of them. It is already a strong and interesting sentence with just one.

20.3. ACCURACY IN SPECIFIC TERMS

Mark Twain: "The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."

20.3.1. Course-defined difference between "premodern" and "traditional"

Consider these sentences related to cultural behavior:

> "It is traditional for Americans to eat turkey at Thanksgiving."
>
> "My Chinese parents are very traditional."
>
> "Our nation's traditions of the past should be honored."

All of these sentences have something in common—they all attach a provisional status to cultural practices. If we make the possible implied portion explicit:

> "It is traditional for Americans to eat turkey at Thanksgiving *but not everyone does these days*."
>
> "My Chinese parents are very traditional *and sometimes I feel a gap with them because of this.*"
>
> "Our nation's traditions of the past should be honored—*some say this, but I wonder if it is really a good idea.*"

In this course, we use "*tradition" and "*traditional" in this sense, when we can remember to do so. It helps us understand the status of *values (and *worldviews, once they become no longer universally accepted and the topic of discussion), namely, "I know that many feel that way but I think this is something that is becoming more limited and fading from common practice and I feel some pressure, but not a lot, to submit to this particular *value." An American example might be thank you cards, or tipping the postman(woman) at the end of the year. Using "tradition" in this sense is good for us because it helps us convey the dynamic, changing nature of culture (*values change over time) and the independent perspective of the individual in the face of culture ("*some* feel that way, but for *me* ....").

"Premodern" is less complicated. This is just an objective adjective or noun meaning "before modern times." For example, if I assert, "The ethical expectation that a military wife—out of devotion, loyalty, and respect to her husband—would kill herself once her husband had been killed in battle is a premodern *value of Japan dating from the Middle

Period." I am neutral as to what the status of this might be now, and I am taking no personal relationship to it (as in, "I don't agree …, I want some distance from this *value"). I am simply stating what I believe to be an historical "fact." Deciding what "modern times" designates is no simple matter of course. It will be used in this class to designate the point at which East Asian ideas have begun to be influenced by "the West"—Western European romanticism, individualism, communism, democracy, Christianity, the mashup of cultures that is the result of globalization, and so on.

In this way, we will use "*premodern" just to date whatever it modifies and "*traditional" to note that we are taking a perspective outside of the *value or *worldview (at least some still think …).

Just one more minor point, though. I would like to think of "*premodern" as "pure" in the sense of "not modified by modern times, modern changes." In this way of thinking, "*premodern Buddhism" is Buddhism as it was before modern times, while "*traditional Buddhism" is Buddhism as practiced today, but taking its past seriously and upholding many of those *values, albeit probably in some updated form.

20.3.2. "Buddhist" vs "Buddhist-like" and similar structures

The distinction between "X" and "X-like" follows the distinction between an *authoritative thought system and a *fragment. If you want the reader to take your description as referring to the full *authoritative system use the term. "He is Buddhist in the way he eats." In this case the person is a practicing Buddhist following (probably) monk rules for what, how, and when to eat. If you want the reader to consider your description as seeming to be perhaps related to Buddhism in some way, then use the "-like" suffix. "He is Buddhist-like in the way he eats." This describes someone with the feel of a monk in his

behavior or attitude, but you actually do not know whether this is the case or not. It just seems that way, enough so that the designation works. (If you are in the world of *derivatives, then "He is somehow peaceful in his eating style" or such would be more appropriate and leave out all reference to Buddhism.) Here are couple of other examples:

> "Baoyu, the main male character in *Story of the Stone*, 17th c. Chinese long narrative, is Daoist in much of his behavior. However, Jin ("Wind"), one of the main character of *House of Flying Daggers*, a 21st-century Chinese film, is Daoist-*like*. By that, I mean the director is drawing on a Daoist notion of a highly capable, spiritually advanced individual who moves freely about, not tied to this society. However, the director isn't really exploring Daoism; it is just one way to help fill out the character of Jin."
>
> *"Double Suicides at Amijima*, an 18th-century Japanese play, at the point when the two lovers kill themselves, is definitely a narrative that accepts the Buddhist perspective that romance leads to suffering. It draws authority from that Buddhist claim. To ignore the strong presence of Buddhism in that narrative is to distort it. On the other hand, in my opinion *3-Iron, a* 21st-century Korean film, ends with the phrase: "It is sometimes difficult to know the difference between dream and reality." That is drawn directly from Buddhist teaching but the film is more surrealistic than Buddhist and so, at least in my interpretation of the film, I would like to call that a 'Buddhist-*like'* moment, not real Buddhism."

20.3.3. Special course requirement when using the word "fate"

"Fate" is one of those words with such a broad definition as to cause us some trouble. "It was fate that we had a test today."

"I am fated to be president." "Just accept that he got the job, not you. It's just fate." "Fate meant for us to meet." And so on. Because of this highly flexible use of the word in English, and because Daoist notions of fate (state of the cosmos), Buddhist fate (karma), and Western notions of fate (God's intention)—just to name a few—are so different, please specify when you use the word "fate." The risk that there will be a miscommunication around this word is exceptionally high.

For these reasons, when you use the word "fate" the best practice for the purposes of this course is to support the term with other phrases that point the reader in the correct direction.

So not this ...

> "The powerful attraction between Baoyu and Daiyu in *Story of the Stone* is fate."

... but instead, this:

> "The powerful attraction between Baoyu and Daiyu in *Story of the Stone* is fate in that on the immortal plane they the stone that was reborn as the mortal named Baoyu had over-watering the flower that was reborn as the mortal named Daiyu. Their mortal bond is fate in that it reflects a relationship already existing on the immortal plane."

... or this:

> "In *Nine Cloud Dream*, Master Yi meets many beautiful women in the mortal world whom he marries. It seems like he is fated to do so, but I would like to argue that this is simply a reflection of a standard story line related to the *caizi-jiaren* story-telling pattern. It is misleading to think of it as fate unless one wants to argue that in order to learn the error of his ways on the immortal plane, Master Yi was forced to descend to the mortal plan and play out, there, the full course of the lesson, which included meeting and marrying beautiful women."

20.3.4. Special, narrow course definitions for "loyalty," "faithfulness," "fidelity," and "devotion"

The English terms and phrases "loyalty," "being faithful," and "devotion" have frequent and varied meanings in natural English. "Sorry, but I'm loyal to my girl." "He was disloyal—I think maybe that was the main reason we broke up." "One of the traits I look for in a partner is faithfulness." "I have problems being faithful in a relationship." "I was super devoted to him for a short time." "His devotion was nice but it began to make me nervous." And so on.

Because of the way these English words cross over loosely in describing modern ideas of monogamy, infatuation, and intense emotions, because of the reality that we are using English translations of East Asian narratives where translators are casually using these words, because we discuss *premodern narratives as well as contemporary ones, and because these words (in an English-speaking environment) can evoke Western ideals of *love, it is best to narrow and specify the definitions of a set of words related to reliability, participation hierarchical structures, and romantic commitment.

This will help to achieve accurate, shareable language for *interpretive projects. These narrowed definitions create a certain degree of awkwardness in expression, but they improve accuracy.

The following is the set of words for this course related to reliability, participation hierarchical structures, and romantic commitment. In this area, it can often be better to explicitly state what is on your mind beyond just using on of these terms, but just using the terms themselves according to these definitions is a step towards accurate communication among members of the class.

- "*Loyalty" as we will use it is narrow in meaning, and quite distant from our usual use of the word. "Loyalty" will be used to designate specifically and solely *premodern Confucian *zhong* (忠). This is discussed more fully in the chapter on Confucianism. Briefly stated we define *zhong* to mean "behaving in ways that support the needs, position, or honor of one's superior." It has nothing to do with monogamy, so sentences such as "I'm loyal to my girlfriend" are out-of-bounds unless you mean she is your superior and you behave in ways that uphold her position.
- "*Faithfulness" will be used to designate *premodern Confucian, or Confucian-like, *xin* (信) which can be cursorily defined as "keeping one's promises or being reliable." This term, then, also has nothing to do with monogamy exception indirectly: if one promises to uphold *fidelity in the relationship and does so, one has been *faithful to the promise and so, by association of the outcome, also *faithful to one's partner.
- "*Fidelity" will be used to designate monogamous behavior while in a relationship. Whether it means monogamous in both body and mind, or just body, is left undefined. What "in a relationship" means is also left undefined. The scope of these words change with cultural contexts as well as at the individual level of a narrative figure.
- "*Devotion" will be used to designate a single-minded, high-valuation of one's partner where one humbles oneself before the beauty of the partner as if before God, shows a type of commitment to a person as one would to a religious faith, or hyper-values the partner as perfect.

These will be our definitions. The assignment material will not follow these rules, of course. They are specific for this course alone. When you read such words in a literary work or a

secondary work, understand them in the way they are meant to be understood in that context. However, when you use them in discussion or report for this class, please follow the above definitions.

20.3.4.1. A linguistic park bench named "loyalty"

If you enjoy the nuances of words, or want to think further on the problem of finding the right word in this class, or just want to review your understanding of Confucian principles, read on. Otherwise, feel free to not take a seat on this park-bench and skip this little sub-section.

The problem is that such a use of "loyal" is grounded in a modern construct and so confuses the issue when considering *premodern or *traditional *values having to do with Confucianism. In modern times a man and a woman more or less choose to be "loyal," that is, to be monogamous even in the face of temptation. It is a natural and informative use of the English word "loyal."

Unfortunately, then, "loyal" tosses into one word the *premodern or *traditional Confucian values of **xin** (信, "*faithfulness"), **yi** (義, "uprightness" "duty"), and **li** (礼, "propriety"), and has very little to do with **zhong** (忠, "loyalty").

If you want to talk about a *modern* couple's action of remaining monogamous or something along those lines, please use the less frequent English word "*fidelity" to replace "loyalty" or consider "*devotion" if that seems more appropriate. "*Devotion" in this class means the high valuation placed on another and one's unwavering commitment to that individual based on warm reasons, not a sense of duty.

The above requirements end confusion with **zhong.**

If you want to talk about a **premodern* couple's action of remaining monogamous, please remember that it is not necessarily about a romantic free-will choice to stay with one

person that you love, to not sleep with others. It might be simply a strong sense the you must uphold social norms (**li**, 礼, "*propriety"), or fulfill your duty as a wife or husband (**yi**, 義, "uprightness" "duty"), or keep your promise of commitment (**xin**, 信 "*faithfulness"). It might also be a marker for the presence of intense passions when no one else interests the lover(s). This is not a Confucian value ("one should ...") but it is part of the *East Asian linguistic world of romance: **qing** (情, Chinese), **nasake** (情, Japanese), and **jeong** (情, Korean). Further, strong bonds might also be understood in terms of **karma** (sense of an invisible bound sense to another).

If the *premodern or modern couple's intimate closeness seems to include *wanting to take care of someone* out of a strong sense of benevolence or sympathy, then **ren** (仁 "*humanness") is part of the mix.

On the other hand, if the premodern or modern couple's intimate closeness seems to include *wanting to be taken care of by someone* seems to be an important characteristic, then ***amae** (甘え, if the context is Japanese) or something similar to this (if the context is Chinese or Korean) is part of the mix.

20.3.5. Special course definition for "true love" and thoughts on "natural love"

We will reserve the term "*true love" to designate Western idealistic love, that is, love that is grounded in the Greek vision that truth is what is good, beautiful, and endures. "**True love" suggests Christian notions of unselfish, unconditional love that could be called godly or divine.

We will use "*natural love" to designate some more Daoist-like sense that if two people seem to be together naturally and easily, and harmony seems to be part of the relationship, and the relationship fits in well with the larger world, then the love can be called good and, in some sense, "true."

The concept of “*natural love” is new to this course and started with a comment by a student who used the term as a definition, and clearly with a sense that others would understand: “But it was a natural love!” I think “*natural love” is a collection of ideas about *love that needs fuller exploration and articulation. I started that process by asking the class to submit their working notion of what “*natural love” might mean. Here are some of the responses, all by students from East or Southeast Asia. This area deserves further thought.

> “Natural love is a love that comes naturally, and parties involved should not feel the need to put in effort in maintaining the love. Everything should be in harmony naturally and no effort is required to achieve that state. There is inherent compatibility with each other between the parties involved.”
>
> “Natural love is the relationship that does not require any one to make specific efforts and exertion of will. Like two gears which engage with each other perfectly with little or no pressure, two people that in natural love have an absolute harmonized compatibility. Natural love will not last forever, but the break-up is still peaceful. Thus, they become together naturally, get along with each other naturally, and break up naturally.”
>
> “Natural love is when two people find each other easily and live in harmony without trying too hard in the relationship. Inherent compatibility is built on natural love. Not many actions are required in natural love since it’s a continuous exchange of energy.”
>
> “Natural love is built on coherent compatibility between couples by following the natural flow of cosmos and allows energy exchanged. It creates a harmonious relationship between couples by discouraging pursuing anything beyond one’s control. It aligns with Daoist principle non-action and allows energy fluid. Different than Western

> notion of true love, natural love does not require monogamy or permanency and it certainly is not destined."
>
> "Natural love contains three levels. The first one is moving to the right person with the power of cosmos, which should not be turbulent. In the developing level, natural love allows feelings of each other to naturally expand and change in their own manner, which is aimed to keep the harmony in a non-action way in the relationship rather than trying hard to chase harmony. The third level is about the way of expression. The couple should understand their roles and accept the exchange of energy between them to get better chance at balance. Natural love slightly differs from true love in western notion, emphasizing on the impermanence and the disobedience of monogamy which is regarded as the core value in true love. The thoughts through the natural love include passivity and compatibility of each other."

And there was this that compared the two terms and offered an opinion of when "*true love" might be used in a Chinese context:

> "The concept is very ideal. Love should be practical. Two people put efforts into the relationship. Natural love is different than true love in the West. For Westerners, if we love each other, we are willing to sacrifice for each other. In Hong Kong, Natural Love feels as Platonic love, we describe that couple feel unstressed and communicate well, similar value and attractive to others, and this love not include sexual life, more focus on spirit and soul. True love is when the people have the strongest passions for each other. In the west, people might see natural love a part of true love. In true love, we have to accept the differences. In natural love, the two people have to change to adapt to the other person. In true love, the partners can accept the

imperfection. Actually, how to define “Love”? Each people has their standard, however, at least, it should be based on respect, loyalty, willing to spend time and efforts into the relationship.”

21. Limiting the scope of interpretive projects

always about high-order love ◆ narrative worlds, not "real" worlds ◆ ToM as litmus test ◆ short-listing

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- no new terms are introduced in this chapter

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

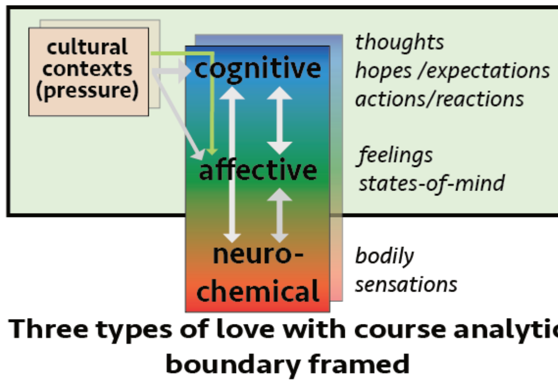
- affective love
- CG-C-D-E-R report
- cognitive love
- cultural contexts
- East Asia
- emergence
- high-order love
- horizons of expectation
- interpretive projects
- love
- low-order love
- model readers / viewers
- practicability
- shareability

Managing *interpretive projects has been discussed previously in a chapter devoted to the issue. Managing our projects is key in terms of *practicability, *shareability and best positioning the work so as to invite discovery and insight. This chapter steps through one more time the principle ways we limit the scope of *interpretive projects so that they are doable and can be easily shared. Further, limiting the complexity of the project helps reduce the fog factor associated with our difficult topic and it is my hope that reducing such distractions and confusions enhances opportunities for insight.

21.1. THE "ALWAYS ABOUT HIGH-ORDER LOVE" STANDARD

We are indeed exploring cultures of *East Asia through the interpretation of film narratives, but we are not exploring just *anything* about these countries or their cultural terrain. We have restricted our topic to "*love." The "*emergence blossom" graphic indeed suggests that *love in its highest expressive form in a narrative is an *emergent effect of a variety of elements, including anxiety, loneliness, war, selfish behavior, desire—well, the list goes on and on. We have determined that we are not trying to capture this full expression of love that would require an extensive exploration of all the cultural contexts of all corners of a narrative. Instead we focus on *cognitive love but with a willingness to discuss *affective love when necessary. Ask whether the initial line of inquiry by you or your group—the analysis as it plays out in your mind or in group discussion, or the conclusions you or your group might arrive at—have met this standard: Is the topic at hand meaningfully and directly relevant to *high-order love?

It might be a good idea to repeat an earlier graphic that shows the boundaries of what we seek to analyze:



Three types of love with course analytic boundary framed

21.2. WE ANALYZE NARRATIVE WORLDS, NOT "REAL" WORLDS

I have discussed elsewhere my view of the porous border I perceive between narrative worlds and this "real" world as well as how similar I view the two to be. That being said, we nevertheless limit our attention to narratives, not the real world situations that they might suggest. This relieves us, to some degree, from the obligation to develop expansive, real world descriptions.

21.3. TOM AS LITMUS TEST

It is not just that we limit ourselves to narratives. We in fact limit our concerns to just one aspect of narratives: things related to *cultural contexts.

Yet, there are almost always a dauntingly large number of possible *cultural contexts. We want to gather widely so that we do not skip over something not obvious that might help us have a keener understanding of the situation, but we do not want to be confronted with long lists of possibilities.

Thus, we tie our decisions of what to consider or not based on this: Will it tell us something that is not already obvious about the *status of the *ToM's *traditional *worldviews and *values relevant to *high-order love? Yet even this is not specific enough. If we imagine the *ToM to be the central character of the film, surely that character goes through hundreds of thoughts, feelings, and decision-making acts or reactions and we do not want to be obligated to consider the *cultural context for each and every one of these. If we limit what we consider by deciding film themes, we are just playing into the hands of the author / director. We want a more independent stance. Therefore, we instead settle on an *instance, restricting our speculation to a specific "moment," avoiding the endless work of considering the entire narrative or the already heavily prejudiced (culturally-embedded) space of the themes of the film. Is should be said though that this "moment" is not just a simple point in time. Things are not *that* easy. It has a broad definition in this case, one similar to the use of the word in sentences like this: "There was a moment in U.S. history when the practice of slavery was called into question."

Of course, to understand this instance we still need an expert understanding of the film as a whole, including almost certainly some knowledge about the director, perhaps also about the audience, and perhaps even other films that are referenced by this film or film genres that are influencing the film content or its place in film history. An *instance is not divorced from these contexts. Thus, limiting ourselves to an *instance is not as much of a rescue as it might first appear to me. It is still better than taking on an entire narrative and we are freer, so to speak, to pick our fights.

As we engage in the work of gathering *cultural contexts, we establish their distance and array them in relationship to the *ToM. Once this is done we probably have only one, two or at most just a few *cultural contexts that we need to understand

and we also know which should be the primary focus of our concern and how they are interacting with one another. Our project has become manageable at this point.

However, I would like to close this section with a return to the previous limiting question: “Will it tell us something that is not already obvious about the *status of the *ToM’s *traditional *worldviews and *values?” Once an *interpretive project is actually underway, it will become immediately obvious that it evokes all sorts of non-traditional *worldviews and *values that we need to consider. *Status does not exist in a vacuum—some sort of *worldviews and *values will give structure to a narrative—it is just a question of which ones. So, establishing the *status of a *traditional *worldview or *value means, in practice, measuring it against the *status of some other *worldview or *value.

21.4. SHORT-LISTING

21.4.1. Short-listing through narrowly defined topic

An *instance, as will be discussed below, is an aspect of a narrative that seems to have a heightened opportunity for exploring *cultural contexts. The best *instances will be highly evocative and suggest a number of different lines of analysis. In order for all working members or working teams to be pursuing analysis whose results are relevant (credible and interesting) to one another according to the *shareability principle, those lines of analysis should be within range of one another (topically speaking, not necessarily in terms of their conclusions). So, we bring to an *instance a *narrowly defined topic which is essentially a short list of things we think are worth investigating. The topic becomes our mutually agreed upon written contract as we say goodbye to one another and disappear to do

independent research and analysis. It sets us off toward specific investigations that hopefully will lead to discovery or insight that coordinates with or challenges the work of others, once interpreters are reunited. Please note that "discovery or insight" is a phrase that is intended to block a research paper approach where the conclusion is imagined and then research is done to support and prove the conclusion. A proper *narrowly defined topic will never pre-decide the outcome. It limits the direction of the research but should never limit the potential conclusions of it, thereby leaving space for discovery. Without this open-ended quality, the diversity of a team cannot be leveraged effectively, blindnesses cannot be overcome, *horizons of expectation cannot be moved.

21.4.2. Short-listing interpretive conclusions with shareability in mind

The interpretive method is designed to enhance lively discussion. In its ideal form a group of diversely thinking individuals who have considered the *narrowly defined topic with some discipline and energy have generated a variety of observations, big and small. For a *CG-C-D-E-R report, they need to decide what of that has the greatest value beyond the borders of their group. This is the final short-list in the method and a very important one. It is the comparison of these short-lists that can (sometimes) be very revealing as to the actual, relevant cultural terrain of the *instance, and most likely well beyond it.

22. Deducing (gathering) possible cultural contexts via plausible ToM construction

Dynamics of cultural contexts ◆ Gathering cultural contexts ◆ Creating interpretive balance

Key terms and concepts introduced in this chapter:

- no new terms are introduced in this chapter

Key terms and concepts mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- attractors
- East Asian
- horizons of expectation
- interpretive projects
- love
- model reader / viewer
- narrative
- ToM
- values

22.1. NAMING THE "DYNAMICS" OF CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

My thinking on the dynamics between *authoritative thought systems, such as Daoism, and what I initially just termed "Western" cultural sensibilities, has evolved on multiple fronts. The formal title for this course was originally "Dynamics of Romantic Core Values in East Asian Premodern Literature and

Modern Cinema." I visualized "dynamics" as the tensions between traditional *East Asian *ethical values and imported Western *ethical values over the contested space of the meaning of a *narrative. My interest in "core" *values was because, in the world of *love, some of our strongest feelings and convictions are invoked. I wanted to problematize overly facile interpretations of *love that derived from being unaware of the reality of the diversity of ideas around what *love is, or due to the interpreter being reluctant to make distance with *values perceived as "core" to her or his own views of *love.

In the early versions of the course, we read at length in premodern literature (with an emphasis on *The Tale of Genji*, *Story of the Stone*, *Nine Cloud Dream* or, some years, *Chunhyang*). This helped give substance to abstract assertions by me with regard to premodern *values and had the further advantage of providing challenging interpretive situations that helped bring into relief how easy it is to misapply one's own assumptions as well as remain unaware of alternative ways of thinking about *love.

In the second half of the course we looked at contemporary *East Asian films and tried to take a measure of how viable traditional *values remained in them. I originally restricted students to cinema released after 2000 because of substantial improvements in the robustness of the South Korean film industry in the 1990s[1] including what is widely seen as a watershed moment with the success of *Shiri* in 1999[2] and, in the case of China, the overseas successes of "Chinese-language cinema" in the 1990s of Fifth Generation Beijing directors such as Zhang Yimou, Wang Kar-wai from Hong Kong, and Taiwan-born Ang Lee, as well as the complications of post-Tiananmen

1. Jimmyn Parc, "The effects of protection in cultural industries: the case of the Korean film policies," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 23, no. 5 (January 2016): 618-633, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1116526.
2. Jennifer Rousse-Marquet, "The Unique Story of the South Korean Film Industry," published September 30, 2013, updated July 10, 2013, http://www.inaglobal.fr/en/cinema/article/unique-story-south-korean-film-industry.

censorship, all which mark significant changes in film content[3] and target audiences.

Cinema was, in the early days, less prominent as a functional component of the course, one that was meant only to explore how traditional *values might alter when a director or marketing entity wished to distribute a film that would include an international audience. The assumption here was that films succeed in part when the *values of the audience are not unduly challenged and that, in the case of *East Asian films, directors are confronted with the conundrum of pleasing a domestic audience with one set of *values and international audiences with other cultural expectations. Frankly, I think internet culture (including the wide and illegal distribution of films) has flattened cultural differences among young people on the one hand and changed marketing strategies on the other. So, while this particular utilitarian reason has become less important, unexpectedly film narrative became central to the course because its rich, multimedia content proved best for *interpretive projects. It must be admitted, however, that the *values in films are often a hodge-podge collection of various *values of which the director may or may not be fully aware or spend much time thinking about. This complicates matters but it is wonderfully well aligned with realworld challenges in reading the cultural contexts of a situation.

While the above more or less describes the start point of the course in its original iteration, I began to create a set of terms around "dynamics" so we could better define what was going on. This was how terms became central to the course. As I worked out the "dynamics" of how cultural contexts did or did not influence someone at any given particular moment, I began to understand that it was the result of tension between the content and power of the context, on the one hand, and the

3. James Wicks, "Cinema Diànyǐngyuàn 电影院," in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China*, ed. Linsun Cheng (Minneapolis: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2009), http://www.academia.edu/8940906/Cinema_in_China_A_Brief_History.

willingness of the subject (person) to accept the influence, on the other. Questions arose: How much of a traditional value is really present with a film? This led to a category of descriptions under the idea of the heritage of a value to its original source (heritage status) and how it is treated within a narrative (narrative status). How can we bring some orderly thinking to what appears to be a jumble of possible cultural influences? This lead to a set of terms around how contexts are arrayed (from the perspective of the person confronted by them). We know that traditional *values are not the primary driving force in most decisions most of the time. What is? In other words, what is there that fades and reduces traditional *values? This led to various terms measuring the distance between a context and a subject (person) and identifying what in the environment was competing with traditional *values or just *values in general. I had already believed that the various influences on a subject was a complex affair (since in literary criticism we tend to shy away from identifying influences since we know that descriptions tend to fall so short of reality as to be almost facetious, unless they are just being used as a way to discuss various important issues). I did not realize just how complex the situation was.

Nevertheless, after years of teaching this course and reassessing its original premise, it remains my opinion that traditional *values are under-appreciated and deserve consideration even now.

22.2. GATHERING CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Our biggest challenge in this course, for all of us including me, is that it is nearly impossible to know exactly what it is we do not know. We know that there are *some things* we do not know. I hope we all have at least that much humility. But this does not

help us identify the specific things that are unknown. How do we do that?

I would like to start with a simple assertion: Interpretation begins with curiosity. Interpretation is a turning over of a text or situation in one's mind, considering various possible angles. This only happens when one wants to understand, or, rather, good questions come out of genuine curiosity. This, and discipline, are the key elements of analysis in my opinion.

Our challenge is, in recognition of the necessity to allow and manage a complex collection of cultural contexts, contextual pluralities, to gather a great deal but not just anything and not too much. So, where to go to identify (gather) potential cultural contexts to consider and how to decide what to include and what to leave aside? The goal certainly is not to make as long a list as possible. On the other hand, the goal is, indeed, not to overlook something important and since we cannot truly know, ultimately, what will turn out to be useful, we need to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion. In other words, we should avoid burying ourselves with possibilities but also avoid becoming satisfied with our collect too soon because often the most important contexts, or the most interesting ones, are those that tend to be overlooked. We have no need of identifying then considering contexts that are already obvious to everyone. We are chasing more agile and slippery creatures.

I have tried to create an environment for the discovery of cultural differences (unidentified cultural contexts that are informing a situation) along these lines: convincing us of our blindness ("*horizons of expectation"), identifying a process that inserts blindness where there could be discovery (*attractors), trying to ameliorate the degree of lack of knowledge by leveraging the diverse cultural knowledge of groups through dialogue and bounded dialogue, and creating a "red flag" system where, when something about a narrative

does not “make sense” it *might* be an indicator of missing or ineptly applied knowledge.

With these things in mind, we gather cultural contexts and refine their content. Our approach is, essential, two-pronged.

22.2.1. Developing a list of potential cultural contexts: Film-based, deductive and tentative working hypotheses

Based on a careful viewing of the film in all of its aspects — what messages are possibly being conveyed by style and content (both) of sound, image, word, story, and actor performance—we puzzle over the worldviews and values that seem to be invoked by these. We construct *ToM for narrative figures and think of what they are thinking and feeling and why they are thinking and feeling those things. We consider their actions and reactions and wonder, too, what these might suggest of cultural contexts. We consider carefully the course of events: what seems to be emphasized, what might be the meaning of certain turns of events, and ultimate plot outcome. We research the director and develop as best we can what might be her or his own worldviews and values, since these will be a significant influence across the film. We research the reception of the film through box-office results and reviews, to get a sense as to what might be the *worldviews and *values of the target audience (*model reader / audience). These can definitely help us make credible assertions about the *worldviews and *values of the film in one way or another.

In sum, we “read” (view, consume, ponder) the film with care and engage in research as necessary. This work itself would be endless so we keep “reasonable effort” in mind, but hope to unearth interesting, relevant observations that have perhaps gone unnoticed and are hopefully useful to others in the course.

22.2.2. Developing a list of potential cultural contexts: Deployment of independent (not "this film"-related) knowledge

There is, for all of us, a lot we do not know about the various cultural groups of our three *East Asian countries. Since the focus of our analysis for this course is *traditional *worldviews and *values, this is particularly the case. How do we learn? Where are the sources of information?

1. This book and in-class comments by me outline some of the points I would like students to consider as they think about what contexts are worth bringing into the discussion.
2. Your own cultural knowledge is immeasurably important. It is important to you, but it is important to your group members, too. Share it, please. Just one note of caution, it is surprisingly easy to err when characterizing your own culture. The confidence level can be too high. Double-check yourself and proceed with caution.
3. The cultural knowledge of others in the group. This course was designed *because* this is Berkeley with a incredible level of cultural diversity among a collection of intelligent, articulate people—all in the room at the same time. It is the catnip of the course. Make full use of it.
4. The cultural knowledge of still others. If you have friends or family, ask them questions, Your parents might tell you things you never expected to hear. (This happens more often than you would think.) You probably know others with extensive experience in Asia. Please remember that it is not just natives of a country that know things about a country. Non-natives who have lived in a country see it will special eyes and can notice things natives might miss.
5. Research. If you do not know what Korean *han* is, or

> Chinese *qing*, or Japanese *amae*, and it has not been discussed in class, go find out. Or find out more if what is mentioned in class was unclear or insufficient. Read about cultures. Admittedly, given the indistinct nature of our topic, and the frustrating reality that we often do not know what we do not know, it is challenging to do this research. (I was once told by. reference librarian here that she was flummoxed one day when a small crowd of students came to her desk and said they wanted a "book about love.") On the other hand, how fantastic for your group that you almost surely have among your group members the ability to read research in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, or perhaps two of these three.

22.2.3. Not going overboard in the process of gathering

We will revisit this point below but perhaps it is wise to briefly note it here: In recognition of the complexity of the task, and wanting results that are useful and interesting to everyone, we limit very sharply the scope of what we need to find cultural contexts for through a series of filters: we consider films not the plethora of complicated events in the real world, we identify a specific instance within the film, we further insist that it be relevant to a single ToM within that instance, and we further limit it by fashioning a *narrowly defined discussion topic. These limiters help but, in truth, the task remains challenging in many cases.

We begin the work of gathering cultural contexts in this course once Part Four becomes the topic of the class sessions. For now, I would like to set out what we do with all the many interesting things we harvest, that is, how do we decide what of this harvest has practical value for us?

23. Achieving outcome credibility and interest

Basic understanding of the film ◆ secondary sources ◆ being real ◆ critical judgment ◆ time investment ◆ rhetorical and logical missteps ◆ "Beyond-First-Thoughts" ◆ "Content-rich" ◆ managing dialogue

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- Beyond-First-Thoughts
- content-rich
- term slippage

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- authoritative thought system
- bounded dialogue
- CG-C-D-E-R report
- cultural context
- derivative
- fragment
- horizon of expectation
- interpretive projects
- narrowly defined topic
- traditional
- values

- worldviews

23.1. CREDIBILITY

In an academic environment, basic credibility is already established through one's employment position or because the work has been published through an academic process that has already checked a manuscript for credibility. However, high-level credibility is something that is always the result of winning challenges. Some of these are explicit challenges, such as when one scholar mounts an argument against another, but most are silent challenges, as the critical reader looks for weak spots in the work, weak spots that might cause more general doubts about credibility.

Once credibility is lost, the entire work, not just an aspect of it, loses credibility. In worst case scenarios (but, actually, all too frequently) the entire corpus of that scholar is called into doubt. In my field, as in most academic fields I would guess, there are those scholars who we generally tend to believe, those who we generally tend to dismiss, and those about whom we have yet to have a clear opinion but seek to know which one of the other two categories is the best way to think of that individual's work.

These decisions are based on whether we think the scholar has good thinking skills (the arguments delivered in the work hold up under critical scrutiny), is well-informed (has read extensively in relevant, credible materials and learned from

that reading), and takes care when producing work (time investment).

Since students do not have either the employment or publication record to already be considered credible, their credibility comes from the content of work that results from good argument, good research, and time investment. Yet, I smile for a moment thinking that a student could, reasonably, make the argument that the status of being a student at Berkeley is similar to that of being employed as an academic; in other words, the mere status of "Berkeley student" should be taken as proof of credibility. That argument is a pretty good one. I still want to talk about credibility.

23.1.1. Analysis begins with a basic understanding of the story or film

Analysis is not understanding the basics of a narrative in terms of what happened as well as the context in which the narrative was produced (about the author and other basic contexts relevant to the composition of the work). Analysis "begins" *after* (is founded on) this understanding.

However, if we are to talk accurately, basic understanding is entangled in analysis—one starts with a basic understanding but that is revised as analysis causes you to rethink the story and of course once the story is reconsidered that has a ripple effect through the analysis. There is no clear boundary between the two. For example, about the Japanese film *Dolls* (*Doruzu*, 2002), to say that "Nukui used the knife to hurt himself" will be a narrative element that is probably beyond doubt. If one instead says, "Nukui used the knife to hurt himself because he was in love" that is an interpretation, but one so obviously true (the vast majority of viewers of the film would agree) that it is close to basic knowledge rather than analysis.

Understanding the story is achieved first from viewing the

film in full, attentively. Sometimes extensive thinking may also be required during the viewing or afterwards. This should lead to a more or less clear understanding of what happened. Of course, films are full of puzzles and mysteries, so in some areas of the film, one might only have a reasonably solid guess as to what happened. Alternatively, one might decide that the film intends to leave the narrative moment as ambiguous. Therefore, knowing the story well does not mean deciding everything—it means knowing what can be known and having reasonable opinions about the rest, including "this is just not meant to be known" or "this cannot be determined because the story-telling was flawed when …."

However, films are stories told and emotions evoked through multimedia: image and sound, where the framing of the image, its lighting, camera angle, and image movement, let alone actual content which includes settings and costumes, are all key factors in delivering message. Sound includes the full range of qualities of the human voice, sound effects, and soundtracks (music). These enwrap themselves in the storyline, while actors and many others insert their interpretations as to what the content of the story should be through their various performances. Editors sweep through all this material to generate yet another level of essential features of the final product. "Reading" a film well includes attention to all of these features, as deemed relevant by you.

If, when someone reads your analysis, they believe you are unclear as to the very basics of the story, of course they will not believe your analysis either. The lack of clarity of basic content where there should be clarity is a deal-breaker.

23.1.2. Using secondary sources effectively begins with wise selection and an understanding of its key ideas

In many cases, your observations will have enhanced

sophistication and credibility when they have been enriched with the ideas of others who have offered well-considered ideas via publications. These are called secondary sources. (An example of a primary source would be the film you have viewed, while a secondary source would be an academic article that has analyzed it.) Students sometimes try to lend authority to their essays by quoting sources. If these are not credible sources, there is very little value in doing this. Similarly, if they are credible sources but the content is not well understood by you, the most immediate result is that the reader concludes the analysis is casual or sloppy.

Given that, research should have the following three qualities.

23.1.2.1. The source is academically credible

In all my courses, the definition of "academically credible secondary sources" is that it meets one of these sets of criteria: a) that there is an identifiable author *and* you can independently confirm that author is qualified in the relevant topics, or, b) the work has been published in a refereed journal or academic press. The easiest way to confirm this second set of qualifying criteria is to use material that is part of an online academic repository such as JSTOR or eBrary, or use material from an academic library system.

These usually do not meet the course grading standard of "credible sources:"

- newspaper and general interest magazine articles
- website content with no obvious author, and
- blogs and similar content.

Commonsense and good critical judgment are involved regarding when the source needs to meet the credibility

standard. It depends, in large part, on what the source is used for.

If the information is not central to your argument (such as whether *The Tale of Genji* was composed in 1008 or sometime shortly after 1020), you can be less diligent, although care is always welcome. Or, if the information you wish to quote is widely accepted, you either do not need a source at all or can quote from a more casual source such as *Wikipedia*. So, for example, if you write, “Premodern Japanese literature had a high regard for poetry” there is no need for a quote to support your claim but if you said, “Premodern Japanese literature exhibits a fetish for hibiscus flowers,” then any critical reader would definitely want to know your source for the claim, and, further, will scrutinize whether it is a credible one.

Finally, secondary sources should always be used with critical alertness. A source might be credible but still unconvincing or simply inaccurate in parts or in whole. In other words, just because it is published does not make it true. Proceed with a reasonable, but not paranoid, level of skepticism.

23.1.2.2. You understand what you are reading

Credible argument will easily indicate that you have understood the key ideas (not facts) of the relevant part of the secondary source that you are citing. This may be the whole article, or a chapter, or a subsection but it most definitely is more than the sentences you wish to quote and almost certainly more than just the single paragraph in which the quote resides.

23.1.2.3. You use the idea(s) effectively

This includes of course the basic course principle that I call the “over the shoulder” rule — that the author, looking over your

shoulder as you use her or his work, would conclude that your use of the material is “fair and accurate.”

But, aside from this, the ideas should have some organic relationship to the flow of your argument. My preference is for limited quoting by the way, and a limited use of sources — one good source well understood easily brings greater sophistication to your work than a longer list of sources because I am inclined to believe they have just been gathered by a search engine and have little to do with the actual content of your work. In this particular case I am highly skeptical until you show otherwise by using the ideas meaningfully. Multiple quotes and long bibliography lists have little use in establishing credibility.

23.1.3. Being real in discussions and interpretive conclusions

When making assertions or considering possible analytic conclusions or when encountering those of your group members or other groups, ask yourself whether those assertions or conclusions just seem “real” as in the sentence, “Please be real” or, “Please be realistic.” In other words, the content should pass basic commonsense measurements that others will bring to bear on it in terms of its recognition of the realities of a situation. Since, ultimately, we are exploring narratives for the sake of understanding cultural communities, our goal is not to offer a delightful interpretation that is intellectually entertaining; it is to make a claim that seems well-grounded in considerations of the real world. This advice is related to the earlier discussion of “making sense” of a narrative. Both rely on your understanding of how the world works and how you think others, too, think the world works. And, as such, both are indeed vulnerable to judgment error due to *horizon issues.

On this note, I have one more observation to make: "Being real" includes being open to the pluralities of a situation. We place against this short-listing to increase the *shareability of a project, but this does not mean to simplify a situation for the sake of rhetorical power. We all know that simple messages are often the more powerful ones. Being real does not mean being powerfully simple, it means to take care not to get lost in the intellectual intricacies or pleasures of constructing an argument, to continually ask, instead, whether the observations and conclusions line up well with the "real" world.

23.1.4. Critical judgment

When one has lost a sense for offering observations and conclusions that line up well with the real world, the consumer of the analysis will judge the thinking process as dangerously unrealistic. If the point is just to explore various theoretical positions or walk the very pleasant avenues of high-discourse argument, this is just fine. But when it is tied to making assertions about actual *cultural contexts, it is not. The consumer will step away from your conclusions—your thinking processes, themselves, have lost credibility. Similarly, the consumer will be evaluating your ability to use good crucial judgment.

In particular, you need to show good critical judgment:

- in how you expand your knowledge through credible research and knowing when that research is needed,
- in the selection and use of sources,
- whether you have reread your own work and adjusted it to edit out those areas where you unnecessarily drifted off topic or made unreasonable claims,
- and so on.

For example, you can use a blog as evidence of an individual's *perception* of a film, and probably you can even use it with some care as *representative* of how many viewers might be reacting to a film, but you cannot use it as *authoritative* analysis of the film.

23.1.5. Time investment

This was introduced earlier as part of the principle of credibility. It is important enough, in my opinion, to locate it in the section on basic principles, not here.

23.1.6. Rhetorical and logical missteps

23.1.6.1. "Overreach" "Overextension" "Sweeping conclusions"

"Overreach" refers to observations or conclusions that are broader or more assertive than is warranted. Credibility is derived from the reader's perception that you are more interested in descriptive accuracy than proving a point and that you understand the justifiable reach of your claim, no more. You might hear me also call these "sweeping conclusions." In the Japanese film *Patriotism (Yukoku, 1966)*, the young officer kills himself while he lovingly thinks of his wife." This is an accurate statement. The implausible extension follows: "Japanese have an unusual connection between the sword and romantic love." It is good to resist the urge to add importance to your observations by presenting them as relevant beyond credible limits. Small conclusions in this course that are derived from the disciplined use of the method are all that is needed. This way of thinking is similar to the idea that many small laboratory experiments, carefully done but each limited in scope, collectively work toward larger scientific discoveries. Of course, ours is not a science, nor do we continue over the

years to collect data and make larger conclusions. But I respect that method in its fundamental integrity towards the analytic process and have adopted it for this course even though, in terms of the big picture, we make very little progress toward describing the cultural terrain of our *East Asian countries. But we do, nevertheless, discovery many interesting things along the way.

23.1.6.2. "False equivalence claims"

In the formal terminology of logic, this is a type of association fallacy. In our class, "false equivalence claims" appear most frequently in the following type of scenario. Imagine a student who is being a little over-enthusiastic in tracing the *cultural context for an *instance back to a *traditional *worldview or *value and asserts that there is Daoism in the video short "High-Five." The student uses this argument:

> Observation: The female protagonist Heidi, seems interested in things psychic.
>
> Logic step: Things psychic are like things mystical.
>
> Logic step: Daoism has a mystical part.
>
> Conclusion: There is Daoism in the video short.

My comment: The first observation is solid but the first logical step is a loose equivalence that cannot be carried forward so easily. The second logical step overemphasizes an aspect of Daoism simply to set up away to get to the conclusion.

Another example:

> Observations: The mother, Megumi, at the center of the Japanese film *Tokyo Sonata* (*Tokyo Sonata*, 2008) has a pretty tough life taking care of her family.
>
> Reformulation: The mother is suffering.
>
> Logic step: Buddhism teaches that all life is suffering.
>
> Conclusion: Buddhism is a relevant *cultural context for this film.

My comment: Buddhism may well be a relevant *cultural context but there will need to be more to support this claim than is offered so far. It is unlikely that the *authoritative system itself is present. Thinking should circle around whether this is a *fragment of Buddhism, or a *derivative that has become something as simple and modern as "life is hard."

23.1.6.3. "Term slippage"

The second is avoiding "*term slippage." "*Term slippage" is an undisciplined exploration of an idea. (If done on purpose, which is exceptionally common in rhetorical arguments, it is a sly rhetorical move.) Here is an example of unintentional term slippage:

In *L for Love L for Lies* (Hong Kong, 2008), beauty and grace are the most important feminine values. Ah Keung falls for Ah Bo because of her kind and trusting nature.

This writer is implying that the personality traits "beauty and grace" are the same as the personality traits "kind and trusting." This may or may not be true, but to slip from one set to the next raises confusions we do not want. It also making an argument simply by association which is unconvincing.

23.2. INTEREST

The other essential component of other-oriented analysis besides producing credible work is that it should be interesting. "Interesting" when used in this course as an adjective to describe expected qualities of results from *interpretive projects means these three things:

1. It should be **interesting to you** because otherwise the work will not be high-quality and you cannot evoke interest from others.

2. It should be **accessible** to others in terms of clarity (of concept, verbal expression, and overall presentation), concise, and have good organization of contents. Readers will not bother to push through poorly presented material.
3. It **offers ideas** that others find stimulating or useful.

It is not always possible for these three to all be present in any given project but it is certainly the aspirational goals that they are, and the best work will meet these expectations.

Above all, your analysis is interesting to others in the course when it is relevant to the class project at hand (either in specific terms such as a *narrowly defined topic on which everyone is working or general terms such as the course interest in exploring the status of *traditional *worldviews and *values). Beyond this fundamental precondition, your *interpretive projects are interesting, in part, because you invested time that others can then benefit from, you offered interpretations that are rich in specific content rather than vague ideas, and the results have benefited from lively and diverse discussion (when group work) or extensive consideration from multiple angles (when individual work) of the topic. I would like to comment briefly on each of these.

23.2.1. Time-investment: The "Beyond-First-Thoughts" standard

There are many ways that *interpretive projects benefit from time investment. How the investment of time enhances credibility was discussed earlier under principles. In that context it meant the time invested in doing research, assembling one's ideas, and giving everything a "one more time" critical review to check for weaknesses in the content.

Here, I want to consider something a little different. This is the time invested in the early moments of encountering an

idea (either spoken by someone else, read, or just arises in the mind). As a biological entity, we are designed to respond quickly to danger. For example, sound stimulus is processed in various ways but the fastest of these pathways (the primary auditory pathway) takes the stimulus from the ear directly to the brain stem, so that we can react to a dangerous situation that split-second more quickly.

Well, new ideas are not threats to run away from and we should not dispose of them with this sort of reflexive, quick reaction. As you have probably gathered by now, I am highly suspicious that one's initial first reactions to a situation are built on *models already in the mind, not a cognitive review of what is actually at hand. The "*Beyond-First-Thoughts" standard is, above all, meant as a subversive breaker of this instinctive rush to decide the meaning of something. Ask yourself: "Is the position I am taking right now just based on common sense or common values?" That will be useful to know. It may still be the best position but it is good to know first the source of your initial analytic judgment. After that initial check, the real analysis begins, following this guideline: "Okay, I think I know what I am dealing with now. Is there something I can say that wouldn't just as easily occur to others, so there is no real point in saying it? How can I carry my thoughts a bit further, to offer something a little more perceptive or insightful?"

So, simply put, the "*Beyond-First-Thoughts" standard means not jumping to conclusions and exceeding in interpretive or analytic value what an average reader could have done on her or his own. When a reader reacts, "Yeah, yeah, I already know that," then she or he does not find your work interesting. When that reader thinks, "Oh, I haven't thought about it in that way, let's see if I agree ...." then it is interesting to that reader. And, if the reader finds the idea credible, it is probably useful, too.

One final comment. In the spirit of practicability, clearly this is

not a process you can do for every step along the way. Develop a sense for when this extra effort is needed.

23.2.2. The “Content-Rich” standard

“The analysis should be content-rich.” “Your response will be graded on whether it is content-rich.” “This was topical, not content-rich, as a description.” I use “*content-rich” in a wide variety of situations and in nearly all grading rubrics. For this reason, I have put more than the usual length of discussion of the term in the key concepts and terms part of this book.

Imagine a conversation between “a certain parent” and “a certain daughter:”

> “How was your day at school.”
>
> “Good.”

This is not content-rich. In fact, the “certain parent” wants to know how the day’s test went. The daughter is saying, “You don’t get to ask about the test, okay?”

Here is a simple set of three dialogues. The first uses a general category word and is not content-rich. The rest are at increasing levels of richness either in specifying reasons or spelling out the specifics of the emotions. The appropriate level depends on the situation:

> “What did you think of the film?”
>
> “I didn’t like it.”
>
> —
>
> “What did you think of the film?”
>
> “I didn’t like it. I felt the portrayal of the main guy was unrealistic.”
>
> —
>
> “What did you think of the film?”
>
> “I started out liking it. But gradually I lost interest because the main guy just didn’t make sense to me.”
>
> —

"What did you think of the film?"

"I started out liking it. But gradually I lost interest because the main guy just didn't make sense to me when he said 'No' to his daughter. The rest of the film seemed to suggest a different sort of man. That part didn't fit and that began to bother me a lot as the film progressed."

—

And so on.

When a description is generic or topical rather than including the specifics, using adjectives with broad, non-specific meaning ("good"), it is not *content-rich. The principle of shareability means we collect the results of our thoughts and deliver them in a way that shares those results. We are duty-bound (that is, it is a course requirement) to be "*content-rich" in our sharing.

Achieving *content-rich expressions is not easy for several reasons. First, of course, we need to actually *have* thoughts on the topic. Second, we need to notice when we are using words that we think are obvious as to the unspoken details when shared ("I hate uncooked shrimp.") but from the listener's side are not as obvious ("Why?? That is one my favorite types of sushi!"). Third, writing *content-rich prose is definitely more time consuming.

Again, as with the "*Beyond-First-Thoughts" standard, the practicability principle is in play here. I think you should *always* ask whether what you are about to say or about to write, or what you have written (that is, during a critical reread of your writing) is *content-rich. I think having this question on your mind very frequently is good analytic practice. However, if you are holding back from sharing in a conversation because of this principle, you are killing the essential reason for having a discussion. Just plunge ahead with your comment. Others can ask if they do not understand. And if everything you wrote was *content-rich it would be impossible to finish and would over-burden the reader.

Given these considerations, I think the guiding principle here might be something like: “Try to be somewhat more *content-rich than you are used to being. Definitely make *content-rich statements at key moments in the report or discussion. Try to remember that others may be slower at understanding you than you think.”

23.2.3. Lively dialogue, bounded dialogue

A core assumption behind the design of this course is that it is through discussion with others that one learns new information as well as discovers the flaws in one’s own thinking. The best environment for these two things to happen is when a variety of thoughtful individuals are freely sharing their knowledge and opinions. The *course method, as a method, is meant to arrive at a few interpretive conclusions that might be interesting or useful to others. But, as a group process, what in fact happens is that all sorts of random details arise along the way. Many if not most of the details will not find their way into a report and yet they can be some of the most informative in terms of the project of this course when writ large: learning about the cultures of our *East Asian countries, as perceived by actual people, not as abstractions.

So, there is a tension between *bounded dialogue that keeps a discussion focused and random discoveries that are out-of-bounds in terms of the method or topic at hand. It is for this reason that there is an “R” in the *CG-C-D-E-R report. That is where the intriguing random things that popped up in the discussion can find a home.

Discovery can be simply the result of good research or good listening or even just good thinking. But there is an aspect of discovery—and this is definitely the case for “insight”—that cannot be planned. It can be invited by some disciplined thinking and process, but ultimately it is something that cannot

be forced to happen. Lively discussion will strike a successful balance between being “on topic” and “off topic” / “within the bounds of the method” and “ignoring the method.”

Lively discussion is grounded on good preparation. When you arrive to a meeting having done research and some initial thinking you bring a substantive value to the meeting. You might be very intelligent and able to comment on the ideas of others, yes, but the course visualizes that you do more than be a commentator on the work of others. You, too, bring work to the meeting.

That being said, the key elements needed for lively discussion are interpersonal ones—on the one hand, the group honors and elicits the contributions of each member, and, on the other, each member makes the effort to offer something. It is a two-way process of inviting contribution and overcoming hesitation about contributing. Some aspects of this are:

- Second language issues should be respected.
- Different thinking should be given a fair place in the discussion. (It does not mean that every observation is true, just that every observation should not be treated dismissively but instead receive fair consideration first.)
- A friendly environment evokes the free flow of ideas.
- One should take care not to dominate the discursive space. Speak, but also listen. And “winning” the discursive space is not the point. What “winning” looks like is a group with a rich and various array of ideas on the table for consideration.
- Goal-oriented process that suppresses the exchange of ideas (“We need to get this done”) can kill some of the best moments of discovery or insight. Allow time. Insight in particular seems to be a function of “enough time”—although admittedly I am speaking unprofessionally. I have never formally studied what makes insight possible.[1]

- The outside world (other working groups) is not forgotten. Group-think is far too easy to fall into. To help prevent this, you can imagine a critical outsider watching your group. Avoid consensus thinking or certainty of conclusion unless it really holds up to critical scrutiny.

1. I wish to make this book recommendation: John Brockman, *This Explains Everything: Deep, Beautiful, and Elegant Theories of How the World Works* (Edge Foundation, 2013). It offers this as a summary of its contents: "Drawn from the cutting-edge frontiers of science, This Explains Everything presents 150 of the most deep, surprising, and brilliant explanations of how the world works, with contributions by Jared Diamond, Richard Dawkins, Nassim Taleb, Brian Eno, Steven Pinker, and more." When I read this, it seemed to me that insight was a key element in all of these ideas.

PART V

CULTURAL CONTEXTS—TRADITIONAL THOUGHT SYSTEMS IN EAST ASIAN LOVE NARRATIVES

The part covers ancient Chinese cosmology, Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism from the perspective of what aspects of these might be relevant to contemporary East Asian narratives. To help gain perspective, the part begins with a discussion of Greek and Christian thought.

24. Western cultural contexts

Overview

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- no new terms are introduced in this chapter

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- context-to-ToM distance
- cultural contexts
- East Asia
- love
- values
- worldviews

The history of romantic love in Western Europe is rich, fascinating, and powerful. It colors perceptions of *love for anyone who has grown up in most areas of Western European countries or in the United States, or has grown up consuming a large volume of narratives written by and for those within these cultures, or is in highly “Westernized” cultural milieu in *East Asia. This poses some problems for interpretive projects because these Greek and Judeo-Christian *worldviews and *values are so pervasive we are unaware that they are at work shaping our interpretations. In the several chapters we will consider a variety of Western worldviews and values to bring into the open some of these influences. Of these, early Greek and the religions coming out of Mesopotamia (Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam) are the oldest and so in ways the most difficult to separate from “commonsense” or “natural” ways of thinking. That being said, some pagan values deserve our attention, as do powerful new ways of thinking. If your cultural roots are in the West, I hope the following discussions help you identify some *worldviews and *values that you might be unknowingly, or willingly, embracing.

But there is indeed a second layer to the challenge. The *worldviews and *values we are about to discuss have, indeed, found their way into the *East Asian cultures we are considering, but the presence is uneven. Determining whether or not we should include these as *cultural contexts (deciding *context-to-ToM distance) is no easy task. Complicating that work is that directors and actors, and others involved with film-making, are, on the whole, relatively global citizens who have traveled extensively, lived in the West, or even received film training in Western *cultural contexts. The history of film is powerfully embedded in Western values and any major film director is well versed in this history. Further, for marketing reasons, East Asian directors may find it profitable to play to Western values to expand their audiences and take advantage of overseas markets. Funding can have international sources, too, and those who provide the financial foundation of a film may have ideas about its content, too. We encounter complicated cultural situations such as the director of *Norwegian Wood* (Tokyo, 2010), which is a Japanese film based on a Japanese novel and with a Japanese script but directed by a Vietnamese who cannot speak Japanese.

25. Early Greek philosophy

The Beautiful = The Good = The Truthful = The Eternal ◆ will and moral acts ◆ Eros, philia, agape, nomos, storge

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- agape
- Eros
- nomos
- philia
- storge

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- devotion
- East Asia
- faithfulness
- love
- model reader
- worldviews

25.1. INTRODUCTION

While most of what remains "live" in modern Western cultures that affects how *love is conceived is rooted in Christian

teachings, not everything is and of that which is, looking at its earlier iterations by Greek philosophers is informative. There are some truly remarkable, powerful, and definitely still relevant ideas within Greek philosophy. Plato's *Symposium* is often cited as a seminal work for our current definitions of *love. His *Phaedrus* echoes and adds to these ideas. Aristotle continued to systematize Plato's thinking. We do not need to go to a specific text and look at the formulation of ideas in that sort of pristine approach (that is, working with the original). We can, instead, pull out from the history of intellectual thoughts several concepts and terms that have shown persistent, powerful influence over the centuries.

Although learning the positions of Greek philosophers is both engaging and valuable, for this course, we have a narrower interest: identifying aspects of Greek philosophy that have helped inform Western culture in ways relevant to *love. The following are what I believe are the most central of those.

25.2. THE BEAUTIFUL = THE GOOD = THE TRUTHFUL = THE ETERNAL

Plato posits a perfect, abstract world toward which we (or "better men") aspire. This world we live in is a dim reflection of that "true" world. When we see something beautiful and wish for it, we are, in fact, yearning for this true and good world. What is true is good and what is true is enduring. All of these are equated.

This basic formula is everywhere in the West: If a romance or marriage is good, it should endure (unless blocked from the outside for some reason). If an institution is good or a car built well, it will last a long time. If our interest in something is temporary, we were not truly interested in it. And so on. This contrasts sharply with both the Daoist / Ancient Chinese Cosmology worldview that everything changes (a *worldview

shared with Buddhist ideology) as well as, for example, Japanese aesthetics that see the transient or short-lived as particularly moving and beautify (think cherry blossoms).

But, for us, there are further very fundamental ramifications than just this equation of the good with the enduring.

First, "The Beautiful = The Good = The Truthful = The Eternal" is a bridge to an abstract, superior, perfect world. It posits a metaphysical world, lending to powerful imagination, unrealistic goals, and soaring valuation of ideals.

The formula affords to "beauty" a certain amount of super, or supernatural, or other-worldly power, in a category beyond ordinary things. For example, it opens the door to placing a high-valuation on a woman's beauty as something that "channels" high truth or perfect goodness. This is close to unthinkable in *East Asian love narratives where the exceptional beauty of a woman will, at most, represent high social status and perhaps good manners and intelligence. But such women cannot be a "muse" as in the West, where beauty helps the artist reach into a higher plane. The formula can also give permission to intense devotion, such as what one sees around the cult of Saint Mary from the 12th century, or in the 11th-14th century songs of troubadours. *Devotion to one's woman is also something we are not likely to see in *premodern *East Asian love narratives. We might see a high level of *faithfulness (*xin 信) but not *devotion that can see in one's partner godliness.

Second, with its pathway of *first one loves physical beauty* (the physical beauty of a woman or man), *then one loves ethical beauty (good morals)*, *and ultimately one loves knowledge-truth* (thus "philosophy" the love of truth), Plato posits desire as good. Desire is also the precursor to action, of course, so these work as a pair: one desires the right thing, then takes an action to move toward it. Daoism / Ancient Chinese Cosmology, Buddhism, or Confucianism do not place this degree of value

on acts of desire. Desire is unwise in the Daoist view, which sees health as harmonizing to the given situation, causes suffering in the Buddhist view, and is likely to cause disorder in the Confucian view.

25.3. EXERTION OF WILL AND ITS PLACE IN MORAL ACTS

Plato places an exceptionally high value on the exertion of will, asserts the benefits of discipline that are measured by the degree of will power one can marshal, and posits morality as the soul being confronted by choices with the better men (he did not include women in his vision) making the more difficult choices that require will power. For example, note how violent the deployment of will is in *Phaedrus*, as the master charioteer teaches his "bad" horse to submit to his commands. (In a way this struggle for control is similar to punishment that asserts authoritative statements of right and wrong found in *East Asian contexts. But the charioteer's fight is an internal, spiritual struggle seen as a very important, even glorious battle, one that will be reiterated as holy war by later religious thought. In this sense, it surpasses the this-worldly, simply parental, or paternal "teaching" of morality to another through forceful and violent punishments or threats of them.)

> When the appointed hour comes, they make as if they [the two horses that are pulling the chariot, one naturally good, one naturally bad] had forgotten, and he [the charioteer, who represents the command position of the soul] reminds them, fighting and neighing and dragging them on, until at length he, on the same thoughts intent, forces them to draw near again. And when they are near he [the bad horse] stoops his head and puts up his tail, and takes the bit in his teeth and pulls shamelessly. Then the

> charioteer is worse off than ever; he falls back like a racer at the barrier, and with a still more violent wrench drags the bit out of the teeth of the wild steed [the bad horse] and covers his abusive tongue and jaws with blood, and forces his legs and haunches to the ground and punishes him sorely. And when this has happened several times and the villain [the bad horse] has ceased from his wanton way, he is tamed and humbled, and follows the will of the charioteer, and when he [the bad horse] sees the beautiful one [the beloved, the one that the charioteer loves = ultimately "truth"] he is ready to die of fear. And from that time forward the soul of the lover [the charioteer and his two horses] follows the beloved [truth] in modesty and holy fear.[1]

Plato's tying of good moral behavior to action that is the result of choice and carried out by will power remains, I would suggest, a pillar of Western culture. Even the basic oh-so-American attitude of "Just do it!" or "You are unhappy? Well, do something about it!" can be traced back to this basic position.

While it is beyond the scope of our course, I would also like to share my personal view that this is an incredibly phallic position to take. In my opinion, the feminist movement is correct in its assertion that just about everything having to do with society, including language, honors this "take action, make a difference, assert yourself, dominate" position. It stands in contrast, we will see, with the Daoist / Ancient Chinese Cosmology view, which honors **wuwei* ("non-action" 无为、無為). And, it does not take long to see how this works out in love narratives. Here are two basic narratives reflecting each of these positions: "I will slay the dragon for you, rescue you, and prove my love!" versus "Fate has separated us. We can lament this, but ultimately we

1. "Phaedrus — Plato's Chariot Allegory," John Uebersax's Home Page, accessed March 5, 2018, http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/plato3.htm#descr2. According to the website, this translation is by Benjamin Jowett, and is his third and last translation of 1892.

must accept that we cannot be together." When I am teaching *The Tale of Genji* (11th c. Japan), some students, particularly female students, express impatience at how much abuse the female characters in the narrative accept without resistance or complaint. While this impatience is healthy, in trying to understand the narrative as a *model reader might have understood it, we need to move off of the "exertion of will" model of the Greeks and draw on the value of **wuwei*. We must also remember that there is yet no discourse of resistance developed for women. No one would affirm or support a woman's complaints. For example, jealousy was taught as something to be avoided, regardless of a man's behavior, because, "commonsense" and medical records asserted, it ages the woman and makes her less beautiful.

Free choice (an exercise of will) and doing the work of God (charitable acts) are, of course, at the center of Christian thinking, too. And these are directly connected to advice for a successful marriage which includes "working at it" if things are not going well. This "work at it" concept floats about as a romantic principle in many of our Western narratives. *Love in *East Asian narratives often has more passive constructions where love just happens to one and will naturally fade, too—"natural love." In Japanese premodern literary texts, this passive posture supports the "truthfulness" of scenes of longing or waiting for someone. Such scenes vastly outnumber scenes where one engages in a loving act for another.

25.4. EROS, PHILIA, AGAPE, NOMOS, STORGE

I would like to introduce five Greek terms for love. Although there are other ways of discussing love within the context of Greek philosophy, these are the most common terms. The schema I use to introduce them keep in mind Confucian terms.[2]

2. The *Wikipedia* entry "Greek words for love" is an informative overview. See, Wikipedia

25.4.1. Eros

Modern romantic love. In the modern version, passionate love is a mark of affirming the depth and importance of the bond. “A marriage without passion” is considered a negative statement. “I am not attracted to him but I plan to marry him” will worry most people if told this. Passion is seen as fundamental to the warmth and power of love. “How to get passion back into the relationship” is an easy to imagine title for an advice webpage. The Greek position is of a higher order. **Eros represents the inherent urge within a man** (called a “loved”, with the object of love called the “beloved”) **towards beauty and truth**. He may well desire a beloved who is beautiful woman or beautiful boy, but these are representatives of his urge towards the understanding of philosophical truth. So please note” “eros” in the Greek system is, at core, not about low love or hormones or lust or physical attraction or Freud’s libidinal drive, although it acknowledges similar emotional states and definitely acknowledges their pleasures and risks. “Eros” does not mean mutual attraction; it does not explore the idea that passionate attraction can be mutual. Since the ultimate object of love is a philosophical truth, it was be truly odd to attribute to the “beloved” a mutual response of attraction back towards the “lover”. If the love partner is a human it may well be that this person feels some returning devotion or appreciation but this is not the same at the movement of eros.

25.4.2. Philia

This is **friendship** or “**brotherly love**” where the two involved (in the Greek system both must be men) appreciate and respect one another, take pleasure in each other’s company, and

contributors, "Greek words for love," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed March 5, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_words_for_love.

explore through discourse philosophic truths. It is often presented as the high order of something that could be called love. It is, of course, the idea behind the modern expression “Platonic Love” although this has evolved to more often simply mean love without sexual intimacy. Though not required, there is an implied sense of equality between the two in such a relationship. This is not required, however.

25.4.3. Agape (early Greek and later Christian definitions)

In early Greek texts, “agape” meant the affection for one’s family or one’s spouse or towards certain activities. It was not a widely used word and would not interest us if it were not for its dynamic use in the Christian *New Testament*. While it may be somewhat out of place to move forward in time and discuss this later definition of word, I would like to do so now, because I want to make clear the Christian contribution to ways of thinking about *love.

The *New World Encyclopedia* outlines concisely the definitions of agape within a Christian context like this:[3]

> In the *New Testament*, the word *agape* or its verb form *agapao* appears more than 200 times. It is used to describe:
>
> - God’s love for human beings: “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son (John 3:16); … “God is love” (1 John 4:8).
> - Jesus’ love for human beings: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2).
> - What our love for God should be like: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37).
> - What our love for one another as human beings should be

3. New World Encyclopedia contributors, "Agape," *New World Encyclopedia*, accessed March , 2018, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Agape.

> like: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39); "Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12); "Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).
>
> *Agape* in the *New Testament* is a form of love that is voluntarily self-sacrificial and gratuitous, and its origin is God.

Of these, the fourth is most relevant to us. It provides the fundamental model for a married couple (and perhaps for the idealized love relationship):

> In reflection of God's divine love, as God's work, each partner is to give willingly to the other a love that is self-sacrificing, unselfish, and unconditional.

Agape is pronounced "ah-GAH-pee."

25.4.4. Nomos

Irving Singer, in his *The Nature of Love: Plato to Luther*, reconsiders this Greek term that means "laws" or "The Law" as it was understood in early Christianity. His reconsideration is what is most relevant to us here, not the original Greek discussion. The following is an abstract of the relevant chapter "Nomos: Submission to God's Will" in his work, as provided by MIT Press Scholarship Online (http://mitpress.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.7551/mitpress/9780262512725.001.0001/upso-9780262512725-chapter-12)

This chapter discusses how religion turns the idea of love into a form of submission. In Christianity, all must believe that man is created in the likeness of God; because a likeness is always inferior to the original, the religious soul must submit to the superiority of God. Spiritual marriage not only entails unanimity but also conformity; man's will must yield to the will of God. This aspect of Judeo-Christian love based on submissiveness

is referred to as nomos, a concept fundamental in a number of respects to all religious love. Freud believes that Christian nomos, inasmuch as it implies a renunciation of the world, is a mechanism by which civilization controls the individual's antisocial impulses. It originates from the universal fear of some external authority. This is not fundamentally a romantic value in Plato's world. It is about law and society. However, I find it interesting that there can be a crossover between submission to the law, to authority, and romantic submission / domination, including devotion. "True love" in the West is probably a blend of willingness to sacrifice oneself for another and commitment/ devotion to another.

25.4.5. Storge

This is a **fondness** or **affection** for someone that grows through shared values or experiences, in other words, **familiarity**. It occurs naturally. It is also the natural love that parents feel towards their children. This is not as common a term as the following four; I mention it because the Confucian idea of **qin* ("familiarity" 親) shares some qualities with it. The parent-child relationship, however, is much better described as **xiao* ("filial piety" 孝).

Storge is pronounce "store-gay."

25.5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

I would suggest that many of these Greek positions remain relevant to traditional Western views of love as later developed within Christianity and which remain with us today; however, some have the *status of being challenged and some have the *status of being affirmed.

Directly challenged by Christianity is that, in the case of Greek thought, **no aspect of love except friendship is considered**

to be reciprocal. Rather, one has desire towards another or another object, or bestows love, or submits through awe and respect—all "one-way" actions. Christianity is ambiguous on this point. Charity is not a directly reciprocal action; however, charitable acts or even acts of sacrifice are recognized and "rewarded" by God, so bestowing love is not entirely one-way. Similarly accepting God into one's heart humbly is definitely seen to be of enormous personal benefit, so in this sense submission has a reciprocal, "giving back" aspect to it.

Further, Greek-style love makes distinctions: some people are more deserving of love and to love someone does not mean that you have entered into an agreement of equality with that someone.

I think these things are important points to note if one is to capture accurately some of the premodern East Asian positions because they resemble more these Greek positions than they do the later Christian positions. It is best to think of premodern romantic relationships as fundamentally not reciprocal and accepting of hierarchy within the relationship. This clarifies the picture greatly. For example, the talented gentlemen "gets" the beautiful woman as a prize for his talents. This does not place on him the expectation that he should respect and honor her as equal to himself. There are definitely remnants of this premodern way of thinking in current traditional East Asian values. Confucianism does have a very strong element of reciprocity, but it is not based on the Christian teaching of universal, no-distinctions-made, unconditional love.

Greek philosophy puts a high valuation on love and the abstract metaphysical plane on which it ultimately resides; indeed, love is broadly, and gravely, treated as the foundation of all things. Unlike Freud (and one of the reasons, I think, Freud received such an unfriendly reception), desire is understood to be fundamentally beautiful and good. Desire is the goodness in man seeking to become closer to truth. Desire is the first

step towards good acts, and, ultimately, wisdom. This position is even further extended by devotional Christianity and its exceptionally high valuation of romantic relationships, marriage, feelings of love, the transformative and healing power of love and its unique (to other religions) formula: “God is love.” All of these positions are in sharp contrast to East Asian treatments of love, which has a more limited place in one’s overall condition and life plan.

As an aside—the Roman poets Lucretius (99-55 B.C.E., *On the Nature of Things*) and Ovid (43 B.C.E – 17 or 18 A.D., *The Art of Love*, *The Cure for Love*) set out views of love that contrast with the above—a view that sees love not as sacred at all but rather the arena of erotic play, game, and strategy. For them, love was ultimately unhealthy to one’s spiritual life.[4] Here is a passage from Ovid’s *The Art of Love* (http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/ovid/lboo/lboo58.htm) to give you a sense of how far this view of love is from notions of love for good ethics and philosophy. The poet is explaining techniques for seducing a woman:

> *If, as not infrequently befalls,*
> *a speck of dust lights on your fair one’s breast,*
> *flick it off with an airy finger;*
> *and if there’s nothing there,*
> *flick it off just the same;*
> *anything is good enough*
> *to serve as a pretext for paying her attention.*
> *Is her dress dragging on the ground?*
> *Gather it up,*
> *and take special care that nothing soils it.*
> *Perchance,*
> *to reward you for your kindness,*
> *she’ll grant you the favor*
> *of letting you see her leg.*

4. See for example William Fitzgerald, "Lucretius' Cure for Love in the 'De Rerum Natura'," *The Classical World* 78, no. 2 (1984): 73-86. doi:10.2307/4349696.

26. Judeo-Christian thought

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- no new terms are introduced in this chapter

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- alternating contexts
- authoritative thought systems
- caizi-jiaren narrative model
- cultural context
- distance
- layers
- love
- mixtures
- model reader
- situational factors
- status
- ToM
- traditional
- true love

26.1. INTRODUCTION

Christianity was the dominant *authoritative thought system for much of the history of most Western Europe cultural groups although around its periphery there was the Islamic empires and pagan cultures.[1] *Traditional Western ideas and ideals of *love developed with Christianity as a broad and "close" (not *distant) *cultural context.

Four aspects are important to understanding a *ToM that is has a relevant "Western" *cultural context which includes these values. I put "Western" in parenthesis because some of the ideals of "true love" has been absorbed in *East Asian cultures and would not be considered "Western" at all, just "not *traditional" perhaps. These four differ sharply with *traditional *East Asian *worldviews and values. In that way they can warp interpretations even of contemporary *East Asian films but especially of *premodern *East Asian literature. For this reason, I am presenting the four with an oppositional scheme (Western value vs *East Asian value). However, it is much better not to think of these as "either/or" relationships but rather *layered arrays or *alternating contexts. *Mixtures is also very common.

- The first is the nature of Christianity as a **monotheistic religion with an all-knowing God** existing nearly total dominant, affirmed *status in Western culture during the time that traditional ideas and ideals of love were developed.

1. "Pagan" is a tricky term for us who are looking at authoritative thought systems and their reach. When we are in a "neutral mode" will use "pagan" to mean, as the Google dictionary offers: "a person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions." However, when we are talking from the perspective of Christianity, we will follow the definition suggested by this quote: "It is crucial to stress right from the start that until the 20th century, people did not call themselves pagans to describe the religion they practiced. The notion of paganism, as it is generally understood today, was created by the early Christian Church. It was a label that Christians applied to others, one of the antitheses that were central to the process of Christian self-definition. As such, throughout history it was generally used in a derogatory sense." Owen Davies, *Paganism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

- The second viewing morality as a test of **will which leads to action** (carried over from Greek philosophy).
- The third is how it establishes a radically perfect **sacred space** for love. "Sacred space" is common to all Mesopotamian religions, and to some degree the Greeks but it is Christianity that squarely considers acts of the best ways of love to be in the image of God's love. Devotional love is an important element in this as well.
- The fourth is the high value placed on the **extreme emotional states** such as intense desire or passion, when pointed in the right direction.

26.2. MONOTHEISM AND SINGULAR TRUTH VERSUS MULTIPLE PLURALISTIC SYSTEMS

Western *worldviews and *values derived from them were formulated almost entirely during the era of Christendom while, on the other hand, Chinese culture developed under the triple systems of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. (Traditional Korean and Japanese *worldviews are composed of both indigenous ideas and those received from Chinese developments grounded in these three *authoritative thought systems.) Even though China has a strong predisposition towards syncretic thinking—and so Daoism and Confucianism and Buddhism have blended dramatically—they remain identifiably separate thought-systems in all of our *East Asian countries, each with its own *worldviews and *values. In addition, today's *East Asian cultures are essentially secular, so, for the most part, individuals in these societies are not devoted practitioners of any single one of these systems but instead have a certain amount of *distance from them.

So, we have on the one hand a constellation of *values based on a single common *worldview (the teachings of the Catholic

Church for the most part) and, on the other, a more complex *array of differing *values derived unsystematically from multiple sources.

Increasing the strength of this phenomenon is the Christian teaching of moral imperatives (godly actions) that are expected at all times, in all situations, as opposed to an *East Asia where there is a more complex array of expectations that sometimes depend on situations and timing as well as whether anyone will be able to know of an action.

To put it another way, Christianity (like all Abrahamic religions that descended from worship of the God Abraham) posits an all-knowing, all-powerful, singular God who judges his subjects based on their free moral choices between good and evil. Whether one is in the public sphere, private sphere, or just alone with one's heart, God knows (and you know He knows) as to whether your decisions and actions are good or evil.

Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism do not posit such a "seer" who is directly and personally aware of your decisions and who will judge, punish, reward, or forgive. The most omnipresent and persistent principles in these three systems would be as follows.

> In the case of Daoism, one can be out of harmony with the configuration of a situation and this will weaken your position or cause illness.
>
> In the case of Confucianism, the eye of society is nearly pervasive and is indeed judgmental and can indeed punish or weaken or exile you for anti-social behavior. But discrete, private, secret actions operate beyond this principle.
>
> In the case of Buddhism, the neutral law of Dharma where bad actions invite bad consequences is indeed as omnipresent and persistent as God, but it is not personal

> and so not judgmental. In other words, while there are bad consequences to bad actions, there is no tangible moral imperative seeking to require good action. While Buddhist compassion encourages one's heart towards good action, it is not nearly as key to the religion as love is in Christianity.

Some concepts that are relevant to *East Asian views of *love and behaviors related to those views that are related to this complex *array of *worldviews and *values are: *layering, the role of deception, and "convenient choices" (pragmatic, situation-based ethics) in love (and in any other ethical situation for that matter).

From both the Greek and Christian perspectives, all three of these are viewed as limited in vision or criticized as moral compromises, or both. From the *East Asian perspective, on the other hand, they are seen as sophisticated wisdom or actions that are realistically based on the complexities of the world in which we actually live, even if not always perfectly ethical.

26.2.1. Layering

*Layering turns out to be surprisingly key for generating good interpretations of our narratives. As we try to develop a credible *ToM for a character, or establish an accurate picture of the *worldviews and *values providing the framework for a narrative more totally, we almost always encounter what seems like multiple systems stepping forward or stepping back depending on the moment of the narrative, and so on. *Layering also runs directly counter to the Western notion of "soulmate" or other ways of thinking that one person is the perfect or *fated (ordained by God or Heaven) partner for another. So, for example, it is often okay in *East Asian narratives to *love someone who reminds one of someone else. In the West this could not be called "*true love." *Layering

also subverts the idea of individuality and individual responsibility—"I" is multiple things, not just a single soul who makes moral choices and bears the rewards or punishments for those choices. These "multiple things" might be identity confusion, or the dominance of memories, or one's hyper-awareness of one's various roles and duties in the world. For example, a spy who has fallen in love with an enemy spy must chose, because of external pressures, whether to betray the country or the lover. But this is a situational choice, deep in the heart of the person in question there is no imperative to chose one way or the other. It is seen as understandable and normal to feel both and be entirely undecided, permanently.

26.2.2. Deception

In our narratives we will notice that deception as often facilitates and supports love as it does subvert it. One should not automatically take the interpretative (or moral) position that if a lover lies to (or just doesn't share something with) the one he or she loves, that it is an indicator of flawed love. Deception and secrets seems intimately entangled in *love states in *East Asian narratives.

26.2.3. Convenient choices (situational factors)

Christianity argues that if you act immorally, the end result is that even in cases where you derive some immediate benefit ultimately upon death you will be judged and can suffer greatly for your short-sighted pursuit of selfish pleasure or profit. You will, in other words, suffer a net loss for your actions. Moral values are consistent in all situations. There is no way to "game the system."

Ethics is a more complex affair in *East Asia in part because it is an amalgam of ethical systems that are not necessarily

coordinated in all of their parts. Thus it is possible to mix-and-match, drawing on one system at one time and another at another time in ways that are most immediately convenient. Further, Daoism, is not really an ethical system—it is a strategic one: wise action is based on understanding the current situation and the changes underway, and then acting accordingly. Behavior is tied to the immediate situation and one's deep understanding of it, not eternal *moral* principles although "harmonize with the cosmos" is, indeed, an enduring, omnipresent *cosmic* principle. Punishment or retribution is in the form of less successful action or weakened health, and such. Confucianism in its ideal form has enduring principles of honesty, respect, kindness, and so on, but as it was and is practiced it has a high tolerance for modifying these principles to more selfishly profitable ends (such as the abuse of authority). Punishment in this system comes from society (not God) but society is less interested in delivering punishment if no disruption of social order actually occurs. So, for example, if one has a love affair and no one notices it or suffers because of it, it is not a good thing but it is not as fundamentally targeted for punishment as it is in Christianity. Finally, Buddhism, which is closest so a system that says that bad acts will bring bad things (karma), has a softer edge than Christianity by viewing bad acts as acts of ignorance rather than truly evil and deserving of punishment. All of these systems, in other words, have well worked out guidelines for correct behavior but lack the absolute (transcendent, metaphysical) nature of moral punishment embraced by Christianity.[2]

2. Buddhism teaches that there are various hells for those who are bad but in its higher discourse takes the position that these are metaphors for motivating people, not actual places.

26.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF WILL VERSUS *WUWEI* AND HARMONY

As already noted in our discussion about Greek philosophy, will-power is how one masters one's own less-than-perfectly-moral urges—the chariot drive asserts his will of the black horse that resist his commands. Moral *acts*, correct-choice-based actions, and the will-power to pursue actively(even aggressively) a correct path are all already fully in place in the Greek system.

26.3.1. Free-will as a key element in morality

The Jewish tradition and Christianity both take this focus on free choice (act based on one's choice that can become the basis of moral judgment) a step further by placing a focus on the free will (and willpower) of each individual, asserting, for example, that God has given Man freedom to either believe or not believe in Him. With the concept of Original Sin, being good (having full faith in God which then leads the way and empowers one to be good) is a choice that hangs on one's soul.

To illustrate the centrality of free will in discussions of morality, below are examples from randomly selected web pages that teach Jewish or Christian principles:

- If humans do not have free will–the ability to choose–then actions are morally and religiously insignificant: a murderer who kills because she is compelled to do so would be no different than a righteous person who gives charity because she is compelled to do so.
- Jewish tradition assumes that our actions *are* significant.
- God dignifies us with free will, the power to make decisions of our own rather than having God or fate predetermine what we do. Consider what the Bible teaches.

- God created humans in his image. (Genesis 1:26) Unlike animals, which act mainly on instinct, we resemble our Creator in our capacity to display such qualities as love and justice. And like our Creator, we have free will.
- Free will is a precious gift from God, for it lets us love him with our "whole heart"—because we want to.

26.3.2. No place to hide—secrets and confession

Since God is all-knowing, one's moral choices are known and will be judged. Keeping one's immoral acts secret does nothing to avoid God's judgment. This challenges the value of secrecy in maintaining social harmony, a common path of choice in *East Asia and one considered mature behavior when deployed correctly (but which is clearly open to self-serving abuse).

Christian confession is not telling God what He does not know. It is an act of removing secrecy from the perspective of the sinner, admitting the guilt of the action, and asking for forgiveness, which is an act of Grace. *East Asia has this confessional moment too, in the sense that the perpetrator recognizes his or her guilty act, and implies an understanding of that guilt as well as an intention not to repeat the action. But these statements are delivered to "society" not to God, and society's forgiveness—while it can be essential to survival—is not seen as having a divine cleansing power.

26.3.3. Testing one's moral steel and depth of love—Free-will in love narratives

Over-coming confusion and mustering the courage to do the right thing (or *love the right person) in the face of temptation or a dispiriting challenge is a very common Western narrative which affirms this principle. Such stories are easily woven into

the fabric of *love narratives: to slay the dragon in order to rescue the girl is one of those. (The Chinese *_caizi-jiaren_ narrative model which has wide distribution in East Asia in contrast is: come from a good family, be handsome, then work hard to enhance one's education / social status and you will be rewarded with a beautiful wife.)

26.3.4. One's relationship with God trumps one's relationship with society

There is a derivative of this line of argument. Moral goodness is following the Will of God. In other words, the source of right and wrong is other-worldly. The sets up a certain pitting of the individual _against_ society. If society is wrong-minded, the Christian must choose the higher authority—God's authority—in order to be morally good. "But everyone does things that way" — convenient choices or *situational factor arguments — simply are not acceptable. It is rare to find in *premodern *East Asian narratives any celebration whatsoever of making choices that do not follow widely-held social norms.

26.4. SACRED SPACE VERSUS SECULAR SPACE

Greek philosophy and the Mesopotamian region religions all in their own ways posit a sacred space. Those individuals who understand and operate within the light of divinity have strength, health, certainty, healing-power, and so forth. For example, in the Irish-British film short "Orbit Ever After" (2014) the young male protagonist Nigel, contemplating a dangerous space leap to unite with his girlfriend, looks towards the window of his spaceship. Light pouring in through the window to illuminate beautifully his face—the scared light of love possibility. By this light we, as *model readers familiar with Christian-like narratives, know something "good" will happen

and the message delivered by this staging cue (nothing is more important that "true love")makes the ending more complex. It is a tragedy and triumph, both.

The Abrahamic religions posit love as situated within this divine goodness, with Christianity's hallmark being to make love its central tenet. In this system, "*true love" has the power to overcome all obstacles, heal all trouble, and so on. Rarely is *love given this sort of supernatural power in *East Asian narratives, not just because love is not explicitly tied to divinity (although it is, indeed, not), but also because the sacred space itself is less all-knowing, all-powerful, and does not represent the spiritual destination of the Daoist, Confucianism, or Buddhist. Daoist and Buddhist immortals are indeed great beings with great powers but these are not God-given and lack the echo of "all-powerful" that the true believer is afforded in these Western religions. "Good overcomes evil" and "Love conquers all" are sayings based on these notions of the power of the sacred to shine its light into this secular world and lend its miracle-making qualities. Again, many Western narratives are designed to confirm these "truths." The exuberance of love is, perhaps in part, this sense of being situated within the sacred, the right, the powerful, and true.

26.5. PASSION VERSUS THE GOLDEN MEAN

Read this description by a Western medieval Catholic female mystic of the 16th century:

17. I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and

> yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it, even a large one. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying.[3]

While this is of course an extreme position and Christian mysticism is not considered mainstream Christianity, the basic notion that passionate devotion and extreme acts of kindness (such as Jesus dying on the cross for the benefit of all others) bring one closer to true faith and/or true goodness is definitely supported. Daoism (because of its concern for balance and harmony), Confucianism (because of its interest in social order and harmony), and Buddhism (because of its view that highly emotional states cloud the mind and prevent religious insight) all reject the power of extreme actions and extreme mental states (although, as a fighting stance ferocity is recognized and is extreme endurance). Each in its own way promotes a concept of the "*Golden Mean" which is a more moderate, mediated, balanced position in any given situation. Intense devotion to another can be seen as a mark of love in a Western context but feels somehow threatening in most *East Asian contexts. This is an over-simplification, and there are definitely significant exceptions to this basic notion, but I do think that there is some distrust of extreme positions in most cases. Being overwhelmed by love, in *East Asian narratives, in, *generally speaking* debilitating to the individual in love and disruptive to the society around her or him.

3. Chapter 29, "Of Visions. The Graces Our Lord Bestowed on the Saint. The Answers Our Lord Gave Her for Those Who Tried Her." In *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus of the Order of Our Lady of Carmel*, by Teresa of Jesus (1565). See http://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/lifeofteresa.pdf

27. Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism – Overview

27.1. THE GOALS OF THE THREE THOUGHT SYSTEMS

Daoism is a teaching of well-being at the level of the individual. The ultimate goal is immortality. It is perceived as showing some indifference towards society and ethics. Some pre-Daoist and "Daoist" ideas are so pervasive in East Asia that it is difficult to notice their presence. This includes in the case of films.

Buddhism is a religion of personal salvation (defined as release from constant suffering). It has an ethical system because of its compassionate point of view and the need to purify the body and mind for proper spiritual training. Some ideas of Buddhism are pervasive in East Asian, although more concentrated in Korea and Japan, especially Japan. Buddhism is present in the atmospherics of some films but makes in presence felt in terms of its actually teaching much less often.

Confucianism is an ethical system focused on the social world. It embraces Chinese cosmology as its cosmology but shows little interest in spiritual matters. Most ethical components of Confucianism remain strong in all East Asian countries but perhaps strongest in Korea. However, specifically within films, the presence is often less obvious or simply less, depending.

27.2. "LOVE" IN THE THREE THOUGHT SYSTEMS

None of the above systems treat love as close to divinity in the way that Christianity does.

Daoism has shown some interest in the exchange of energies during sex, and has a position on the compatibility of the individuals but does not particularly promote love in and of itself.

Buddhism treats all attachments as unhealthy but does support compassionate love that seeks to release others from

their suffering. It has traditionally been monastic and anti-family but that has not been the case for many sects now for hundreds of years.

Confucianism places a very high value on “ren” (仁) which can be thought of as humanness, or human warmth, or human understanding of another’s heart and this, in some ways, can be called love. It sees the most natural form of love, however, is xiao (孝 parent nurturing, shielding and sacrificing for child, child responding with obedience and appreciation). Doing one’s duty (yi 義) to another is often a way of communicating one’s love for another but it is not required that one do one’s duty with a feeling of love. Confucianism strongly supports the traditional family structure and so, deductively, supports marriage but it does not treat it as a sacred institution in the way that Christianity does.

28. *Ancient Chinese Cosmology, Daoism, and Daoist-like elements in East Asian love narratives*

Book of Changes ◆ yang-yin and its ramifications ◆ five elements (wuxing) ◆ Daoist passivity and change ◆ Daoist sexual alchemy

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- wuxing
- yang-yin

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- cosmic worldview
- cultural contexts
- East Asian
- layers
- pluralities
- values
- worldviews
- wuwei

28.1. "ANCIENT CHINESE COSMOLOGY" (*BOOK OF CHANGES*)

By "ancient Chinese cosmology" I mean those very early

constructions of the nature of the cosmos that become entwined with Daoism and which Confucianism implicitly accepts. Although much of these ways of thinking were fully incorporated into Daoism and would be, now, considered as Daoist ideas, they did not develop inside an authoritative thought system we could call Daoism. It is more accurate to view their roots as in the *Book of Changes (Yijing)*.

28.1.1. A cosmos of shared essence, ever in change, and built for a masculine / feminine polarity

In this ancient system, the universe comes into being as the separation of chaotic cosmic energy into two basic qualities: ***yang*** (the hard, assertive, bright, active and masculine) and ***yin*** (the soft, yielding, dark, passive and feminine):[1]

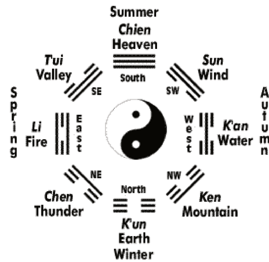
> According to ancient Chinese metaphysics, as recorded some 4000 years ago in *I ching* [*Yijing*] or the *Book of Changes* (Wilhelm translation, 1967), when the undifferentiated universe (symbolized by an empty circle) moved, light or Yang was produced; when movement ceased, dark or Yin appeared. The continuous interplay between these primal bipolar forces of Yang and Yin (symbolized by a circle of interwound white and black segments) creates stress, change, and harmony in the universe as humans know it. At the beginning of the *Great Commentary on I Ching* [*Dazhuan*, before 168 BCE*]*, attributed to Confucius, we find the following (Wilhelm, 280-86): "Heaven is high, the earth is low; thus the Creative and the Receptive are determined. In correspondence with this difference between low and

1. While *yang-yin* is seen as a quintessentially Chinese way of thought, Evancovic makes an interesting argument that it originates in India. See, M. R. Evancovic, "What or who really is the Tao? The Aryan Vedic origin of Yang-ying (Skura-Krrna) philosophy of Taoism (Adhvacara)," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 92 (2011): 52-55, http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.berkeley.edu/stable/43941272.

> high, inferior and superior places are established. Movement and rest have their definite laws; according to these, firm and yielding lines are differentiated … The way of the Creative brings about the male; the way of the Receptive brings about the female." The underlying polarity of Yang and Yin thus begins with light vs. dark and extends not only into high vs. low, creative vs. receptive, firm vs. yielding, moving vs. resting, and masculine vs. feminine, but also into many other areas of human concern, including the sun and the moon, the weather, the parts of the body, and even the distinction between gods (all Yang) and ghosts (all Yin). This polarity is not simply evaluative; it is rather, as Wilhelm (297) concludes, a polarity between two global forces which can only be termed THE POSITIVE AND THE NEGATIVE.[2]

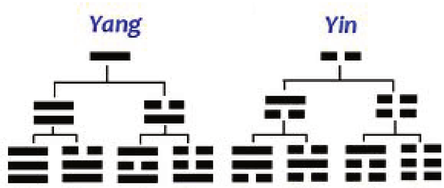
Yang and *yin* continue to divide numerologically into the eight trigrams and then the sixty-four hexagrams. These sixty-four represent states with various mixes of *yang* and *yin* as they transition the next phase.

2. Charles E. Osgood and Meredith Martin Richards, "From Yang and Yin to and or but," *Language* 49, no. 2 (1973): 380-412. doi:10.2307/412460.Osgood and Richards are exploring structures of cognition through linguistic, especially semiotic, analysis and they seek to show the complexities of bipolar thinking so the polarity here is a little overdrawn I think.



The Eight Trigrams as the first set of essential change-states, via various combinations of yang (long line) and yin (dashed line), correlated with the seasons and natural formations

The Eight Trigrams as the first set of essential change-states, via various combinations of yang (long line) and yin (dashed line), correlated with the seasons and natural formations



Yang and yin dividing into the eight trigrams

Yang and yin dividing into the eight trigrams

While there are sixty-four different basic states, all are determined by combinations of *yang* and *yin*. This is the basis for three concepts important for our understanding of *East Asian *worldviews and *values.

28.1.1.1. Eternal, natural change

The first concept is that all states are in flux, in transition to the next state. Ancient Chinese cosmology posits as universe in

constant, eternal, ever-refreshing change. There is no entropy in this system. Change is natural and healthy.

28.1.1.2. A universe based on harmony, balance and the Golden Mean

The second concept is that *yang* and *yin* both derive from the same original cosmic force. That is, they are not good and evil in opposition, each of different essence with the potential of one overwhelming the other. There will always be *yang*, there will always be *yin* — the state of affairs is coexistent either in balance or out-of-balance as the case may be. "Truth" — if it should be called that — is not an absolute good but a process of ever-changing mixes of *yang* and *yin*.[3]

According to this *cosmic worldview, **conflict resolution seeks a proper balance of forces** rather than an elimination of unwanted forces. Of course, if the kitchen sink has been attacked by ants, zapping all of them is the solution, rather than leaving an appropriate number to coexist and tolerating a few ant lines. But in an unhappy marriage, an accommodation of your partner's displeasure might be all you can hope for in the situation rather than eliminating or reversing it. The ***Golden Mean**—balance in terms of one's emotions (poise, stillness), non-excessive behavior, avoiding aggressively assertive behavior that might cause a backlash, all these sorts of "wise" approaches to life's challenges are grounded in these very old ideas that opposing forces are nearly always present in any given situation and all situations are in a state of transition to the next state, not static. In the endless challenges that arise in love relationships, we very often see behavior choices based on this *worldview.

3. Manichaeism, which started in the Mesopotamian region in the third century and which spread quickly both eastward and westward, and survived in China for centuries, also posits a dualistic universe but one where good and evil are in constant conflict.

28.1.1.3. Phallocentrism

The third important aspect of this, for our purposes, is that it is a *worldview that leads quickly to gendered descriptions—according to this system, there is such a thing as manliness and womanliness at the metaphysical level. This is a very high-level status to give to gender differences—it makes it a truth that cannot be altered or ignored. This view more or less locks men and women into stereotyped expectations as to what is proper behavior and grants men freedom to be active and restricts action for women. In other words, sexism is encoded into this system. Confucianism, with is emphasis on social hierarchies further encodes this sexism, placing the male in the superior position. As a simple example, here is poem from the *Shi-jing (Classic of Poetry,* 11th to 7th centuries BCE) as quoted in *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* [4]:

乃生男子	A male child is born.
載寢之床	He is made to sleep on a bed.
載衣之裳	He is made to wear a skirt.
載弄之璋	He is made to play with a scepter.
其泣喤喤	His crying is loud.
朱芾斯皇	His red knee-covers are august.
室家君王	He is the hall and household's lord and king.
乃生女子	A female child is born.
載寢之地	She is made to sleep on the floor.
載衣之裼	She is made to wear a wrap-cloth.
載弄之瓦	She is made to play with pottery.
無非無儀	She has no wrong and right.
唯酒食是議	Only wine and food are for her to talk about.
無父母詒罹	May she not send her father and mother any troubles.

4. Paul Rakita Goldin, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 24, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqhd2.

Ode 189, Shi-jing (Classic of Poetry, 11th to 7th centuries BCE)

That being said, the *yang-yin* system grants *yin* an essential place in the making and maintenance of the cosmos and recognizes the value of yielding and retreating forces. This will support *ethical principles that value patience, waiting and "non-action" (**wuwei*).

28.1.2. The power of the hidden

This concept was first introduced in the chapter of *pluralities in the discussion of various arrays of *cultural contexts, in particular *layered *cultural contexts.

The second important aspect is the assertion that **the seed of change for the next state is hidden within the current state**. If you look at the classic representation of *yang-yin* you can see how there is always a bit of *yin* in *yang* and a bit of *yang* in *yin*. "Pure" states of *yang* and *yin* are considered unstable and brief as the energies are far out of balance and the cosmos evolves not towards entropy but towards balanced, fluid, endless change.

As a practical effect, this means placing a high value on the occulted or hidden as powerful, as a force to be attentive to.

- Just because your partner is silent does not mean that you should not fear the anger hidden within.
- Love can sneak up on you as a tiny seed growing in your heart that at first you do not notice.
- Your relationship is beginning to fall apart and you know this because that little comment by your partner seems "somehow strange" and you know it is a glimmer of what is inside her or his mind, or inside the relationship itself.
- And so on.

28.1.3. Relational thinking versus oppositional thinking

Finally, this worldview argues that everything is originally of the same substance (before *yang* and *yin* separated from each other) and so rather than a world of good versus evil, it is a world of good vis-a-vis evil vis-a-vis good. The two can never really be separated. **Rather than in opposition, things are in relation to each other**: Love and hate are related; success and failure are related, and so on. In our narratives, this can create **partial solutions, partial endings, semi-closures, ambiguous moral attitudes,** and so on. The Western novel's narrative arc of development-climax-resolution (closure) is often not present. Things feel unfinished or still in process.

28.1.4. The five basic elements or movements (*wuxing*)

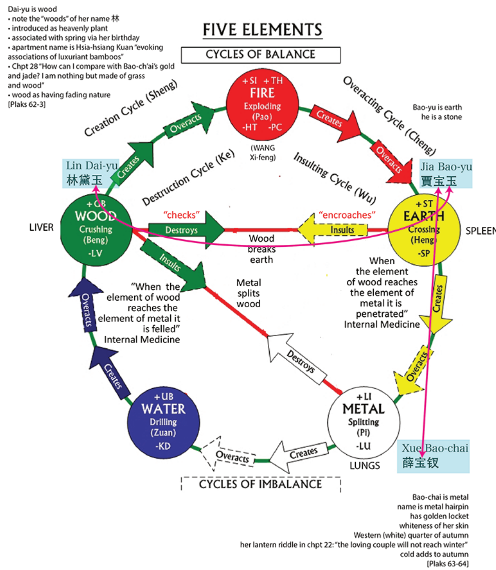
In addition to the basic explanation of how all things in the universe came into existence, what is their essence, and how things change, the universe is said to be impelled to move by **five basic movements** (五行, *wuxing*): fire, earth, metal, water, wood. It is easy to locate diagrams of these relationships on the web. One of the simplest English-language descriptions I have come across is on a website that introduces T'ai chi.[5]

Finally, the cosmos is an orderly system of correspondences—the five elements are associated with five directions, five colors, five human organs, and so on. The basis of Chinese traditional medicine (CTM) is to recover natural circulation, counter-acting distorted energy exchanges that have arisen because an element is over- or under-active, or moving in the wrong direction.

But what is more interesting to us, perhaps is an idea that human interactions can also be understood as an interaction

5. I offer this link for the diagram itself. I am not endorsing the written description. "T'ai Chi – QiGong Florida," accessed March 10, 2018, https://taichiqigongflorida.wordpress.com/wuxing/.

of these elements, offering a psychology entirely different from modern views of why humans behave the way they do. Here is a famous example from *Story of the Stone* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*), outlining how the three primary characters affect one another. This will not make much sense except to those who know the story but the basic idea it evident anyway.[6]



Daiyu, Baochai and Baoyu of Story of the Stone with relationship explained using the five elements of ancient Chinese cosmology

28.2. DAOISM

By "Daoism" I do not mean its more recent formulation as an organized religion but rather the very ancient early principles of how the cosmos is designed, how change occurs via elemental forces, and the strong suggestion that it is healthy, even wise,

6. This was first introduced in the chapter on mindreading and narratives.

to harmonize with the various configurations of the cosmos (**“non-action” 無為, *wuwei**) rather than insist on one’s own line of action (self-determination, exertion of will). These basic ideas have a huge influence on the content of Confucianism and Chinese (not Indian) Buddhism. (Korean and Japanese Buddhism derive from Chinese Buddhism, as no doubt you can guess.)

28.2.1. Passivity

Confucian and Buddhist principles are definitely more proximate to *East Asian values and strategies of action. Nevertheless, the very *East Asian idea that “some things are not to be” and it is better not to force the issue—in other words, **it can be better to wait, yield, give up or otherwise be passive,** waiting for the current unhelpful situation to change—is better attributed to Daoism that anything else.

28.2.2. Daoist healthy cyclical change and Buddhist change as suffering

Both Buddhism and Daoism embrace a worldview that asserts the cosmos, **everything, is in constant change**. However, their views of change are very different. **Buddhism teaches that life is suffering because humans perceive change as painful**. Further, constant change is the result of “emptiness”— all phenomenon are empty and therefore non-persistent. **Daoism teaches that the cosmos is an orderly system of ever-renewing, ever-refreshing, healthy cycles of growth and decay**. Buddhism seeks separation from an unhealthy psychological or emotional reaction to the truth of change, through wisdom. Daoism suggests that health is derived from harmonizing with endlessly changing situations and effectively working with the forces at hand.

28.3. Daoist sexual alchemy and early ideas about sexual activity

Because of the graphic nature of this particular discussion, I refer you to the online course materials in the folder on ancient East Asian sexuality. The brief statement of what is important to us here is that sexual intercourse is not considered to be part of expressions of tenderness or deep love. Instead, sexual intercourse is required of men for them to be healthy because intercourse is drawing energy from the woman into the man. Since, after intercourse, the woman's energy is depleted, the man must sleep with a different partner (if he is to have intercourse again soon) to benefit from further energy"stealing." Sexual intercourse, in other words, was a way of giving to a man vitality, or for a man taking it. He is how one scholar puts it:

> Sex, like music, is considered something of a universal language, but anyone who has listened to Chinese music will tell you how different la différence can be. To Chinese sexual sensibilities, the Western sexual ideal—two souls striving to be one, who tune their instruments of the same pitch, make beautiful music together for a short duet, share the glory of a crashing crescendo, and console each other through a languorous denouement—is so much adolescent thrashing. How different the Chinese ideal, for here the male conductor rehearses each member of his female orchestra through the entire score, only to rest his baton as she reaches crescendo, absorbing the exhilarating waves of sound, before he retires to his dressing room to count the evening's receipts.[7]

Daoist sexual alchemy was not widely practiced but these basic

7. Douglas Wile, *The Art of the Bedchamber: The Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics Including Women's Solo Meditation Texts* (New York: SUNY, 1992), 3.

ideas found their way into early medical manuals used by doctors and the basic ideas are representative of premodern views of heterosexual activity probably across all of *East Asia.

28.4. A brief summary

What all of the above means to us is the generation of interpretive positions such as this: **in love relationships is a tendency towards passivity** when things are not going well and, probably somewhere deep inside, a **lack of surprise that a relationship might change in its quality, or end**. "Happily ever after" is not a plot line that seems credible in a Daoist (or Buddhist) context and it is the *individual*, not the romantic or married *couple*, who should harmonize with the cosmos. **Daoism does not afford couples any special status** in terms of spirituality, religiosity, or morality. **It focuses on the individual** growing in healthy power and wisdom to attain, ideally, immortality.

29. Confucianism in East Asian love narratives

Accepting hierarchies ◆ society before the individual ◆ Confucian sexism ◆ Confucian ideal couples ◆ basic Confucian values

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- Confucian duty (*yi*)
- Confucian uprightness (*yi*)
- Doctrine of the Mean
- faithfulness (*xin*)
- harmony (*he*)
- human-ness (*ren*)
- propriety (*li*)
- moral restraint / moderate behavior / reserve (*jie*)

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- Confucian loyalty
- East Asia

*In this chapter, there are more than the usual number of Chinese characters. However, it remains the practice of this course to have no expectation of students that they learn any *East Asian script (Chinese, Japanese, or Korean). They are, though, sometimes expected to use the romanized version of these words.

29.1. ACCEPTANCE OF HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIP

There are five basic relationships (*wulun*) defined by Confucianism. All are governed by mutual obligation (reciprocity):

1. Ruler and Subject
2. Father and Son
3. Elder Brother and Younger Brother
4. Husband and Wife
5. Friend and Friend

There are several aspects of this schema that are very relevant to our interpretive work.

First, according to this system, social harmony is achieved when each individual is properly fulfilling his or her role. In other words, social pressure to perform normatively according to your role is intense.

Second, the *values related to the roles is pre-determined: a ruler must be benevolent, a subject must be submissive and appreciative, a so on.

Third, one can see that except for the last of the five, all are in a superior-inferior relationship. (Husband and wife are to be understood in that way.)

In short, the system brings peaceful relationships so a peaceful society, the system is founded on normative behavior that honors orderliness, and the system turns on the acceptance of hierarchical relationships. Sometimes I ask my high diverse classroom whether they “feel good” when doing something for a superior. About half of my students say that it does indeed feel good to behave in ways that affirms these sorts of hierarchies. So, just to be clear, acceptance of superior-inferior relationships, in essence, is not grudging for members of cultural groups where the *status of Confucian values is that

they are begin affirmed. This does not mean one will love one's boss; it means that one accepts the necessity of a boss-worker relationship for the larger good.

29.2. SOCIETY COMES BEFORE THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL ORDER IS PARAMOUNT

By extension of the above, one is a member of a group and one has a defined duty to that group. The five relationships cover, in theory, all possible relationships. In the classic Confucian system there is no relationship that does not carry with it expectations, obligations, even duties (although these may be small or large.)

This "society before the individual" way of thinking is not unique to Confucianism or even East Asia. This was true in premodern Western Europe as well. I have argued earlier that the first real split from this sort of full acceptance of authority having broad, almost absolute reach was with the Magna Carta of England, but more pertinently through the French Revolution, German Romanticism, and fractures in the dominance of Christianity created by philosophers, particularly Nietzche. The pervasive hyper-individualism of Western culture has challenged and weakened the status of Confucian respect for hierarchy but the love of orderliness with is deep roots in very old worldviews beginning with ancient Chinese cosmology, have proved to have exceptional staying power.

It should be noted that "society" is a topical term. In practice, much of the time what "society" means is one's family but it is understood that the notion of family itself is supported by society as a whole.

29.3. SEXISM (LOW SOCIAL STATUS AND LIMITS PLACED ON WOMEN)

Let us get one thing out of the way right from the beginning — Confucianism encoded into patterns of expected behavior the various forms of sexism, if not misogynist attitudes, that were pervasive in *East Asia (and not just there but that is the region we study). Confucianism, as practiced not articulated in philosophical essays, ranked the claims and needs of women as secondary to the needs of men. Women's ability to speak and act was limited, sometimes severely. Their social position was highly dependent on having a relationship with a man or men (that is, son, husband and/or father, sometimes ruler as well). In narratives, their physical and/or mental suffering was often the coinage of the story rather than something of genuine concern. Examples of institutionalized sexism are so frequent there is no need to offer proof.

Here were the legally accepted reasons for a Japanese husband being able to divorce his wife according to the major legal document *Taiho Ritsuryo* **大宝律令**) of the Taiho period (701), laws based on Chinese legal code. (The official language of this period of Japan, by the way, was Chinese.)

1. Has not given birth to children.
2. Is lascivious in her demeanor.
3. Is useless to the father-in-law.
4. Is too talkative.
5. Has a tendency to steal things.
6. Is frequently jealous.
7. Has an incurable disease.

A woman could remarry if she had not heard from her husband in five years, or, if there were children, in three years.

As just one further illustration, here is a passage from clause

Article 366 of a Chinese Qing dynasty legal code, regarding punishments for adultery:

> If the guilty pair have not been seized in a place where the illicit sexual intercourse took place [but were apprehended someplace else], they will not be punished. If the adulterous wife become pregnant (*then although there is proof as to the woman, there is no proof as to the man*), the punishment is inflicted on the woman alone.[1]

Many of these attitudes of dominance and restraint remain in part or in full force in the modern narratives (text and film) we encounter in this class.

Of all features of Confucianism, this sexism, above all, is what most often and most intensely affects the shape and progress of our narratives. The women in our narratives often work with limited resources and external constraints to action, even constraints as to what they were allowed to think and feel. (if they are taught, for example, to feel guilty about feeling jealous, etc.)

29.4. CONFUCIANISM RARELY GLORIFIES THE COUPLE AS A COUPLE

Next, Confucian values are designed to regulate human relationships in way that promotes social harmony, not spiritual progress. Social norms, and the expectation to meet them, weigh heavily on Confucian ethical choices. This can end up being at odds with romantic feelings. Although we do not have the same glorified narrative structure of "the two of us against the world" that we see so often in Western romantic narratives (think "Bonnie and Clyde") we do often get couples that feel separated from the world in some way — it is just that such a

1. Don S. Browning, Martha Christian Green, and John Witte, *Sex, marriage, and family in world religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 424-425.

situation is rarely *glorified*. Confucianism has trouble validating the behavior of rebels because of its intense interest in social orderliness (*he* 和).

29.5. CONFUCIAN IDEALS IN ACTION WITHIN THE ROMANTIC COUPLE

In romantic situations, Confucianism visualizes the happy and stable bonded couple as:

- sacrificing for one another,
- showing integrity in communication and promises (honesty),
- showing compassion or sympathy or empathy or understanding or other forms of warmth, and,
- fulfilling the expected roles: the man will shield and care for the woman and the woman will defer to the man, the diligent husband will provide for the household, working outside the house, and the diligent wife will complete household and child-rearing duties and to some degree manage the house.

Passion (very strong emotional attachment or sexual attraction) is not really part of the system or a legitimate rationale for a relationship. These strong feelings need to be contained, somehow, in the above patterns.

Disappointment, recrimination, anger, or revenge come most frequently when one or many of these normative relationship expectations are not met.

29.6. CONFUCIAN ETHICAL VALUES (A LIST)

While there is an “official list” of the primary Confucian virtues

(called “the five *constants*“[2] *wuchang* 五常), this is not the most relevant set of Confucian terms for our course purposes.

29.6.1. Rén / Jen 仁 — benevolence, human-ness, warmth, kindness, understanding

Benevolence, love of humanity, deep understanding of human relationships. This is a very important category to us which includes sympathy, empathy, and benevolence. A romantic relationship without *ren* feels cold, mechanically performed, and lacking “heart.” Korean and Japanese culture place a huge emphasis on the affective component of this warmth. *Jeong* (情) is one way of taking about this in Korean; *kokoro* (心) or *nasake* (情け) are terms in Japanese. Of course the term is originally Chinese — *qing* — and, as we will see, there is a rich history of thought and literature around it. the point here is the high emotionality attributed to the term

Usually *ren* is considered the highest of the Confucian virtues but this is somewhat misleading: the virtues are so interrelated it is difficult to create a true hierarchy.

The official course term for this ethical value is: “human-ness (*ren*).”

29.6.2. Jié 節/节 — moderation, constancy, self-regulation, moral restraint, moral integrity

This might be considered a way of proper conduct. It is restraint, deporting oneself properly, staying within bounds:

> “When joy, anger, grief, and happiness…are aroused and remain within their proper bounds, this is harmony” 喜怒哀樂之。。。發而皆中節，謂之和.”[3]

2. An aside — Notice the 常 in the terms. This shows how at odds Confucianism and Buddhism can be, since the core principle of Buddhism — impermanence / everything in constant change — is 無常, literally "not constant".

Moral-restraint (*jie*) sets itself against passion and passionate decisions. According to this *value, it is not a good idea to jump onto the motorcycle of a man you do not know and let him drive you away from your house as we see occur in *3-Iron* (*Bin-jip*, 2004). Moral-restraint (jie) works lock-step with the "*Doctrine of the Mean," or "Golden Mean," or "Middle Way" (*zhongyong* 中庸) in its proscription to avoid emotional intensity and extreme behavior:

> The *Doctrine of the Mean* can represent moderation, rectitude, objectivity, sincerity, honesty and propriety (*Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, 2008). The guiding principle of the mean being that one should never act in excess.[4]

The official course term for this ethical value is: "moral restraint (*jie*)" of "moderate behavior (*jie*)" or "reserve (*jie*)."

29.6.3. Yì 義/义 — uprightness, righteousness, knowing right/wrong, doing what is right regardless of personal benefit (duty)

Doing what is right, doing what is asked or expected of you directly by those who have authority over you or indirectly via social norms. This is huge since love almost always evokes expectations of certain types of behavior of one's partner and those expectations are very often grounded in Confucian notions of duty. Christian chivalry probably adds the idea of honor to this (although I haven't really thought this through carefully): the knight accepts the needs to rescue the damsel

3. *Liji [Book of Rites]*, "Zhongyong," 32.1, as quoted and translated in Michael David Kaulana Ing, *The Dysfunction of ritual in Early Confucianism* (Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013), https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199924899.001.0001/acprof-9780199924899. The underlined words are the translation for *jie*.
4. New World Encyclopedia contributors, "Golden Mean (philosophy)," New World Encyclopedia, accessed Marcy 12, 2018, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Golden_mean_(philosophy)

in distress: it is both his duty and a way to protect his honor. This idea of "honor" is not always present in East Asian love narratives. Honor itself is (in military codes regarding courage, in public reputation, in "saving face") but it is not often formulated as "a man perseveres his honor by doing his duty to his woman". I think that is probably rare. "Duty" usually means the man and woman are committed to supporting the house in specific ways (and here "house" means one's partner, the household finances and reputation, the children, all of that).

Doing one's duty within a romantic relationship (or any relationship for that matter) need not be onerous. Fulfilling one's duty can be a satisfying way of showing respect, devotion, love, understanding, or affording comfort, consolation, or well-being. "Doing one's duty" can have a constraining of militaristic ring to it in English. In some circumstances it is better to interpret it as "while it might be difficult, it is my pleasure to fulfill my duties within this relationship".

The official course terms for this ethical value are: "Confucian uprightness (*yi*)" or "Confucian duty (*yi*)" depending on the context.

29.6.4. Xiào / hsiao 孝 — *filial piety, respectful love towards parents

Recognition of one's debt to one's parents and grandparents within the family. Obedience to one's parents and grandparents. This awareness or attitude is sometimes extended to others that have authority over one. Xiao is considered the most natural, strongest, most reliably present, most essential type of love. Xiao is often considered to be the binding virtue of all relationships and, in practice, manifests as acceptance of, and obedience to, authority in most or all of its forms. (It is extended in many ways in various forms

of Confucianism—the paternalistic nature of the Japanese company that helps one find a spouse, for example.)

However, I would like us to emphasize the reciprocity of xiao. Here is a chart that explores the reciprocity of the "five relations" of Confucianism (notice that four of the five are hierarchical):

If we emphasize reciprocity, we can have, as a working definition, love between parent and child, with the parent's desire and duty to protect and nurture the child and the child's grateful awareness and loving response to this powerful parental love. So, love within the family, love between parent and child.

What makes *xiao* particularly interesting in love narratives, and I think this is under-discussed in the scholarship on love, is how the parent-child relationship can manifest within the romantic couple relationship. The desire to protect and the desire to be protected, the desire to possess and the desire to be possessed, the pleasure of exerting authority and the pleasure of submitting to authority, the complex power balance of a relationship, the attractiveness of strength and the attractiveness of weakness — all of these can be part of emotional and/or erotic intimacy. We talk about this somewhat extensively in this course, particularly in our discussion of Japanese *amae* (甘え, love as being indulgent in a relationship, as inviting and receiving protection) and Korean *han* (恨, anger resulting from a sense of injustice), but not just in those terms.

Addenda — I received this email once from an ex-student of this course who had graduated:

> I am currently studying at the National University of Singapore and interning at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital this summer. … There are many obvious and subtle things that are very different here in Singapore compared to the States. A notable difference in the way the social and

> health system is constructed here. For example, the Maintenance of Parents Act mandates children take care of their parents. It very much refers back to the Confucian principle of "xiao" filial piety. It's very interesting to see it in place, as opposed to just reading or watching it through the media, like in *Chunhyang*.

The official course term for this ethical value is: "filial piety" or "*xiao*."

29.6.5. Xìn / hsin 信 — *fathfulness, trustworthiness, integrity, keeping promises

Keeping one's word, trustworthiness, fulfilling one's promise. Note the Chinese character: it includes "word" within it. *Faithfulness in most cases is related to promises spoken, written or suggested (that is they could be put into words if necessary). The entire Confucian system does not work unless promises given are promises kept.

*Faithfulness is very relevant to love narratives. We can understand issues of fidelity / infidelity, betrayal, trust, trustworthiness, deception (including seduction, secrets) as related to faithfulness in one way or another.

The official course term for this ethical value is: "faithfulness (*xin*)."

29.6.6. Lǐ 禮/礼 — *propriety, rites and rituals, "proper" relationships, upholding social rules

Upholding social order, especially by honoring customs, rituals, social norm; knowing one's place and acting accordingly (inferior respects superior, superior cares for inferior). This can suppress relationships (think "In the Mood for Love" 20th c China, film), and often marks illegitimate relationship behavior

as taboo, etc. It is a powerful constraint—the "eyes of society". On the other hand, it is also a powerful way to show love. A man who respects his woman, a woman who respects her man—when they show this through proprietous behavior, relationships can feel strong and very satisfying, even if the word "love" is never used between them.

The official course term for this ethical value is: "propriety (*li*)."

29.6.6.1. Hé 和 — harmony, orderliness

This is perhaps the most dominant Confucian *ethical principle and affects all others. Orderliness itself does not originate with Confucianism. Daoism, with its brazenly universal notion of correspondences, has already posited a highly ordered cosmos. (The apparent erratic behavior of Daoist immortals is because they have transcended all ordinary social rules, not because they have a low view of them.)

> A main characteristic of the Han *Yijing* scholars was their determination to link the *Yijing* to correlative cosmology. Promoted by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195–105 BCE), correlative cosmology established a direct correspondence between the natural and human worlds. In the words of Sarah Queen, correlative cosmology "sought to align the human realm with the normative patterns of the cosmos" to develop a sharpened awareness of "the mutual responsiveness of heaven and humanity." With the sharpened awareness, human beings would see the direct impact of nature on their lives and vice versa. This belief in the mutual responsiveness between nature and humankind is based on two assumptions: First, the cosmos is regarded as an orderly and stable structure. Its orderliness and stability are shown in the regular succession of the 4 seasons, the 12 months, the 365 1/4

> days. Second, similar to the cosmos, the human world is an orderly and stable structure. Despite the vicissitudes on the surface, the human world is balanced, systematically organized, and predictable, as evidenced in the life cycle and the rhythm of work and rest.[5]

Orderliness contrains passionate choices, bringing to a couple in love an imperative to be "reasonable" and non-disruptive in behavior. The emotional disarray that comes with romantic swoons and romantic trouble is seen as debilitating and unhealthy. The 10th-century Japanese poet gives lyrical expression to the disorienting pain of love when he writes:

> If we could have a world devoid of cherry blossoms,
> how easy our hearts of spring would be[6]

The official course term for this ethical value is: "harmony" or if the point is to squarely situation the value within the Confucian system, then "Confucian propriety (*li*)."

29.6.7. Zhōng / chung 忠 — *loyalty, acting for the benefit of in-group superiors

Commitment to the benefit of another who is superior to you and who, for the purposes of the act treat as superior to you; acting to enhance another person, institution, or ideal. Elsewhere I have discussed how we will use this term to mean strictly these actions by the inferior to support the superior. (It should be said that individual of equal status can do engage in loyalty — mutual respect is possible, mutual loyalty is possible. But in practice we don't often seem men submitting to the authority of women in our narratives. It does happen now and then, however.) However, in premodern texts it is entirely

5. Geoffrey Redmond and Tze-ki Hon, "Cosmology," *Teaching the I Ching (Book of Changes),* (Oxford Scholarship Online, November, 2014), https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199766819.001.0001/acprof-9780199766819.
6. *Japanese Poems Old and New* (Kokin waka shu, 11th-century Japan), no. 53.

legitimate to talk about loyalty of the woman to the man, but rarely of the man to the woman since that reverses the defined hierarchy of the relationship. There are no "women on pedestals" in East Asian premodern narratives, although there may be women who have a total grip on the heart of the man. … Loyalty can certain show up in modern films. However, please don't use it loosely just to me "committed to the relationship". Use if when you want to indicate a hierarchical attitude + the desire to behave in a way that enhances the superior's life or standing.

The official course term for this ethical value is: "Confucian loyalty."

29.7 A WORKSHEET

Some of you might find it interesting to explore Confucian terms and how they might relate to Western notions of love or your own notions of love by using the below worksheet and drawing arrows or situating the red-boxed text in appropriate locations between the two columns on the sheet. You can create your own red boxes based on practically anything related to love that comes to mind, or borrowing terms from Sternberg's triangle.

The worksheet is in the resource folder for the book and looks like this:

ARISTOTLE (PRE-CHRISTIAN)

EROS
Sexual attraction

PHILIA
brotherly love

NOMOS
respect for the law
submission to order

AGAPE
benificant love
compassion

CHRISTIANITY
ROMANTICISM

Love as the most important thing in life

Devotion

Soulmates / fidelity / monogamy

Self-sacrifice

Slaying the dragon / having someone slay a dragon for you

NIHILISM
HEDONISM
LOVE AS GAME

CONFUCIANISM

REN (JEN 仁)
human-ness: benevolence, love of humanity, deep understanding of human relationships, sympathy, empathy

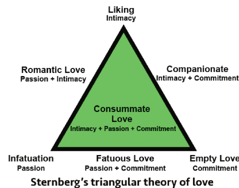
LI (礼)
propriety: upholding social order, social norm; knowing one's place and acting accordingly (inferior respects superior, superior cares for inferior)

ZHONG (CHUNG 忠)
loyalty

XIN (HSIN 信)
faithfulness: trustworthiness, keeping one's word, fulfilling one's promise NOTE: Faithfulness is very relevant to our class and we can understand issues of fidelity / infidelity, betrayal, trust, trust-worthiness, deception (including seduction) as related to faithfulness in one way or another

XIAO (HSIAO 孝)
filial piety: love within the family, recognition of one's debt to one's parents

YI (義)
duty: doing what is defined by society as expected action



Sternberg's triangular theory of love

Confucian values work sheet

Worksheet for exploring the relationship between traditional Confucian values and various terms and concepts regarding Western contested-love

30. Buddhism in East Asian love narratives

Happiness, illusion, desire, excessive emotion, change, fate, karma

Key terms introduced in this chapter:

- no new terms are introduced in this chapter

Key terms mentioned in this chapter that should now be familiar:

- authoritative thought system
- derivative
- East Asia
- cultural context
- fragment
- layered
- -like
- making sense (of a narrative)
- mix (mixture)
- model readers
- status
- ToM
- traditional
- worldview
- values

30.1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism confronts us with some of our most difficult interpretive challenges. While it is often present to some degree as a *cultural context for our films, it can be difficult to identify. It is undeniable that it is fully integrated (*mixed) into the *traditional cultural landscape of all three of our *East Asian countries, just like Confucianism and Daoism, yet it does not have as clear a set of *ethical values on which individuals draw (which would help us identify it) and much of its *worldview are so *mixed with the *worldview of Daoism that it is difficult to determine whether we should be thinking in terms of Daoist-like (*-like) *fragments or Buddhist-like *fragments.

Unlike Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhist originated outside East Asia. Further, the history of Buddhism includes extensive periods of fervent persecutions in China and Korea. Also, while it was the dominant ideology at times in Korea and Japan, it finished its premodern history eclipsed by official government policies that favored Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism). In none of our countries could it be called now the dominant *system.

> In China, Buddhism never recovered from its Tang dynasty peak. Buddhism was aggressively persecuted in the 9th century and this forever limited its scope. Although there was a re-flourishing in the Song dynasty and the Chan sects of this era had enormous impact on Japanese Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism was the dominant *authoritative thought system in China until the 20th century.

> In Korea, Buddhism enjoyed its heyday during the Goryeo (Koryo) dynasty (10th-14th centuries). The Joseon (Choson) dynasty shut down most Buddhist activity for political

> reasons. Confucianism, then Neo-Confucianism, has dominated since.
>
> In Japan, Buddhism probably had the largest, longest, and most pervasive presence (dominating from the 13th-16th centuries). It was supplanted by Neo-Confucianism in the 17th century but has retained a strong presence in some areas of cultural values, particularly around issues of the transient nature of things and, perhaps, a general sense of anxiety about life.

But the story is a bit more complicated than just discussing cultural history and the *status of Buddhism in these cultures. The world of narratives has been kinder to Buddhism than the real world. In fact, Buddhist principles of various sorts have a lively presence in many of our love stories. This can make using our knowledge of actual cultural practices less useful than our knowledge of literary history and the role of Buddhism in it. Buddhist tropes abound (or even just "window-dressing" level symbols meant to point to true *fragments) and those familiar with *East Asia know when to deploy these, even if they do not subscribe to Buddhist principles or even know much about Buddhism. They nevertheless know when and how to put on a Buddhist hat when a text or film signals to do so. *Love narratives are often about suffering and the Buddhist teaching that desire causes suffering is one to which *love narratives have a powerful affinity. *East Asian *model readers and model theater-goers, whether Buddhist or not, are familiar with, and probably at some level are ready to accept, provisionally, its claims as true (even if it is just for the length of the text or the film).

Perhaps because of this symbolic presence of Buddhism rather than as a system that mimics the real world, its presence in narratives can be quite temporary. It can exhibit a short half-life: evoked for a specific purpose but soon, apparently,

forgotten. That is, we often have “Buddhist moments” where it can really help to know Buddhism in order to interpret that particular moment; however, it is much less frequent to have whole films that are grounded in Buddhist worldviews.

Buddhism’s uneven and sporadic presence in narratives (or ill-defined presence as mood rather than principle) might be because Buddhism has been over-*layered by Confucianism and the basic *worldview principles of Daoism because of their native origins and natural harmony with their cultural environments rather than the foreign “DNA” of Buddhism.

But it is also true that Buddhist tenets are impractical and rather harsh (for the individual). Some of the ideas of Buddhism are easier to accept than some of its practices. Being compassionate, gentle to life, even accepting of fate, are not that much of a challenge, but detachment from the ups-and-downs of this world, management of desire, wise outlook, and self-discipline ask much more of us. Thus, I would suggest, Buddhism has a partial presence in both real lives and narrative lives, being invited and dismissed as is convenient or practicable rather than as an *authoritative system that demands our allegiance. Its description of why we suffer is compelling, but its solutions to suffering are a high mountain most of us will forgo attempting.

So, for us, there is an important gap between the socio-historical issues of the distribution and daily-life *status of Buddhism that calls up such questions as “Who practices Buddhism?” “Who actually lives their lives following Buddhist teachings?” “Who believes in Buddhism?” on the one hand, and, on the other, “Does the reader or film viewer understand the Buddhist *worldview and use it to accurately consume a narrative?” In short, Buddhism is more important for accurate cross-cultural interpretation than it might appear from a social or historical perspective. While its presence within love narratives might be not that obvious, and might reside in only

a portion of the narrative as a “Buddhist moment,” I would suggest that it frequently has an over-sized role to play in interpretation. In my opinion, many *love narratives, are at least certain key moments, are better understood when these principles below are kept in mind:

- the fragility of bonds, the uncertainty of existence, ill-defined anxiety—all validated by the Buddhist position that this is a life of painful change,
- the positive, powerful nature of human bonds based on Buddhist teaching of karma but also, on the other hand, a more negative, fatalistic view of fate, based on the same concept,
- a deep suspicion that sexual desire and romantic attraction (and any other extreme emotional state) lead to suffering based on the Buddhist teaching that desire is the origin of all suffering,
- that the best metaphors for love are labyrinths, unsubstantial dreams, unrealistic sentimentality, disorientation, as sense of separation from this world, illness and near-death feelings, all based on the Buddhist view of our stubborn ignorance in the face of reality.

I will revisit many of these below, and add a few other ideas. But first I would like to review the Buddhist Four Noble Truths from the perspective of our course topics. It seems like we should at least know this much about the core teachings of this *authoritative thought system.

30.2. WHAT IS HAPPINESS? (THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS)

The premise of Buddhism is that we seem to suffer a great

deal in this world, that much of this suffering is a mental phenomenon, and that there is a way to reduce suffering through wisdom that eliminates the mental aspect of suffering. Buddhism does not deny that poverty is painful, that broken bones are painful, that a bee sting hurts, and so on, but it does argue that we add to the pain by the way we think about it.

In this sense, Buddhism is a negative discourse: it defines happiness as equanimity in the face of suffering. This is quite different than the happiness offered by Confucianism as moderate, harmonious living among those who care about you, with health and well supporting that rich social life. It is different, too, than the Daoist hermit-distance from society with exceptionally well-balanced physical and spiritual health (if not immortality), or more pleasure-oriented hedonisms and dopamine droplet happinesses.[1] Where Daoism advises wise patience and tolerance, or skillful solution, when confronted with unpleasant circumstances, Buddhism seeks to eliminate the very cause of psychic unpleasantness right at its root so that it never even takes hold but instead comes and goes like a cloud.

This is relevant to us because narratives (love or otherwise) often show progress toward or away from either happiness or suffering or both; therefore, how these are defined matters. Further how one can move toward or away from happiness or suffering—or even the possibility of whether movement is possible—varies according to the relevant *worldviews. In short, while in some ways Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism manifest in culture in similar ways (moderation, harmony, affirmation of change) their *worldviews are actually radically different and it is good to know what *worldviews are best to deploy for *making sense of a narrative.

The Four Noble Truths are at the very core of Buddhism. As is

1. While this final comment is made in a humorous vein, perhaps we should indeed take more seriously how frequently now happiness is marketed as a sense of a sudden moment of pleasure that comes from activities that release dopamine in our systems.

common with essential and brilliant teachings of *authoritative thought systems, the content as it exists in practice in cultures is often not quite what was originally taught.

Let us begin with this *fragment-like list of the four truths (this is how most of my students would present the four, if asked, if they have familiarity with Buddhism only through "on the street" contemporary practices and ideas:

1. Life is mostly suffering and this is just going to continue forever unless we get wisdom through Buddhism. That wisdom:
2. Desire causes suffering.
3. We should stop desiring.
4. We should do this by telling ourselves to stop desiring.

This is perhaps the more important list for us in terms of using Buddhist ideas to interpret narratives. It may well be how the audience thinks of it, how the director thinks of it, how the characters in the film think of it. Nevertheless, it is not very close to the original Truths. A better understanding of them will not tell us more about how an average audience viewer thinks of the problem of desire but it can help us understand some of the nuances of other Buddhist tenets as well as their persistence in culture.

First of all, this formula matches classic Indian medicine: identify the problem, its cause, and remove that cause—three steps—and these are Numbers 2, 3, and 4 of the Noble Truths. Number 1 is the radical premise of the formula:

30.2.1. Truth Number 1 — This conditioned world is characterized as *dukkha*

So, what is dukkha? *Dukkha* (that is Pali, the language of the original canon of Buddhism. The Chinese character that was

used to translate it, and one that is definitely not a literal translation, is 苦, "ku" in Chinese and Japanese, "ko" in Koean). The Pali word *dukkha* means "incapable of satisfying" or "not able to bear or withstand anything" as in "always changing," "impermanent." This assertion is based on the Buddhist position that in fact nothing has an essence or, put around the other way, that all things are at essence empty. Permanence supposes that things actually exist. Since they do not exist, everything is impermanent. However, from the human perspective—the one that matters for us—*dukkha* in usage does indeed mean "sorrow," "suffering," "affliction," "pain," "anxiety," "dissatisfaction," "discomfort," "anguish," "stress," "misery," "aversion," or "frustration."

30.2.2. Truth Number 2 — *Dukkha* is experienced as "suffering" (by humans) because of human *tanha*

Tanha is "craving" or "desire." (Chinese translation is 愛, Japanese is 渇愛. Notice that the word "to love" is used.) The three main categories of craving/desire are: 1) desire for sensual pleasure, 2) desire to become, and 3) desire to avoid the unpleasant. We spend our days on this earth pursuing pleasures (sensual here means "material"), trying to give ourselves a sense of being, and avoiding fearful and painful things. The world is not inherently made up of suffering; rather, the conditioned world in its ever-changing movement is *subjectively experienced* by humans as a world of suffering because humans incessantly desire things, existence, and a pain-free state. It should be clear that sexual desire or even the desire to form a human bond of any sort is considered unproductive behavior according to this teaching. Therefore, love narratives, if grounded in Buddhist beliefs, will either show how love is a folly that needs to end, or how it brings endless pain, or how it only appears to bring pleasure. Either the man

or woman is suffering and does not know it (the sweet pain of love), or the romance will end and the man or woman will fall into sadness, grief, loneliness, and/or anger.

30.2.3. Truth Number 3 — There is a way to end suffering (or, more precisely, end desire which creates suffering)

If we understand the folly of our incessant desiring, either by seeing how it is the origin of our suffering or that the cosmos, in truth, is not a conditioned world (an enlightened perspective described as Buddhist wisdom/insight and gained through meditation), *tanha* will naturally of itself, without our effort, fall away and, with it, our subjective experience of the world as suffering. Indeed, any effort we make only increases our suffering because effort is based on the desire to gain something. Of course, the end of *tanha* means our desire for existence also falls away and so we live out the rest of our days in a state of "no-self" and, once the human body is dead, we will not be reborn into this world again. We are gone. In other words, that this is a world of suffering is not real, it is an illusion created by your ignorant insistence on desiring things. The world is substance-less and we only falsely attribute a concreteness to it.

30.2.4. Truth Number 4 — The way to end suffering is to follow the 8-fold path

The "8-fold path" is essentially the content of the practice of Buddhism. The 8-fold path (right action, right speech, correct meditation, and so on) leads to the purity, wisdom and insight necessary for enlightenment to occur of its own. Enlightenment itself cannot be a goal because that would suggest there is a self that can attain a goal. However, one can go through the motions of working towards that goal and, in fact, *must*, since

proper ethics, proper meditation and proper knowledge are the preconditions for enlightenment to occur.

The 8-fold path is where Buddhist ethics are encoded into the total system. These ethics are grounded in humility and benevolent love / compassion towards all sentient beings (humans, animals, plants). Proper training of the body includes discipline and cleanliness — not ethics per se but these requirements influence behavior. One should not aggressively desire things; thus a passive attitude often is viewed in a positive light. Social status and wealth are not seen in and of themselves as either good or bad but desiring them is bad. One is invited to devote one's life to benefiting others but this is not specifically required of the system—enlightenment occurs at the level of the individual not the community. (The Abrahamic religions and Confucianism place the burden of responsibility on the individual to uphold the community.)

Buddhism as it is practiced today connects dynamically with social communities, but for most of its history Buddhism was a monastic religion with practitioners separating themselves, sometimes quite severely, from society although monasteries that were seen as institutions that spiritually and materially contributed to society. And it is true the the spread of knowledge, cultural practices, and many other things benefited from the growth and spread of Buddhism throughout *East Asia.

It should be said that for most of Buddhist history it was considered a pre-condition that you must be in a man's body to attain enlightenment. If you aspire to enlightenment, you hope to be born a man.

30.3. LOVE AS AN ILLUSION

30.3.1. Subversive distance

Stories that are situated in Confucian cultural contexts will most surely have a large number of narrative figures interacting. The world will be full of humans and relationships with them. In contrast, both Daoism and Buddhism insert some distance from these social worlds. In this sense, both can deny or subvert or just weaken the *robustness of a Confucian world. But of these two, in many cases it will be Buddhist *worldviews that are more contemplative in mood and the narrative figures embracing these *worldviews will seem, to some extent, isolated. Buddhism split into Theravada and Mahayana sects and of these Mahayana sects were more open to lay practice and it is Mahayana that took root in China. Nevertheless, at its core Buddhism requires detached time away from society for meditation and contemplation and retains a certain "not this world" mood about it. Not always but often.

Distance, then, is often part of the equation when calculating cultural contexts for *ToM subscribing to Buddhist values. Buddhists should be contemplative, that is, aware of their thoughts and feelings. They should be detached from desire or any strong emotion since powerful emotions, according to karmic cause-and-effect law, generate still more powerful emotions and emotional states cloud the mind, threaten poise, and keep the individual involved in cycles of anticipation and disappointment or fear of loss. In Christianity we saw that desire has a clarifying effect by pointing the individual towards the good and true. According to Buddhism, desire leads to suffering because it contradicts one's true nature which is nothingness. It posits a person who will be happy when it gains something. Buddhism says this very concept is the problem. There is no person, there is no gain. Buddhist-like narrative

figures in our films who pursue Buddhist wisdom will usually be introverted and self-conscious of their distance from society. Buddhist-like narrative figures who have found Buddhist wisdom or enlightenment will in fact be outwardly oriented in a compassionate way towards others but will lack a sense of connectedness to others. They are detached and cool in this regard. Either way, if subverts the core world of Confucianism which is highly social and turns on human connections. In this sense, like Daoism but more so, it places distance between the Buddhist or Buddhist-like *ToM and *cultural contexts of the “ordinary” world.

30.3.2. Dreams, dreaminess (sentimentality), and dreamstates—Love as an illusion

Buddhism teaches that is a world of illusion. We travel this world in our blindness and ignorance, lost and suffering. The ontological argument of non-existence is not the point, although it will indeed argue that nothing has essence. The more relevant point is psychological: the world as we perceive it is constructed by us—we invent through our limited understanding of things a false perspective of the world, one that causes us suffering. “Right view” of the world clarifies the mind, the illusions disappears and, with it, the many pains associated with that world.

This view lends itself, in love narratives, to metaphors of dreams, dreaminess, and dreamstates all of which subvert the substantiality of love. This makes love not the great, powerful and healing, positive presence that we often encounter in Western love narratives but instead a mere feeling, one that is quick to dissipate, is unreliable, and is ultimately void. In Buddhist-influenced narratives, “dream” never means “the ideal” as in “She is the one I always dreamed of meeting.” It means, instead, the unsubstantial and unreliable.

It is helpful if we use the following three terms to embrace some of the nuances of how Buddhism manifests in love narratives in terms of dreams and such.

30.3.2.1. Dreams

These are actual dreams. They are, not coincidentally, frequent elements of Buddhist narratives. They help evoke the inward-looking, other-worldly perspective typical of such narratives. It is not a coincidence that the Chinese love narrative *Dream of the Red Chamber* (**紅樓夢**, **红楼梦**), and the Korean love narrative *Nine Cloud Dream* (**九雲夢**,구운몽) have the word "dream" in their titles. "Dream" in these titles suggests affinity to those stories that suggest: "This will be a story about the mortal plane, our world, not the heaven of immortals or some perfect world. It will include the pains and joys of our world and will almost surely include a love element."

But I would like to note that students often make the interpretive error of asserting that a film is engaging a Buddhist *worldview simply because there are narrative events related to dreams. A dream in a narrative is not enough to claim Buddhism as a relevant *cultural context because, obviously, dreams are a common narrative element in many types of stories (from all over the world and across historical eras) that have nothing to do with Buddhism.

30.3.2.2. Dreaminess

In this case, one or perhaps even all narrative figures are acting in non-realistic, sentimental ways. Perhaps the entire world of the narrative has this feeling to it. "Dreaminess" in not a positive state in Buddhist narratives. Instead of a ecstatic states or a pleasant sense of being free of trouble, "dreaminess" suggests in the blind in this painful world, acting somewhat foolishly.

"Overly emotional, near-sighted, foolish" behavior might be a better description than "dreaminess." The romantic swoon is often associated with such states. The romantic pain of being lost endlessly in one's memories of past failed loves is also sometimes marked by this sense of disorientation. The train of the 21st-century Chinese film *2046* is like this. Actions within narratives heavy with dreaminess can be soft and mushy but that is not a requirement: when the man of the 21st-century Japanese film *Dolls* gouges out his eyes to try to establish a romantic connection with the pop-star who has had an accident, that is sentimental behavior associated with an overly emotional state that separates him from common sense. He is lost in his world of desire, making foolish choices. Buddhism, especially Chan (Zen) Buddhism, argues that your actions should be grounded in a clear-sighted appraisal of this real world, not derived of strong emotions, false hope and so forth. "Dreaminess" is not always, in fact probably usually is not, Buddhist-related. Martial arts films often criticize "dreaminess" and embrace other aspects of Buddhism despite the presence of Confucian *zhong* or faithfulness (*xin*). "Gritty" films often criticize dreaminess, too. That (classically speaking) is a type of naturalism. (We usually call this is common conversation "realism" or just "being realistic.") "Dreaminess" if you encounter it, will require some careful thinking to establish relevant cultural contexts.

320.3.2.3. Dreamstates

This seems like an appropriate word to use when the narrative world or the characters that you are reading or seeing appear to operate in a parallel universe or some sort, of a "not-grounded" or "not-firmly-in-this-world" state. The world seems unreal to the narrative figure or the narrative world as a whole seems unreal. For us, there is an interpretive problem in that

it seems to me it is just as likely that the narrative has a *derivative dreaminess rather than a Buddhist-like dreamstate, in which case it is misleading to posit a Buddhist cultural context. Films that take on issues of “what is reality” or “what is identity” can deploy dreamstates as part of the discourse around the theme. *Memento* (Los Angele, 2000) and *Inception* (Los Angeles, 2010) are case in point. It would be a stretch to evoke a Buddhist *cultural concept for either of those films. Similarly, calling them Buddhist-like does not seem too promising as a line of interpretation. It might say something about how Buddhist psychology and post-modern perceptions of the self are converging, but it says less about the relevant *cultural contexts of the films.

30.4. DESIRE AND EXCESSIVE EMOTION

Love that has a strong carnal aspect manifesting as the desire for someone, extreme attachment to someone, issues of possession of another, possessive jealousy, and so on are not celebrated in the Buddhist tradition. Unlike Greek philosophy that sees passion and desire as a movement towards truth even if misguided, passion, indeed any sort of intense emotion, from the Buddhist perspective is de-centering. Romantic love still has power and mystery, and still is compelling, but it almost certainly will be clothed in trouble and suffering.

The “Golden Mean” (zhōngyōng 中庸)—an appropriate, balanced response to a situation rather than a highly dynamic, assertive, passionate reaction—supports this idea but is not Buddhist in origin. It is a product of Confucianism although in my personal opinion is that this approach is cross-cultural and difficult to determine in origin since we see similar concepts in ancient Greek philosophy and early yogic Indian traditions. Confucianism and Buddhism have mixed thoroughly but classically speaking, Buddhist poise is not a balance of forces

but rather a detached view of the phenomena of this world. The "Middle Way" is not a balance of forces but the ability to not be distracted by illusory phenomena although moderation is a behavior requirement of practicing Buddhist.

30.5. CHANGE: FRAGILITY, THINNESS, ANXIETY

Change in "Daoism" guarantees that if things are in their proper order, a healthy cyclic change can be expected: bad situations do not last forever, after winter there is spring, it is normal for those in power to fall later out of power, and so on. It doesn't promise an endless string of happy states or situations but it does promise that bad situations, like all other things, have an end to them.

Buddhism, on the other hand, says that the fundamental human experience of change is painful: we either are dissatisfied because we do not have what we want or we fear losing what we have when we do have it. We are endlessly unhappy about not having what we want and endlessly fearful of losing what pleasure we have. So change is not reassuring. Both "Daoists" and Buddhists will show patience and restraint in the midst of painful situations but for different reasons: "Daoists" understand the still-point of *wu wei* (non-action) as a stance of wisdom in the face of unpleasant things that can't be changed, Buddhism asks that we put aside a desire to escape our psychic pain. (By the way, Buddhism has *never* argued that if you are standing in front of a train that is about to hit you it doesn't matter whether you jump out of the way or not. That is a misguided understanding of its teaching since it lacks compassion (in this case, for one's own body), and blurs the distinction between physical dangers that should be properly taken care of and psychic pain that is a false mental state.)

In practice, Buddhism in love narratives tends to subvert the reliability of the bond and certainly does little to celebrate it.

Being in love is often shown as debilitating, unhealthy, anxiety-ridden, riddled with mistrust, short-lived— all-in-all a very disturbing experience. Yet in some narratives these very conditions are beautified and such suffering becomes a type of glorious pain. That is hardly Buddhism—it is an adjustment to Buddhist claims. Again, because of the subversive teaching of Buddhism, existence itself can seem thin. It can seem like one is on the point of expiring. This thinness and uncertainty, too, is sometimes valorized as beautiful.

30.6. KARMA AS FATE, WUWEI VS BUDDHIST NON-ACTION

(This section is not yet written. The main argument is that Buddhism strongly supports an acceptance of "fate" and "fate" is a very common aspect of East Asian love narratives in two ways: "situations that are meant to be (for better or worse) and must be accepted not resisted" and "passive behavior that would be considered this or watered-down love in a Western context." The Buddhist practioner realizes that actions generate karma and karma continues the cycle of rebirth. Action, if taken, must be not done with the ignorant notion of an actor—that would perpetuate a false belief in the self. In practice this simple leads to no action at all: passivity.)

30.7. KARMA AS BONDS UNIVERSAL TRUTH

Buddhism had a theoretical problem: If nothing has essence why is it that a table continues to look like a table from one moment to the next? If things exist, this isn't a problem that needs an answer. But if things don't exist, then why do they persist in the same form more or less? The Buddhist solution to this is karma: state-moment A via karma causes state- moment

B to arise. Moments are connected in meaningful cause-and-effect through karma. Good actions lead to good karma in the future; bad actions lead to bad karma. This is the popular way the idea is embraced. (If we were to be accurate: *all* karma causes one state to follow another, including our rebirth into another miserable existence on this earth. Enlightenment is the cessation of karma—one shouldn't want to have good karma any more than one should want to avoid bad karma but as a practical matter, the concept of retribution is an important way to invoke good behavior.)

30.7.1. Karma and passivity

Because actions generate karma, limited action is generally proscribed.

30.7.2. Karma and fate

If one is thinking as a Buddhist, one sees karma as governing the chain of cause-and-effect: one's current situation is the result of one's past condition and one's future state turns on actions both current and past. This affords a huge power to one's personal past and one's group's past. Although in theory one's actions in the present moment should also be able to contribute to one's future, generally speaking one concludes that one's past trumps one's current choices. This is the Buddhist view of "fate"; that is, one's past has already more or less conditioned one's present and future and the best that one can do is accept it. Buddhist fate is a fate into which one is entrapped, in most cases. Now and then fate delivers positive circumstances but this is less usual. This is different than a fate that is a description of circumstances that seem unusual and have no obvious earthly cause (a young man and young woman finding themselves in the same elevator several days in a row).

And it is different than a star-crossed lovers type of fate which implies that the gods have helped create the romantic pair — a "match made in Heaven".

Americans, with their generally faint interest in history and tendency to see themselves as individuals rather than foremostly responsible to a group, are often impatient with behavior fashioned with a Buddhist notion of fate. Love narratives that show individuals drifting through a painful relationship doing little to improve their situation seem overly negative, pessimistic, or otherwise odd. The Confucian view is similar for, like American optimism, it tends to believe that problems have solutions. In the Buddhist view, there is no immediate solution to the problem of suffering. One needs to get out of the game entirely.

30.7.3. Karma and interpersonal bonds

At the level of biology certain people are mysteriously attracted to certain other specific people. Investigating whether this is a chemical phenomenon or a psychological one is beyond the scope of this course. What we can say, however, is that instant, powerful attraction is a frequent event in love narratives for all of our East Asian countries. If this is or can be interpreted via Buddhist lines of thought, the explanation will be "a karmic bond from a previous existence". Karma may be used more generally, for example, as a man's approach to a woman or as an excuse for a couple. A "karmic bond" to one's partner suggests that it is affirmed as some transcendent, mystical or metaphysical level and should not, cannot, be resisted. Again, this can lead to passive behavior.

"Bonds" in this view are powerful, deep, and not generated by one's present-time actions. Karma cannot be ignored or removed. Such bonds are close to sacred except that karma is an impersonal, cosmic force, just the result of things.

30.8. WORKING WITH BUDDHISM IN OUR FILMS

The presence of Buddhism in a narrative can be exceptionally difficult to determine with any confidence.

Clearly in *premodern times Buddhism functions primarily as a subversive element in love narratives by suggesting that being in love is a state of ignorance (since we live in a world of illusion and romantic love is very much of that world), or weakening / debilitating (since desire, even desire for stability and security causes suffering) in some way, or unreliable/fleeting (since everything changes).

However, in modern times we are confronted with narratives that might include existential angst, or simple ennui, or urban malaise, or cynicism, or a host of other negative values that subvert or problematize romantic feelings. In your essays and projects, it might be tempting to connect your narratives to Buddhist perspectives. But, actually, in this class we definitely consider what of *traditional values remains, *or not*, in modern love narratives. So make your own decision on how "Buddhist" a narrative that seems uncertain and painful really is. This is important.

Further, not all sadness (the variety of sad feelings that come from mourning or feeling loss) in *premodern texts is "Buddhist" sadness (awareness of the fleeting, unreliable, unsatisfying nature of the world). Please be careful not to quickly assert that Buddhist concepts are what are behind the unhappy feelings of any given situation. Further, try to understand the distance between classical Buddhist teachings and the more "lay" or generic or popular understanding of Buddhist teachings as they appear in narratives.

PART VI

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Terms marked with an asterisk (*) in the body of the volume are explained here. Some terms are groups under a common heading but the list is essentially in A-Z order, with terms cross-referenced when necessary. Much of the content of this volume is structured around definition of terms.

Ordered & cross-referenced list of key words, phrases, abbreviations and main ideas

▷ actions (and reactions) — see: Theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

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▷ affective love — see: love (aspects analyzed in this course)

▷ *agape* — see: models of selfless, giving love

▷ alternating contexts — see: array

"always about high-order love" ("always about love") standard

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"Bounded dialogue" allows us to independently generate sets of analytic conclusions about a narrative that we can then compare. "Bounded dialogue" means to approach a topic in accord to a specific set of rules. One of those rules is that whatever we explore, it must have a meaningful connection to love and not just love in its many broad and complex meanings but rather cognitive (high-order thinking) love and affective love when it is tightly related to cognitive love. We set aside neurochemical love.

Because it is redundant to mention explicitly at every occasion, please remember that we are **always** analyzing issues related to love, not other things. If I say, "What is the main point of this passage?" I mean: "In terms of the love narrative, what is the main point?" We discuss government, money, deceit—all types of things—but everything must be easily identifiable as relevant to this context of love. So, for example, we do not debate, "Is lying right or wrong?" but rather, "What is the role of lies in an intimate relationship?"

It is surprisingly easy to fail to uphold this important

standard. Please remember: **always about high-order love, all the time**.

▷ *amae* (甘え) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

array

This refers to a schema of various configurations in context-ToM relationships that affect content-to-Tom-distance. We think of these as four types: autonomous entities, competitive multiplicities, alternating contexts, and layered contexts.

attractors (cognitive and cultural)

"Attractors" are a core concept for this class. In chaos (complexity science) theory, one of the dominant questions is how systems that appear chaotic also embrace orderly formations. For example, earth's weather patterns remain too complex to predict even with supercomputers, yet there is order to the chaos. These orderly formations, among chaotic systems, are explained in part with mathematical models (such as the Lorenz Attractor). This notion of complex phenomena settling into recognizable patterns has been applied to cognitive psychology and culture studies to explain repeating of similar interpretations regardless of the variations of the information. For our purposes, the difference between an attractor leading to an interpretation and a pattern leading to an interpretation is that the first will always be preconscious while deployment of patterns to "make sense" of data may or may not be.

authoritative systems of thought, their fragments, and derivatives

- authoritative systems of thought: Confucianism, Buddhism, and so on as full-fledged sets of worldviews and values working together as a powerful culture unit. An example of a statement treating the cultural context as a full-fledged system: "Japanese Buddhism dominated the arts in Japan's Middle Period." I call these "systems of thoughts" rather than religions because of the difficulty of calling Confucianism a religion and to put emphasis on their conceptual content rather than social practices.
- fragments: a portion of a thought system that can still meaningful be traced back to its "parent" system but where evoking the entire system is not particularly useful. Example: "Don't kill that spider, your karma will be bad." This can be a reasonably convincing argument to some people, even if they are not really "believers" of Buddhism. "You will get something bad in the future if you do something bad now because that is how karma works." We do not have to worry whether the individuals involved *also* believe in the doctrine of impermanence or whether they suffer over the thought that the world is constantly changing — other fundamental truths of Buddhism. "Avoid bad karma by doing good things" is a fragment loosely associated with Buddhist teachings. We cannot deduce from this that other behavior by that individual will also be Buddhist or *Buddhist-like.
- derivatives: these are ways of thinking that can be better understood *perhaps* if the possible origin of the idea is known but culture itself does not make the connection to the original authoritative thought system. "I am enjoying this romantic relationship but romantic relationships don't last" may or may not be a common way of thinking of Japanese, but if someone is thinking like that, they might not be

thinking, “Ah, I am being so Buddhist right now.” They may not know that this was originally a common proposition of Buddhism that just became a general, widely held notion in culture, losing its connection to Buddhism. In the case of “fragments” it might be useful to better understand the fragment by thinking of its origin. In the case of derivatives, it is probably inaccurate and distracting (in terms of understanding the nuances and details of the concept) to drag the original thought system into all the factors under consideration. The idea is orphaned and independent and speculating on its origins is interesting and might open up lines of thought, but should be undertaken only with the greatest of care

▷ autonomous entities — see: array

“beyond-first-thoughts” standard

“Beyond-first-thoughts” is a course standard that is expected for interpretive analysis. It means that one’s thinking around an issue will exceed the thinking that any well-educated individual could arrive at within the first few minutes of thinking over the same topic. There are two concepts behind my interest in requiring ‘beyond-first-thoughts” observations. The first is the belief that early, initial, quickly-arrived-at ideas are more likely to represent cultural patterns and models rather than be grounded in the actual situation, and so may or may not be accurate to the situation. The second is my view of analysis as time-intensive on the side of the person doing the analysis while time-efficient on the side of the consumer of the analysis: if the consumer could arrive at the same quality of insight in a couple of minutes of thinking on her or his own, the analysis results lack much value.

bounded dialogue

Our interpretative method asks members of a group to develop independent interpretations that are then tested against those of other group members. This trial of ideas is done through discussion. That discussion, when required to following the rules and standards of the course and cleave closely to the course method, is called "bounded dialogue."

▷ Buddhist benevolence (慈) — see: models of selfless, giving love

▷ Buddhist Middle Way — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

bumps

A sense of discomfort while consuming (viewing, reading, analyzing) a story or film that results from a segment of the narrative "feeling" as if it does not make sense (when it seems it should—this does not include suspense, puzzles, and so on). This might be for many reasons but, for the purposes of the course, we are interested in determining whether the reason is the dissonance between a worldview or value we deployed to make sense of the narrative and a worldview or value that the author or director of the work expected us to use.

▷ *caizi-jiaren* storyline — see: scholar-beauty (*caizi-jiaren*) storyline

▷ cause-and-effect chains — see: “making sense”

CDE template / CDE report (full name would be “CG-C-D-E-R&O template”)

When the results of analysis are reported, you will often be asked to use a response template that is meant to help articulate and preserve diversity of opinion within the group together with the effect of the discussion itself on various ideas. This is called the CDE template for simplicity of terminology. However, it actually includes all of the following components:

- CG=Common Ground (content upon which the group agrees upon before talking with each other);
- **C**=Convergence (content that becomes accepted by some or all group members after discussion);
- **D**=Divergence (content upon which the group cannot agree upon);
- **E**=Emergence (discoveries—new content—developed in the process of discussion but had been noticed by no one before the discussion began); and,
- R&O=Random & Other (content randomly arrived at or content the group wants to report that does not fit into any of other above categories).

▷ Christian devotion — see: models of “true love”

▷ “Christian Love” — see: models of “true love”

code (and data)

This term is used in this book to mean the words, sounds, images and other associated multimedia data that have been produced with the intention of being interpreted and, once interpreted, to have meaning and significance of some sort, even if that meaning is absurd or puzzling. They are those words, sounds, and so on before the interpretation. The brain seeks to make sense of incoming data. It will decide a table is a table, it will attempt to give meaning or construct a narrative to which is commonly called “texts” but which we call “code” because “texts” are the interpretive results we construct. In this book, the only real difference between “incoming data” and “code” is that code is the result of intentional assembly of symbols and such that the creator believes can be interpreted meaningfully (even if the product is the result animal, human, or computer action) while “data” is just the physical attributes of an object or event impinging on our senses. A faded rose randomly encountered is seen as a faded rose (data) unless it is a gift, in which case is it probably seen as code to be interpreted.

▷ cognitive attractors — see: attractors (cognitive and cultural)

▷ cognitive love — see: love (aspects analyzed in this course)

▷ common practices — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

▷ competitive multiplicities — see: array

▷ Confucian devotion — see: models of “true love”

▷ Confucian duty (*yi* 义・義) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Confucian faithfulness (*xin* 信) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Confucian harmony (*he* 和) —ToM’s position about self-in-world

▷ Confucian loyalty (*zhong* 忠) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Confucian moderation — see: ToM’s position about self-in-world

▷ Confucian righteousness (*yi* 义・義) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Confucian *xin* (信) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Confucian *zhong* (忠) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ constructing ToM — see: Theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

content-rich (and "content rich" standard)

By "content-rich" I mean substantive statements that provides **details** rather than summary or topical statements that only tell me **about** the object or what was thought, decided, or done. Students can assume that unless otherwise stated, all analysis and submissions should uphold this standard except where common sense suggests otherwise.

Here are some examples:

Meeting report —

Topical: "My partner and I met and noticed we have a lot of differences in how to interpret the films." (You have only said that there were differences. I still do not know what they are.)

Content-rich: "My partner and I met. Anne felt that Himiko's jealousy was primarily the result of a difference in status between Himiko and the other woman. Jeremy thought that was possible but personally felt the jealousy was the result of an insecurity Himiko had based on an earlier relationship." (You have said both that there were differences and *what* those differences were.)

Thesis statement —

Topical: I will explore sacrifice in two films, "My Little Sister" and "The Last Letter."

Content-rich statement: I will explore the final sacrifice that is made by the main protagonist in two films: "My Little Sister" and "The Last Letter." I will conclude that the sacrifice in "My Little Sister" isn't really that at all. Because of the content of her suicide note, as well as the location of that suicide, it is, instead, simply an act of anger meant to hurt her lover. However, "The Last Letter" involves a real sacrifice by the protagonist: he gives up his love to allow her to marry someone else. This is not what he wants for himself, but he realizes this is best for the person he loves. I compare these two sacrifices and suggest that, in the case of the Korean film, the movie is less about romance than plot twists and the dark nature of people, while in the case of the Japanese film, the theme is unrequited love from beginning to end. I suggest that the Korean film is fairly distant from any premodern roots but the Japanese film continues a long tradition of not being able to be with one's lover, something we saw already in *The Tale of Genji*.

Analysis appearing in an essay —

Topical: "Encounters on a Dark Night" is a heavy-feeling story.

Content-rich: "Encounters on a Dark Night" is a heavy-feeling story because of its detailed portrait of a woman entangled, if not completely entrapped, in strong, painful memories.

context-to-ToM distance

This is a descriptive term used to characterize the level of energy between a cultural context and a ToM. (Or, if you prefer to think of it this way, how powerful and present a cultural context is as part of the ToM.) It is not an indication of the

degree of acceptance of a cultural context, since a ToM might be in a posture of resistance or acceptance of a worldview or value which is part of the context. (Status describes a ToM's relationship to a worldview or value on the acceptance-rejection spectrum.) This is instead a "strength" factor—Distance is the result of the dynamics between the nature and degree of the robustness of the cultural context, on the one hand, and the nature of and degree of ToM's receptivity to it, on the other.

Connectionism, Connectivism, (and connectedness)

Connectionism

The Wikipedia definition is succinct and helpful:

> Connectionism is a set of approaches in the fields of artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, and philosophy of mind, that models mental or behavioral phenomena as the emergent processes of interconnected networks of simple units.[1]

Connectionism supports the idea of various biological systems and neurocognitive systems working semi-independently but — in sometimes competitive, sometimes harmonious communication with one another— all leading to our thoughts and behaviors. It gives us interpretive space in that we need not expect there to be a single principle that explains all aspects of what we considering. It encourages us to situate an individual squarely within culture and all its content rather than as a conceptual spirit that floats, somehow, separate of it.

Both of these are good explanations of "Connectionism:"

- James Garson, "Connectionism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of*

1. Wikipedia contributors, "Connectionism," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed Jan 4, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connectionism.

Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/connectionism/.

- Jonathan Waskan, “Connectionism,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://www.iep.utm.edu/connect/#H6.

Connectivism

The Wikipedia definition is, again, succinct and helpful:

> Connectivism is a theory of learning in a digital age that emphasizes the role of social and cultural context in how and where learning occurs. Learning does not simply happen within an individual, but within and across the networks.[2]

This summary statement is also informative, in foregrounding the place of the Internet in the theory:

> Connectivism is a learning theory that explains how Internet technologies have created new opportunities for people to learn and share information across the World Wide Web and among themselves.[3]

Siemens original article that proposes the pedagogical approach is here:

- George Siemens, “Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age,” *International Journal of Instructional Technology & Distance Learning* 2, no. 1 (January 2005), http://www.itdl.org/journal/jan_05/article01.htm.

connectedness (*musubi*)

This is an English translation of a Japanese term we consider. I list it here just to remind that it is entirely different from the other two terms, although it would appear similar. See: *musubi* (“connectedness”).

2. Wikipedia contributors, "Connectivism," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed Jan 4, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connectivism.
3. Learning Theories, "Connectivism (Siemens, Downes)," accessed Jan 4, 2018, https://www.learning-theories.com/connectivism-siemens-downes.html.

▷ **Confucian duty / Confucian righteousness (*yi* 義/义) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, and monogamy**

▷ cosmic worldviews — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

▷ **course method — see: interpretive project (interpretive method, course method)**

course standards (as list)

The various standards are defined elsewhere. Standards identify what should be aimed for; they can be difficult to achieve. Effort is expected but not always success. Here they are just collected into a list for convenience:

- "all about high-order love" (interpretation and analysis)
- "beyond-first-thoughts" (interpretation and analysis)
- "content-rich" (interpretation and analysis)
- "fair and accurate" / "over-the-shoulder" (use of secondary sources, see syllabus)
- "context is king" (avoidance of plagiarism, see syllabus)

▷ cultural attractors — see: attractors (cognitive and cultural)

cultural contexts

This is a practical component of our interpretive analysis. In our attempt at constructing a ToM for an individual, we are considering some of all of these:

- What is that individual's thoughts (strategic thinking, hopes, expectations)?
- What will that individual do or what does she or he think someone else will do, and what might be the reaction?
- What are the feelings or states-of-mind of the individual?

Many factors, of course, are at play in determining answers to such questions. We take only one corner of those many factors, all of which have to do with widely known principles or behaviors and which exert pressures, or influence, or offer guidance and can all be reasonably labeled as cultural artifacts relevant to that individual at that *instance.

These can include broad principles such as "Revenge is okay" or "One should never lie to one's spouse" or the common behaviors of those in relevant cultural circles such as "it is acceptable to text during a dinner with others," or even genre-based factors such as "In horror films irrational behavior that seems not originating in any credible reason is pretty common and we don't worry much about illogical *narrative progress."

We call these, collectively, "cultural contexts," although they include diverse types of things. They all, however, have the potential of altering or informing a person's ToM.

We are not suggesting that these are all the possible cultural contexts. We have selected areas of cultural contexts for our analytic focus.

There are other factors very important to accurate interpretation including common practices (which may or may not be fairly described as "cultural" depending on the factor itself) and other situational conditions. If I primary interest was in a full and rich interpretation, these would be at the forefront of our analysis. However, our analysis of films is simply one possible process for discovering and discussing cultural contexts, so we keep our focus in that direction, even when the analysis feels uncomfortably incomplete.

cultural context mirage

This is when a ToM believes (casually or strongly) that the cultural environment includes a certain worldview or value—that "everyone" has that worldview or value—when, in fact, they do not. It is a mistaken assumption which is unknown to the ToM as mistaken. This term is meant to capture differences in defining things that one would think everyone shares the same opinion about such as, for example, "fate" in the phrase "that was fate" where the ToM's understanding of fate and the of others are out of alignment, a little or greatly. "Really?? I just assumed that you thought …" is one way to visualize a reaction to an evaporated context mirage.

culture and cultural groups

<u>About "groups"</u>

In the context of our work, there are many types of groups. Some are joined by choice, some are not. Some are persistently present, others are ephemeral. Some are "real" in that they can take actions over which members have no control but which affect the group member. Others are "internal" in that an actor imagines to be a part of the group, whether or not that is the fact and whether or not the group has an empirical existence. For example, one can imagine one is part of a secret society whose members were born into this world to save the planet even if one has not met another member and even if one cannot confirm the existence of the group. Nevertheless, its imagined worldviews and values are relevant for understanding that individual.

<u>About "culture"</u>

For us and our interest in how perception (understanding, and the subsequent thoughts, feelings, and actions) is affected by cultural contexts, "culture" represents a set of practices and/

or beliefs which seem to be widely affirmed by members of the group, allowing for variations and exceptions but only to a certain degree. The practices and boundaries are known by its members. If they are unknown, the individual is not yet fully a member since the individual has not internalized (or accepted) yet the worldviews and values (but is of course subject to the group's actions nevertheless). I recently heard this use of the world "culture" which is close to the meaning I am suggesting here: "UDL (Universal Design for Learning) is first implemented by the university's administration, begins to become adopted by faculty, and finally becomes part of the culture of the university." What is implied here is that the final stage is close to a state of affairs where faculty unquestioningly and as a matter of common practice, develop course material that meets UDL standards and knows that to challenge the value of that will be met with resistance.

Culture, for us, is a widely accepted (by group members) set of ways of thinking (worldviews), values (upheld in theory whether or not actually practiced), and common practices. With this type of definition, cultural change, then, is when a tipping point has been reached and a certain value transitions from one position to the next, such as equity of pay for female employees. At the level of an ideal value, the cultural change is in place in America—few believe that they can mount a successful nationwide argument against this (although they can find sub-groups which will agree with them)—but pay equity is not yet a common practice. There is still an unspoken "understanding" that inequity of pay is "inevitable" at times. When this changes to "hey, you cannot do that, no one does that anymore" then the cultural change has reached the level of common practice, too. Thus, our treatment of culture follows our best estimate of the group member's subjective understanding of the group's views and values.

▷ data — see: code (and data)

▷ derivatives — see: authoritative systems of thought, their fragments, and derivatives

▷ devotion — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ devotion-obsession (obsession) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ distant / distance — see: context-to-ToM distance

▷ duty (*yi* 义・義) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

East Asian (narratives, cultural groups, etc.)

We are interested in the ToM of members of cultural groups that might engage traditional East Asian worldviews and values. It is enough, for our purposes, that these ToM has a subjective sense of relationship to the cultural group. However, for convenience's sake, this course operates on the assumption that culture is embedded in language and those who are native or near-native speakers of the language of the cultural group are, subjectively speaking, more entangled in the worldviews and values of that group than those who are not. Thus, we put more emphasis on linguistic boundaries than geographic ones; defining cultural boundaries in geographic terms ("China," "Japan," "Korea," "Beijing," "Seoul," and so on) does not necessarily position us well.

In order to define boundaries within which our objects of analysis must fall, we limit ourselves to objects to those that meet all of these criteria:

- the narrative is primarily in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean;
- the narrative was created by native or near-native (culturally fluent and nearly language perfect) speakers of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean;
- the narrative uses immediate settings that are primarily populated by a social network of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean speakers (even if, in a larger context, other cultures have a significant role in the story); and,
- the narrative was created primarily for an intended audience of Chinese, Japanese, or Korean speakers
- the ToM that we will construct is a native or near-native speaker of the language of the cultural group.

emergence (weak emergence, strong emergence)

Emergence, broadly defined, refers to phenomena that arise from the complex synergies of combining elements or networks. “Weak” emergent phenomena have a recognizable relationship to the elements or networks that produced them. “Strong” emergent phenomena are difficult or impossible to understand simply based on descriptions of the elements or networks or the cause-and-effect relationships among them. Emergent phenomena can have a “downward” effect on the elements or networks that produced them. They are not merely a symptom of them. emergent phenomena are in essence ephemeral since they exist as an effect of synergies, but if the elements or networks that produce them persist, then the emergent phenomena can persist, too.

We are interested in the concept of emergence for multiple

reasons: We treat narratives, cultural contexts, and love as strong emergent phenomena. Further, the course's structure is to enhance the possibility for unexpected discoveries in the process of dialogue. Rightly or wrongly, I view the sort of insight that can be obtained in this course that might overcome horizons of expectation—the "Ah-ha" moments—as, in some ways, emergent events.

▷ emergent love — see: love (aspects analyzed in this course)

"equal interest" rule

Regardless of the cultural group (East Asian or otherwise) that is, was, or will be the focus of the interpretation, students engage that analysis with the same effort to learn and understand as they would for any other cultural group. Regardless of the clarity or apparent credibility of a student's observations, all students are afforded careful consideration when they offer observations. "Equal interest" in these two ways is one of the course's core rules. Failure to uphold this rule can cause the student to fail the course.

equality

Equality has two specific meanings in this course:

1. Equal investigative interest in general topics and general subject matter. In this sense it is another way of stating the "equal interest" rule. But also, equal initial consideration given to a wide variety of details to determine whether they are relevant to an interpretive project. This is, for example, part of gathering cultural contexts or deciding what to pay attention to in a film. In

other words, take some care not to skip over details that might turn out to be useful.

2. Individuals help preserve equal contributions among team members through actions taken to insure that all ideas receive equal consideration (whether or not ultimately kept). Further, all group members should have an equal presence in a discussion. Members make an effort to bring ideas to the discussion, on the one hand, and, on the other, members make an effort to include the perspective of other members through listening, invitation to speak, and so on.

▷ ethical values — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

▷ faithfulness (xin 信) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ “Familiarity-arising-over-time” — see: models of “true love”

▷ fidelity — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ fighting for what is right — see: ToM’s position about self-in-world

▷ figures— see: ToM, narrative figures (characters), and people

▷ filial piety (*xiao* 孝) — see: Models of selfless, giving love, also see terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ fragments — see: authoritative systems of thought, their fragments, and derivatives

framing question

The framing question is the start point of any interpretive project. Interpretive projects are most powerful when they have a well-defined contract that captures into it a large and interesting issue but has found a way to explore that issue through a narrowly defined topic.

These larger issues are conceived by the individual and group

and articulated and given direction through a framing question. The authors of an interpretive project then "translate" this general idea, as posed by the question, into something that can be explored via the course method, with its terminology and specific process.

The framing question, then, is:

- a question that is interesting, relevant, or otherwise useful in some way toward considering cultural differences and similarities among our East Asian countries or exploring the fading or persistence presence (*status) of traditional worldviews and values—but is, itself, too large to have any realistic, credible conclusions only tentative ones,
- something that an interpretive project can offer insight towards,
- free of course jargon but instead is general, intuitive, casual, natural, or conversational in its language.

▷ God's love — see: Models of selfless, giving love

han, hen, urami ("hatred" "resentment" "rancor")

These terms point towards feelings that might be described in English as "hatred," "resentment," "rancor," "regret," "feelings of revenge," and so on. The Korean *han*, the Chinese *hen*, and the Japanese *urami* can all be written with the same Chinese character—恨—and are similar in that all definitely engage visceral (primal) emotions of aggressive or pained feelings when a ToM sees itself as being mistreated, threatened, or attacked, especially when that mistreatment is experienced as unfair.

However, for culturally accurate interpretations, more specific cognitive content should be associated with each of

these terms (what line of thought instigates the feeling, what actions are invited, and so on), in their various specific cultural contexts. These contexts can be as large as "all Korean speaking people everywhere in the world" or small "freshman at such-and-such a university" but a group of some sort is always involved since the sense of "fairness" derives from what the ToM thinks are the values of a given group (even if that group is just "all humans in how they treat one another").

▷ *hen* — see: *han, hen, urami*

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high-order love

Cognitive love with reference to affective love when truly necessary, but an avoidance of elements that are mostly related to neurochemical love. The method in this book is based on the assumption that most of the influence of cultural contexts arrives via cognitive love, thus the focus on high-order love for interpretive projects. There are more details about "high-order love" at "love."

"horizon of expectation"

"Horizon of expectation" is a term I have borrowed from Hans Robert Jauss (mid-20th century; "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" was given in 1967) but used in a somewhat different way. In his theory, "horizon of expectation" designates the expectations of a cultural group that are used for understanding and so, conversely, the limits of imagination and understanding of a cultural group. For us, "horizon of expectation" emphasizes the interpretive problem of not knowing when we are entirely wrong in an interpretation because the content we should use to interpret code is

unknown to us or known but not used. Unlike Jauss, who links the horizon to historical circumstances, I view it as an effect of fluid cognitive processes of perception affecting SO/M (selection, organization, and matching). Some of our horizons can and do shift. Others, may not: there is much we do not know that we even do not know that we do not know. This is one of the most challenging factors of cross-cultural interpretive processes. Our effort to construct a "more culturally accurate" ToM is, in part, an attempt to step inside the "horizon of expectation" of that ToM rather than operate within our own. My view is that it is possible to have limited success in this, but probably never complete success.

▷ human-ness (Confucian *ren* 仁) — see: Models of selfless, giving love

"in good taste" rule

All comments during discussion and observations shared verbally or in writing should be in good taste and sensitive towards the possible views and feelings of others.

instance

An instance is the well-defined object around which we build analysis. It might be a moment in time such as "What are the thoughts and feelings of Ah Mei when she read the letter from Zhang in which he includes a poem?" Or, it might be a specific aspect of a film such as "Does it matter that the director of *Norwegian Wood* cannot speak Japanese?" Or, it might be a theme such as "What is the role of gifts and the exchange of money in the film *2046*?" Or, "Do secrets appear to facilitate or inhibit the development of love relationships in this film?" Or,

it might directly take up an ethical value such as "What is the status of loyalty in the minds of Jin and Xiao Mei in *House of Flying Daggers*?"

The point of an instance is to narrow the direction of analysis enough so that the work produced by all teams is mutually beneficial. When the object is not well defined, analysis might be insightful but if it splits away from the analytic direction in the room, it cannot cross-check or stimulate the work of other groups.

On the other hand, when the instance is too narrowly defined, the analysis becomes insignificant and uninteresting.

It is not always easy to identify a good instance. In class exercises, instances are sometimes predefined by me.

The word "instance" has an admittedly unnatural feel to it. "Topic" is more usual but suggests something too broad. The advantage of "instance" is that it reminds us that it is difficult to make broad, sweeping conclusions from the results of our analysis. The premise of the course is that we begin to understand a culture not from the enthusiastic extension of a few organizing essential principles but rather from the meticulous consideration of the texture arising from a variety of smaller observations, considered collectively.

interpretive project (interpretive method, course method)

Course method

The fundamental project of the course is to learn something about the **status** of **premodern worldviews** and **ethical** values that help interpret love narratives.

The learning process primarily occurs through carrying out interpretive projects which include independent analysis, and the subsequent sharing of conclusions through **bounded dialogue**, open dialogue, and reports. The workflow of an **interpretive project** is:

1. Decide the film or text to be analyzed
2. Define the **ToM** and **instance**
3. Fashion an appropriate **narrowly defined topic** that will explore the status of certain **worldviews** and ethical **values**
4. Gather **cultural contexts**, **array** them, and decide the **context-to-Tom distance**
5. Make concise conclusions that answer or respond to the narrowly defined topic
6. Discuss these conclusions (at the level of work group or class-wide) via open or **bounded dialogue** or both.

This workflow, the terminology associated with it (some of which are in bold above), and the theoretical positions supporting this particular approach to interpretation are called, collectively, the “course method.”

Interpretive project

This is the name of the workflow that is the central activity of the course method.

In its shortest form, it is often an individual asking questions in her or his mind how we should understand something in light of cultural contexts.

In its full form, it is entirely constrained by the course method and uses a template. The components are:

- Contract (the shared information and shared analytic direction of anyone completing the project)
    - Film basics
    - Relevant cultural details of film financing
    - Relevant background and cultural details of film’s creators
    - Relevant background details of film’s content

    - Relevant background details and cultural implications fo film's reception
    - Bridging topic or question (a line of inquiry relevant to course topics than can be accomplished with the film at hand)
    - ToM List (list of ToM for whom one will construct thoughts, feelings, or actions; possible ToM are the narrative consumer (reader or audience), a creator of the narrative, or an actor within of the narrative)
    - Instance(s) as moment(s), scene(s), or aspect(s)
    - Target of Analysis (TOA) (the bridging topic of question reformulated to something very specific)
- Analysis and the reasoning behind it (individual work)
    - Cultural contexts (what to select, content to provide, relationship to ToM)
    - Positions (if an individual, her or his tentative conclusions, if a group this is in the form of a list that identifies common ground, where members finally agree, where they agree to disagree, and discoveries via discussion)
- Sharing
    - Individual Report (IR), or Group Report (CDE Report), and its distribution

Projects do not try to capture the larger scheme of an issue. The are narrowly defined, credible, disciplined, insightful statements on smaller elements that, when considered collectively, might be useful in answering larger questions.

See also: course method

▷ "Intimacy (closeness)-developed-over-time" — see: models of "true love"

▷ "Intimate Love" — see: models of "true love"

▷ Japanese *amae* (甘え)— see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ Japanese harmony (*wa* 和) — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ Japanese *musubi* ("connectedness" "bondedness") — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ *jie* (节・節) — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ layered contexts — see: array

layers and layering

Layering in a key concept for this course, used in a variety of ways.

1. Straight-up ontology: "Presence" is not only a direct and singular phenomenon but also can relevantly exist as filtered through something else. Further, this fact of being behind something else, I argue (probably as a fragment of Daoist views), can actually lend it power rather than diminish it.
2. Chronology: I have observed, but cannot offer a fully convincing reason why, that East Asia love narratives very

frequently layer and mix timelines. The most common narrative shape is the prominent place of memory, of course. But in fact there is a predilection beyond this to mix, confuse, or convert to labyrinths, all sorts of timelines.

3. Identity: Lovers who resemble previous or current lovers, brother-brother-girl or sister-sister-boy love triangles, comedy or tragedy from confused or multiple identities (such as spies in love with one another), and many other configurations that blur or confuse identities is another common feature of East Asian love narratives. This is particularly interesting in its challenge to the Western romantic model of the dramatic discovery of that unique other in the world who is meant to be your soulmate (love at first sight) and other notions of love that valorize the individuality of the people involved. (Think troubadours.)
4. Complex cultural contexts: This recognizes that cultural influence is not just mixed (where the various elements are so blended there is not way to tell them apart any more) but can be powerful even when not obvious. In other words, obviousness or overt presence of a value is not the best measure of its influential strength.

▷ -like — see: “X” and “X-like”

love (aspects analyzed in this course)

“Love” as defined for this course is, in its broadest formulation, the strong emergent effect arising from the synergy of neurochemical, affective, and cognitive processes occurring simultaneously and situated in complex contexts.

Examples of neurochemical love would be non-discursive urges towards physical intimacy (sexual desire, and so on).

Examples of affective love are longing when the beloved is absent or a sense of security or sense of insecurity. A couple of cognitive love examples are a trust or commitment (promises, contracts, obligations). In nearly all cases, it is common for any given love attribution to resides in not one but two or all three of these three categories. A cognitive sense of obligation ("I promise to care for you until I die"), for example, may well include a deeply felt urge towards nurturing or partnering ("I so much feel like protecting you all the time") and that may well invite more neurochemical-like intimacy.

We do not treat love as a metaphysical, universal, or spiritual entity/reality, but neither is there any intention to deny such possibilities. We also do not try to decide or define what might be called "true love," "best love," "right love," or "ideal love" or measure the love we identify against these concepts. We explore love as it arises in multitudinous formulations from the interpretation of narratives. While such love might well resonate with love as experienced in the real world, we keep in mind that our space of analysis is fictional narrative and allow for the special shapes love might assume in such contexts.

Love defined broadly in this class is not always a good thing. It can be characterized as a mixture of all or some of the below, as well as other things:

- to wish to be or be the center of attention, to have one's existence acknowledged / to give such attention and acknowledgment
- to think endlessly about the other, obsession, hyper-awareness of the other
- to nurture, serve, provide comfort, or protect / to be nurtured, be served, be comforted, or protected
- to be in awe of or respect / to be adored or receive respect
- to possess or sense ownership, to dominate or command /

to be possessed or be owned, to submit, follow, or feel loyalty

- to intimately partner (bond), and/or to reside in a sense of familiarity or mutual understanding, and/or feel inexplicably connected (bonded)
- to trust / to be trusted
- to share.

In this course, love is not just something arising from body chemistry; it is not just our powerful emotions, it is not just our hopes, expectations and strategic conclusions. It is all of these things as they together—but hardly in unison or harmony—start, fashion, and end relationships, as individuals together confront a world that supports or challenges a relationship, and as all of this plays out in the context of other life adventures and crises. What we call "love" in this course emerges from these many things as ephemeral and mysterious entities, or as powerful excesses, or both.

Yes, in English love means things other than the above: "There is no greater love than that of God." "I loved her more than anyone else, although I was not yet ten years old." "My love of food exceeds my love for study." Nevertheless, for the purposes of defining the boundaries of this course, since all interpretive projects must meaningfully relate to the topic of love, we use the above definition.

Because of our interest in identifying cultural similarities and differences among East Asian cultures, we are focused on how these various cultures in their many formulations affect how we interpret narratives. In particular, we focus on worldviews and ethical values. To that end, we maintain a hierarchy of "high-order / low-order" love with the body associated with "low-order" and cognition associated with "high-order." In this schema, because neurochemical love is most closely associated

with the body it viewed as the least affected by cultural conditions, while affective (limbic love, emotions of love) is somewhere in the middle, and cognitive love is the most inextricably entangled in cultural contexts.

Since it is a premise of this course that cognitive love is the most closely associated with culture, we focus on that type of love. But it should be noted that how we interpret emotions (affect) may well be deeply involved in cognitive movements and that, further, the neurochemical-affect-cognition complex is definitely a mixed entity where it is therefore sometimes not useful or possible to discuss just one isolated aspect of it. Even so, to the degree possible, we gaze toward cognitive love and culture's involvement with it.

▷ "Love-by-familiarity" — see: models of "true love"

▷ love circle, love story circle — see: love narrative circle (love story circle, love circle)

▷ "Love-from-closeness" — see: models of "true love"

love narrative circle (love story circle, love circle)

This is a description of narrative development where we attempt to place an instance on a point in the development of a love narrative. Its five main phases are: pre-relationship, early relationship, mature relationship, declining or deteriorating relationship, and post-relationship. We plot an instance on the circle as best we can to better understand its situation and for purposes of more meaningful comparisons with other love narratives.

The five main phases themselves can have subdivisions. For

example, if the relationship "seems like it is beginning to fall apart" that would be an early moment within the declining phase.

low-order love

Neurochemical love and emotions closely tied to neurochemical cascades in the body. There are more details about "low-order love" at "love."

▷ loyalty — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

"making sense" (of the apparent content of a ToM's thoughts, feelings and actions, and of narrative progress)

For the purposes of the course we take as a premise that an author or director seeks to offer a narrative that will "make sense" to the readers or viewers.

What this means is that the **narrative progress** and the **cause-and-effect chains** in a narrative proceed along lines that we "understand." Whether or not we agree with the action is a separate matter. We might be puzzled either as a result of deliberative writing by the creator of the narrative, or limited understanding, or poor reading. This might indicate that we need more thought or information. But when we concludes "No, that does not make sense at all" then either we are working with an "absurd" narrative that does not intend to make sense, or it is evoking an entirely different worldview or value. To "make sense" we need to draw on this information.

Buddhist Chan/Zen koans were stories with cause-and-effect strings that do not make sense with ordinary common sense

but do make sense to those who are enlightened (or so claim). For example,

> The monks of the East Hall and the monks of the West Hall were quarelling over a cat. Nansen picked up the cat, and said: "If any one of you can say even one word of zen, you can have the cat. Otherwise, I'm going to cut it in half."
>
> No-one spoke. So Nansen drew his sword, and killed the cat.
>
> Later, Nansen asked Joshu what he would have said if he had been there. Joshu took off his sandal and put it on his head. Nansen said: "It's a shame you weren't there: I wouldn't have had to kill the cat."

We are left with a puzzle. This narrative does not "make sense" regardless of how we adjust it, until we simply say, "Well, it is a koan and this is how koans are."

For us, when a narrative does not make sense either we have been careless in our reading (failed at the level of basic understanding) or there are worldviews and values or other contextual information in play that either we do not know (being not a member of the targeted cultural groups) or do not agree with. "Making sense" of a narrative, for us, is not altering interpretation it until we can personally agree with it but rather understanding the relevant contexts sufficiently that the narrative proceeds more smoothly (the reasonable progression of cause-and-effect chains) , with fewer puzzles. In general, when a narrative stretch does not "parse" easily, either it is:

- poorly written, or
- we are reading insufficiently carefully, or
- the puzzle is meant to puzzle us, or
- we are missing contextual information.

It is this last area that interests us the most because it is where cultural information resides.

▷ matching — see: selection, organization / matching (SO/M)

▷ Middle Way — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ mindreading — see: Theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

mimetic desire

Mimetic desire, a term coined by Rene Girard (literary critic and philosopher), is one's desire for an object that arises because one is aware that someone else desires that object. In other words, one's desire is in imitation (mimesis) of someone else's desire. For us, this concept is one among many others that indicate that our thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected with our social (cultural) world. Although Girard argues that all desire is mimetic desire, and I agree, that more absolute position is not necessary for the theory of this book.

mixture (and mix)

The topics in this class are often complex and whereas analysis is sometimes the disassembly of the parts to take them on one-by-one and thereby better understand the whole, that does not work well with *love which, as an emergent phenomenon (in my view), is not so much an assembly of parts but something that results from the coming together of a variety of things. *Worldviews and *values can be so intertwined that there is no way to talk about them meaningfully by pulling them apart. Jealousy, insecurity, and urge to bond can present such a

problem: it is possible that one cannot talk about the jealousy of a narrative figure without also discussing his or her issues of insecurity. These are so mixed together that there is no way to separate them anymore. In this course, we call this situation a "mixture," borrowing a common use of the term in sentences such as "My feelings towards that person are a mix of envy and attraction."

So, there are two principles behind this term or, rather, two sides to one principle: We will recognize that our topic evokes multiple elements in nearly any attempt to understand any aspect of it — that's culture, a mixture of things. But, we will accept that we cannot talk about everything under the sun each time we are trying to make a conclusion. While we might be uncomfortable with the narrow range of our claims (that is, recognizing that the statements need to be longer and take up a greater variety of ideas) we trade off comprehensive statements for accuracy and portability in these narrow statements. We want interpretations that are sufficiently short and specific so as to be able to share them easily across the class.

Perhaps the above could be restated simply in this way: Life is complicated. We know that. We are going to keep our observations narrow anyway, and remember that there are other pieces of the puzzle we had to leave untouched.

model reader / model viewer

Umberto Ecco developed the idea of a "model reader." He writes in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations In the Semiotics of Texts* (p. 7) as quoted by Guillemette:

> Although the text is a cloth woven from signs and gaps, the Model Reader, using his encyclopaedia, has the ability to fill in the gaps to the best of his knowledge, using his social baggage, his encyclopaedia (sic) and cultural

> conventions. The author has in fact foreseen a Model Reader who is able to cooperate in the text's actualisation in a specific manner, and who is also "able to deal interpretively with the text in the same way as the author deals generatively [in producing the text, that is]."
>
> (Lucie Guillemette and Josiane Cossette, "Textual Cooperation," *Sign o/0: Theoretical Semiotics on the Web*, accessed February 8, 2018, http://www.signosemio.com/eco/textual-cooperation.asp.)

From our perspective, a "model reader" is the ideal reader that the author or director imagines when producing narrative.

It is one of the assumptions of the course that in the writer-reader contract is an unspoken promise that the writer will product narrative that can make sense to the reader. When I, as the reader, feels that this contract has been broken, I will probably lose interest in the text because it feels as if it is not "about me" anymore.

Eco definitely convinced me that writers do indeed imagine readers, either generically or in very specific terms, and do write for an array of them in most cases. This might be a diverse or not diverse group of course. One that is familiar to us, or not (such as the original readers of *The Tale of Genji*).

In any event, the theoretical point is that the writer is putting words (code that has, in the above language "signs and gaps" — "signs" here are semiotic signs, not actually sings like stop sings) on the page *that can only be completed by the reader* — it really is code, a symbolic representation of a world and the actions in it — and so the writer will include whatever is necessary for that decoding to happen to a satisfying degree but, on the other hand, will tend to be sparse in this offering since to over-explain is unpleasant to readers, giving them a sense that the writer thinks they are not very intelligent. (Example: "Mariette was sad when her car was stolen. It is often the case that people become sad when their cars are stolen.") We can use what is

there and what is not as clues to the cultures of the model reader imagined by the writer. And when something does not make sense to us we should consider that possibly there is a culture gap between us and the model reader.

NOTE: I noticed that Wikipedia has an article on “Reader model.” While this is not Eco’s “model reader” it might be derived from his theory, which was widely discussed in film studies. In any event, this “reader model” is also useful to us. As Wikipedia explains: “A reader model is the term used for the hypothetical average person who is the target audience for a product.” This is similar and perhaps worth keeping in mind, and certainly it is a good idea not to confuse the two. (Wikipedia contributors. “Reader model.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Accessed February 8, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader_model.)

▷ models — see: patterns and models

models of selfless, giving love

Multiple thought systems uphold the value of selfless, giving love.

Christianity asserts that **God’s love** is a perfect love and that it is unconditional, universal, forgiving, and entirely free of personal motive (instead, it is a selfless love). Christians, to the extent that they can, try to love in this godly way. This sets a powerful standard for what ideal love should look like and what loving behavior should attempt to achieve. The role of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others is key within this system although often moderated by an ethic that one should be kind and fair to oneself as well. **Agape** is introduced as one of the types of love described by the early Greek philosopher Aristotle. For Aristotle, it meant “affection” but the term evolved in

Christian thought to represent the highest possible type of love as described above.

Buddhist benevolence ([Pali:] *metta* [Sanskrit:] *maitri* 慈) is kindness, friendship, love, benevolence, or pity and is the position taken by Bodhisattva's to remain in this world of suffering until all sentient beings find enlightenment. In its highest form, it is a type of detached, wise benevolence or concern for others but in practice it is a Buddhist's helpful, concerned, loving attitude towards.

Confucian "**human-ness**" (*ren* 仁) is a key principle of Confucian ethics (some place it as the dominant principle that guides all others) which includes, among many things, care towards others, understanding, honesty, sincerity, and warmth.

Confucian *xiao* (**filial piety** 孝) is considered the most natural formation of love, with the parent caring for, sacrificing for, protecting and loving the child and the child reciprocating by showing respect and gratitude for the parent. However, Confucian xiao lacks the associations with the divine that Christian love has, so it lacks, too, the nearly magical powers of healing, transformation, solution, and the overcoming of obstacles associated with Christian love.

models of "true love"

In this course we try to avoid a casual use of "true" that would mean "the most important" or "the best" or "desirable" in sentences such as "He was my only true love," "I don't think I truly loved her," and so on. Instead, we keep the word set aside to point towards specific models of love, as below:

"Sincere Love" (not-a-game, honest, not strategy-based)

This might be an evaluation of one's own feelings but it is more likely an estimation of a partner's feelings or intentions, and this estimation is measured more for what it is not than what it is. (I have listed "commitment" elsewhere—that would

be a present quality of love, reliability for example, the absence of a quality as here.) Examples of TF/A that need to be absent to consider true love along these lines are seduction or companionship for ulterior purposes not beneficial to one, falsely declaring love, and casual dating.

“Christian Love” (Christian ideal love)

This phrase means “true love in the Christian, idealized sense of an enduring, pure, aspiring-to-be-perfect, unselfish, sacrificing, unconditional love in the spirit of God’s love for man” together with its associations that this is was everyone seeks and “should” select if the opportunity arises. Further, it includes a promise of fidelity and the likelihood of devotion.

“Reliable Love” (stable, commitment, reliable, trustworthy, on-going, monogamous)

Confucianism establishes stability in a relationship through xin and other ethical values and common practices, all working together to uphold social order. Christianity, drawing on Greek thought, embraces the formula that “what is good = what will endure” so as long as the love is “true” is can be expected to continue. Social mores around marriage help support stability in both cultural contexts.

Daoism does not expect or promise stability. According to its view, everything changes. Buddhism is similar in its doctrine of constant change (無常) but adds the psychological perspective that we experience change as painful. All relationship, whether good or bad, will end, it is just a matter of when and how.

“Passionate Love” (affective / neurochemical, low-order love)

Visceral indications of love:

- “When I kissed you, I knew I loved you.”
- “My body tells me I am in love.”
- “When you are around, I am inexplicably happy; when you are gone I am endlessly lonely.”

- “To my eyes, you are the most beautiful person in the world.”

There are darker versions: extreme possessiveness, for example.

Because, in some ways, we trust our feelings more than our thoughts, body-based emotions, especially in love narratives, often have the status of truth and love without little or no affective or neurochemical content feels dry and empty.

“Natural Love” (naturally occurring and untroubled)

I have not defined this term although students use it as if there is a definition. Clearly it is a phrase that is broadly useful for our discussions and probably, in the way we are using it, means “the East Asian equivalent of Western ‘true love’ in terms of indicating an authentic, or desirable, or ‘true’ love.”

However, what it is seems not clearly defined but perhaps is in the range of “unforced love,” “love that happens of its own and seems right,” or “love that lacks conflict and so must be right or desirable or good.”

In a sense I think there is a uncritical or unconscious deployment of a measurement that parallels the Greek formula of true=good=beautiful, in this way: If it seems unforced or requires little work or causes little pain, it must be good and if it is good it is in some sense “true.”

The phrase “natural love” opens the door to many rich areas of thinking about cultural contexts and is best left undefined, in order to allow wide-ranging speculation that is useful to our course.

Love-from-closeness

Familiarity-arising-over-time (“Love-by-familiarity”)—Chinese: *qin* (亲・親)

This is a bond with gathering stability due to the shared history between partners, a developed sense of trust that can grow with the passage of time, and just a “habit” in a person’s life. Caution and distance gradually fall away

overtime even if the shared history includes episodes of pain for one or both in the bond. “Familiarity” includes the nuance of “as if family” or “like family” with the confidence and openness that might be a component of family relationships.

Intimacy (closeness)-developed-over-time (“Reduced-distance Love”) —Japanese: *shitashimi* (親)

In a psychological environment when other people (even a partner) are seen as outsiders or insiders, the phrase suggests insider status as a personal level. “In-house divorce,” for example, would be a couple that maintains the appearance of a marriage but no longer feels close (shitashimi) towards one another. *Shitashimi* tends to develop over time but can arise rapidly in some cases.

modern times

“Modern times” will be used in this class to designate the point at which East Asian ideas have begun to be influenced by “the West”—Western European romanticism, individualism, communism, democracy, Christianity, the mashup of cultures that is the result of globalization, and so on.

▷ *musubi* (“connectedness” “bondedness”) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ narrative figures— see: ToM, narrative figures (characters), and people

▷ narrative progress — see: “making sense”

narratives (texts)

Among others, these definitions can be found in the English Oxford Living Dictionary:

1. A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.

    1.1. The narrated part of a literary work, as distinct from dialogue.

    1.3. A representation of a particular situation or process in such a way as to reflect or conform to an overarching set of aims or values.

We will use the word broadly, that is, as a way of referring to the storylines in a literary work or film or “template” storylines that exist in a culture (such as “finding one’s soulmate” or “lovers painfully separated by circumstance like Romeo and Juliet”). This also helps us avoid genre designations (such as “short story” or “novel” which are often not a good fit for premodern *East Asian works) and reminds us of the importance of story progress (narrative events) for our interpretive method. Example: “Narratives that engage love as a corrosive event are not uncommon in East Asian cultures.”

However, when the word partners with another word it has a narrower meaning closer to how it is defined in 1.3. of the *Oxford Living Dictionary*, in other words, events that proceed

from one to another meaningfully. Example: "'Narrative events' that turn on the issue of '**xin*' (trustworthiness) are key to understanding the *status of Confucianism in this film."

The following website has some thoughtful, well-organized, and fairly basic comments on narratives in film: James Mooney, "Film Narrative," *Filmosophy*, posted February 11, 2015, accessed February 9, 2018, https://filmandphilosophy.com/2015/02/11/film-narrative/ .

narrowly defined topic

A narrowly defined topic is an early step in interpretive projects. Together with the film selection, the instance, and the ToM, it creates the interpretive project contract. The narrowly defined topic defines the focus and boundaries of the interpretive analysis that will be carried out. Thus, it is an exceptionally important element of the project and often is the most difficult element to construct usefully or correctly. It has these key qualities:

- It positions the interpreters to think usefully on issues of cultural contexts and their status in the narrative.
- It is narrow enough that individual interpretive projects, when compared, are meaningful to each other.
- It is broad enough that there is room for discovery.
- It is entirely free of prejudicial language, presumptions, conclusions, or suggestions of conclusions. It is never a step toward an outcome that has already been decided.
- It avoids confusing language or suggesting multiple topics. Instead, it is short, specific, and exceptionally clear as a statement. Beware, in particular, that it avoids "X and Y" and "X or Y" constructions.

- Of course it remains faithful to the movie, instance, and ToM selection, as well as the course's discourse rules and guidelines.

▷ "Natural Love" — see: models of "true love"

▷ neurochemical love — see: love (aspects analyzed in this course)

▷ no-self / detachment (無我) — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ non-action / *wuwei* (無為) — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ obsession — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

▷ organization — see: selection, organization / matching (SO/M)

▷ parameters — see: analytic parameters

▷ "Passionate Love" — see: models of "true love"

patterns and models

Patterns and models are cognitive structures of which a ToM is aware and which are the basis for matching, to give meaning

and significance to incoming information (and so pre-exist the arrival of that information).

Cognitively, these can be very simple, such as the shape of a letter of a script, or very complex, such as a collection of worldviews and values set out by a thought system. At the level of biology, they may exist primarily as a network of neurons that act together reflexively, or networks of neurons that, by habit or tendency, frequently interact.

Patterns and models may participate in interpretation either with or without the conscious awareness of the perceiver/ interpreter.

Patterns and models either reside within the mind or within the relevant cultural group, but in the view offered in this volume, the internal/external distinction is not key except that it is important to note how patterns are not cleanly separate from external (real or imagined) social connections and networks.

Patterns and models are used differently in different fields of thought. For this volume, patterns are more singular and models are more complicated structures usually assembled from patterns. Not a lot of care has gone into using them in distinctly different ways. (By the way, either can be static or include the element of time.) So, recognition of a stop sign draws on a geometric **pattern** already known to the perceiver while that a narrative figure decided to tell the truth rather than lie at a certain moment would be explained by the reader based on the **model** of that person's mind that the reader has put together.

practicability

Practicability describes a quality of an interpretive project. In this course, practicability has these two basic facets:

1. Is the scope of the project being considered **realistic**

enough that it is possible (practicable) to finish the project with a short list of excellent observations?
2. It the project designed so that its results are **shareable** (have practical value to others)?

"premodern" and "traditional"

In this course, "premodern" simply designates a time before *modern times. Example: "The status of today still needs improvement but the status of women in premodern times was worse." "Tradition" or "traditional" suggests that the status of a value or worldview in limited or otherwise being viewed from "outside" of it. Example: "I don't accept some of the traditions of my parents."

These terms are discussed more fully in the chapter on *worldviews, *ethical values, and *common practices.

▷ propriety (*li* 礼・禮) — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

▷ *qin* (亲・親)— see: models of "true love"

receptivity

In terms of the course method, "receptivity" is a description of ToM's engagement with a worldview or value. While the term inadvertently suggests "willingness to accept" what is meant instead is the degree of engagement, whether positive or negative. Receptivity includes considerations of how important it is to the ToM to show allegiance to the cultural group by accepting a value, but other factors also need to be kept in mind, including ToM's physical location (for example, ToM's particular Korean value may seem more important to uphold while living in Korea), and so on.

▷ “Reduced-distance Love” (Japanese shitashimi) — see: models of “true love”

▷ “Reliable Love” — see: models of “true love”

▷ *ren* (仁) — see: models of selfless, giving love

▷ righteousness (*yi* 义・義) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

robustness

In terms of the course method, “robustness” is a description of presence-absence across a spectrum where something can be strongly present (influential, relevant) or weakly present or absent. It is the result of many factors including status and how close to a full authoritative system should be evoked for the interpretation.

scholar-beauty (caizi-jiaren) storyline

The *caizi-jiaren* storyline, as the notes below indicate, refers specifically to a Ming-Qing dynasty stereotypical narrative shape; however, the fundamentals are exceptionally old and widespread in East Asia. Among iconic texts, even the 11-th century Japanese long narrative *The Tale of Genji* has similar features, as does the 17th-century Korean long narrative *Nine Cloud Dream* and the Korean pansori epic also from the 17th-century, or earlier, *Chunhyangga*. It remains, I would suggest, one of the standard storylines of modern East Asian romantic films. Of the many outstanding features of the brilliant 17th-century Chinese massively long narrative *Story of the Stone*

(*Dream of the Red Chamber*), one is its ability to rise above this oh-so-predictable cause-and-effect chain.

Below are a excepts from scholarly works that outline the main features of this narrative line.

> from Geng Song, *The fragile scholar: power and masculinity in Chinese culture* (Hong Kong University Press, 2004):
>
> > The ideals of the masculine and the feminine in pre-modern Chinese literary representations of love and sexuality are best defined by the designations caizi (才子) and jiaren (佳人), which, far from conveying the full connotations of the original words, have been translated as "scholar" and "beauty." Broadly speaking, the terms can be applied to any hero and heroine in classical Chinese representations of love and courtship. In a narrow sense, however, caizi-jiaren refers exclusively to a model of romantic stories in popular drama and fiction that flourished in late imperial China ... [13th-19th centuries]. This model is notoriously known for its standard story line, highly conventional (and even hackneyed in the later period) style, theme, characterization and, above all, stereotyped and established gentry-class notions of masculinity and femininity.
> >
> > The scholar-beauty romantic pattern is characterized by a set of stereotyped formulas. According to Hu Wanchuan, the following motifs are essential for a standard caizi-jiaren story:
> >
> > > 1) It is a love story between a handsome young scholar and a beautiful girl, both of whom display exceptional gift for poetry and prose, especially poetry.
> > >
> > > 2) Both the hero and heroine come from distinguished families. They are usually the only

child of their families an amusingly enough, they are most likely orphaned, or at least one of their parents is dead. (apart from reducing the number of characters on stage, this plot line may also serve to emphasize the extraordinary value and peerless perfection of the scholar and beauty.)

3) They meet under an unexpected circumstance and fall in love with each other at first sight.

4) Some hindrances will occur in the way of their marriage; it is usually the girl's mother or father who is opposed to the match because of the scholar's lack of an official rank.

5) The beauty sometimes has a clever girl servant who helps mediate in-between the lovers and thus functions as a matchmaker for them.

6) The love story invariable ends with the happy reunion of the couple, which is in most cases made possible by the caizi's success in the imperial examination.

notes from Keith McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists: Sexuality and Male-Female Relations in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Duke University Press, 1995):

page 105

As comic romances (although some of the above antecedents are not comic), *caizi-jiaren* stories differ little from those in any culture about a young man and woman who are destined to be together, encounter obstacles to their union, but finally overcome them and unite in marriage. As a group of like books, not simply stories with universal features,

however, the *caizi-jiaren* romances constitute a genre that attains a specific historical identity because of its appearance in ten- or twenty-chapter (or so) form about the early Qing. [The Qing begins 1644.]

As Lin Chen notes, although the term *caizi-jiaren* was common by the early Qing, it already bore what was then the notorious connotation of self-determined marriage between two talented and good-looking youths (56). Some of the works even eschew the appearance of free choice …

page 106

Honglou meng [*Dream of the Red Chamber*] suggests that these types of books are "all alike, of inferior literary quality, and obscene."

page 306, note 19

According to Christina Yao, the terms *caizi* and *jiaren* have been linked together since the Tang to refer to three types of love stories: those involving a relationship between a gifted man and a courtesan, between a man and a ghost or spirit, and between elite young men and women involved in premarital affairs (Yao 1983).

selection, organization / matching (SO/M)

This refers to one way of describing the basic processes of attributing meaning to incoming sensory data or code. A portion of the data or code available is selected, this is organized, and these organized objects are matched to patterns or models around which further cognitive thought might occur.

The process is abbreviated SO/M to set the first two closer to the objects themselves and the last to cognitive patterns that

are "internal" but that the phases are ever-entangled, affecting one another.

The process is hermeneutic and on-going, to end when circumstances dictate. I suggest that what we select, how we organize what we select, and what we match incoming data or code to all are affected by culture. Since basic perception is a sensory-cognitive neurological process, the state of the body will of course play a role. However, we are interested in those aspects of the cognitive process that can be bent by cultural influence.

▷ self-in-world — see: ToM's position about self-in-world

shareability

Through adherence to the course method and thoughtfulness toward the needs of one's group members or other groups in the room, interpretations are fashioned so as to be credible, intelligible, and useful to others.

▷ *shitashimi* (“Reduced-distance Love”) — see: models of “true love”

▷ “Sincere Love” — see: models of “true love”

▷ situational considerations / factors — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values, common practices (WV/CP)

▷ social harmony / *he* (和) — see: ToM’s position about self-in-world

▷ social worldviews — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

▷ standards — see: course standards

status

For the course method, this is a technical term when it is in sentences such as: “Where the ToM is the director, the status of Confucian faithfulness in *My Sassy Girl* is strongly and unambiguously affirmed despite the wayward lifestyle of the boy and the ‘modern’ ways of the girl.” In non-technical language outside the method of this course: “This film has a lot of Confucianism in it, even if it seems modern and was really popular.”

Briefly put, the status of a worldview or value within a narrative almost always needs to be described as part of our analysis and will fall into one of three broad categories: affirmed, conflicted, or rejected.

*Please note that we often need to talk about socio-economic

differences in this course and "status" in those case has its usual meaning, as used in sentences like this: "Men of high status were often found attractive by women of that time."

▷ strategic considerations — see: worldviews (cosmic and social), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

▷ systems of thought — see: authoritative systems of thought, their fragments, and derivatives

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▷ system fragments — see: authoritative systems of thought, their fragments, and derivatives

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term slippage

Term slippage is a type of undisciplined step in an argument, or a rhetorical strategy—one that is unwelcome in this course in order to enhance discourse accuracy. Term slippage is when one word that represented a certain concept is later replaced with another word which is presented or treated as an equivalent, although in fact it introduces a slightly different concept. The initial term has "slipped away" with another not quite equivalent term taking its place.

terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

We use words to describe postures that are primarily active (engaged in by choice) and words that describe "natural" or passive postures that seem to occur of their own or are stronger than one's own intentions. Sometimes these two are mixed.

Confucian duty / Confucian righteousness (*yi* 义・義)

The expected behavior derived from the ethical principles of the Confucian authoritative thought system. I ask students to use "Confucian duty" or "Confucian righteousness" (that is, not just "duty" or "righteousness" or "moral honesty," etc.) when they want to indicate that the duties or sense of what should be done that are felt by the ToM are identifiable as derived from Confucianism (whether or not the ToM is aware of this). "Duty" can be used in many other circumstances. A Japanese samurai will think it is his duty to protect his general but it is probably more accurate to see this type of duty as derived from a warrior's moral code rather than Confucian ideals. It comes down to the same thing in terms of setting aside one's own wishes to fulfill a requirement defined by a principle. On the other hand, to fully understand the cultural context, it is unwise to import Confucian values simply because you observe someone acting dutifully. The pressing moral argument should reference Confucianism as an authoritative thought system. If it does not, then it is a fragment or perhaps it is righteousness based on a different authoritative thought system, such as Christianity.

devotion (Confucian devotion, Christian devotion, devotion-obsession)

In all cases "devotion" refers to a single-mindedness towards the individual one loves. It is present (even if its "presence" is that it is missing when it should not be) in nearly all narratives, but how it is understood can differ according to cultural context and it is one area where cultural contexts mix frequently and easily. It may not be useful to be more specific than just using "devotion" to characterize the thoughts or feelings or actions of the ToM. However, in cases it might be helpful. We will use "**Confucian devotion**" to refer to a mixture of duty and/or respect towards the individual loved. "**Christian devotion**" is used to designate a single-minded, high-valuation of one's partner where one humbles oneself before the beauty of the

partner as if before God, shows a type of commitment to a person as one would to a religious faith, or hyper-values the partner as perfect. "**Devotion-obsession**" or just "**obsession**" will be used when devotion has a negative nuance, regardless of the cultural context because this seems to be close to a primal emotion (jealousy or possessiveness) and so, according to our system, is closer to a universal (similar across cultures) affective or neurochemical state.

Note that we use two other terms as well: "**faithfulness**" (Premodern Confucian **xin** 信) and "**fidelity**" (being monogamous). "**Devotion**," "**obsession**," "**faithfulness**," and "**fidelity**" give us a range of words to help characterize expectations or intentions of monogamy and/or bonded-ness.

faithfulness (Confucian xin 信)

We use this only to indicate premodern Confucian, or Confucian-like **xin** (信), which can be loosely defined as "keeping one's promises, being reliable." This term is not used in this course to describe monogamous values. "**Fidelity**" is used for that.

fidelity

When characterizing a love relationship, it is one of the terms with a specific course definition. It designates monogamous behavior while in a relationship. Whether it means monogamous in both body and mind, or just body, is left undefined. What "in a relationship" means is also left undefined.

Confucian loyalty (*zhong* 忠)

When characterizing a love relationship, Confucian loyalty means "behaving in ways that support the needs, position, or honor of one's superior." While it is common English practice to use loyalty to mean "devotion" or "monogamous" we need a term that points exactly at a hierarchical relationship between two partners. Thus, I have set aside loyalty to be used in this specific way. This is not the same, by the way, as a submission-

dominance relationship where a sense of belonging or possession derives from being in command or offering oneself as a servant to the other. Nor is this meant to invoke sadomasochistic relationships. However, as is the case with much of what we analyze, distinctions are not in practice easy to make and blended states-of-mind are the usual "actual" conditions.

musubi ("connectedness" "bondedness")

Musubi derives from the verb musubu "to tie together." Knots and the state of being tied to another or to something is a common way to describe the "stickiness" or persistence of a relationship. Metaphors (strings, robes, knots and their unraveling) are common ways to refer to a bond. While it may be more frequently described as grounded in Buddhist notions of karmic bonds—and Buddhist did offer powerful doctrinal positions to support this type of inexplicable and invisible bond—robe and knot imagery are more fundamentally related to Shintoism, which predates the arrival of Buddhism (not as a formal thought system but in its essential worldviews and values). I prefer the term "musubi" to English words since we already have two other terms using the root word "connect" and "bondedness" can have negative nuances while musubi (even in situations where it is unpleasant to be bound to the other), at root, is never negative.

Japanese *amae* (甘え)

While the common translation of *amae* is "dependency" and, when a verb, is "to indulge" or "to rely on someone," all of these carry too negative a connotation. *Amae* is to receive the benefits of another (care, attention, protection, gifts or deeds of giving) and to believe that the relationship is such that these things can be expected. In that sense it is a vulnerable embracing of trust and intimacy. It is also to behave in a way that might elicit the desire to be cared for (cuteness, helplessness, childishness). Japanese visualize this as a two-way structure in relationships of

mutual trust and intimacy (either partner can *amae*), not always in one direction.

filial piety (*xiao* 孝)

Filial piety (*xiao* 孝) is described in its core principles under models of selfless, giving love. In this context (attachment, loyalty), however, the focus is not on the benevolence of the parent or appreciation expressed by the child but rather the comfort of feeling protected, of being loved ,and the sense of bonding that arises from that. This quality, I would suggest, can arise in amorous (non-family) relationships although it is unlikely to be called xiao. It is listed here because I wanted to position it next to "amae" with which is shares some qualities.

▷ texts — see: narratives (texts)

▷ TF/A — see: thoughts, feelings, and actions (TF/A)

Theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

Theory of Mind, abbreviated by us as ToM, is a concept of both philosophy and cognitive psychology, with considerable cross-over between the two. For us, ToM is our construct of (our best guess at) the thoughts, feelings, and reasons for actions taken or contemplated of another (TF/A), either to understand that other or predict its actions.

Construction of ToM falls into two general categories "Theory-Theory" and "Simulation Theory":

> In the case of Theory-Theory we apply general ideas of what someone is likely to think, feel, or how that someone might act based on experience, knowledge of the context, and our general view of how humans behave in many circumstances.
>
> Simulation Theory posits us as the model for the ToM:

> "What would I feel in such a situation?" "What would I do in such a situation?"

Give our project of trying to understand a ToM in terms of its own culture, clearly we are less interested in Simulation Theory (in fact it would be an interpretive error in many cases) than we are in Theory-Theory. But, of course, much of how we think of what humans feel and do is based on our personal experiences so, in a sense, these two approaches blend.

ToM is absolutely central to the theory of interpretation offered in this book. Our interpretation of narratives derives from our construction of ToM for various individuals. We do not talk about people but rather the thoughts, feelings and actions (TF/A) of them as a cognitive construct by us.

Our ToMs, in essence, do not require a gender and will be referred to as "it" or "they," but in practice most ToM subjectively associate with a gender. My ToM of person X and another's ToM of person X are probably similar in some ways and different in others.

thoughts, feelings, and actions (TF/A)

This phrase, and its abbreviation TF/A, are shorthand for those aspects of Theory of Mind modeling (construction) that interest us most. We imagine what might be the content of the thoughts (cognitive content) and feelings (affective and neurochemical content) of a ToM, and what might be the reasons for the actions (or reactions) of a ToM or what might be the actions a ToM is contemplating.

While most frequently we are interested in the TF/A of narrative figures, TF/A can also be those of the writer making writerly choices. There may even be times when it is appropriate to target oneself as a sort of third-person reader responding to the narrative.

Although listed as three words, thoughts, feelings, and

actions arise from, cause, and otherwise shape one another so completely that it usually is counter-productive to focus on just one. For our interpretive projects, it is usually most effective to discuss them collectively.

That being said, in a more granular way of contemplating the three, thoughts and feelings stand apart from actions in that we can only speculate on the thoughts and feelings of narrative figures or the author, while actions taken occur in an external environment. The slash in the abbreviation is meant to represent this internal/external split.

tolerance

To facilitate diversity and liveliness of discussion, a student's attitude in all ways should be welcoming towards the ideas and observations that another student is offering. Additionally, students should never belittle the language abilities of other students by showing off linguistic knowledge or criticizing those abilities.

▷ ToM — see: theory of Mind (ToM) / mindreading

ToM, narrative figures (characters), and people

When we are imagining what are, or were, or might be the thoughts, feelings of actions of someone, whether that be a real person who has or had an empirical existence or a figure (character) in a narrative, we are constructing a ToM: "that person probably will …." "that person probably now feels." We may or may not be able to articulate the reasons why we have thus concluded and we may or may not have confidence in our conclusion, but generally speaking we will construct these ToM frequently, casually, and more or less accurately.

In this way, ToM should be viewed as an aspect of a narrative figure or person—its internal thoughts, feelings, and reasons for actions. (If someone is confronted by a tiger, that person will probably run away. The event, from the perspective of creating a ToM, is uninteresting. If, however, the person decided instead to leap towards the tiger and wrestle with it, our brain kicks into action remaking the generic ToM, looking for explanations of the behavior. “That person has a death wish.” “That person has an over-confident attitude towards her strength.” “That isn’t a person, it is some sort of spirit in human form.” We look for plausible explanations (try to “make sense” of the narrative). In this way, in this course, our discussions of ToM, narrative figures, and real people overlap over the issue of explaining thoughts including strategic calculations, hopes & expectations, actions & reactions, and/or feelings / states-of-mind.

Additionally, because of my affinity to Melanie Klein’s way of seeing how we relate to the world (Object Relations Theory), I do not see a great deal of difference between *how* we contemplate a narrative figure and some real person in our life. Naturally, the value we place in the two is different and, of course, the real person can do all sorts of things that a narrative figure cannot. But at the level of puzzling out what someone is thinking and what a narrative figure is thinking, I do not see a great deal of difference. At least when the topic is looking for cultural influences.

Finally, English strongly affords the subjects and objects of a sentence with substantiality: “The main narrative figure of *Flying Daggers* is caught between her love for two men—this figure is plagued with split loyalties” versus “The main woman of *Flying Daggers* is caught between her love for two men—she is plagued with split loyalties.” The second sentence is much easier to work with although there is accuracy in the first sentence through its reminding us that the woman is fictional. In fact, stories become “real” to us as we forget that we are

reading about fictional entities. We suspend reality to enter the reality of the narrative. In this way, the use of pronouns and designations such as “person” “woman” “man” when discussing figures in a film treats narrative figures as real people and this can be useful, and is quite natural, even if, ultimately, inaccurate.

In terms of the confusion between these terms “ToM,” “figure,” and “person,” I offer as a working solution for the purposes of this class that we do not worry too much about these crossovers between them. We keep in mind that in most cases we are probably actually talking about ToM. When we need to call attention to a specific aspect of the situation, it is best we use the correct term. For example, “My professor is an important narrative figure in my life” means something entirely different than, “My professor in important in my life.” We should ask ourselves why that person has gone out of his or her way to use the term. Similarly, “I see that Jin is sad, but I can’t understand why” seems like a reasonable way to talk about the ToM of a character in a film without using the more precise “I am having some difficulty constructing a plausible ToM for the narrative figure named Jin.”

In short, I would suggest that we remain aware of our language but not be too wooden in the deployment of the more technical terms “ToM” and “figure.” Finally, I find “figure” and “character” to be, basically, synonyms in the way I use them. You might hear either one, and whichever you use will sound nature in the parlance of this course.

ToM’s position about self-in-world

Broadly speaking, a ToM’s thought, feelings, and actions (TF/A) are very likely to be better understood if you know its position about “self-in-world” for a given situation. By “self-in-world” I mean, broadly, one of the following three positions.

> **Context (cosmic or social)-first**, where the ToM puts great value on context, whether something cosmic such as "fate" or something more immediately at hand such as the needs or pressures of a social group or a multiplicity of social groups or even combinations of social groups and cosmic elements. The ToM affirms the value and/or power of its complex context.
>
> **God (or other)-first**, (devotion, loyalty, obsession) where the ToM expends single-minded attention towards a singular entity whether that be God or a god, an institution, or an individual. Devotion, loyalty, and obsession are some ways to describe the position. (Obsession suggests a state-of-mind outside the control of the ToM, the other's may or may not be position freely chosen.
>
> **Self-first**, where the ToM views its own needs, desires or intentions to have higher priority than that of others. Modern individualism is in this category.

Why a ToM selects one of these may be for a wide range of reasons that derive from natural feeling cultural positions to strategic choices. We are most interested in the cultural dispositions.

PASSIVE-VS-ACTIVE APPROACHES TO SITUATIONS

Depending on the mix of the three above, the ToM is likely to perceive a need to match to a context or sees an opportunity to change the context. We can use our analysis along these lines to describe in a neutral, non-judgmental way whether an action is passive (disengages from or works with a context) or active (attempts to alter the situation).

MODERATION ↔? PASSION

That being said, the above calculations and reactions occur, in my opinion, almost always in a context of the ToM's view of whether moderation is superior to passion or whether passion is superior to moderation. Again, this is context-bound of

course (is one is being chased by a bear it is better to run with all your passion than with moderation) but in ambiguous situations predispositions may well come into play ("I would rather to be loved a little more softly by you than this constant, tearful, passionate love that you have for me" vs "You are never jealous—I think you don't really care").

ORDERLINESS ↔? CHAOS

Similarly, ToM's attitude towards whether orderliness is beneficial or oppressive, and whether disruption, chaos, or anarchy is useful or to be suppressed, will almost certainly be another key element.

With these four in mind (the three ways to relate to context, attitudes towards passive and active approaches, attitudes towards the value of moderate or passionate state-of-mind and behavior, attitudes towards the merit of orderliness and chaos) we consider the status of various traditional worldviews and values. In a contemporary context, these various elements have likely blended to the point that deciding which is in play have no real interpretive value. But this is not always the case, and some clarity about the original positions gives us an expanded and more nuanced vocabulary for analysis and the conclusions that might derive from it.

Daoism: non-action/ *wuwei* (无为・無為) cosmic harmony

For the purposes of this course, *wuwei* (无为・無為) refers to the Daoist notion of "non-action" where harmonizing with the deep conditions of a situation is considered wise and which often means allowing the situation to develop on its own rather the proactively push a course of action. When filtered through Buddhism, especially Japanese Buddhism, it means "no-self" or enlightened and free action. In modern societies is often means "patience is good, waiting is often a valuable action" but also leads to overvaluing passive stances.

Confucianism: social harmony/ *he* (和)

Social harmony is a key element of Confucian ethics. It seeks

and orderly social structure where each member knows his or her proper place within the society according to the basic relationships (the "five bonds"), respect for authority, **propriety** (**li** 礼・禮), **self-restraint** (**jie** 节・節), reciprocity, and so on. Implicit in the system is that social order is more important than personal happiness but that, with good social order personal happiness is also enabled. Fulfilling one's **duty** (**yi** 义・義) is part of upholding harmony but hiding what would be disruptive behavior is also, in practice, a part of upholding harmony as well. For example, disorderly conduct (such as having an affair when married) is never truly welcome but it is more unwelcome when not hidden from others. It can be considered wise, even considerate, to keep one's negative thoughts to oneself. Confession for purposes of forgiveness is possible, but it is more strongly supported in Christian cultural circles. It might be better not to expose one's actual crimes or "crimes of the heart." Extreme actions, not "knowing one's place," highly selfish actions, immoderate behavior, insubordination, deviant behavior, minority opinions, all things along these lines might be looked upon sternly as disharmonious.

Japanese social harmony / *wa* (和)

While much of what is said about Confucian social harmony is appropriate under this category as well, the intense "groupness" of social units in Japan leads to a somewhat different affective response to disharmonious behavior as not just incorrect but truly threatening and, perhaps, even personally threatening. The positive virtues of harmony perhaps also have more of an affective content of "comforting" or "reassuring" on top of the more principle-based "it is the right thing to do."

Buddhism: no-self/ detachment (无無・我無)

A central doctrine of Buddhism is that there is no true, substantive, ontologically stable self but rather only the illusion

that one has a self. This illusory belief leads to suffering as we tend to the needs and wants of a self that does not, in fact, exist. Insight into this "truth" leads to enlightenment and stops the arising of suffering related to it. Setting aside whether there is actually such a thing as enlightenment, most who accept either in part or in full Buddhist teachings around no-self will consider that one way to reduce or escape suffering is to assume an attitude of detachment to worldly things, situations, even one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Buddhism: Middle Way

If we were interested in Buddhist doctrine, an understanding of the "Middle Way" would be a complex endeavor. This is one of the first of Buddhist doctrinal positions and has been debated as to its meaning ever since. For example, in the case of Mahayana Buddhism the debate is around the meaning of "emptiness" (sunyata), looking back to Nagarjuna's dialectic that positions "emptiness" as neither existence nor non-existence (a description that presupposes that there is such a thing as existence, which he denies). However, while such doctrinal scaffolding manifests in cultural awareness, by far the most common way of thinking about the Middle Way of Buddhism is as an proscription for behavior: be moderate in all things, neither wish for too much or wish for too little, be neither indulgent nor an ascetic in your approach to life. In other words, Buddhism as practiced in a social environment usual evokes images of moderate, reasonable behavior and a balanced lifestyle.

Current major religions originating in the Middle East: action-oriented righteousness / **fighting for what is right**

All the Abrahamic religions that developed in the Middle East (Judaism, Islam, Christianity) believe that the religious follower is obligated to fight to change immoral contexts. These religions take the view, fundamentally, that God's kingdom of heaven is the ultimate model for human societies. When a social situation

is immoral or too far from the heavenly model, it is considered proper (or incumbent) to take action that will bring change. Again, it is not that reform is not a part of Eastern thought systems but action is more likely measured against the context and the element of action as a representative of divine intent is absent.

topical intensity

This refers to the degree of involvement of a worldview or value, from the ToM's perspective. Does the ToM constantly think about how dangerous the world is? That might be a great degree of topical intensity about a certain worldview. Does the ToM seem to be callous towards others? That could be a low level of intensity, even if, at the level of the film overall (director ToM) the topic is very intense and it is just that this figure is an example of not being considerate when the value at the level of the film is “One should be considerate to others.” When a value is rejected, that is not low intensity. When it is ignored that might be: If is seems not to be a topic of the film, unnoticed, not discussed or presented, that is very low intensity. However, when the topic seems to be floating about in the film but the negative figures ignore it, it has high intensity at the level of the film but low intensity at the level of the narrative figures. Thus, there is absence of the topic (a neutral position) and *conspicuous* absence (absent when the expectation is that is should be present but it is being ignored).

▷ traditional — see: “premodern” and “traditional”

▷ true love — see: models of “true love”

▷ *urami* — see: *han, hen, urami*

▷ values — see: worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values, common practices and other situational considerations

white noise

Functionally speaking—that is, in terms of achieving “good” interpretation that offers a more complete cultural understanding through the contexts of a ToM’s thoughts, feelings, and actions / reactions—white noise is any or all prominent features of an instance that are important for understanding the non-culturally specific basics of the ToM’s situation, but in their prominence and familiarity distract us from finding more nuanced cultural insight.

worldviews (social and cosmic), ethical values, common practices (WV/CP)

Abbreviated as WV/CP, following the same model as SO/M and TF/A.

worldviews

Worldviews are assertions or notions of how the world *works* (in contrast to how we should *behave*). A worldview might assert something about how the Universe itself works (cosmic worldviews) or more specifically about the makeup of human nature (social worldviews). Worldviews are highly influential because they tend to be widely held among members of a

cultural group and are often unnoticeable. If the group is self-aware of the worldview, it is usually relatively unassailable. Worldviews invite participatory resistance on the part of readers and viewers if the worldview does not match well with their own; it is, therefore, one of the ways we feel or can discover differences in culture.

ethical values

Ethical values proscribe behavior—they tell members of a cultural group what they *should* do. Some are more insistent than others in whether or not to submit to or otherwise affirm and uphold the value. Some stand merely as ideals; others are strongly asserted by and policed by the culture (if the proscription against something as represented by a value is exceptionally strong, it might be called a “taboo”). This article is a good overview of what an ethical value is: Wikipedia contributors, “Value (ethics),” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,* accessed February 22, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_(ethics).

In other words, *worldviews state **how things** *are*, **how things work** (what are the *expected cause-and-effect chains*) while *values state **what** *should be done* and indicate cultural pressure to *behave* in certain ways.

It can be difficult to separate these two, since ethical values are founded on worldviews. “Because people have a tendency to lie, the right thing to do is tell the truth.” The first half of this sentence is a social worldview. The second half of the statement is a social value because of this view since if everyone always told the truth there would be no need, fundamentally, to have an ethical value that insists on it.

common practices

Common practices may or may not be fairly labeled as an element of a culture, depending of what is being considered. “Doesn’t everyone keep a 100-dollar bill if they find it on the ground?” might just be a comment on a universal tendency of

humans, or it could be based on one's perception of a specific cultural group. If so, then it is a cultural description. We are not too concerned about this theoretical conundrum of whether or not common practices are always cultural features. Instead, we use the concept of common practice to explain the gap between what is generally considered ethical behavior and what people actually do, based on their belief that the majority of people would do the same. This helps us from over-applying ethical values or ethical ideals in our interpretations.

situations (strategic) considerations

In addition to the above, it is normal reading practice to consider the situation and the strategies that might best work in that situation. We embed what we believe a ToM needs or wants in a situation, then calculate plausible possible thoughts, feelings or actions (TF/A). Situational factors are often the single most powerful element in determining ToM content. Even so, we set this aside and look further into the situation to analyze what might not be primarily derivative of the situation but is still worthy of consideration.

examples

Some examples of the above categories:

- "I will have bad karma if I keep this money" — sounds like a cosmic worldview.
- "No one tries to return money found on the ground" — sounds like a social worldview.
- "One should try to return money, if found" — sounds like an ethical principle.
- "I don't need to try to find the owner of this money because most people would just keep it" — sounds like common practice.
- "I can keep this money because no one saw me pick it up" —

sounds like a strategic consideration (part of our "other situational considerations.")

wuwei

For the purposes of this course, *wuwei* (无为・無為) refers to the Daoist notion of "no-action" where harmonizing with the deep conditions of a situation is considered wise and which often means allowing the situation to develop on its own rather the proactively push a course of action. When filtered through Buddhism, especially Japanese Buddhism, it means "no-self" or enlightened and free action. In modern societies is often means "patience is good, waiting is often a valuable action" but also leads to overvaluing passive stances.

▷ WV/CP — see: worldviews (cosmic and social), ethical values / common practices (WV/CP)

"X" and "X"-like"

In the pursuit of accurate terminology we use the suffix "-like" to create a distinction between something that is, say, Buddhism, and something that seems to be intended to make one reference Buddhism in some way but might only be in the guise of it, or reminds you as the interpreter of Buddhism but whether it is reasonable to associate that something with Buddhism is unclear or undecidable. So, as another example, if I say "Matsumoto seems to have sacrificed his whole way of being in order to devote himself to the mental damaged Sawako in the vein of a Christian-like love" I am raising the issue as to whether or not Christian values or relevant. I think they might be but either I am not sure or I am not sure the director or Matsumoto consciously make this connection. On the other

hand, if I say “Matsumoto displays Christian love when he decides to sacrifice his whole way of being in order to support the mental damaged Sawako” then I am claiming Matsumoto consciously and unambiguously views his action as Christian.

▷ *xiao* (filial piety 孝) — see: Models of selfless, giving love, also see terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

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▷ *wa* (和) — see: ToM’s position about self-in-world

▷ *wuwei* / non-action (无为・無為) — see: ToM’s position about self-in-world

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▷ *xin* (信) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

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▷ *zhong* (忠) — see: terms for attachment, loyalty, monogamy, dependency

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