

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

The Spirit Wanders with Things: A Literary Post-Phenomenology

Jonathan Bratt

Arizona State University

Abstract:

This essay articulates a post-phenomenology of literary production. I draw on the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur to give an account of the emergence of literature from a world of experience, while transforming this hermeneutics from a phenomenological one to a post-phenomenological one. I join Ricoeur in seeking to reconstruct the 'entire arc of operations by which practical experience provides itself with works, authors, and readers' (1990: 53). I diverge from Ricoeur, however, in imagining authors and readers not primarily as interpreters of texts and the worlds that prefigure them, but as bound up with texts and worlds through rhythmic encounters and immersions. In this account, authors write and readers read 'with' texts, and, in the acts of writing and reading, texts impel responses, so that author, reader, and work undergo mutual transformation. This literary post-phenomenology thus joins critiques of modernism that seek to displace author and reader as absolute determinants of textual meaning; at the same time, it accounts for subjects as embodied and affective rather than narrowly cognitive and interpretive, and expands the pre-subjective conditions of literature's emergence from the social and the cultural to the more-than-human and the cosmic. To enact this literary post-phenomenology I draw on a variety of sources, including a number of early Chinese-language texts on literary theory, whose ideas I argue are strongly evocative of contemporary post-phenomenology.

Keywords: literature; posthumanism; postphenomenology; production; rhythm; subjectivity.

Author contact: jbratt@asu.edu

Introduction

This essay articulates a post-phenomenology of literary production. I draw on the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur to give an account of the emergence of literature from a world of experience, while transforming this hermeneutics from a phenomenological one to a post-phenomenological one. Post-phenomenology responds to a perceived persistence of a pre-experiential subject among the central concepts of its predecessor, seeking instead to displace this subject from its ontology (e.g. Ihde 1995; Adams 2007). While post-phenomenology is a diverse endeavor, James Ash and Paul Simpson identify a number of key elements among its manifestations in the field of geography: a focus on the body, a notion of inter-subjectivity rather than one of subjectivity opposed to objectivity, and an emphasis on the autonomy and agency of non-human entities. Geography, they note, has particularly sought to excise from post-phenomenology its remaining traces of intentionality, the idea that ‘an experience is an experience of something’ by ‘an intentional subject in advance of experience’ (2016: 53). In place of the pre-existing subject of phenomenology, post-phenomenological thought tends to posit the emergence of experience from embodied interaction with agentive worlds. Such thinking has already inspired geographic work across a variety of registers (e.g. McCormack 2002; Anderson and Wylie 2009; Simpson 2009; Spinney 2015).

Western literary theory echoes this critique of phenomenology in its twentieth-century attempts to displace the author from his privileged position in literary production (e.g. Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946; Rosenblatt 1968; Barthes 1977; Iser 1978; Foucault 1980; Derrida 1982). Roland Barthes declares ‘the death of the author’ to be a symptom of this critique. He notes modernism’s associations of the literary work with its ‘Author-God’ and of the meaning of this work with the intent of the author, and instead argues that a work emerges from the ‘innumerable centres of culture’ that constitute its literary-historical context. Authors are simply those who ‘mix’ the writings of a tradition, while readers are the ultimate determinant of meaning: ‘a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination’ (1977: 146-8). Ricoeur himself joins Barthes in seeking to rend text from author:

The theory of the text is a good guide. It shows that the act of subjectivity is less what starts than what completes. This conclusive act could be expressed as appropriation (*Zueignung*). It does not pretend, as does romantic hermeneutics, to rejoin the original subjectivity which carried the meaning of the text. It *responds* instead to the thing of the text. It is therefore the counterpart of distantiating which established the text in its own autonomy in relation to the author, to its situation, and to its original destination (1975: 94).

Because reading is an appropriation of and response to an autonomous text, Ricoeur states that the hermeneutic task is to ‘discern the “thing” of the text’ rather than ‘the psychology of the author’ (1975: 93). His hermeneutic phenomenology, moreover, seeks to elucidate how interpretation of a text derives from a reader’s historical participation in an *epoche*, an *epoche* which determines the relationship between experience and language in

its shaping of 'the whole of our aesthetic and historical experiences' (99). History, in other words, conditions not only the act of writing, as argued by Barthes, but also the act of reading and interpretation, in that it sets the conditions by which a text as language can function: 'The *epoche* is the virtual event, the fictional act which begins the entire game by which we exchange signs for things, signs for other signs, uttered signs for received signs' (97). Ricoeur thus devotes the opening section of his three-volume work *Time and Narrative* to explicating how our ability to comprehend the 'thing' of narrative derives from our phenomenological experience of time.

In this way, Ricoeur figures the reader's interaction with a text to be an act of interpretation that is 'coextensive to a historical tradition' (1975: 90). Reading is a subjective reflection on a text's 'meaning' informed by 'artistic, historic, and linguistic experience' (100). Ricoeur's phenomenology, along with Barthes' account of authorship, therefore remains fundamentally humanist and cognitive, positing an exchange of symbols conditioned by a stream of social interaction and cultural production. While the text may be freed from the pre-given intentionality of authors and readers, it remains a byproduct of these authors and readers' societies and cultures.

In this paper I suggest that a post-phenomenological orientation can shift our pre-conceptions about the conditions under which literature emerges, replacing accounts of subjects, traditions, and interpretations with accounts of movements, embodied interactions, and co-constitutions. Angharad Saunders calls for a similar orientation in accounts of literary practice: 'There is a need to move beyond the artifacts of writing to assess more fully the immediacy of writing as an embodied practice, yet this must be alive to the doubtfulness of retrieving literary practice solely in terms of the practice of putting pen to paper' (2010: 446). This shift reimagines literature's relations with authors, readers, and worlds as dynamic and more-than-symbolic, and incites reconsideration of the implications of a text's autonomous thingness. In this way, post-phenomenological literary theory returns the work to the world through a foregrounding of literature's more-than-human dimensions.

Such a shift also offers an approach to the spatialization of literary theory pushed by a growing body of literary geography (e.g. Saunders 2010; Alexander 2015). For some, such spatialization goes beyond accounts of space in narrative (e.g. Friedman 1993) to explore the participation of 'a broad array of people, places, times, contexts, networks, and communities' in literary production and reception (Hones 2008: 1301). Echoing the geographical post-phenomenology summarized by Ash and Simpson, Jon Anderson calls for an 'assemblage approach' by which literary geographers 'identify all components that have agency and influence in fiction (including authors, translators, publishers, readers, places etc.)' (2016: 3). Drawing on strands of actor-network theory, Anderson emphasizes the relationality of literary production and reception, arguing that a spatialized literary theory 're-articulates the associations that bring a book into being, and goes on to contribute to its nature and meaning over time' (5). In this approach, the world of the work encompasses a variety of agents joined into spatialized assemblages in which no agent escapes interaction with and influence by the others. Joanne Sharp similarly calls for attention to the 'context' of literary production, analyses of which 'require an understanding of the positionality of the author, rather than seeking all

meaning from the text itself' (2000: 332). The literary post-phenomenology articulated here hews closely to such ideas, while seeking to supplement the role of 'intentions of writing (or reading) ... generated within social contexts' (Anderson 2016: 7) with a strong sense of the more-than-human agency bound up in literary events.

To enact this literary post-phenomenology I draw on a number of sources, including the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the cybernetic theory of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, and the rhythmic poetics of Henri Meschonnic. I also draw on the writings of several early Chinese literary theorists, whose work resonates with contemporary post-phenomenology. The most notable of these theorists is Liu Xie (465-520), whose text *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* is among the most well-known Chinese-language works of literary theory (Liu 1959; Cai 2001). Written in a formative period of classical Chinese literature, *The Literary Mind* is a collection of fifty essays on a dizzying array of literature-related topics, ranging from literary history to writing technique. Emerging from several of the essays is a relational theory of literary production that emphasizes the author's affective interaction with the cosmos as a key step in the writing process. I also draw briefly on *The Poetic Exposition on Literature* by Lu Ji (261-303) and a later work *The Origins of Poetry* by Ye Xie (1627-1703), texts which articulate accounts of relational literary production similar to those found in *The Literary Mind*. Through these texts I suggest a broader post-phenomenological orientation in much medieval Chinese-language literary theory, one which can inform contemporary literary thought. What I do not draw on here are specific illustrative works of literature. If the nature of a text is inseparable from its interaction with author, reader, and world, then no account of a text-in-itself is possible, and I choose not to let my interactions stand in for others' here (cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley 1949). Readers might instead create their own illustrations through observations of their interactions with this or other texts.

Ricoeur on Time and Narrative

Ricoeur's work *Time and Narrative* takes as its topic the relation between its title's two terms, time and narrative. For Ricoeur, a distinct logic defines each of the terms: for time, this logic is one of succession, 'one thing after another'; for narrative, this logic is one of causality, 'one thing because of another' (1990: 41). Each logic, moreover, makes the other intelligible: 'Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience' (3). This correlation between time and narrative is the starting point for Ricoeur's hermeneutics of literary narrative. If narrative in literature emerges from the human experience of time, then this experience must be accounted for in explanations of narrative. Ricoeur calls for hermeneutics 'to reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering, to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their acting.' Among these 'opaque depths' is the experience of time, which is crucial as a condition for the establishment of a narrative work. Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics thus moves beyond a simple semiotics in which 'the only operative concept is that of the literary text' (53).

To account for the time-narrative relationships, Ricoeur lays out a three-step process through which narrative literature comes into experience. Drawing on the Aristotelian concept of mimesis as 'the arts of composition,' and opposing this concept to the Platonic concept of mimesis as imitation (1990: 34), Ricoeur labels these three steps mimesis1, mimesis2, and mimesis3. Each step comprises a relation between two actants: for mimesis1, these are author and world; for mimesis2, these are author and text; for mimesis3, these are reader and text.

Mimesis1 is a process of 'prefiguration' whereby an author's 'preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character' preconditions that author's act of literary composition (1990: 54). This prefiguration involves understanding both of the semantics of action and of the diachrony of narrative. First, the semantics of action allows the distinguishing of 'the domain of action from that of physical movement' through the interpretation of human movement in terms of agents and goals. The term 'semantics' here derives from Geertz's characterization of actions as symbols to be read by others, or a 'texture' that mediates action and ritual system (57-8). In other words, movement becomes action insofar as we recognize movement as having some meaning or motivation. Second, the diachrony of narrative allows the distinguishing of individual actions from both 'the total action constitutive of the narrated story' and this story's 'irreducibly diachronic character' (54-6). Ricoeur illustrates this link between action and narrative with Heidegger's linking of 'Care' and 'being-within-time.' For Heidegger, our Care, or 'preoccupation' with the world, implies our capacity 'to reckon with time and, as a consequence of this, to calculate'; thus, 'the existential now is determined by the present of preoccupation, which is a "making-present," inseparable from "awaiting" and "retaining"' (62-3).

Following from this prefiguration of the author's understanding, mimesis2 is a process of 'configuration' whereby the author integrates the events of a story into a meaningful whole. Ricoeur also refers to this process as 'emplotment,' an 'operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession' (1990: 65). Key to mimesis2 is its mediating function between mimesis1 and mimesis3, or 'between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work,' and thus between the time of human experience and the narrative of literature (53). In an author's act of emplotment a logic of action informs her integration of heterogeneous events into a story, with the story thus made intelligible and followable by its continuous linking of causes and effects. Ricoeur likens this configuring function of emplotment to the synthesizing or 'schematizing' function of Kant's productive imagination. Like Kant's schematism, emplotment 'engenders a mixed intelligibility' between the intellectual and the intuitive, or between the 'thought' of a story and the individual events and actors that comprise it (68).

Completing the compositional act, mimesis3 is the process of 'refiguration' whereby the reader 'actualizes [the story's] capacity to be followed.' Refiguration mirrors configuration as an active process that brings together various actions as a single plot: 'If emplotment can be described as an act of judgment and of the productive imagination, it is so insofar as this act is the joint work of the text and reader, just as Aristotle said that sensation is the common work of sensing and what is sensed.' Ricoeur refers to a written

work as a 'sketch for reading' that must be followed and completed by the reader (1990: 76). This following and completion is possible in that a logic of action is shared by both text and reader, is 'both constructed in the piece and exercised by the spectator' (49). While the author may place the 'burden of emplotment' on the reader through misleading narrative devices, the act of reading is ultimately pleasureable: 'This pleasure of recognition, in turn, is the fruit of the pleasure the spectator takes in the composition as necessary or probable' (49, 77). A reader, then, is not simply a passive recipient of an author's configured work, but rather must re-produce the narrative structure of the literary work through active engagement with the text.

Ricoeur's mimetic theory thereby comprises an 'entire arc of operations by which practical experience provides itself with works, authors, and readers' (1990: 53). As such Ricoeur's approach is deeply phenomenological, concerned with 'practical experience' as the basis for literary narrative. He rejects a semiotic approach to literature in favor of an 'extralinguistic' one, in which 'reference' is not signification but rather 'the experience [a literary work] brings to language and, in the last analysis, the world and the temporality it unfolds in the face of this experience.' This ontologization of language, moreover, is 'the counterpart of a prior and more originary notion, starting from our experience of being in the world and in time, and proceeding from this ontological condition toward its expression in language' (78-9). Identifying himself with a phenomenological tradition extending from Augustine to Heidegger, Ricoeur depicts authors and readers as actors in and synthesizers of the worlds around them, including the worlds of text.

At the same time, a certain disembodied subjectivism persists in *Time and Narrative*, a notion that the world is made of interpretants and that authors and readers are primarily interpreters. Ricoeur starts with 'movement' as the condition of the temporal world (1990: 57-58), but the subject itself does not move, instead simply figuring that worldly motion into something semantic and logical. We might ask, then, how Ricoeur's theory might proceed if we start from a different set of propositions. What if the preconditional movement of a world sweeps up the authors of literature, moving them along with it? What if authors and readers consist of both minds and bodies, and what if worlds and works are actors as much as human subjects are? What if movement retains its force and vitality in the face of our attempts to reduce it to time? In other words, what would a post-phenomenology of literature look and feel like? In place of three mimetic activities, I offer three movements.

Movement 1

故思理为妙。神与物游。神居胸臆。而志气统其关键。物沿耳目。而辞令管其枢机。枢机方通。则物无隐貌。关键将塞。则神有遁心。

When thought is subtle, the spirit wanders with things. The spirit dwells in the breast, and intent and *qi* hold the key to its gate. Things move along with the ear and eye, and language controls their doorway. When passage is allowed, then nothing is hidden. When there is blockage, then the spirit's mind is concealed.

Liu Xie (26.1)

We begin with movement. Or, more precisely, we move with movement, with a moving world. The with-ness of this moving-with is key. We may move toward, but that which we move toward continues also to move with us. Stephen Owen comments on Liu's language while linking Liu's notion of authorship with a notion of sagacity, the latter notion being a more general feature of various early Confucian and Daoist texts:

The "with" (*yu* 与) is an essential relation. When writing on the idea of the sage, it was often said that the Sage is "with" things; that is, the Sage neither loses himself in things nor does he see them as mere objects, but rather he participates 'with them.' Commentators often speak of this passage in "Spirit Thought" as the fusion (*chiao-jung* [jiao-tong] 交通) between self and scene, a union prized in late poetics; certainly that later notion of the mutual determination of self and other is an outgrowth of the values implicit here.... It is essential to recognize that the writer in the condition of spirit thought is not merely knowing or observing; he is "sharing" in a system of things (1992: 203).

In Liu's passage, taken from *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, subtle 'spirit thought' denotes a state of immanence more than one of transcendence, a participation in a dynamic world of things that sets off language as a passage. The two keys to passage are 'intent' (*zhi* 志) and *qi*. Liu's intent, however, is not the same as Augustine's *intentio* or Heidegger's *sein zum*. This intent, writes Owen, is 'involuntary' and 'prearticulate'; it is 'that to which the mind goes' and is a corollary of being 'stirred up by something in the external world' (1992: 28). *Qi* is a body's vital force or energy, and, according to Liu, must be preserved through quietude and ease in order to achieve 'pure language' (*chunyan* 淳言) that 'follows from intent' (*shuaizhi* 率志) (42.2). Calmness and ease conserve *qi* and prime the self for literary passage; an author's main task is modulation of inner movement. A union of this primed self and the world with which it wanders constitutes the first step in Liu's arc of literary operations.

In this passage we already sense an echo of twentieth-century post-phenomenological thought. Merleau-Ponty, whose work *The Visible and the Invisible* Suzi Adams posits as the 'bridge between phenomenology and post-phenomenology' (2007: 3), declares the body to be a 'thing among things ... caught in the fabric of the world' (2011: 455). For Merleau-Ponty, the body's movement and the world sensed by the body emerge simultaneously. Vision is more than an apprehension of the world, deriving also from the eyes' movement through a world that is itself already mobile. This is true even of the experience of artwork: 'Rather than seeing [a painting], I see according to it, or with it' (456). For Alphonso Lingis, this with-ness of sensation implies that our interaction with a world is foremost a response to it; a world gives itself over to us as an imperative. Neither self nor world determine the other: 'The movements of perception ... are neither reactions and adjustments nor intentional and teleological acts, but responses' (1998: 4). Such responses fundamentally define 'association' with an other (6). For Lingis, a range of 'elements' and 'levels' underpins the worlds we perceive; these

elements and levels both exist independently of perception and allow objects to present themselves to perception (14, 26-7).

In this imaginary, author and world move together; subject with subject, or object and object, one with the other, simultaneously distinct and related. Each are 'subjective and objective both at once' (James 1912: 10). The two interact and influence in their movement, but neither movement starts with or depends on the other. One conceptual model for such relational thingness is Maturana and Varela's notion of 'autopoiesis.' Maturana and Varela describe living entities as autopoietic or self-generating machines (1980: 78-9). For them, an autopoietic machine exists at the phenomenal level only through its own organization and production of self, and has no purpose or function outside of this organization and production (85-6). It continuously changes but not towards any end. Liu Xie finds in the world a similar characteristic, *ziran* (自然), or 'self-so':

人稟七情。应物斯感。感物吟志。莫非自然。

People have seven emotions. In responding to things there is sensing. With sensing things there is singing of that to which the mind goes. All of this is self-so (6.2).

A correlate of the with-ness of author and world is their self-generation, their mutual independence of that with which each exists. Independence, however, does not imply disconnection or disharmony: 'A universe comes into being when a space is severed into two. A unity is defined' (Maturana and Varela 1980: 73). Maturana and Varela argue that autopoietic machines may be coupled together into autopoietic systems. In coupling together, machines mutually interact and modify, becoming a 'second-order' union: 'Autopoietic systems can couple and constitute a new unity while their individual paths of autopoiesis become reciprocal sources of specification of each other's ambience.... The coupling remains invariant while the coupled systems undergo structural changes selected through the coupling' (108). Second-order unions, in other words, enact the 'mutual determination of self and other' that we find in Liu Xie's account of spirit wandering. Maturana and Varela's explication of autopoiesis thus provides stimulus for a post-phenomenological literary theory in which author and world are each subject in processes of literary production.

Through this coupling and change, the motion of author and world persists; '物色之动。心亦摇焉。The colors of things move, the mind also shakes,' Liu declares (46.1). Passage and influence are never simply from world to author or vice versa, but always move and modify both. A relation of between-ness, note Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, starts from a middle: '*Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle' (1987: 25). Autopoietic machines are kinematic machines, nudged by their ambience in certain directions but never determined by it.

Being kinematic, autopoietic machines are also rhythmic machines. The movements of coupled authors and worlds are marked by rhythms. Just as Ricoeur moves away from the Platonic version of mimesis, however, we move away from the Platonic version of *rythmos* and instead join Emile Benveniste in recovering rhythm's pre-Platonic denotation:

Benveniste demonstrates that *rythmos* is related to *rein*, to flow, and that this is never used for the sea but for a river. *Rythmos* therefore originally referred to a constant flowing movement and not to the alternating tidal ebb and flow. The meaning of *rythmos* was consequently the activity of giving form but with the particularity of being form in movement, without organic consistency, and always subject to change. (Pajevic 2011: 305)

Rhythm, then, is bound up in autopoiesis, the kinematic self-generation of form that meets and couples with other kinematic self-generations of form. What is constant is the flow rather than the meter, the meeting rather than the endpoint: 'When we talk about rhythm, we are not talking about regularity or measure but about form without fixed consistency, form assumed in a single moment' (Pajevic 2011: 306). While the correlate of coupling is rhythmic movement, the unity of the coupled system in a 'state of health' lies in the eurythmia of its constituent first-order machines (Lefebvre 2004: 16). It is rhythm that gives this interaction a consistency, territorializing it as a coupled system (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 313-4). In other words, rhythm is that by which a coherent yet dynamic entity remains in assembly with other dynamic entities. A unity of author and world therefore depends on a unity of their rhythms, a unity of their kinematic self-generations. This does not require that they move in step, so to speak, but simply that their respective movements do not distort or repel the other or lead toward 'fatal disorder' (Lefebvre 2004: 16). The pre-Platonic notion of rhythm also implies that literary rhythm does not belong exclusively to poetry, or to any work or genre in particular. Rhythm as form in movement is implicated in all literary couplings.

In short, a coupling of author and world as kinematic, rhythmic, autopoietic machines preconditions the operation of literary production. Author and world are both dynamic and mutually condition the other. The texture of a world is not only interpretant but also affect, movement in itself rather than movement as object of understanding or schematization. An author's experience 'of' a world is simultaneously experience 'with' a world, and she cannot but be caught up in the movement of the world around her. In her association with a world, an author achieves a state of eurythmia, both gaining a feel for and participating in its motion and rhythm.

Movement 2

是以诗人感物。联类不穷。流连万象之际。沉吟视听之区。写气图貌。既随物以宛转。属采附声。亦与心而徘徊。

As the poets sense things, there is an endless association of ideas. They linger among the images of the world, they are absorbed in the places they see and hear. They write the appearances of *qi*, even as they twist and turn along with things. They join colors and match sounds, even as they linger with their mind.

Liu Xie (46.2)

A second coupling transpires, a coupling between author and work. This coupling remains unified with our first coupling, forming a three-fold unity of world, author, and work. 'If,' writes Ricoeur, 'we are to talk of a 'mimetic displacement' or a quasi-metaphorical 'transposition' from ethics to poetics, we have to conceive of mimetic activity as a connection and not just as a break' (1990: 47). A connection or a coupling joins each machine in the literary process, fashioning a literary assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 23; Anderson 2016).

At this point a work joins the flow of a world. For Liu Xie and his contemporaries, literary works were manifestations of the cosmos, with which an author plays a conducive role. Indeed, the Chinese term for literature, *wen* (文), also carries the meaning of 'weaving' and is used as a term denoting 'pattern' or 'patterning.' Literature is an act of patterning in the same way that a world is such an act; as Liu declares, '文之为德也大矣。与天地并生者。Wen's capacity is great and it is born with heaven and earth' (1.1). The writing operation corresponds with the worlding operation; the patterns of words correspond with the patterns of colors and sounds (31.2). In *The Origins of Poetry*, Ye Xie similarly links literature to the manifestation of the universe: '文章者。所以表天地万物之情状也。Literary works express the conditions of Heaven, Earth, and the ten-thousand things' (21).

An author, as participant in this cosmos, is not the origin of a literary work, but rather the site of a passage, what Saunders describes as a 'refraction' of the world (2010: 439). In his text *The Poetic Exposition on Literature*, Lu Ji joins Liu Xie in characterizing literary production as movement:

若夫应感之会。通塞之纪。来不可遏。去不可止。藏若景灭。行犹响起。方天机之利。夫何纷而不理。思风发于胸臆。言泉流于唇齿。纷威蕤以馥鹑。唯毫素之所拟。

As for the joining of response and sensation and the occurrence of passage or blockage, that what comes and goes cannot be stopped. It hides as in a shadow and moves as rising sound. The operation of Heaven rushes onward, and nothing is confused or disordered. Winds of thought issue from the breast and streams of words flow through the mouth, flourishing in their varied appearances. Only the tip of the brush can grasp this.

A world, in other words, passes through an author, manifesting itself in the movement of his brush. Inspiration once again becomes respiration, as the author breathes the wind (Merleau-Ponty 2011: 458). 'One writes initially,' Michel Serres proclaims, 'through a wave of music, a groundswell that comes from the background noise, from the whole body, maybe, and maybe from the depths of the world....' (1995: 138). Literary production joins the other workings of the universe, and literary works emerge alongside authors channeling and refracting a world. The author, meanwhile, is unable to halt what passes through him:

[Medieval Chinese literary theorists] describe the stages in a process of coming-to-be, not the relations of a 'maker' to a 'thing made'; there is no analysis of component parts. Although some of the things [Lu Ji] describes in his poetic exposition could be elements of a *technē*, more often composition is made possible by achieving an orderly series of preconditions: background, states of mind, and areas of attention. These preconditions facilitate a thing's coming-to-be, rather than describing the structure or blueprint of the made thing itself. In the Chinese tradition, identifying the stages of a process answers the question of what a phenomenon 'is'. (Owen 1992: 95)

Owen here echoes Ricoeur's foregrounding of the preconditions by which literature comes to be and be experienced, as well as his displacement of author as creator. For both Lu and Serres, a 'background' of cosmic activity lays the groundwork for literary composition.

Heidegger, however, notes that *technē* does not simply denote creation according to a blueprint, as Owen suggests, but rather marks the apprehension of a 'thing's coming to be':

The word *technē* denotes rather a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present, as such. For Greek thought the essence of knowing consists in *aletheia*, that is, in the revealing of beings. It supports and guides all comportment toward beings. *Technē*, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings in that it brings forth what is present as such out of concealment and specifically into the unconcealment of its appearance; *technē* never signifies the action of making.... To create is to let something emerge as a thing that has been brought forth. (2011: 107)

Heidegger joins Ricoeur and Lu in downplaying the intentional action of the writer; a work stands alone as being, while an author lets it come to be. Merleau-Ponty discusses the autonomy of the painting in similar terms:

The world no longer stands before [the painter] through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration

of coming-to-itself of the visible. Ultimately the painting relates to nothing at all among experienced things unless it is first of all 'autofigurative.' (2011: 466)

A literary work takes on its own autopoietic character, participating, as Liu Xie puts it, in the 'self-so *dao*' (1.1). An author as conduit is not an absolute origin, but rather the opposite entity in a coupled author-work system. What she channels, however, is not only a tradition, but also cosmos-being, 'the things of the world.' It is her wandering with a world rather than her interpretation of its actions that facilitates literature's emergence.

A work, moreover, does not remain still as an endpoint of literary production, but rather takes on its own life and motion: 'A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds... Comparative raters of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 3-4). The movement of work with author and world ensures also that their coupling constitutes a eurythmia or a consistency, the rhythm of the work moving with the rhythm of the author. A literary work is both autofigurative and motile, and configures an author even as an author configures it. A poem, writes Henri Meschonnic, is not an object 'made in advance' but rather a 'language-subject' that continually renews. It is a subject in that it is rhythmic, and is 'the language-organisation of the continuum of which we are made' (2011: 164-5). For Meschonnic, a poem organizes language as motion, giving it not an endpoint or resolution but rather form in movement. It does not point to a distant world but rather couples itself to a proximate world: 'Words are not made to designate things. They are there to situate us amongst things. If one sees them as designations, one demonstrates the most impoverished idea of language' (166). Words are not 'made' but are simply 'there' alongside us. Poems are not products but auto-poietic subjects, self-organizations of a language-continuum. Meschonnic calls the poetic operation '*poésie-transformation*,' an operation which 'is actually to act on the poet and on the reader by changing their relationship with the world' (Pajevic 2011: 312). The work, in other words, is an imperative. In return for writing, the work offers a new relation with a new rhythm, an ever-renewed form of organized movement. In this sense, any literary work can be one with what Derek McCormack calls 'an interest in rhythm' (2002).

A work's coupling with author and world conditions its coming-to-be. It is more than a singular thing, instead coming together through 'the associations between writer-reader-page-and-place that form its particular meaning and identity' (Anderson 2016: 6). An author writes with a work, which is a patterning, a streaming, or a revealing, but the author is neither the absolute origin nor the sole determinant of the work. The lines on a page, McCormack exclaims, 'become an effort to *write with* the animating potential of an interest in rhythm, and not only to write an interest in rhythm' (2002: 480). A work, then, emerges not stillborn but with its own being and rhythm, joining in the flow of the cosmos and pushing back against its author (Lingis 1998: 69). In all of this it remains both autonomous and inextricably connected to its ambience.

Movement 3

缀文者情动而辞发。观文者披文以入情。沿波讨源。虽幽必显。

An author's affections stir and words issue forth. A reader opens a work and enters its affections. He moves along with the waves in search of a source. Although the source is hidden, it must become clear.

Liu Xie (48.5)

A third coupling brings together work and reader. A work as language-subject joins a reader as human-subject. The endpoint of literary production is not simply a reader, but a second-order coupling of reader with work. The reader, Liu writes, moves along with the stream's waves, but curiously this downstream movement takes her in search of a source. Perhaps the motion of the waves is the source, a stirring movement as generator and organizer of self that 'must' be revealed to whomever discovers it. Meschonnic would agree:

For rhythm is a subject-form(er). The subject-form(er). That it renews the meaning of things, that it is through rhythm that we reach the sense that we have of our being undone [*défaire*], that everything around us happens as it undoes itself [*défaire*], and that, approaching this sensation of the movement of everything, we ourselves are part of this movement (2011: 165).

The poem as subject is also a subject-former, but this forming process is comprised of eurythmic motion in which the reader as subject joins the movement of the poem and is 'undone.' A poem takes us amongst a world of things and gives us a sensation of their rhythm. 'It makes subjects. Does not stop making subjects. Making you. When it is an activity, not a product' (Meschonnic 2011: 165).

A work and a reader comprise a coupled unity of autopoietic machines, sharing a sense of rhythm as the constant but undulating flow of the cosmos. What is encountered in the work as rhythm is 'not so much a series of lines about moving, but a series of lines *moving about*' (McCormack 2002: 471) and moving with its ambience. Furthermore, at the same time a work sits before the reader as an object of perception, it leads her across its pages through its language-organization. In spite of its physical form, literature, writes Stanley Fish, is a 'kinetic art': 'Somehow when we put a book down, we forget that while we were reading, it was moving (pages turning, lines receding into the past) and forget too that *we* were moving with it' (1970: 140). The page does more than form blank spaces between signifiers (Derrida 1992: 115-6); it is also 'a medium in which ... any space between things [turns] into a path' (Lingis 1998: 30). Literature's spatialization extends right down to the page on which it is written. A text is both a material form of paper and ink, and an axis through which readers orient themselves toward it (82-3).

Emmanuel Levinas, like Lingis, sees art as an imperative; being amongst a world of things necessarily impels response to it. For Levinas, an encounter with an art object is essentially rhythmic and is marked by a 'fundamental passivity':

Our consenting to [rhythms] is inverted into a participation. Their entry into us is one with our entry into them. Rhythm represents a unique situation where we cannot speak of consent, assumption, initiative or freedom, because the subject is caught up and carried away by it. The subject is part of its own representation. It is so not even despite itself, for in rhythm there is no longer a oneself, but rather a sort of passage from oneself to anonymity. (2011: 142)

While Levinas dismisses art as unable to engage with reality and thus as unethical, we might instead recover a sense of ethics that treats the other as an imperative, an imperative that may fly beneath the consciousness and concepts marking our engagement with it (Lingis 1998: 220-2). Rather than being a function of an image estranged from reality, rhythm is constitutive of the other and of our interaction with the other. A reader is impelled to participation with any work-as-other through her rhythmic coupling with it and through its affective impression on her (Esrock 2004, Freer 2015). Through this participation we might even cultivate an attunement to worlds as imperatives, or reach a realization that 'thinking needs eventful encounters from, through and against which to emerge and move' (McCormack 2002: 482).

To apprehend a text, then, a reader engages it with a body. If a text is an imperative, then the reader response it impels imbricates the entire body. Sheila Hones describes the act of reading as involving a 'metageographical beat,' iambic and other rhythms 'generated in the dimension of author-reader space-time' rather than being signified in texts. As Hones argues, 'this rhythmic grounding can be almost hypnotic,' drawing a reader into and through a literary work (2015: 88). Even Barthes, who elsewhere emphasizes the role of culture and tradition in the reader's engagement, admits the importance of the body: 'The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do' (1975: 17). The body, moreover, is itself rhythmic, so that its rhythm and that of a work must constitute a eurythmic coordination in order for their coupling to persist: 'To grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration' (Lefebvre 2004: 27). The reader encounters a literary work, but the work is not only the object of the reader's refiguration. He reads with the work, connecting to it in a mutual transformation of the relation between reader and read. 'A poem happens in the reversibility between a life become language and a language become life' (Meschonnic 2011: 69).

The culmination of our post-phenomenological arc of literary operations is the union of reader and work, in which the reader both perceives and follows the work. Rather than being a passive object, a literary work is an event; 'a text 'happens' when read' (Hones 2008: 1301). Conversely, it is not only authors but also readers who lack pre-established intentionality toward these texts. Reader response is not simply a cognitive or interpretive apprehension of a text (Gallese and Wojciehowski 2011). Rather, a work couples with a reader as a rhythmic imperative for a body in motion, while its language puts us among things.

Conclusion

Post-phenomenology shifts the conditions under which we imagine literature emerges. It melds together post-structuralism's view of the work with post-humanism's view of the non-human, positing the text's autonomy as participant in a more-than-linguistic world. In place of authors and readers interpreting worlds and texts, it imagines each of these as bodies transpiring 'with' the others and joining together into rhythmic unities. It holds that literary works, in their very nature as autonomous and dynamic, impel an interest in rhythm.

In this shift of emphasis, post-phenomenology takes one step further Ricoeur's project to transform the pre-given subject of literary production and reception. The prefiguration of authors becomes a process of embodied interaction with a world that both retains its vitality and impels response. The configuration of works becomes a process whereby authors conduce to written texts that channel the atemporal flow of a world. The refiguration of works becomes a process of texts making readers through rhythmic imbrications. In all three processes, relations of with-ness mean that figurations are mutual, rather than acts of human subjects construing non-human worlds and texts.

Literary post-phenomenology impels a spatialized literary theory that focuses on the associations through which literature emerges. The components of these literary assemblages are manifold and more-than-human, involving a range of dynamic agents beyond our social networks. Such a premise, however, complicates empirical observation of processes of literary production, not to mention acts of textual analysis. One avenue of application might be more attention to places, environments, or atmospheres as agents of figuration. While this could involve interaction with other authors as attempts to understand their productive milieus, it could also impel observation of our own prefigurative associations, and attunements to various actors that comprise the literary assemblages with which we write. At the least, literary post-phenomenology offers a reminder that literary production and reception is an embodied practice involving worlds that are much more than the socio-cultural and the symbolic.

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Note on Language Usage

All translations from Chinese texts are my own. My translations, however, owe much to the guidance of those by Owen (1992) and Shih (Liu 1959). The title 'The spirit wanders with things' comes directly from a translation by Owen (1992: 202). I use the pinyin system of Chinese romanization, except when the Wade-Giles system was used in direct quotes, in which case I include the pinyin in brackets.

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