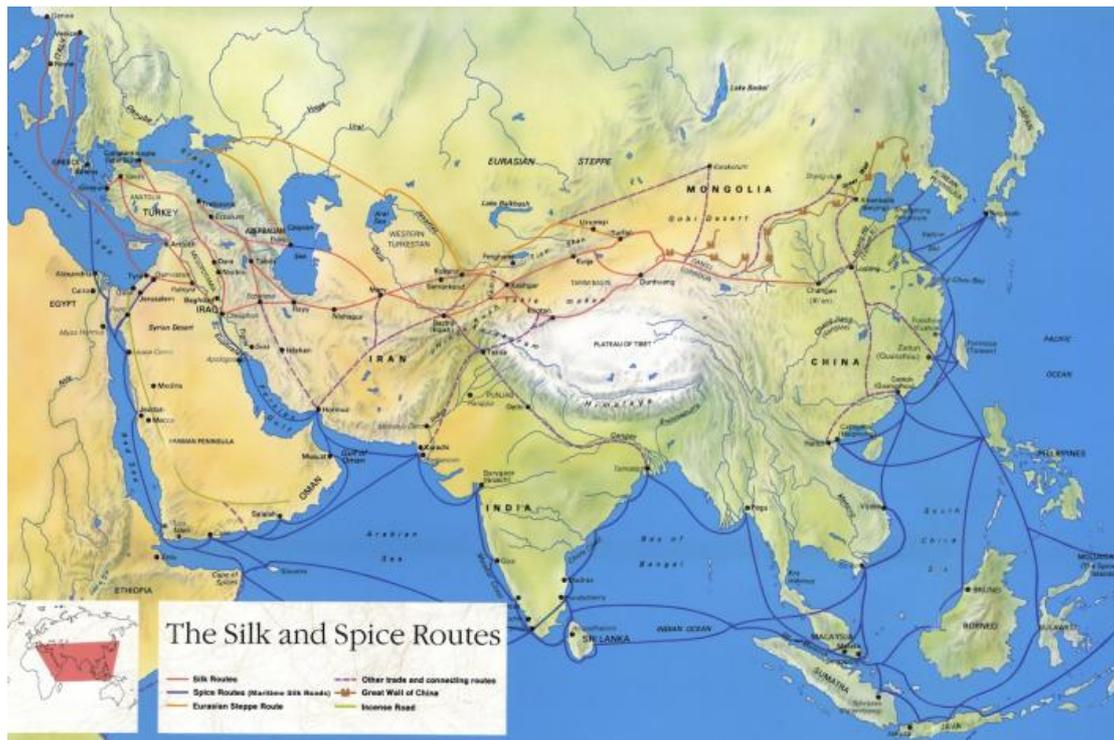


## Chapter 2

### The Silk Roads of World Literature

Wen-Chin Ouyang

The Silk Road is today a metaphor of global connectedness in the past and at present. German traveller, geographer and scientist, Baron Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen (1833-1905), coined the term in 1877, alternately as “Seidenstraße” (“Silk Road[s]”) and “Seidenstraßen (“Silk Route[s]”). The Silk Road initially referred to territorial routes connecting East Asia and South Asia with West Asia and Southern Europe along which the lucrative silk trade took place. It now encompasses the spice routes, or the maritime trade roads connecting East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Europe along which spices are transported and sold around the world. China’s current “One Belt and One Road Initiative” brings the historical trade routes from ancient and medieval times into the twenty-first century and beyond Asia, Africa and Europe to include the Americas and Oceania.



The Silk Road, as a set of overlapping networks of circulation transporting people and goods around the globe has today further been reinvented as “a model for idealized exchange” and “a condition or strategy for geopolitical thought and action” (Chin). As such it has often served as a useful “roadmap” for thinking about “worlding” of objects in art history, of ideas in intellectual history, and of musical traditions in ethnomusicology. In this chapter I argue that it can also serve as a roadmap for thinking about modes of circulation in world literature in ways that take us beyond current theories and practices of reading.

If we imagine the Silk Road as comprising multiple networks connected through myriad contact hubs located across many temporal and spatial planes, it can help us to go beyond the familiar accounts of cultural encounter and exchange that are at the heart of comparative and world studies today. In the particular context of world literature, it allows us to see movement of ideas, motifs, aesthetics, bodies of

knowledge, texts, genres and literary worlds in a more complex fashion than the linear trajectory of West influencing the East, the centrifugal proliferation of the European novel around the world (Moretti), or the centripetal East coming to the West for a place in the world travelling on the waves of translation from one Eastern national canon to an international canon located in London, New York and Paris (Casanova and Damrosch). It can even take us beyond the single temporality of the global visions of “modern” “colonial” and “postcolonial” “planetary” (Spivak), “globalization” and its attendant “networks” (Cooppan, Siskind) and “cosmopolitanism” (Holden). *The 1001 Nights* (or *The Arabian Nights*) is a classic example of the global circulation of a “text” beyond “translation-as-circulation” and the confines of monologically defined language, nation, genre and historical period. This body of stories that came to be known first in the tenth century is today a compendium of stories shaped by a millennium of global circulation along the Silk Road through translation, adaptation, quotation, and creative invention.

### ***The 1001 Nights: Global Circulation, Mediated Translation, Textual Formation***

Muḥammad Ibn Iṣḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or 998) famously wrote of the Arabic *Alf layla* (one thousand nights) as an Arabic translation of a storybook originally written in Persian known as *Hazār afsāneh*, or a thousand stories which, he explained, were “fictional tales” “told at night.” Alexander the Great, Ibn al-Nadīm let it be known, was in truth the first person ever (in history) who turned to storytelling at night during his military campaigns; he used to have among his entourage clowns and storytellers, not for entertainment but for keeping vigil. Kings after him used *Hazār afsāneh* for similar purposes. *Hazār afsāneh*, the first storybook ever, said to have been written for a Persian princess by the name of Humani daughter of Bahman, begins with a

king, who took a different woman every night and killed her at dawn, eventually marrying a princess (a daughter of one of the kings) by the name of Shahrazād, who was both “intelligent and wise,” and who started telling him stories at night but stopped in mid track at dawn. He stayed her execution so as to find out the ending of the story the following night. This went on for one thousand nights, until she bore him a child. When she confessed her machinations, the king, rather than punishing her for her deception, fell in love with this wise woman and remained married to her.

In the tenth century, and by the time Ibn al-Nadīm compiled *Fihrist*, the catalogue of the extensive holdings in his bookshop in Baghdad, Arabic writers, whom he described as “versed in the literary arts,” had already polished its language and begun to write in a similar vein. The book contained less than two hundred stories, for each would be told over a period of few nights. It was written in “an insipid language” but this did not prevent literary figures such as al-Jahshiyārī (d. 942), the renowned tenth century author of the *Book of Viziers and Secretaries*, from emulating its form and collecting Arabic, Persian and Greek stories in one book, albeit eschewing that night-within-and-into-night structure of storytelling. Each night would instead contain a complete story. Al-Jahshiyārī collected 480 stories or nights, and copied them by hand into around fifty folios, but he died before he could bring the number up to a full thousand.

The *Nights*, despite its popularity even among the cultural elite of the Arabic-Islamic world, was of no literary consequence in Arabic until the modern era. The text acquired world literature status in Europe in the eighteenth century, when Antoine Galland (1646–1715) translated, or rather adapted into French a body of stories from a 15<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript and other sources in two volumes (1704 and 1717). The *Nights* fever spread like wild fire, across Europe first, then around the world. The

*Nights* in the state-of-the-art research is a shape-shifting chameleon that survives and thrives in globe-trotting and crossing historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic, medial and generic boundaries. However, it remains without a definitive “original” text in any language. The known “full” texts in Arabic, the Egyptian version published in Bulāq (1835) and the Indian version published in Calcutta, known as Macnaghten or Calcutta II (1839–1842), took shape in the aftermath of Galland’s translation, developing from and expanding on his 15<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript by appending to it a variety of analogous manuscripts. Similarly, the post-Galland global proliferation of the “Oriental Tale,” including *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba*, two “orphan tales” traceable neither to oral nor written Arabic origins, have proliferated across the world in the past century.

The pre-modern global network of translation, adaptation, quotation and creation, from East and South Asia to the Mediterranean, that produced the textual network, or a body of overlapping texts written in a “middle” register of the Arabic language, has yet to be fully mapped. However, it is clear that the *Nights*, as a canonical work of world literature, exists only in the interstices of translation, mediated through Arabic version first before the tenth century, followed by French in Europe in the eighteenth century, then by English, especially Burton, in the nineteenth century, and then proliferated in other languages. The kernel of the Arabic full texts is possibly a body of tales purportedly translated from Persian, which itself may have constituted a body of stories from multiple sources, such as Greek and Indian, onto which stories of all kind and from all cultures are grafted throughout the ages. Galland’s fifteenth century manuscript is but one rendition of the *Nights*. Since the eighteenth century, European translations, including pseudo-translations and creations

of oriental tales, have contributed to its making, even to the rise of its standing in Arabic literature.

The reception of the *Nights* in Chinese, to name but one example, adds another layer of complication to the story of the globalization of the *Nights*. It was the popularity of the *Nights* in Europe that prompted the Chinese to translate the stories from European languages. But this did not happen until 1900, even though European (and especially English) translations of the *Nights* were available in China at the latest by 1870, when Kelly and Walsh, the first foreign bookshop, was founded in Shanghai. The *Nights* found its way into Chinese most likely through translations from European languages, especially Burton in English (1885–88). A Zhou Gueisheng translated a selection of stories from the *Nights* in 1900, which he called *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*. There is in the Chinese Union Library Catalogue a record of a four-volume translation by a Xi Rou published in Shanghai in 1906. These and other translations, as well as adaptations from translations and adaptations from adaptations, all invariably given the titles *Tian Fang Ye Tan* or *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*, have been in continuous production until today. There is, it seems, a steady stream of *Nights* books in Chinese throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Tian Fang Ye Tan* is practically a literal translation of *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, including the archaic and exotic “twang,” or slant Burton has given the *Nights* in his translation.

In the 1930s, during the Chinese resistance to Japanese occupation, another stream of translations from the Arabic original, primarily Bulāq, began to appear under the title *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*, a literal translation of the Arabic “one thousand and one nights.” Two names emerge as heroes of such an enterprise. A Mr. Na Xun, apparently a Chinese Muslim, who made a five-volume translation in the 1930s known at the time as *Tian Fang Ye Tan*. In the 1950s a three-volume translation by

the same Mr. Na appeared as *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*. Finally, a six-volume translation, a complete translation according to his Beijing publisher, appeared in 1982. This 1982 Beijing edition by Na Xun is the source text of a two-volume Taipei edition purportedly translated by a Zhong Si. Zhong, according to the “readers’ guide” written by a Su Qikang, a professor of English, at most edited Na’s translation, restructured the work and reorganized the stories. Zhong’s translation, however, has been very popular (Su 1999, xii) and is in continuous demand since it first appeared in 1981. It is at least in its sixth reprint.<sup>i</sup> And finally, a ten-volume translation of the Bulāq text was made by the now professor of Arabic at Beijing’s Language Institute, Li Weizhong, and published in Taipei in 2000. This translation is given the title of *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*.

The *Nights* is known as *Tian Fang Ye Tan* or *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye*, Chinese renditions of the *Arabian Nights* and *The 1001 Nights* respectively. It is primarily known as a collection of children’s stories. *Tian Fang* is the classical Chinese term for a region that is perhaps best conveyed by the medieval English term “Araby” (Metlitzki 1977). *Ye Tan* means night talk, nothing like serious discussion but more like “table talk,” or casual exchange of news and stories, or simply chatter. “Sindbad the Sailor” and “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp” are the two most popular stories even today. There are innumerable versions and editions of children’s *Tian Fang Ye Tan*, all attributed to an anonymous “Arab” author, “*yi ming*”, and they come in a plethora of shapes and sizes with little or next to no information on the sources and “authors” - - compilers and translators -- of the volumes. There is even less accounting for why some stories are chosen for inclusion and others are left out. Perhaps what is most interesting about the popularity of the *Nights* in Chinese is the ways in which the title and many of the objects have been integrated into the fabric of Chinese language and

culture today. *Tian Fan Ye Tan* and Aladdin's magic lamp are bywords for the fantastic, and *Yi Qian Ling Yi Ye* denotes multiplicity and variety and now appears as verbatim quotations in titles of collections of short stories and even essays in literary criticism.

The role of Europe in the spread, translation and reception of an Arabic work in Chinese is precisely why it is interesting. It provides an alternative trajectory of circulation to that of European translation and reception of the *Nights*. There is also the possibility of translating from Japanese translations, especially in Taiwan, a former Japanese colony, where early multi-volume Japanese translations (from as early as 1875) may have been known and available. Furthermore, Taiwan, like Japan and other East Asian countries, has played an active part in worldwide adaptations of the *Nights* in poetry, drama, short story, novel, theater, pantomime, cinema, television, animation, graphic storybooks, and even pornography. For these reasons it is impossible to track with any certainty clear trajectories of circulation of the motifs, stories and ideologies (e.g., gendered master and slave relationship). This is precisely why the *Nights* has invited both "distant" and "close" readings in ways that take us beyond current practices of world literature. The *Nights* allows us to look at circulation outside the East-to-West binary, and to consider circulation as taking place across languages, texts, and genres along divergent but overlapping networks connected by multiple contact hubs. It also draws our attention to the politics surrounding both translation and canon formation, nationally or internationally, and their attendant machinery, as well as the cultural encounters informing and underpinning the literary worlds (Larzul and Ouyang). It makes it possible and necessary to re-politicize representations of cultural encounters, whether in the

literary world (Hayot 2012) or outside in the machinery supporting, managing and promoting world literature.

The literary world is often saturated with traces of cultural encounter, including bodies of knowledge, such as Orientalism (Ouyang 2018), whose itineraries of travel around the globe resonate with the Silk Road. The Silk Road haunts many literary works inhabited by people, things, ideas, ideologies and even entire cultural institutions that have come from far and wide to partake in the construction of their textual world. “The Tale of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad” in *The 1001 Nights* is a good example. It begins like this:

There was once a young man in the city of Baghdad, who was by faith a bachelor and by trade a porter. One day, as he was leaning idly against his basket in the marketplace, a woman, wearing a full veil of Mosul **silk**, tasseled with gold and turned with rare brocade, stopped before him and raised the veil a little from her face. Above it there showed dark eyes with long lashes of **silk** and lids to set a man dreaming. Her body was slight, her feet were very small, and clear perfection shone about her. She said, and oh, but her voice was sweet: “Take up your basket, porter, and follow me.” (Mardrus in Ouyang 2014, p. 81, Emphasis mine)

It then goes on to name fruits and flowers from around the Middle East the young woman buys and puts in the porter’s basket. Silk, brought from China to the Middle East along the Silk Road, has clearly set roots in the Middle East, as the reference to Mosul silk indicates. It has not only spawned local farming and industry but also technologies of weaving, embroidery and couture, as well as fashion, wealth and

social standing. Silk farming continued to be a source of economy in Syria and Lebanon under the French occupation in the nineteenth century even though its industry would now be surpassed by France. France had her own history of silk industry; luxury silk items were made in France with Syrian and Lebanese raw material and exported back to the Middle East at a much higher price. Silk trade gave rise to a new middle class in the nineteenth century that was instrumental in the development of a modern Arabic literary culture and the emergence of the Arabic novel (Holt 2017). Hoda Barakat's 1998 novel, *The Tiller of Waters* (tr. Booth 2001), for example, weaves a cosmopolitan history of Beirut by threading the movement of silk commodities around the world along the Silk Road through the prism of this Mediterranean port city.

Silk is not simply an object in the *Nights* or *The Tiller of Waters*. It embodies a history of travel around the globe, setting roots wherever it goes, and generating new markets as well as industries, technologies and cultures. It has imprinted itself in the fabric of language and literary worlds. Silk is too obvious and easy an example of the ways in which world, connected by the Silk Road, inhabits the literary world. There are numerous objects appearing in literary works that on the surface seem mundane, but upon close scrutiny reveal themselves to be signs of global circulation haunted by a history of production and consumption in multiple regions connected by overlapping networks across plural temporalities. At the same time, they embody the divergent styles of consumption developed with attendant new technologies and cultures. These are in turn implicated in local cultural politics surrounding intercultural exchange. Coffee, like silk, is a good example. A much more recent commodity than silk, the history of coffee's origins and proliferation, and of its production and consumption as well as attendant technologies, material culture,

rituals and spaces, has been mapped more fully than that of silk. It is fairly easy to track the global movement of coffee, as plant, bean and husk, from Ethiopia in Africa, through Yemen, starting in the fifteenth century and continuing in the twenty-first century, to the Middle East, Europe and South America, and to Asia and South East Asia. Its consumption led to increased farming in suitable habitats, in South America, Africa and South East Asia, often replacing other agricultural products, to the production of pots for making coffee and china for serving it, to the birth of spaces and rituals of consumption at home or in the coffeehouse, in the morning, in the afternoon or at night, for social or religious purposes, and to the emergence and development of sub-cultures in which coffee is a site of discourses on identity and cultural politics.

### **Coffee, Empire and Literary Worlds**

The Coffee Road, or the map of the movement of coffee around the globe, overlaps with and at the same time diverges from the Silk Road. The Coffee Road connects overlapping empires in the past and at present, which are all arguably Silk Road empires: Ottoman (1299-1920), Portuguese (1415-1999), Spanish (1492-1975), Habsburg (1526-1780), Dutch (1581-1815), British (16<sup>th</sup> century-1997), French (16<sup>th</sup> century-1962), Qing (1644-1912), Japanese (1818-1947), and American (19<sup>th</sup> century-present). These empires intersect in both temporal and territorial terms, but they each establish a unique network of commodity exchange, take turns in dominating the world market, and bring into existence a culture of consumption that is simultaneously informed by global and local practices. The Coffee Road, like the Silk Road, is implicated in colonial competitions for land, commodity and market. Coffee, as global commodity, has spread around the world from Africa, along the Silk Road

and additional routes, and put down roots at varying contact hubs, where it also picked up local habits and created unique cultures of consumption. The world reflected in and through coffee differs from one contact hub to another. More importantly, coffee remembers its history, thrives in cultural encounter, and finds expressions in literary works.

Coffee is a site of cultural encounter in literary works and offers another alternative model of worldliness and global circulation. A comparative reading of coffee and its culture of consumption, epitomized by the coffeehouse, in contemporary Arabic (Egyptian and Palestinian) and Turkish literary texts on the one hand, and Japanese and Taiwanese works on the other, demonstrates this amply. The Middle East and the Far East, if I may borrow two Orientalist regional designations for the sake of brevity and clarity, offer two distinct models of worldliness structured around coffee and coffeehouses that gives shape to literary worlds and generate diverse meanings of coffee in the literary works. Even the role Europe plays as an intermediary in the spread of coffee from the Middle East to the Far East has an impact on the shape of the literary world. The presence of coffee, as well as coffeehouses, in literary works opens up the literary world to global connections beyond translation, adaptation, quotation and attendant creative invention. The map of world literature it draws presents multiple centers connected by manifold networks of circulation, and as such it encourages diversification not only in defining modes of circulation and reading but also in understanding world and worldliness. It offers a new model for the practice of world literature that goes even beyond the scope of *The 1001 Nights*, and makes it possible for us to bring together diverse literary works from around the world in a meaningful comparative analysis.

Reference to coffee drinking first appeared in the mid-fifteenth century in Sufi circles in Yemen (Mocha). It pervaded the Middle East and North Africa by the sixteenth century and spread to Europe in the seventeenth century and eventually to the rest of the world. The Dutch East India Company brought it to Japan in the seventeenth century. However, it did not take off in Japan until the nineteenth century. Taiwan was a Japanese colony between 1895 and 1952, and coffee arrived there at the turn of the twentieth century. With its own farming colonies in Brazil, Japan was able to establish its own network of supply outside the European networks during the height of European power in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, it encouraged coffee plantation in Taiwan as well. Coffee quickly became a social drink and coffeehouses, from the simple hole in the wall in poor quarters to the familiar shops in middle class neighborhoods and the luxurious palatial edifice in the wealthy districts, came into existence in a very quick succession around the world to become an integral part of urban life since the sixteenth century: Mecca before 1512, Damascus in 1530, Cairo thereabouts, Istanbul after 1555, Venice 1629, Rome 1645, Oxford in 1650, London in 1652, Paris in 1657, the Hague after 1664, Tokyo in 1888, and Taipei after 1896. Coffee is the daily drink we know today and more. It was consumed day and night. Coffeehouses, unlike the coffee shops dotting cityscapes open only till early evening in the twenty-first century, were open all hours, serving in addition to coffee other stimulants dependent on where one was.

Coffee is a staple feature of the fictional world of Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006). It is modeled on Cairo's coffee culture and as such informs the representation of coffee and coffeehouses in his novels. The day begins with a cup of coffee at home, is punctuated by another in the afternoon at work, and ends with more in the coffeehouse in the evening. The coffeehouse is the heart and soul of a community. In

*Arabian Nights and Days* (tr. Denys Johnson-Davis, 1995), Mahfouz's creative rewrite of *The 1001 Nights* as a national allegory, the Café of the Emirs is a space where the community comes together to enjoy each other's company and, above all, to exchange news of the day and discuss the most pressing moral and political issues. It already appears in an earlier national allegory set in an old Cairene quarter, *Midaq Alley* (1947; tr. Trevor LeGassick, 1966). Here, the café in the old Cairene quarter is a place where male members of the community congregate to catch up on the news of the individual and nation, to resolve conflicts and make deals. It is also a *hashish* den where older male predators go after young boys. There is only one difference between the café in the fantastically rendered national allegory of *Arabian Nights and Days* and the realist *Midaq Alley*. The poet who sings stories of the community remains in place in the former but is replaced by a radio in the latter. Coffee and coffeehouses do not exist in the *Nights*, and Mahfouz implants them in the literary world of the *Nights* to locate his national allegory in the present day.<sup>ii</sup> The coffeehouse in *Arabian Nights and Days* is, one may argue, a Habermasian "public sphere" where "democracy" is born. The political elite, the merchant class, the labourers and even the riff raffs come together in this space and by working through their experiences of political authority and its corruptive potential the citizens learn to choose "moral" men as the "rulers" of their community (Ouyang 2012).

The Mahfouzian novel takes it for granted that coffee is an integral part of life in Cairo. Coffee is a marker of identity and its authenticity in Arabic literary writings and cultural expressions. It comes from Yemen in Southern Arabia in the Arabic cultural and literary imaginary, and has been an Arab drink since time immemorial. Yemen gave it to the rest of the world. In televised adaptations of pre-Islamic Bedouin romances, often centered in heroic poets, coffee and its drinking rituals take

on communal and symbolic meanings especially at times of tribal conflict. Coffee is always ready to be served. When a delegation from an opposing tribe arrives at the tent, the host would have coffee offered to the members. If they come in peace they would drink it right away. If they come in strife, they would postpone drinking it until the contentious issue they raise is resolved to their satisfaction. In Jordan today—and many Jordanians and Palestinians claim Bedouin ancestry—coffee is kept in a thermos-flask ready to be offered to any visitor at any time of the day or night. Similarly, guests with friendly intentions take a sip and shake the up in the air in a gesture of acceptance, and guests with a bone to pick refuse the drink. Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), the Palestinian national poet, gives coffee the pride of place in symbols of Palestine. A poem dedicated to his mother, “To my mother,” appearing in a collection of his early poetry, *A Lover from Palestine* (1966), begins with “I long for my mother’s bread, my mother’s coffee, and my mother’s touch,” and ends with a will to return to her, to her embrace and care, to her house, and to Palestine. Coffee is Palestinianness here, and it escalates from a symbol of resistance to Palestine herself in *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1982; tr. Ibrahim Muhawi, 1995), Darwish’s one-day memoir written during the Israeli bombing of Beirut in 1982 (14 June-21 August) after which PLO headquarters were forced to move to Tunis. Coffee is the thread that connects the poet, his body and humanity, “so I can hold myself together, stand on my feet, and be transformed from something that crawls, into a human being” (6), to a steely will that “propel[s] my thirst in the direction of the one and only goal: coffee” (7) and finally to an imagined “return” to the “primordial,” to “[c]offee is geography” (20), to Palestine.

The “primordial” origin of coffee in the works of Mahfouz and Darwish is arguably the type of “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm) that gives the “imagined

nation” in their texts “roots in the immemorial past” (Anderson). This serves their national and nationalist politics well, but it clearly goes against the grain of history and reduces the global past of coffee to “authenticity” based in “local origin.” Orhan Pamuk reverses this type of single-minded and unilateral construction of the history of coffee in *My Name is Red* (1988; tr. Erdag M. Goknar, 2001), restoring to coffee its global past in an assertion of Turkey’s cosmopolitan identity that similarly has roots in the past. The Silk Road and Coffee Road intersect in this novel that is ostensibly a murder mystery, but allegorically an interrogation of violence legitimated in the “myth of authenticity” inherent in discourses that will the nation into existence out of the murky waters of empire(s). The novel is set in Istanbul in 1591 against the background of the Ottoman Safavid War and the competitive Ottoman and European trade and diplomatic relations. It begins with the murder of a miniaturist, Elegant Affendi, who is a member of a secret group of illuminators commissioned to illustrate a manuscript in the Venetian style. Another murder, that of the master illuminator and leader of the group known as Enishte, followed, leading to a full investigation during which numerous attempted murders would be made. When the murderer is revealed at the end of the novel, it transpires that the motive behind the murders is precisely to safeguard the secret commission against the parallel conflict around coffee. The novel culminates in violence, the destruction of the coffeehouse the miniaturists frequented, and in the death of many, including the murderer.

At the heart of the controversy is the planned portrait of the Ottoman Sultan that would rival the “realism” of the Venetian style of representation, as opposed to the “stylized” style of traditional “Islamic” miniatures. Pamuk resurrects the historical coffee controversies in Istanbul and other parts of the Islamic lands including Mecca and Cairo between sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that resulted in disputes, bans

and violence. These offer a powerful backdrop for the murder in the novel. Venetian style “realism” is, in this context, an innovation, or *bid'a*, not sanctioned by tradition. “Coffee drinking,” according to certain Husret Hoja, “is an absolute sin!” This Husret Hoja even invents a Prophetic tradition. “Our Glorious Prophet did not partake of coffee because he knew it dulled the intellect, caused uclers, hernia and sterility; he understood that coffee was nothing but the Devil’s ruse.” (14) Venetian style painting is linked to coffee drinking in another way. “Coffeehouses,” where a storyteller unfolds a picture of a dog before the crowd and tells tales in his voice (12), “are places where pleasure-seekers and wealthy gadabouts sit knee-to-knee, involving themselves in all sorts of vulgar behaviour; in fact, even before the dervish houses are closed, coffeehouses ought to be banned. Do the poor have enough money to drink coffee? Men frequent these places, become besotted with coffee and lose control of their mental faculties to the point that they actually listen to and believe what dogs and mongrels have to say” (14). Venetian style “realism” is similarly a Devil’s ruse in that it invites not anthropomorphism but also fantasy.

The religious fanatics in Pamuk’s novel, including the vociferous Husret Hoja, and his lackies lurking in the dark waiting to pounce on their imagined enemies, reject everything they deem “inauthentic.” Both coffee and “realism” are new. However, there is a difference between coffee and “realism.” Coffee is native to Islam, but “realism” is imported from Europe. Coffee arrived in Islamic lands with Yemeni Sufis, whereas “realism” was imported from European Christians. If coffee, a drink used for devout purposes, should cause so much strife, what would happen if they should find out about European paintings that breathe life into their objects? What the religious fanatics do not see, the novel shows, is the ways in which what they take for granted as authentic is born out of cultural encounters. The art of miniature and the skills of

the miniaturist come from all over the world. Enishte's favourite pupil and nephew, Black, has travelled around the Muslim lands, such as Safavid Persia and Herat, and worked with miniature masters along the way. Many details of their style and skill come from Mongols, especially their prized red color. This global past of Ottoman miniatures highlights the absurdity of the dispute around coffee and the Venetian style of representation, and of the fear and violence a new thing, idea, perspective or technique should generate on the ground of authenticity.

The national and cosmopolitan impulses behind Arabic and Turkish narratives, and I refer specifically to Mahfouz and Pamuk, do have one concern in common. They interrogate the paradoxical omnipotence of the Sultan (both fictional and historical) and expose the pervasive tyranny of these God-like figures as well as their inefficacy in managing the quotidian minutia of living. They cannot control what goes on in the coffeehouses. The sexual excesses of their subjects become potent symbols of resistance to, and modes of escape from, tyranny. Homosexuality in a homosocial male-oriented public world of the coffeehouse, as Husret Hoja unwittingly reveals in his condemnation, escapes both political and religious censorship. Coffee, perhaps because of its potency, has been associated with sexuality and sexual desire from the outset, and the coffeehouse in the Middle East with clandestine daring-dos, including hashish smoking and picture storytelling, which in Islamic discourses incite passion and make men lose control of their mental faculties.

Coffee is seen as equally erotic and subversive in contemporary Japan and Taiwan. It is associated with homosexuality in Zhu Tianwen's *Notes of a Desolate Man* (1994) and Oedipal sexual desire in Murakami Haruki's *Kafka on the Shore* (2002). The events of Zhu's novel unfold on a world stage during the height of the AIDS epidemic against the backdrop of rigid heterosexual moral universe in Taiwan.

The world of the unnamed homosexual protagonist is filled with repressed or unfulfilled sexual desire. As he remembers his first love, Ah-Yao, who is dying of AIDS in Japan, he recounts his love affairs and travels in Taiwan, Japan and Italy (and the cinemas of these countries). He meets Fido, one of his young objects of desire, in a coffeehouse. “When the coffee arrived, Fido looked at me, waiting for orders,” the narrator remembers, “I just focused on the cup of iced coffee, overflowing with whipped cream and topped with a cherry; I was half meditating, half nodding, like a man appreciating a work of art,” and “I was the lucky one, for I was free to drink in his beauty and youth with my eyes” (69). He would “Sail toward the Mediterranean” to marry Yongjie, and “Our wedding, after all, something Ah Yao didn’t know, was held in the biggest church in the world, St. Peter’s Basilica, where the Pope resides” is pungent with “[t]he smell of that morning’s cappuccino with cinnamon assaults my nose like a hurricane,” and plans to “visit Rimini, Fellini’s hometown. We’d also go to Venice, Florence, then return to Taiwan before school starts” (46-7). Coffee is an antidote to repression, and the coffeehouse a space where passion finds expression, perhaps even relief, as one finds in the Fellini’s films referenced in the novel.

Coffee in Zhu’s novel is at first glance European, but the association of coffeehouse with sexuality tells a different story. Coffeehouses in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were meeting places for intellectuals, artists and political activists but not so in Japan and Taiwan at the turn of the twentieth century. Japanese-style coffeehouses in Japan and Taiwan, open till early hours in the morning, were meeting places and pleasure houses for the male cultural elite, where beautiful stewardesses served and Geisha entertained. Even though contemporary coffeehouses are no longer their former pleasure houses, coffee in Japan and Taiwan continues to

resonate with the culture of pleasure houses. It is simultaneously European and Japanese in *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami's exploration of the impact of repression, and here, of memories of violence in the history of Japan, on three generations of Japanese subjects. The youngest generation is represented by the eponymous Kafka, a fifteen-year-old boy whose father is viciously attacked and killed. The older by his imagined long lost mother, Miss Saeki, a woman in her 50s who lost her lover to violence during the 1970s university student unrests. And the oldest by Nakata, a man in his 60s who lost his memory as well as speaking and thinking faculties during an American air raid at the end of WWII. In separate but parallel journeys, Kafka and Nakata leave Tokyo for Takamatsu, where Saeki is. Both are runaways on a quest. Kafka runs away from his father and searches for his mother (and sister), while Nakata goes on the run after he kills a cat-killer by the name of Johnnie Walker (or perhaps Kafka's father) and arrives in Takamatsu in search for the "entrance stone" that would help him unlock his memory. Saeki has returned there to run the Komura Memorial Library after a twenty-year absence.

Four characters drink coffee in the novel. Saeki, her transgender assistant, Oshima, a young woman Kafka befriends on a bus and fancies her his sister, Sakura, and Hoshino, a young truck driver who decides to drive Nakata and help him find the "entrance stone." Coffee is associated with Europe and sexuality. Hoshino, a virile man, goes to a coffeehouse several times in Takamatsu in order to listen to Beethoven and Schubert. Oshima drinks coffee out of a flask every morning. Saeki and Sakura are Kafka's imagined mother and sister as well as the objects of his desire in a mock Oedipal plot. Kafka brings Saeki coffee every afternoon, "[a]t two, I take a cup of coffee on a tray up to Miss Saeki's room" (287), falls in love with her, "each time I see her face, see her, it's utterly precious," (290) and has an affair with her in

dreamlike episodes. Sakura drinks coffee every time Kafka is around, and he also has an affair with her in a dreamlike episode. Murakami's coffee, like Zhu's, is antidote to repression, and its potency, necessarily represented as exuberant sexual desire, unravels the dark side of forced amnesia and provides a line of escape from its tyranny. It is like the coffee served in Hitchcock's 1945 murder mystery, *Spellbound*, right before the psychoanalytic session in which two psychiatrists, Dr Constance Peters and her mentor Dr Alexander Brulov, begin to unlock the protagonist John Ballantyne's amnesia. This leads to the restoration of his memory and his exoneration from murder. Murakami's novel does not give its protagonist Kafka - who imagines himself to be his father's murderer - this relief. This is, perhaps, because his memories are too entangled with those of Saeki and Nakata, with the absented memories of war and collective violence in the past.

Coffee and coffeehouses in the five literary works I have discussed are quotidian details in contemporary life, but their history haunts literary worlds. This history of the global circulation of the "dark gold" and of its diverse cultural and social life in different parts of the world, connects these literary worlds and gives them their cosmopolitan worldliness. The origin of coffee, whether it is perceived as native or imported, has an impact on how it is deployed in literary texts. The social life of coffee, particularly the coffeehouse, in turn leaves a mark on its cultural life. Despite its diversity, it is intriguingly a common site of resistance to repression and oppression. Coffee, as a way of life, and coffeehouse as a cultural institution, are products of cultural encounter at different historical and geographical junctures and as such each instance also has a unique manifestation. Missing in these works is the politics of production and marketplace. Perhaps this should not be surprising, for these works seem to see from the prism of consumption, of "empire," the Middle East

and East Asia, rather than “colony,” Africa, South East Asia, and South America. It would be important to bring into discussion the experiences of the “colony” in order to complete the picture of Coffee Road as a “roadmap” for world literature. This said, the two examples explored above suffice to demonstrate the ways in which the Silk Road, as well as Coffee Road, can be productive in generating a new paradigm for world literature.

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<sup>i</sup> The reprints appeared in 1981, 1984, 1985, 1994, 1997 and 1999.

<sup>ii</sup> The oldest fuller manuscript of this compendium of stories belonged in the fifteenth century and most likely predated the arrival of coffee in the Middle East.