

**Towards a Multilingual National Literature:
The *Tung Wah Times*
and the origins of Chinese Australian Writing**

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Australian literature has over the last 50 years witnessed the gradual inclusion of writers and texts formerly considered marginal: from a predominantly white, Anglo canon it has come to incorporate more women writers, writers of popular genres, Indigenous writers, and migrant, multicultural or diasporic writers. However, one large and important body of Australian writing has remained excluded from histories and anthologies: literature in languages other than English. Is this the last literary margin? How might it be incorporated into the national canon, and how might it enhance our understanding of the cross-cultural traffic that feeds into the literature of a migrant nation? These are the questions explored in a project entitled 'New transnationalisms: Australia's multilingual literary heritage.' The specific aim of the project is to trace the history of Australian writing in Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic and Spanish (and to encourage and support other scholars to produce similar histories for other language traditions); beyond that, we want to chart new directions for thinking about the relationship between local and global cultural production, shaping while at the same time interrogating the category of the national.

The 'transnational turn' in the study of Australian literature of the last decade has offered new and important directions for locating national cultural production within transnational and global frameworks. Robert Dixon's 2007 essay 'Australian Literature—International Contexts' charted the development of Australian literary studies from the cultural nationalist phase of the early years through to 'the *inter-* or *trans-national* perspectives that have emerged in a number of humanities disciplines since the 1990s' (24), and proposed a research agenda for 'a transnational practice of Australian literary criticism' (22). Important contributors to the transcultural literary debate have also been David Carter (2007), Ken Gelder (2010), Graham Huggan (2009) and Nicholas Jose (2009). However, as Michael Jacklin points out in his 2009 paper 'The Transnational Turn in Australian Literary Studies':

[R]esearch into the transnational dimensions of Australian literature appears to be mostly assigned to mainstream literary studies, meaning that attention will continue to be directed towards the works of Anglo-Celtic Australian writers, in English . . . In other words, although the scope and reach of Australian literary studies may expand as the discipline goes global, there is no accompanying assumption that the corpus, or the canon, of Australian literature will be radically altered.

Our project aims to give the 'transnational turn' a new turn: towards Australian multicultural writing, and especially the large, but largely hidden body of texts written in languages other than English.

The critical neglect of LOTE writing in multicultural and multilingual Australia stands in sharp contrast to developments in other immigrant nations. In particular, American literary studies has in the past decade broadened its scope, moving from a monolingual model in which English is the norm to a more inclusive conception of the national literature that acknowledges linguistic plurality and complexity. This ‘multilingual turn’ has produced a number of remarkable outcomes: anthologies, scholarly networks, research collaborations. (see Shell; Shell and Sollors; Rosenwald). In a review of the anthology *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity and the languages of American literature*, Caren Irr writes: ‘*Multilingual America* vastly expands the terrain of scholarly questions one might ask about American literature and encourages us to think historically and specifically about political and cultural assumptions about the role of language in forming national identity’ (370). Importantly, scholars have found that the new and broader focus does not simply ‘add’ LOTE writing to a monumental and unique national literary tradition; it brings about a shift in theoretical understandings of transcultural literary flows and their impact on national culture. Multilingual writing offers possibilities for radical readings of transnational flows in literature: it will take the study of Australian literature beyond the (necessary) recognition that it is and always has been transnational into new understandings of the cross-cultural traffic which takes place in an immigrant nation as each group of new arrivals negotiate the various phases of their resettlement within new cultural settings while renegotiating bonds to their previous homes. Australia, with a greater foreign language-speaking, and -writing, migrant population than any other Western nation, producing large and diverse bodies of literary output, has the capacity to move to the forefront of this international conversation—but this can only happen once our multilingual literary heritage has been fully documented, mapped, and recognised as an integral part of Australian literature.

Early work on Australian writing in languages other than English involves extensive community consultation as researchers seek to locate, survey and index publications which carry literary content. In the target languages of our project, as well as in other languages, newspapers and magazines play a central role in the development of a community of writers and readers. Many publish poetry, essays and fiction (short fiction or serialised novels) on a regular basis; they also serve as stepping stones for writers who subsequently go on to publish in other venues, whether book-length publications with local or overseas presses, or English language publications. However, journals and magazines are often ephemeral: they survive for shorter or longer periods, then disappear, and can be notoriously difficult to trace—complete or incomplete archives may have survived in libraries, community organisations or in private ownership, but this is not always the case, and many have never been indexed or recorded. Examples include the Arabic language weekly *An-Nahar* (1973–2000), the only complete archive of which was located in the possession of the family of its late editor, Peter Indari, or the Spanish language journal *Hontanar*, the digital version of which is not archived on PANDORA, the National Library of Australia’s digital archiving service because the journal uses an offshore server and its URL does not end in .au. An important part of our project thus consists in calling attention to these endangered treasures, and to encourage their preservation, indexing and, if possible, digitisation.

The early Chinese language newspaper the *Tung Wah Times* offers an excellent illustration of the ways literary writing may be used to mobilise a community seeking to define its diasporic identity while under considerable pressure from events in both their home and host countries.¹ Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Chinese population in Australia was in decline. Restrictions on Chinese immigration had been legislated by the individual colonies prior to Federation, and with the passing of the *Immigration Restriction Act*, known as the White

Australia Policy in 1901, further immigration was effectively barred. From more than 40,000 in the early 1860s, the population had by 1901 been reduced to 30,000 and would dwindle further, to 10,000 or fewer after World War II.² However, while overall numbers were dwindling, the Chinese population of Sydney and Melbourne was in fact increasing as more Chinese moved to the city to concentrate in certain locations, such as the Rocks in Sydney, and in certain occupations, such as international trade and market gardening. Increasing pressure from anti-Chinese sentiments in the mainstream population galvanised the community and led to calls for greater solidarity, at the same time as political struggles both in China and in the wider diaspora became issues of major concern. It was in this climate that the first Chinese language newspapers were launched, the most important of which were the *Chinese Australian Herald* (广益华报 1894) and the *Tung Wah News* (东华新报 1898; after 1902 the *Tung Wah Times* 东华报) in Sydney and the *Chinese Times* (1902)³ in Melbourne.⁴ The major issue for debate was the political situation in China. While the need for major reform of the corrupt and outdated Qing dynasty was recognised by all, Chinese Australians were divided on how this could best be achieved. The *Tung Wah Times* threw its support behind the monarchy and the Chinese Empire Reform Association, while the *Chinese Times* (and to a lesser extent, the *Chinese Australian Herald*) embraced the revolutionary republican cause. Chinese nationalist sentiment also led to calls for solidarity across the vast Chinese diaspora, including support for the move to boycott American products in protest against the US *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882. Locally, the call for solidarity within the community could not cover up for deep divisions and disagreements, not just between monarchists and republicans, but also between English-speaking elites and working-class Chinese, between Christians and Confucians, and between the different professions. The elites were strongly in favour of Australia's move towards Federation and keen to emphasise their support for the democratic values underpinning the new nation. They were greatly shocked and disconcerted by the White Australia policy and the anti-Chinese sentiment in the mainstream community, which they blamed on the one hand on the backwardness and despotism of China's Manchu government and on the other on the behavior of the lower classes which in their view damaged the reputation of all Chinese in Australia through habits such as gambling and opium smoking.

Liang Qichao, exiled reformer and prominent spokesman for the Chinese Empire Reform Association, visited Australia from 1900 to 1901. A champion of civic equality, gender equality, racial equality and national equality (see Fitzgerald 118), he was one of the fiercest critics of the social, cultural and political order of his home country, arguing for a modernised (and Westernised) system which would see China take its place as a proud and equal member of the society of nations. He initially endorsed, even celebrated, the egalitarian ethos which underpinned the Commonwealth of Australia, but was later to complain bitterly that in the treatment of the Chinese, Australia betrayed the very values on which the new nation was founded. His views, which were widely disseminated in speeches and in the pages of the *Tung Wah Times* and other newspapers, came to shape the political agenda of influential factions in the Chinese Australian elites. As John Fitzgerald has observed, it is one of the tragic paradoxes of Australian race relations that just as the Chinese were pleading for justice in the name of equality, it was denied them because, in the view of mainstream Australia, they were thought to be culturally disposed to be hierarchical, and 'could not appreciate equality if it were offered to them on a platter' (116).

It was in this climate of heightened community awareness of the precarious position of a homeland on the brink of revolution, and their own precarious position within a hostile host

nation, that we see the emergence of the first literary writing in Chinese Australia.⁵ Liang Qichao, himself an accomplished poet and novelist, firmly believed in the power of literature to raise the consciousness of a readership and to mobilise support for the reform agenda. Chinese nationalism, aimed at fostering pride in their rich culture and to strengthen international diasporic networks, was firmly embraced by all of the Chinese Australian press, though there was considerable variation in their conception of the national character and ideal. The *Tung Wah Times* was particularly active in fostering transnational political and intellectual networks, and in developing markets for new publications within Sydney's Chinese community. As agent for newspapers, books and literary journals from Shanghai, Japan, Hong Kong and America, it promoted the idea of the Chinese diaspora (*huaqiao*) at the same time as it nourished political consciousness within the local community around issues regarded as crucial to improving the reputation of the Chinese in Australia. A major aim was to enlighten the lower classes, to spell out the dangers of certain practices, to reform their lives and thus make the community as a whole more acceptable to white Australian society. The *Tung Wah Times* promoted a program of social reform which apart from admonishing against gambling and opium, included support for gender equality, discouragement of traditional worship and encouragement to improve English language skills (Kuo). Literary writing became an important tool in this campaign.⁶

The *Tung Wah Times* (originally the *Tung Wah News*) published literary essays, short stories and poems from its earliest days. The language used was literary Chinese (*wenyan wen*) which was the traditional style of written Chinese in imperial China (by contrast, both the *Chinese Australian Herald* and the *Chinese Times* adopted the more populist vernacular style). As much of the content of the newspaper was copied from publications in China and elsewhere (including the English language Australian press), and names of authors were frequently omitted, it is difficult to determine which texts were penned in Australia. The earliest short stories, such as the humorous 'A Story about a Bachelor' (2 June 1898), 'Stories of Mr Ghost' (13 August 1898) and 'A Story about a Funny, Incompetent Doctor' (20 August 1898) include no reference to an Australian setting. However, two early poems are clearly of Australian provenance. One, entitled 'Bidding Farewell to Mr Bao Chi who is Going to Preach the Gospel in Western Australia,' appeared on 30 July 1898. The author of this poem is identified as Yang Meicheng, but there is no information about the background of either the poet or Mr Bao Chi. Another, published on 9 November 1898, was entitled 'A Poem Dedicated to Mr Yang Guancai who has Come Back in Glory.' It is clear from the poem that Mr Yang Guancai was also a missionary. This poem was written by Wen Zhipan to pay tribute to Mr Yang Guancai after he had accomplished his mission. There is no mention of the background of Mr Yang Guancai or Wen Zhipan, but an anonymous short passage in the *Tung Wah News* of 9 July 1898 mentions Mr Yang Guancai. In this article, he is praised as a philanthropist who has helped many troubled Chinese migrants in Sydney. Both poems are written in the traditional Chinese poetic style of '*qi lü*'—a poem of eight lines with seven characters per line and a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme.

After the newspaper changed its title to the *Tung Wah Times* in 1902, it expanded to eight pages, covering a wider range of literary genres: short story, essay, poetry, biography and travel writing. The style remained relatively unchanged (it was not until 1920 that the Republican government in Beijing decreed that literary Chinese which had traditionally been used in textbooks for primary school students be replaced by vernacular Chinese). The majority of the stories are set in China, a few in foreign countries including Burma, France, Russia and Italy. Only one story published in the first ten years is set in Australia. However, the stories are clearly aimed at an Australian readership. In 1905, Sydney's Chinese

merchants launched the Anti-Opium League of New South Wales, and in support of their campaign, the *Tung Wah Times* ‘began to publish folk literature, such as operatic songs, comical essays, poetry and short stories, intended to admonish the lower-class Chinese to eschew opium’ (Kuo 136). A story entitled ‘Horrible Poison’ appeared on 19 December 1908. This story is set on an Australian sheep farm, where a number of sheep have been eaten by dingoes. The owner of the farm decides to kill the dingoes by mixing beef with opium and putting it out as bait. The dingoes die after eating the poisoned beef. Then a flock of crows come and feed on the dead dingoes. They in turn fall dead on the grass nearby. The sheep from the farm eat the grass the crows lie on, but it is so poisonous that they all die as well. Another story, published on 6 February 1909, is entitled ‘A Tiger Was Poisoned by Opium.’ It describes a small village in Tibet which is threatened by tigers living in nearby mountains. The tigers regularly enter the village and eat both pigs and humans. After exhausting all other means of holding the tigers at bay, the villagers decide to put up a fight. One day, a tiger comes to the village and is immediately surrounded by villagers. But they are no match for the ferocious tiger. They run for their lives and later find that one villager has disappeared. They follow the trail of the tiger into the mountains and eventually find it, fast asleep. They kill the tiger and take it back to the village. The villagers cut open the tiger’s stomach and find the missing villager’s body. It turns out that the tiger has been poisoned as the villager was a heavy opium smoker. The moral of both stories is that not only is opium deadly, but its poisonous effects reach well beyond its original users—perhaps a hint that the use of opium by part of the Chinese community in Australia damages the whole community.

Quite a few short stories featured strong women portrayed in a positive light. A story published on 5 January 1906 portrayed a Chinese woman who challenged the Confucian patriarchal norms of womanhood. In this story, entitled ‘New Conjugal Relations,’ a fifty-year old scholar goes to visit his friend in the provincial capital. He is surprised by the way women there dress and behave, wearing tight-fitting clothes and walking fast and with great confidence. The scholar has had a wife as well as a concubine, but his wife has died and he wants to find a new one. He asks his friend to introduce him to a suitable marriage candidate. His friend agrees and helps him find a woman in the capital. The scholar brings his new wife back to his home town but their relationship is not a success. While he is patriarchal, his new wife is what we would call a ‘feminist’ and the clash leads to conflicts in their marital life. She accuses all men, including her husband, of being male chauvinists and calls for equality in conjugal relations. Another story with the title ‘A Woman Detective—Ms Lotus Flower’ appeared in four instalments in 1910 and featured a courageous and intelligent Polish woman detective. The feminist agenda was part of the reformist push for equality espoused by the Chinese Emperor Reform Association, and is particularly interesting given the vast gender imbalance in the diasporic community: In 1901, there were, according to Brian Murphy, only 394 women of Chinese birth in Australia (36). While clearly aimed to counter practices considered unacceptable to white society, such as polygamy and foot-binding, the idealistic portrayal of strong women may have had particular appeal to a readership starved of female company.

In the decade from 1901 to 1910 the *Tung Wah Times* published 86 poems, which roughly fall into five categories: poems by revolutionary martyrs such as Ms Qiu Jin, who were executed for their attempts to overthrow the Qing government, and those mourning their deaths; poems by famous royalists such as Kang Youwei, a famous reformer in the late Qing period who was Liang Qichao’s mentor, and Prince Gong who was Emperor Guangxu’s uncle; poems against opium smoking; poems farewelling or meeting friends; and poems about Chinese Australian experiences. It is interesting to note the co-existence of poetry by two opposing political

camps: the royalists and the republican revolutionaries. This is an indication that the *Tung Wah Times* shifted from simply being the mouthpiece of the Chinese Emperor Reform Association at the end of the 19th century to a more mixed political stance in the early 20th century, and the wish to appeal to a wider section of the deeply divided Chinese readership.

Ten poems from this period reflect on Chinese Australian experiences. Eight of them appeared as a sequence in the *Tung Wah Times* of 12 March 1910. Written in the traditional Chinese poetic style of *qi liu*, they followed the traditional practice whereby a poet wrote a poem in a certain style and other poets composed their poems in the same style to ‘echo’ the original. In this sequence, the original poem was ‘Some Casual Thoughts on the Occasion of the Double Ninth Festival in Australia,’ written by Zhou Ruitin. The Double Ninth Festival, or ‘*chongyang jie*’ in Chinese, is celebrated on 9 September in the Chinese lunar calendar. It is customary for family members to get together on this day to pay tribute to their ancestors and the elderly people in the family. Traditional practices include climbing a mountain, drinking chrysanthemum wine and wearing dogwood branches. These Chinese Australian poems took as their model a well-known poem about this holiday by Wang Wei (701–761 AD), a renowned poet of the Tang Dynasty. In the translation of the American poet Witter Bynner, Wang Wei’s poem reads:

On the Mountain Holiday Thinking of My Brothers in Shandong

All alone in a foreign land,
I am twice as homesick on this day
When brothers carry dogwood up the mountain,
Each of them a branch—and my branch missing.

Though more than a thousand years apart, Wang Wei and the Chinese poets in Australia had at least two things in common: homesickness and a sense of alienation in a foreign land. Chinese poets in Australia took advantage of this special occasion to give voice to their feelings. However, Zhou Ruitin’s poem conveys more complex messages than Wang Wei’s. His poem, together with those composed to echo it, bear testimony to Chinese intellectuals’ strong sense of responsibility and patriotism. In English, Zhou Ruitin’s poem reads:⁷

Some Casual Thoughts On the Occasion of the Double Ninth Festival in Australia

Years have passed since I came to this foreign country
But my ambitions are yet to be fulfilled.
White people have experienced ups and downs in the past year;
My yellow soul feels restless with the passage of time.
State affairs will be settled
And a democratic government will wipe out the national humiliation.
Our home country has fallen and who will rise to the occasion?
I will struggle together with my compatriots.

As the effects of the White Australia policy deepened and the political crisis in China escalated with the republican revolution of 1911 and its aftermath, the messages conveyed by the Chinese Australian press became more urgent. On 16 January 1915, the *Tung Wah Times* published the poem ‘My experiences in Australia’ by Yang Yuting, a returning consular official. The poem was preceded by an editor’s note:

Mr Yang Yuting, a consular official with the Chinese Consulate-General in Australia, stopped over in Sydney en route from Melbourne to China. He wrote

a poem entitled 'My Experiences in Australia.' We publish this poem so that we will be able to know his thoughts.

The following is our translation of the first part of the poem, which deals directly with his views on Australia:

**My Experiences in Australia—a Poem
Composed at a Farewell Banquet for My Former Colleagues**

I heard that the British are the smartest colonisers;
The Portuguese, the French, the Germans and the Dutch are no match.
The British have ruled Australia for one hundred and ten years;
Six states of the Commonwealth are run independently;
Australia's agriculture, animal husbandry and mining industry
are unequalled in the world.
After white people arrived in Australia, they imposed harsh restrictions
on the Chinese:
Discriminatory laws and regulations against Chinese migrants were issued
one after another.
New Chinese arrivals each pay 500 dollars in tax;
Those who stay in Australia receive wages on fixed working time
and are punished if they work extra hours.
There were about sixty thousand Chinese workers in Australia in the past,
but now the number stands at twenty thousand.

Using a poetic form, Mr Yang Yuting succinctly sets out conflicting views on the Commonwealth of Australia: He has 'heard' of the superiority of the British colonisers and of the new nation's effective management of its vast resources, but has experienced harsh discrimination against the Chinese. Such thoughts were echoed in a number of poems, and we have noted the extensive use of the Chinese word *ke* (guest), indicating that they regarded themselves as sojourners, not permanent residents. Feelings of alienation and loneliness feature prominently. The large number of poems dedicated to friends who were leaving Australia offer another indication of the growing pessimism over their future in a hostile environment.

Other recurrent themes in the poems from the latter period are expressions of support for the troubled motherland and lament over its precarious political fate, split under the dominance of warlords and invasion by Japan and Western powers. The political struggle as reflected within the Chinese community in Australia is the subject of 12 songs in the style of *Yue Ou* (Cantonese song), which attack the politics of the *Tung Wah Times*'s rival the *Chinese Times* (27 December 1919; 10 January 1920; 31 January 1920), criticise corruption in the new Chinese regime (14 January 1922) and satirise the regime's submission to Japan (24 June 1933). There are also poems of a more lyrical nature and with more positive messages, such as a sequence of eight poems by Shou Zhen about his travels in the South Pacific region. Personal feelings are combined with descriptions of the natural beauty of places like Sydney and New Zealand (26 October 1918; 5 April 1919).

Of the short stories published in the latter decades of the *Tung Wah Times* none are set in Australia. Most have a Chinese setting and are probably borrowed from Chinese publications. Of the stories with a non-Chinese setting, 'The British Queen Begging' (7 January 1911) rehearses a familiar theme: the queen on a snowy day disguises herself as a beggar in order to

find out who has a kind heart. As a reward she then invites those who have given her food to a banquet at the palace. Another story is set in France and features an artilleryman who, following the order of his commander, fires cannons at his own home (28 January 1911). These stories both extol virtues that are central to the Confucian world view: kindness and obedience to superiors.

A large number of literary contributions to the *Tung Wah Times* were in the form of *san wen*, literally translated 'loosely structured article' in contrast to drama, poetry or fiction. The term is usually translated into English as 'essay,' though *san wen* covers a wider range of literary styles and genres than the essay. In this genre as well, prevalent themes are Chinese politics, nationalism, the vilification of Chinese in Western countries such as Australia and the US and their consequent suffering and alienation. Some are specifically aimed at criticising rival versions of Chinese identity such as the different conception of Confucianism espoused by Sun Yat-sen's republican movement and its supporters in Australia. A large number of essays deal with issues related to women, gender relations and marriage. Many advocate gender equality and feature stories of strong and intelligent women (see for example 'An Intelligent Woman' of 9 March 1918 and 'Outwitting Robbers Twice' of 30 March 1929). However, there are also stories of female thieves (25 March 1933) and robbers (2 November 1918), female ghosts (6 September 1930; 11 February 1933), mad women, loose women and prostitutes (28 September 1929). Thus, alongside stories supporting the feminist agenda of the newspaper's founders, are others in which women are objectified, sexualised and commercialised. In a community where, as a consequence of immigration restrictions, women were vastly outnumbered by men, this fascination with the female sex is not surprising, and we must conclude that its range—from admiration and political support to male fantasy—reflects attitudes in the predominantly male readership. Not all of the essays deal with serious topics, however, and not all are critical of Australia. A number are humorous in nature, and many praise the beauty of the Australian landscape (19 June 1920; 26 June 1920; 10 June 1922) or the patriotism of Australians ('Australian People Love Australia,' 12 October 1918). Others comment on particular events seen as newsworthy or bizarre, such as 'The Flower of Australia' (6 November 1926), which reports on the triumphant homecoming of a Western Australian university student who had won the Miss Australia contest.

As becomes clear from this brief survey of the *Tung Wah Times*, literary writing served many and varied purposes in the Chinese community in Australia in the early years of Federation. It kept the community in touch with events in the homeland at a time of national crisis. It enabled them to share their feelings of frustration and sadness at their unfair treatment under the White Australia Policy (though, interestingly, the tendency was to blame China and the Chinese first, and Australia second). It established connections with other parts of the Chinese diaspora and was instrumental in fostering a sense of solidarity with Chinese in other locations, and in forging a diasporic identity, both within Australia and beyond. It bears witness to the cultural as well as political dimensions of that identity, the desire to maintain a strong cultural heritage while making it relevant to present circumstances. It served an educational purpose, seeking to discourage practices which were regarded as damaging to the community's reputation while instilling pride in their rich heritage and reinforcing Confucian values. It highlights the nurturing of cultural activities which was an important part of the community-building undertaken by the *Tung Wah Times*: apart from publishing literature within its own pages, the newspaper was the agent for overseas publications, it ran writing competitions, supported the Sydney Chinese Literary Society and played an active role in setting up schools for teaching both Chinese and English. And while the *Tung Wah Times* may have been at the forefront of this literary and cultural movement, the other newspapers

were not far behind. The *Chinese Times*, for example, published a full-length novel, a picaresque (and cautionary) tale of a Chinese digger during the Gold Rush, which appeared in instalments from 1909 to 1910.

It could be argued that this writing, and its readership, simply disregarded national boundaries by being at the same time Chinese, Australian and international. However, in light of our project's enquiry into the ways in which multilingual diasporic literary traditions intersect with, and challenge, categories such as 'national,' 'transnational' and 'global,' our research to date indicates that, above all, they put paid to any sense of monolithic categories or traditions. The canon of Australian literature is increasingly multicultural in the sense that it has gradually come to incorporate ethnic and cultural elements from the diverse communities that make up the migrant nation, and transnational in reaching across national and cultural borders for its subject matter as well as readership. Literary traditions in languages other than English are *Australian* to the extent that they reflect the experience of particular migrant communities, and circulate in those markets; they also speak to the mainstream culture with voices and views that are highly relevant to intercommunal understanding. However, rather than seeking to construct a national literature which has somehow absorbed multilingual writing into a predominantly Anglophone canon, we prefer a model which instead recognises multiple canons within the cultural space of 'Australian literature,' traditions which speak to each other across linguistic and cultural difference while at the same time speaking (albeit differently) to other national canons and to cultural spaces outside that of the nation. While North American research in this domain most often gravitates towards the concept of a national literature, transnational studies also offer the concept of the 'nonterritorial transnation' (see Appadurai) which in our view provides another highly relevant theoretical lens for studying the literatures of diasporic communities.

In *Making Chinese Australia*, Mei-fen Kuo argues that the Chinese language newspapers, and in particular the *Tung Wah Times*, were instrumental in shaping a Chinese Australian imagined community whose membership had previously looked to native place and kinship divisions as the basis for business networks and identity formations. While distinctly Australian in reflecting the particular make-up and circumstances of Chinese Australia, this imagined community was at the same time transnational, forging alliances with the homeland as well as the world-wide Chinese diaspora. However, as its history has been marked by disruption rather than continuity, it cannot be assumed that the imagined community of the early decades of the twentieth century has survived into the very different Chinese Australia of today.

From the mid-1920s, literary production in the *Tung Wah Times* started to lose momentum; by the early 1930s it had almost completely ceased. The *Tung Wah Times* ceased publication in 1936. The main reason for this was the ever dwindling Chinese population, not only through lack of renewal but also the departure of the community's most enterprising individuals. Of those who remained, the younger generation were mostly literate in English and able to read the mainstream press, while at the same time Chinese publications from overseas became more easily available (see Liu; Kuo). The Chinese language press and with it, the literary activity it had supported, had ceased to serve its function, and the community, or what remained of it, had to look elsewhere for the maintenance of its diasporic identity. It would take until the 1980s, and new waves of student and business immigration, for literary production in Chinese to recommence in earnest. The writing of this latest generation of Chinese Australians is the subject of current research.

NOTES

¹ The *Tung Wah News/Tung Wah Times* have been indexed in English. The original index has been archived by La Trobe University (see <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/5/5/1/public/index.htm>). Copies of the newspaper are held at the National Library of Australia and the State Library of New South Wales. See Bagnall for information on digital access to other early Chinese newspapers.

² These numbers vary considerably depending on how the census figures are interpreted, especially in relation to how mixed-race people are counted. For example, Brian Murphy reports the 1947 Chinese population as 6,404 while according to Arthur Huck it was 12,100.

³ This publication changed its Chinese name several times, but it remained the same in English. It later moved to Sydney where it survived till 1949 (Kuo 6).

⁴ The very first Chinese language paper was in fact *The Chinese Advertiser*, published in Ballarat from 1856 to 1858 (see Bagnall; Rolls 434).

⁵ For examples of early Chinese Australian writing outside the newspapers, see Broinowski; Shen; Ouyang.

⁶ The question of what writing falls under the category 'literary' (as opposed to, for example, to journalistic reporting) is not without ambiguity. We have surveyed the genres considered literary at the time in the Chinese context: poetry, short and long fiction and essays (*san wen*).

⁷ Unless otherwise stated, translations are by Huang Zhong.

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