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Guest Editor's Introduction

The development and proliferation of digital technologies and the rise of the Internet have brought immense changes worldwide, and as this year's Kiriya Fellow and guest editor of *Asia Pacific Perspectives*, I had an opportunity to ask scholars from different geographical areas and disciplines to share recent research that touches on some of the ways that this "Digital Turn" has affected the Asia-Pacific region. The "Digital Asia" feature of this issue of *Asia Pacific Perspectives* includes articles on online gaming and online gaming fiction in China and their psycho-social implications; the profound effects of call centers and other aspects of the IT economy in India on Indian society, especially women; the groundbreaking work being done with a digital archive devoted to literary translation; and a review of a book-length study of online Sinophone Romance fiction. In addition to these essays, the editors of *Asia Pacific Perspectives* are pleased to announce a new feature that highlights work written by University of San Francisco graduate students whose research is relevant to the Asia Pacific Region.

"What's in a Game? Transmedia Storytelling and the Web-Game Genre of Online Chinese Popular Fiction," by **Heather Inwood** of the University of Manchester, explores the interactive dynamics of online multiplayer games and the online works of fiction that are both a response to and an offshoot of these games that have taken on lives of their own. By exploring the interactive qualities of Web-Game fiction, Dr Inwood argues against those who hold that such fictions and the games that inspire them are pernicious escapes from real life. She counters "Chinese critics who employ vocabulary such as *youxihua* ('gamification' or 'ludification'), 'YY' (*yiyin* or 'mental masturbation'), and *chenmi* (absorption or addiction) to warn of the dangers of allowing one's imagination to run wild in mediated fictional worlds." Rather, she argues, Web-Game literary works are complex and at times empowering modes for processing and integrating virtual and real experiences that are "emblematic of Chinese netizens' desire to take control of their own stories within a larger contemporary reality." Drawing on ludology research and a deep knowledge of online popular culture and literature, Dr Inwood sheds light on a heretofore unstudied area.

"New Indian Stories @ the Digital Frontline," by independent scholar **Laurel Steele**, explores several facets of the ever-evolving IT sector in India, with particular reference to how IT has changed women's lives. Whether Dr Steele is writing about women doctors working at night transcribing surgical procedures in Pennsylvania in real time, the economically precarious and socially isolated lives of the brides of Indian IT workers in the US, about a best-selling novel about IT workers, or about sexual assaults against female call-center workers, she brings first-hand knowledge as well as research and analysis. Steele's approach includes personal anecdotes that provide information and rich detail. By focusing on the social changes stemming from Indian women's involvement from the perspective of women in particular, Steele bridges the study of IT in India with that of the status of women there.

In "Chinese Literature in Translation after the Digital Turn," **Jonathan Stalling** of the University of Oklahoma ponders the implications that a digital archive that collects the work of translators of Chinese literature will have for the situation of modern and contemporary Chinese literature in world literature. Arguing that "Continental Theory" and the linguistic turn have done much to marginalize translated literature, Dr Stalling proposes to make Chinese literature in translation accessible to scholars outside of Sinology by rendering transparent the process by which these works are brought into being. By enabling researchers and other readers to trace the complex sequences of linguistic and cultural decisions and multiple esthetic and ethical threads encountered by the translator along the way, Stalling lays out how the archive can bring them closer to something that had previously appeared indecipherable.

Hui Faye Xiao reviews Jin Feng's study of online Romance fiction, *Romancing the Internet: Producing and Consuming Chinese Web Romance*. Xiao describes Web Romance as "doubly marginalized" (because its audience is primarily female and online publications lack the prestige of traditional books) and praises the author for paying serious attention to the genre. She highlights the author's exploration of the implications of Web Romance for attitudes towards gender in light of its "gender bending" qualities and remaking of concepts such as Mr Right, along with a more open minded attitude towards homosexuality. In addition, Xiao offers a thoughtful discussion of the book's strengths along with a few suggestions for improvement.

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"Self-Reflection in the Tub: Japanese Bathing Culture, Identity, and Cultural Nationalism," written by Masters in Asia Pacific Studies student **Lesley Wynn**, is a well organized and clearly presented overview of the relationship between Japanese bathing culture and cultural identity. Ms Wynn consults a variety of materials and assembles a brief cultural history of the Japanese bath, from early times until the present day. The diverse sources consulted for this paper include a fictional portrayal from the late Edo period, nineteenth-century Western accounts, semantic analysis, and works by leading anthropologists.

On behalf of the editorial committee, I hope that readers will find this issue of *Asia Pacific Perspectives* both informative and enjoyable to read.

Andrea Lingenfelter

Guest Editor

2013–14 Kiriama Fellow

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