
Editor's Note

Ex-position is not meant for everyone.

For all the reasons in the world, it's not for cynics.

It's also not for habitual pessimists, not for those who subsist on believing only in the visible. (And the difference between the two groups? Let's say the cynics need an audience while the pessimists are fine keeping to themselves.)

The list could go on, with categories falling within similar perimeters: worriers, skeptics (the mundane kind), and people who always only play risk-free moves.

The journal was founded in 1985. *Ex-position* is its second attempt throughout the years at redefining itself. The new identity came to be at a time of general angst in the local academy: running an English-language journal here had become—and still is—a daunting task. In a socio-political climate where higher education is expected to spearhead the nation's chase after recognition, anyone capable of writing English has been encouraged if not instructed by their institute to publish abroad. And “foreign literatures” (or, specifically, English literature) is in an even trickier position in that, for nearly thirty years now, scholars in the field have also felt an obligation to write in Chinese in order to communicate closely with local scholars from other areas of specialization. This has proven fruitful, to be sure, so much as that it has also created a serious imbalance: scholarship presented in Chinese easily receives greater attention and gains clout, but people rarely (have time to) read each other's English publications. Publishing in English here starts to feel like routine.

And then there are other constrictions such as funding bodies that give conflicting criteria every other year as to what constitutes a good journal.

In short, loss of purpose.

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Yet, it is perhaps precisely this across-the-board sense of trepidation that gives us a much welcome opportunity to rethink our commitment. Once the colleagues at the journal's home base have reached the consensus to revamp the journal, what lies ahead, it becomes clear, is a wide horizon of freshness, and what is to be left behind is everything that is confusing.

Our agenda is simple: we start by becoming a journal that local scholars would like to read. And we set out fully aware of some of our perceived limitations. For one thing, to best serve the local academe, *Ex-position* has to remain a generalist journal. (This in itself is a legitimate reason why the journal does not intend to appeal to everyone. For those who wish to be appreciated in their area of expertise, finding a readership in a specialist journal is a much worthier pursuit.)

But one of the positive implications of the journal taking on a generalist persona is that we all ought to learn to write across disciplines, to find ways to better engage fellow scholars. This may very well turn out to be a strength in the long run. (And this goes for those feature topics we put out—they are designed to promote attention to specific themes, yes, but they are, too, tasked with the job of being intellectually inviting.) Journals like *Ex-position* must work around—and try to thrive on—our distinct positionality. While admittedly a lot of us have trained in Western scholarly frameworks, we are now serving a non-English-speaking academe. We have to multitask.

And multitasking doesn't just mean more effective writing strategies. More important, it is an imperative, an imperative to be conscious—and conscientious—of what our singular place should entail in our identity as scholars, as teachers. To publish here is to assume multiple envisioning, of our personal relation with the subject we have in hand, and of the relevance of our subject matter to local scholars and students. It is not absolutely easier or absolutely harder than writing for a group of experts, but it is worlds different.

Another critical side to our positionality is that it is a privileged position. Being able to use an international language to turn outward is a privilege: stimulation from without keeps us growing. At the same time, this ability to reach out (and branch out) comes as a responsibility as much as it is a privilege. If anything, first and foremost, we are particularly interested in working with academic circles that are situated similarly—that is, outside the world’s putative academic centers—rather than going after a superficial international profile.

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All of this (prospect, program, or mission) can be summed up in our new name, the awkwardly formed title that nevertheless makes our goal crystal-clear.

All of this is also our version of crisis management, our response to the sweeping depreciation of the humanities—and the shrinking influence of the foreign-lit field in particular.

For this inaugural reinvented issue to materialize, a pack of people have come to our help. We are grateful to our editorial board members for being on call 24/7, and for all the discussions and even impassioned debates over the submissions; to our advisors for gracing this budding entity; to the invited contributors (to the section “Perspectives,” which is aimed at accommodating commentaries, personal reflections, position papers, and any writing that requires intellectual candor) for their powerful feedback on the featured theme; to all the authors of the research articles for trusting us; and to the external readers for demonstrating what we very much hope to foster at the journal, that is, genuine exchange. And special thanks to Yoshi for taking up the challenge of making our very first feature topic a reality.

At the risk of sounding predictable, I say a journal truly is a peculiar kind of community: a community-becoming whose substance does not take shape until different actors come around to flesh it out, to help define it. Thus, each issue is a new start, a new gathering, a new round of anticipation and excitement. *This* cannot be routine.

Chun-yen Chen
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