

# **Gazing at the Moon and Back at the Ground of Globality: Observations on a Poem by Huang Zunxian**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Here I analyze a poem by Huang Zunxian and through it explore the question of the "globality" of Chinese people. For my assumption is that globalization theory must at last find its ground in globality, the individual's experience of his own state of being. Not only from abstract thinking but also from personal life experience, the individual must profoundly "see" the global transformation of the world. Huang Zunxian's experience of the moon-image is a very "Chinese" experience. Here the poet describes his changing "vision" of the moon in a series of stages: (1) the original experience of identification with the moon; (2) the shift from identification to (self-moon) difference; (3) the longing for identification in the context of difference; (4) the return to the state of difference through individual life experience; (5) reflecting on the possibility of pursuing identity-in-difference. We find from this poem that the Chinese experience of globality contains oppositions or tensions: ancient/modern, Chinese/Western, identification/difference. Thus we see that globality takes the individual's experience of his/her life-world as its very ground.

## **KEY WORDS**

globalization  
lifeworld  
Huang Zunxian  
identity

globality  
ontological ground  
moon image  
difference



According to an old Chinese idiom, human beings should live on the ground because only in this can they have a sense of “standing on solid ground.” Although sometimes people can fly (by other means) into the sky, they are bound to come back to the ground as their fundamental ontological ground or home. Recently there have been many heated discussions of “globalization,” a process of transformation in and through the fields of geography, politics, economics, society and culture. But any notion of globalization must be grounded in a sense of “globality”—that unforgettable ground which can be identified with the individual’s experience of her/his own state of being. It is not only from our conceptual and abstract thinking but also from our personal life experience that we will “realize” the global transformation of the world. In his poem “Gazing at the Moon” Huang Zunxian, a late Qing Dynasty poet, provides a space within which to reflect on such a “globality” from a quite “localized” Chinese position; here he shares with us his own experience of an image deeply-rooted in Chinese culture, the image of the full moon.<sup>1</sup>

Huan Zunxian (1848–1905) was born in Jia Ying (in the present-day Mei County), Guangdong Province. In 1876 he passed the imperial examination and was immediately appointed the Qing Dynasty Counselor to Japan. The following autumn he sailed to Japan to begin his career as a diplomat; he spent over ten years in that country. During his stay there he visited various places in Japan, Singapore, the United States and Britain. His most famous collection of poems is *Poems of the Hut within the Human Realm*, which includes 11 volumes, one of which begins: “I composed this poem after gazing at the moon from a ship in the Pacific Ocean on the night of the Midautumn Festival.” This poem expresses the poet’s awareness of China undergoing a process of transformation seen now “in the light” of his experience, or “vision,” of the full moon.

The moon is an archetypal image in all cultures. It is “sung” repeatedly in classical Chinese poetry; “gazing at the moon” or “enjoying the glorious full moon” had long since become a quintessentially Chinese poetic theme and image. For instance we have the well-known lines: “I lift my eyes and see the moon” (Li Bai); “But the moon is brighter at my home” (Du Fu); “A bright moon rises above the sea” (Zhang Jiuling); “One may feel the cold moonlight when reciting poems in the night” (Li Shangyin); and “When will the bright moon light my journey home?” (Wang Anshi). This moon-image is in fact closely connected to the traditional Chinese worldview, which takes China as the very center of the universe. If the poet’s experience of the moon lies within the framework of this worldview, the world of the poet is then still a world dominated by the “China-as-Center” illusion. Yet once a “difference” is experienced, a “disruption” of this China-centric (Sino-centric) view, this initial outlook and, in the poem’s terms, correlatively the full-moon-image, will be split. This then mirrors China’s own internal conflicts on the path of transition from a traditional cultural self-awareness to the new experience of globality.

Thus it is “natural” that, within the Chinese experience of globality, the traditional aesthetic “vision” of the moon-image must be distorted, dismembered or transformed by the force of globalization. That is why Huang Zunxian could have, when he wrote this poem, a new experience of the moon quite different from that of his predecessors. In September 1885, as Chinese Ambassador to New York, Huang asked for leave to come back to his homeland. On the night of the Midautumn Festival his ship was sailing in the vast Pacific Ocean. Gazing at the moon with a deep nostalgic feeling, a deep longing for home, while listening to the foreign songs of a fellow passenger, he composed this poem:

I composed this poem after gazing at the moon from a ship  
 In the Pacific Ocean on the night of the Midautumn Festival  
 The huge ocean waves merge with the sky,  
 Where the full moon’s giant orb glitters just on the horizon.  
 Every night she lights the stern to send us along on our jour-

ney,  
But tonight her clear rays glow with double purity.  
Outside our ship there's not an inch of land anywhere;  
The dark heavens stretch above us, the inky waters below.  
Since embarking I've seen the moon wax and wane four  
times,  
And we have already sailed three thousand miles back  
home.  
The entire universe shares the same moon with us,  
But not all people celebrate our Chinese Moon Festival.  
The Western calendar is approaching its two thousandth  
year,  
But Westerners don't reckon time by the phases of the  
moon.<sup>2</sup>  
Officers navigate with compasses upon the bridge;  
Both our ship and Milky Way glide westward together.  
Curly-bearded Americans sing hoarsely, and blue eyes be-  
come drunk,  
But their foreign music helps make me more homesick.  
The Chinese laborers who travel steerage class below  
Escape from their bondage for a short while in sleep.  
Like ants, they sink lifelessly into the black realm of sugar  
dreams,  
Sprawled in disorder, arms locked together, elbows akimbo.  
Fish and sea creatures lie silent, as midnight approaches;  
The ocean is level as a mirror, and the wind dies to a hush.  
The moon's wheel hangs in the sky as the ship's wheel  
turns,  
And I alone pace anxiously beside the railing.  
My body follows the ship, just as the moon follows me;  
My friend the moon has become so dear that she can't bear  
to leave me.  
On the vast ocean that stretches for thousands of miles,  
I raise my head and gaze westward toward thick-lying  
clouds,

Below which lie the homes of billions of men.  
In how many families do young couples mourn their Separation?  
In how many mansions do the rich sing and dance?  
Though their joys and sorrows differ from one another,  
Four hundred million Chinese share this same autumn evening.  
How could those men of Cathay, of our middle kingdom, know  
That somewhere west of America, some place east of Japan,  
A lonely traveler stands on the deserted deck of a ship?  
I left the land of my ancestors more than ten years ago,  
And now moonbeams are shimmering on my graying temple hairs.  
Just to see where the sun rises I journeyed eastward to Japan,  
And then I harnessed the wind to cross endless seas.  
When I raise my head, I see the moon of my homeland,  
Though she appears at different times in each country of the world.  
Tonight my family will watch her from the ocean's other shore,  
But when she pops up in China she will have already set here.  
I lead an existence as aimless as a rolling tumbleweed;  
I'm a Chinese pioneer wherever I travel in the world.  
Even our sages didn't reach lands that don't use our calendar,  
But I still have not come to the end of my journey.  
Home lies beneath my feet on the back side of the globe,  
So what were Heaven's intentions in setting me down here?  
I scratch my head and wish to ask Heaven a question:  
Just what is the destination of my unending voyage?  
My heart is so vexed, I lean against the railing, sleepless.  
The night's shadows turn vermilion with dawn's rosy hues,

And the sun rises dead east—half lost in a fog.  
(J.D. Schmidt 254–55; translation modified.)

This poem describes the poet's novel experience of gazing at the moon above the Pacific Ocean on the night of the Mid-autumn Festival. Chinese poets have often gazed at the moon from inland or from the inner shore rather than on the open sea. For instance, we have the "Shui Diao Ge Tou—When did the moon begin to be?" by Su Shi, and "Gazing at the moon and yearning for the native land" by Zhang jiuling, among others. For China, as the Chung-Kuo, "Middle Kingdom," was always thought of as a vast "Mainland"; the Chinese were never primarily a seafaring people. At the same time, as we see in the poem, the moon has always had a special temporal significance for Chinese people, given that the *lunar calendar* has been and remains the standard one. Thus not only the activity of "gazing at the moon" but also the very conception of space-time in which this activity is set are conditioned by the ancient Chinese worldview: space because we view from a vast interior land, time because the moon itself marks our sense of time. And it is said that Chinese poets tend to take it for granted that the whole world shares this same "experiential context," or perhaps "life-world context," in gazing at the moon; this is perhaps the purest form of Sinocentrism. However, when Huang Zunxian sailed across the Pacific Ocean for the first time and looked at the moon, the traditional Chinese moon-image was now, in his eyes, unconsciously but significantly transformed.

The 56 lines of this poem can be divided into five stanzas. The first stanza (1–4) demonstrates the original Chinese experience of self-identification with the moon. The second stanza (5–20) describes the poet's dramatic shift from identification to differentiation. The third stanza (21–34) reveals a longing for re-identification in the situation of differentiation. The fourth stanza (35–49) depicts a return to differentiation through an individual's own life experience. Then the last stanza expresses his inward sense of skepticism tempered by hope for the future. Therefore we can say that these five stanzas represent the process of transformation of the poet's experience of gazing at the

moon from a “classical Chinese” experience to a global one, that is, to a new awareness of “globality.” We then have a series of experiences of self-moon (subject-object) identification, differentiation, re-identification, re-differentiation, and “reflection” on the foregoing stages, reflection that points toward a skeptical or qualified sense of hope, that is, toward the possibility of still pursuing identity with the old (Chinese) moon while remaining aware that this Chinese-moon has already become differentiated, globalized.

### 1. The Original Experience of Self-identification

The huge ocean's waves merge with the sky,  
Where the full moon's giant orb glitters just on the horizon.  
Every night she lights the stern to send us along on our journey,  
But tonight her clear rays glow with double purity.

These lines express Huang Zunxian's original experience of identification with the moon under the unconscious influence of the traditional Chinese aesthetic mode. The reason for the feelings he described in the above lines is that there are so many vivid moon-images from traditional Chinese poetry surging in his mind. He therefore feels great affection for the moon while gazing at it in the Pacific Ocean on the night of this traditional Chinese festival. Since the moon is associated with family reunions in the Chinese cultural tradition, the poet naturally feels homesick when he sees the full moon, while Western poets probably won't have this particular feeling. Therefore it is natural for the poet to imagine the joy and happiness of a family reunion, and to find the moon bigger and brighter than ever before when he gazes at it on the night of the Midautumn Festival. Of course, this feeling is also connected with his physical standpoint: seen from the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the moon is indeed bigger and brighter than it would be if seen from the mainland.

## 2. The Shift from Identification to Differentiation

However, this original experience of identity-with-moon as a kind of Chinese self-identification is transient, it cannot last. As the poet suddenly realizes he is not at home or even in his homeland, but rather drifting over the boundless Pacific Ocean, we get the shift from the “classical Chinese” image to the “global” one.

Outside our ship there's not an inch of land anywhere;  
The dark heavens stretch above us, the inky waters below.

It is an unfamiliar, mysterious and even terrifying experience for the Chinese poet to gaze at the moon in such novel and strange circumstances. His unconscious Chinese standpoint has quietly shifted to a global one. Hence he notices that

Since embarking I've seen the moon wax and wane four  
times,  
And we've already sailed three thousand miles back home.

Back in China the poet may have gazed at the moon from boats on the river, but this is the first time he has gone anywhere near this far, or spent anywhere near so much time sailing (four months, since each cycle of waxing-and-waning is one month), on the open water. The sense of time and distance is thus also slightly warped here; this new spatio-temporal sense contrasts with the traditional Chinese lunar, agricultural, “domestic” sense of space-time. This is a new experience of one's “world” or state of being.

Here then the poet also learns the “difference” between the ancient and modern, between the Chinese cultural tradition and its contemporary Western counterpart.

The entire universe shares the same moon with us,  
But not all people celebrate our Chinese Lunar Festival.



Reluctantly, Huang Zunxian has accepted the new worldview of globality; “the entire universe,” originally a term from Taoism (Tian-Di, Heaven-Earth) and Buddhism, now refers to the presently known, universally objectified cosmos of (western) science and no longer the universe whose center is China. The speaker is surprised and upset because he can’t share his experience of gazing at the moon with “the whole universe”; he could really only share it with other Chinese, those who “celebrate our Chinese Lunar Festival.” This sharing of “shares the same moon” is purely physical, empirical, mechanical—the only possible sharing that would be truly “global”; thus we get the contradiction between the “global geography” and national culture.

This same split now also exists in the speaker’s sense of time:

The Western calendar is approaching its two thousandth  
year,  
But Westerners don’t reckon time by the phases of the  
moon.

“Its two thousandth year” refers to the Western solar calendar that begins with the birth of Christ; the poet rounds off the year 1885, making it 2000 A.D. Of course, “calendar time” is relative, and many countries and cultures have different calendars: in Buddhist lands like Thailand, which as with the Christian calendar base the “starting point” on a significant religious event, the year is now something over 5000; in the Republic of China (Taiwan) the year is 93 because 1911, the year of the founding of the republic, is marked as the starting point. But the poem’s contrast here again highlights the traditional Chinese lunar calendar: perhaps if time were reckoned “by the phases of the moon” we would now be (as too in the Buddhist calendar) in a much “later” year than 1885 (or 2004). The key point is that whereas the Chinese lay great emphasis on the symbolic meaning of the moon’s cycle of waxing-and-waning, feeling it represents all of nature’s rhythmic, organic processes—including the yearly seasons and (closely tied to the moon itself) women’s menstrual cycle—to Westerners the moon’s “phases” are something purely objective, a common astrophysical phenomenon.

What's more, the poet associates his experience of gazing at the moon with national, ethnic, cultural differences.

Curly-bearded Americans sing hoarsely, and their blue eyes  
become drunk,  
But their foreign music merely helps make me feel more  
homesick.

And ironically, while the Americans are drinking and enjoying their own songs, the poor Chinese are feeling more homesick than ever before.

The Chinese laborers who travel steerage class below  
Escape from their bondage for a short while in sleep.  
Like ants, they sink lifelessly into the black realm of sugar  
dreams,  
Sprawled in disorder, arms locked together, elbows akimbo.

When the poet turns to these lower-class Chinese laborers on the same boat, he feels a deep sense of sympathy for them; not only have they become in effect the slaves of rich masters but these are (we assume) foreign masters, white masters. The socio-economic sensitivity that enters the poem here—like William Blake's "chimney sweeper," they can only "Escape from their bondage for a short while in sleep," and the upper classes they appear as little more than a swarm of "ants" ("the masses")—makes this description somewhat different from the sympathy for Chinese compatriots of more traditional Chinese poems; yet this is precisely a global humanity that we are now talking about, and indeed one that is situated "under late capitalism." Under the domination of certain hegemonic socio-economic forces that "flatten out" the world, the poet feels (not just the differences but) the intense inequalities that exist among races and nations.

### 3. A Longing for Re-identification in the Context of Differentiation

If what is expressed in the second stage is a foreign, strange, even terrifying and painful experience of globality, then in the third stanza the poet is ready to seek re-identification with “Chineseness,” though this must now be situated within the context of the “difference” of an already-experienced globality. Indeed, in the third stanza the whole poem reaches its climax; there is now a feeling of calmness, the psychological consequence of an inward adjustment to the physical and mental excitement of “global shock.”

Fish and sea creatures lie silent, as midnight approaches;  
The ocean is level as a mirror, and the wind dies to a hush.  
The moon’s wheel hangs in the sky as the ship’s wheels  
turn,  
And I alone pace anxiously beside the railing.  
My body follows the ship, just as the moon follows me;  
My friend the moon has become so dear that she can’t bear  
to leave me.

With the fading away of the initial sense of alienation and pain of the second stage, the poet now resumes his connection with the ancient Chinese culture, his identification with/through the traditional and familiar moon-image. He finds that although he is now in a globalized state the moon still overflows with the same deep affection and friendship he knows from his childhood back home.

On the vast ocean that stretches for thousands of miles,  
The moon, my shadow, and I make a party of three.

The first line describes the poet’s strange and novel experience of globality upon the boundless and immeasurable ocean, while the second line expresses his re-identification with the moon; here, of course, he refers back to Li Bai’s (Tang Dynasty) poem, “Drinking alone by

moonlight”:

By moonlight, with my pot of wine,  
 I drink alone, no friends at all.  
 I raise my cup to invite the moon;  
 Moon, my shadow, and I make a party of three!  
 The moon itself doesn't know how to drink,  
 And my shadow follows my body in vain.<sup>3</sup>

The full moon, though hanging in the sky above a vast and unfamiliar ocean, is just like an old friend whom Huang Zunxian has not seen for ages. It helps him to realize his own re-identification as a “modern” Chinese. This implies that even in an increasingly globalized world, all Chinese can regain their original sense of who they are. Thus again the speaker thinks of his homeland and misses his relatives, but this is now on a more complex level, a more universal level of awareness.

I raise my head and gaze westward toward thick-lying  
 clouds,  
 Below which lie the homes of billions of men.  
 In how many families do young couples mourn their separation?  
 Though their joys and sorrows may differ,  
 Four hundred million Chinese share this same autumn  
 evening.<sup>4</sup>

The poet's personal experience of identification is sublimated into the collective experience of all Chinese: beneath the “westward thick-lying clouds” live four hundred million Chinese compatriots who have different joys and sorrows and share the same Midautumn Moon Festival; the permanence (through annual repetition as of an ancient ritual) of this Festival unifies all Chinese. But beyond this there is the hint of a further level of sublimation, into the universal experience (suffering and joy) of a globalized mankind. Thus again we are reminded that this more sophisticated level of re-identification is set within the context of

cultural difference.

#### 4. A Return to Differentiation through the Individual experience of the Lifeworld

Thus the poet comes back again, as if the poem were itself a rhythmic repetition, a (lunar) “cycle,” to the inevitability of the difference between ancient and modern, China and the West.

How could those men of Cathay, of our middle kingdom,  
 know,  
 That somewhere west of America, some place east of Japan,  
 A lonely traveler stands on the deserted deck of a ship?  
 I left the land of my ancestors more than ten years ago,  
 And now moonbeams are shimmering on my graying temple  
 hairs?  
 Just to see where the sun rises I journeyed eastward to  
 Japan,  
 And then I harnessed the wind to cross endless seas.

The phrase “How could [. . .] know [. . .]?” conveys another turning point in the poet’s experience, the psychological transition (on another level) from “identification” to “differentiation”: his own countrymen do not know where he now is, they perhaps cannot fully understand what he now feels; the “cultural difference” that he feels creates another difference, that of the “experiential” separation between himself and his homeland. The word for “endless seas” here is *Dayinghai*; it comes from the *Biographies of Mencius and Xunzi* in Sima Qian’s *Historical Records*. Zouyan, a scholar of the Qi state, believes that China belongs to the Divine Land, which is one of the Nine Lands of the world. Surrounded by small seas, these nine lands in turn can be called one big Land and there are nine such big Lands altogether, surrounded by the *Dayinghai*. The unity-in-multiplicity of this topographic image parallels the complexity of the mental (spiritual, experiential) stage now entered by the poem’s speaker. Sailing in these “end-

less seas” he thinks of himself as both connected to and disconnected from his homeland and his Chinese countrymen. Unlike his ancestors who confined themselves to Mainland China, he has been to such places as Japan and America and has encountered the “global” world, a new and virtually “endless” world to him. The speaker now seems to subtly ask: was this his fortune or his misfortune? Anyway, he cannot now “go back” in this sense, though literally he is returning to China. “*Dayinghai*” is a meaningful symbol here, showing that Huang has discarded the classical worldview of “China-as-Center” and has accepted a more modern sense of China-as-part-of-larger-world.”

When I raise my head, I see the moon of my homeland,  
 Though she appears at different times in each country of the  
 world.  
 Tonight my family will watch her from the ocean’s other  
 shore,  
 But when she pops up in China she will have already set  
 here.  
 I lead an existence as aimless as a rolling tumbleweed;  
 I’m a Chinese pioneer wherever I travel in the world.  
 Even our sages didn’t reach lands that don’t use our calen-  
 dar,  
 But I still have not come to the end of my journey.

This whole passage seems to foreground, partly through the use of the moon-image, the “relativity” and potential transformation of one’s “own” (Chinese) sense of space/time. The ancient Chinese could never travel far enough to reach lands which—even if they lie beneath the same moon—have a “different time” (different way of measuring time). And that the speaker himself has not yet “come to the end of his journey” suggests an endless journey (“endless seas”) and/or (at the very least) a journey “away from home,” yet (paradoxically) this journey will end and it will end “at home.” Thus again we come back on another level to the sense of the global world’s diversity, multiplicity, even rupture and discontinuity, but we are experiencing this from the stand-

point of our own Chinese lifeworld, a lifeworld now itself becomes discontinuous and multiple, becomes an “endless sea,” distanced from itself spatially and (as Chinese history versus the present) temporally.

### 5. The Future: Pursuing Identity in Differentiation

At last the poet cannot help wondering: what will be the future of the world, of China, of himself in the context of this new, globalized or globalizing experience of differentiation?

Home lies beneath my feet on the back side of the globe,  
 So what were Heaven’s intentions in setting me down here?  
 I scratch my head and wish to ask Heaven a question:  
 Just what is the destination of my unending voyage?  
 My heart is so vexed; I lean against the railing, sleepless.  
 The night’s shadow turn vermilion with dawn’s rosy hues,  
 And the sun rises dead east—half lost in a fog.

The poet is filled with uncertainty and anxiety about his future as he stands on the boat, sailing home to China on the “back side” of the globe. He realizes that now his home is really “beneath my feet”: it could mean the ship itself, and thus that he will always be carrying his home with him, i.e. forever a traveler who (in effect) *has* no home; it could also mean (a variation on the same idea) that home now, in *this moment*, is that part of the earth (in the mid-Pacific) he is sailing over, thus that as he travels he will in each moment have a “new home.” To say he is now on the “back side of the globe” might suggest that the Pacific is a sort of vast, dark no-man’s land (between America and China) as compared, say, to the Atlantic which connects Europe and America. And yet this would imply a non-Sinocentric view of the world, which is an important part of this stanza’s meaning: while we are approaching home (China) we can never really arrive there, for our goal must from now on be viewed as already a self-difference. In other words, the journey home is “unending”; in fact, we no longer know what our destination—which we once had assumed was “home”—is

any more, or if we will ever reach it: we must “ask Heaven” (perhaps “ask the limitlessness”).

Of course, Heaven will not give us any answer to our future-directed question, there is no final “solution” to our anxiety about an increasingly-globalizing future, yet the poet insists on gazing at the moon and seeking for the answer until the moon disappears and “the sun rises dead east—half lost in a fog.” The poem ends with the sun’s arrival; the sun at last replaces the moon. We might think this sunrise is a symbol of optimism and hope, for the whole world but especially for China: the classical prototype for this sentence is found in an old Chinese poem, “The sun in the sea rises from the remaining night.” That is, we might think the poet has here found a new basis for re-identifying with Chinese culture and tradition. Yet the sun rises in the east, over America; the poet is headed west, toward China and into darkness, into the unknownness and unknowability of the (Chinese) future. (Relativity again: he is headed west in order to get to the Far East.) But if China is dark, the part of the world that lies in the *other* direction (e.g. America) is “dead,” for the sun rises in the “dead east” (“directly to the east”). Furthermore, this sun is “half lost in a fog”: if the night’s full moon suggests quiet contemplation, the daytime’s sun obscured (or even fragmented) by the hazy fog suggests at best confusion, at worst chaos. This sun is hardly that of the “sunrise” in traditional Chinese poetry; rather, it is perhaps the sun of the future.

Thus the speaker’s experience of the moon in Huang’s poem develops through a series of stages: these are stages in the relationship between subjective identity with the Chinese homeland and difference of/from that homeland—where this “homeland” is China itself but also the sinocentric worldview. The movement is essentially one from Chinese ethnocentrism (sinocentrism) to a globalized view of the world, where the latter is more complex than one might at first have realized inasmuch as it involves seeing the “differences,” not only between one’s home culture and the world’s other cultures, but also *within* one’s own culture, cultural history, (ethnic) identity. Specifically in the poem we have tensions between China/the West and also between ancient/modern; but whereas on the first level “ancient” correlates with



China, on another level China itself is seen to embody the old/new bifurcation. And on yet another level of abstraction we could say the poem is also dealing with the tension between identity/difference.

Such tensions or contradictions, then, are the necessary components of globality and therefore also the process through which individuals must experience or come to “realize” globality. That is, the experience of globality involves complex inner (subjective and socio-cultural) conflicts, but it is also the process of *development* of these conflicts, a process which will hopefully lead to a “resolution” of the conflicts. But as at the end of the poem, so too (I would suggest) with regard to the increasingly and ever-more-rapidly globalizing world that we live in today, it is not clear whether these increasingly complex contradictions (at both the individual and the socio-cultural level) can or will ever be resolved—or whether we will not rather be left “in a fog,” in a state of accelerating confusion and perplexity.

Yet perhaps in order best to “rethink” the situation we, as citizens of a new world order, have now entered into, on our own ship in mid-ocean at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (as measured by a particular, more or less hegemonic calendar), we should do what Huang is in fact doing in his poem. We should go back to the starting point. For the awareness of globality in the final analysis holds the individual experience of his/her lifeworld as its very ground. Now is the time to look at the moon hanging in the night sky, the same moon seen everywhere in the world though at different times, and reflect upon its fullness; but this upward gaze will force us to look back down at the ground of our own globality.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Midautumn Festival, celebrated on the full moon of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month, is one of the major Chinese Festivals, when family members get together to eat moon cakes and enjoy the sight of the full moon.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the West uses a solar calendar.

<sup>3</sup> This is an allusion to a line from one of Li Bai’s most popular poems, “The shadow opposite makes us three persons,” a drinking

poem in which Li holds a drinking party with the moon, his shadow, and himself.

<sup>4</sup> Translated by J.D. Schmidt; see his *Within the Human Realm: The Poetry of Huang Zunxian 1848–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.)