The Japanese concept of “ma間” intrigues fashion designers’ imagination of the space between textile and skin. *Exploring Art, Knowledge and Movement in Japanese Fashion* tells a philosophical story of the Greek *poiein,* avant-garde Japanese fashion designers, the Paris high fashion scene, and Chinese classics from early modern to contemporary times. It traverses the terrain of history of art, performance studies, religion, and the eighteenth-century literary masterpiece *The Dream of Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *Story of the Stone* 石頭記).

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Exploring Art, Knowledge and Movement in Japanese Fashion

B Y

VIVIEN JIAQIAN ZHU

"I Dwell in Possibility:" The Poetics of Space in the works of 1980s Japanese Avant-garde Fashion Designers

Abstract:

What is art? What is history? What is knowledge? What is scholarship? Following the discussion between art and craft, I reflect on the use of textile with scholarship from Julia Bryan-Wilson and Winnie Wong. Inspired by Susan Foster's article "Choreography Empathy," and Georgina Kleege's More Than Meets the Eye, I associate space with choreography and kinesthetic movement—particularly concept of "ma 間" for the 1960s-1980s Japanese fashion designers.

Keywords: Textile, Fashion, Art, Craft, Choreography

"I Dwell in Possibility:" The Poetics of Space in the works of 1980s Japanese Avant-garde Fashion Designers

I dwell in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –
More numerous of Windows –
Superior – for Doors –.
— Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)[1]

Like the façade of an architecture, cloth becomes a second skin covering the human body. Like the construction of an architecture, fashion experiments with the reconstruction of space and material. The rich analogue between architecture and fashion design is continued in postwar Japan, when experimental designers jettison the western tradition of tightly sculpted tailoring of the fabric. Unlike western clothes, the Japanese kimono is an assemblage of rectangular pieces of fabrics. Kimono is thus "flat" when unworn, but gains volume when put on a human body. With the tradition of Japanese kimono in their minds,[2] Japanese designers seek inspiration from the metamorphosis of space between two-dimension and three-dimension. Often represented by the big Three — Issey Miyake (1938-2022), Rei Kawakubo (1942-), and Yohji Yamamoto (1943-), the 1980s Japanese fashion designers, in particular, become the synonym of avant-garde, innovation and newness on the international stage. The era of the 1908s also marks a moment when the boundary among fashion, design and art dissolved. Instead of appealing to consumers through pure advertising, Japanese fashion designers self-consciously seek out other vehicles—books, photographs, magazines, exhibitions and documentary films—to disseminate images of their work and to convey

[1] Helen Vendler, *Dickinson: Selected Poems and Commentaries* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010), 222.

[2] The Japanese kimono has been influenced by traditional Chinese garments since the fifteenth century. The notion of authenticity is more problematic regarding the social construct of the "Japanese" culture.

intellectual concepts.[3]

In this writing, I consider designers' work as a form of intermedial art, and the representation of space as its major visual form. I attempt to use the practice of formal analysis in the History of Art to look at experimental work by Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo, and Yohji Yamamoto. T. J. Clark's (1943-) *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (2006) starts with how he the art historian looks, very closely, at two Poussin's paintings, showing us how to look and what to look for. His art journal in the chapter further unfolds a relentless process of looking, writing and rewriting, in order to use words to render a touch of "blue" by Poussin.[4] Echoing with Clark's durational experience of looking, Japanese designers show a similar interest in process and duration in their work. Inspired by T. J. Clark's formal analysis of brushwork and hue, I will closely look and examine the poetics of space in works of Japanese fashion designers. As the etymological root of the word "poet" suggests "a maker," I will refer to the word "poetics" in the way the Greek work *poiein* suggesting ways of "making."[5] I will thus examine how the 1980s Japanese designers explore various ways of "making" the space between two-dimension and three-dimension, as well as between the body and the garment—a rich space they refer to as "*ma*" in Japanese.

Often featuring the unfinished look of rags, holes and exposed seams, fashion design to these Japanese designers, I argue, develops its finished form through the dynamic

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[3] For example, Issey Miyake was one of the first Japanese designers to adopt the exhibition as an expressive medium, beginning with *Issey Miyake: Bodyworks* (1983), followed by *Energies* (1990) in Amsterdam, and more recently *Making Things* (1998) in Paris. For a chronology of Miyake's exhibitions, see Makoto Ishizeki, "Centralizing the Marginal: Japanese Fashion through the History of Fashion Exhibition," *Dresstudy*, vols. 57-58 (2010). For Japanese designers involvement in different media, see Akiko Fukai, "Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion," in *Future Beauties: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii (London and New York: Merrell, 2010), 21.

[4] T. J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 41.

[5] Timothy Hampton, "Introduction," *Bob Dylan's Poetics: How the Songs Work* (New York: Zone Books, 2019), 13.

construction of ma and the movement produced by the wearer's body. In Japanese, the literal meaning of *ma* 間 indicates "an interval," both spatially and temporally. When ma refers to a spatial interval, it connotes a space between the two mediums. To approach *ma* across genres, media and fields, I also attempt to look at dance costumes designed by Rei Kawakubo, and photographs of her collaborated choreography work with the American dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009).

1980s Japanese fashion designers follow the successful debut of first generation Japanese designers—Kenzo Takada (1939-2020) and Hanae Mori (1926-2022)—on the international stage. Rather than evoke the Japanese in fashion as the exotic and foreign, this second generation of Japanese designers invests their creativity in revolutionizing the western concept of fashion, and in deconstructing the western notion of the beautiful.[6] Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo shock the Paris high fashion with their notably asymmetrical design.[7] Their legendary Spring/Summer 1983 collections boldly propose a new decorative language of frays, holes, ropes and exposed seams—in their garment design, a shattered bagger-like look. Avoiding using bright colors, these designs feature minimalist cut and heavy use of a monochromatic palette—from strong hues of black to the crispy shades of pure white. These seemingly unfinished work suffuses earlier *japonisme* with unconventional forms and shows a new deconstructionist approach to innovate garment design. In the words of Kawkubo, "to do things that [had] never been done before."[8]

The ragged aesthetic is termed as *la mode destroy* (destruction fashion) or simply *le*

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[6] See Yuniya Kawamura, *The Japanese Revolution in Paris Fashion* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

[7] See Roger Caillois, *La Dissymétrie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973). The French sociologist and literary critic Roger Caillois explicitly describes the phenomenon of asymmetrical design as a characteristic of Japanese aesthetics.

[8] Karin G. Oen, "Deconstruction and Refashioning Japonism," in *Kimono Refashioned: Japan's Impact on International Fashion*, ed. Yuki Morishima and Rie Nii (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2018), 23.

destroy by the French. *Le destroy* can be seen as a design practice of philosophical deconstruction, indirectly informed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) notion of *destruktion* and Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) notion of deconstruction in the late 1960s. Influenced by Japanese fashion designers, later European designers like Martin Margiela (1957-), Ann Demeulemeester (1959-), and Dries Van Noten (1958-) too imbue high fashion with this disruptive energy.[9] Interestingly, when Japanese fashion designers redefine contemporary sensibilities with austere and "imperfect" work in Paris, Derrida was considering Japan in his 1983 "Letter to a Japanese Friend" with Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993). Derrida reflected on his particular use of the term "deconstruction" to help with its translation into Japanese.[10]

The cultural phenomenon of 1980s Japanese fashion design suggests the underlying transnational dialogue of philosophy and aesthetic, and Japan's burgeoning economic growth in the postwar era. Japanese designers followed the mood of debunking established modes of design in the aftermath of Derridean deconstruction, and continued the aggressive counterculture that first appeared on the streets of London in the 1970s.[11] The heavy use of black in Yamamoto and Kawakubo echoes with the "punks' shredded black garb," which suggests "a publication of outrage and antipathy to society." Both *le destroy* and the 1970s "punk look" gloss a new "destructive" aesthetic of "unfinished, inside out and ravaged."[12]

With regard to the avant-garde gesture of *le destroy*'s shockingly new aesthetic, I attempt to examine the experimental construction of ma between two-dimension and three-

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[9] Oen, 24.

[10] Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Derrida and Difference*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (Warwick, UK: Parousia Press, 1985), 71-82.

[11] Cher Potter, "Deconstruction: Exposing the Invisible, Unhinging the Establishment," in *Future Beauties: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii, (London and New York: Merrell, 2010), 96.

[12] Potter, 96.

dimension in these garment designs. To further reflect on how le destroy designs the space, I will closely look at Rei Kawakubo's jersey dress designed for Autumn/ Winter 1983-1984 collections (Figure 1 and Figure 2), Yohji Yamamoto's dress designed for Spring/Summer 1983 collections (Figure 3), and Issey Miyake's shirt and dress designed for the 2010 "132 5." collection (Figure. 4 and Figure 5).

Commissioned by the Kyoto Costume Institute in 2008, the photographer Naoya Hatakeyame's (1958-) 2009 Lambda print (Figure 1) of Rei Kawakubo's (*Comme des Garçons*) jersey dress captures the simple black hue, the stark flatness and the extraordinary shape of her dress when it is unworn. The sharp contrast between the white background and clean black edge manifests a geometric beauty of line, shape and order. One horizontal line on the top leads the attention to the central vertical line and two triangles on both sides. This symmetrical image suggests a loop-like image that resembles a Möbius strip. When the dress is lying flat, the Euclidean space it suggests is almost unexpected to the stereotype of *Comme des Garçon* as asymmetrical, out-of-order and unfinished. As the print captures the overlap of one black fabric over another, this unworn dress suggests multiple nuances within the black hue and predicts a dynamic act of folding and layering behind the image. Among geometric shapes, Rei Kawakubo self-consciously explores the richness of ma through topological space on a two-dimension planar, and transforms the flat surface into an active process of "making" the flat dress.

When the black wool jersey dress is put on a human body (Figure 2), the Möbius strip" is unfolded as a voluminous black tube that shrouds the wearer from the front bodice to the back. A slip on the tube dress produces an intersecting drape, creating a flowing space among water draperies. As the Möbius loop indicates a spatial illusion of magic, the drape also suggests an illusory effect of the *ma* as the wearer can arrange the drapes in a variety of ways. This worn dress in three-dimension thus becomes an architectural dress that embodies

amorphousness. As the wearer puts the drape on or under the shoulder, or along the legs, waist or the body, the black dress manifests various possibilities to produce kinetic movements around the body.

The British design critic Deyan Studjic (1952-) discusses Rei Kawabubo's devotion to making "clothes that can be manipulated by the wearer," and also points out that though the wearer may not desire to use different options, "the idea that this is possible affects the way the wearer feels."[13] Rei Kawakubo's approach redefines the notion of authorship in fashion design, and proposes a "democratic" collaboration between the wearer and the designer. The finished form of the garment does not solely rely on the material, the designer, or the concept, but is from the input of the wearer— how the wearer desires certain shape, style and arrangement of space. In this regard, space, or *ma*, in garment design mediates the dynamic process of aesthetic production with conjoined exploration of inter-person relation.

Echoing with Rei Kawakubo's fondness of using the color black, Yohji Yamamoto's design dispenses with bright colors and performs a more poetic expression of clean cut, western tailoring and Japanese aesthetics. Yohji Yamamoto's affection for the monochromatic palettes is reminiscent of the tone of calligraphy and sumi-e (monochrome ink-and-wash painting). This minimalist palette also recalls the writing of the Japanese writer Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) in the early twentieth-century: "We find beauty not in the thing itself, but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates."[14] In his book *In Praise of Shadow* (1933), Tanizaki contends that the harmony of the shadow is the essence of Japanese aesthetics:

> Why should this propensity to seek beauty in darkness be strong only in Orientals? The West too has known a time when there was no electricity, gas, or petroleum, and

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[13] Deyan Sudjic, *Rei Kawakubo and Comme des Garçons* (New York: Rizzoli,1990), 82.

[14] Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *In Praise of Shadow* (1933), trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Publishing, 1977), 30.

> yet so far as I know the West has never been disposed to delight in shadows. Japanese ghosts have traditionally had no feet; Western ghosts have feet, but are transparent. As even this trifle suggests, pitch darkness has always occupied our fantasies, while in the West even ghosts are as clear as glass. This is true too of our household implements: we prefer colours compounded of darkness, they prefer the colours of sunlight. And of silver and copperware: we love them for the burnish and patina, which they consider unclean, insanitary, and polish to a glittering brilliance. They paint their ceilings and walls in pale colours to drive out as many of the windows as they can. We fill our gardens with dense paintings, they spread out a flat expanse of grass.
>
> But what produces such differences in taste? In my opinion it is this: we Orientals tend to seek our satisfactions in whatever surroundings we happen to find ourselves, to content ourselves with things as they are; and so darkness causes us no discontent, we resign ourselves to it as inevitable. If light is scarce; we will immerse ourselves in the darkness and there discover its own particular beauty.[15]

Tanizaki's self-orientalizing writing compares how the West and Japan react differently to light and darkness. He exoticizes the way the Japanese worship darkness, which can be regarded as backward in technology and civilization through the lens of the West. The "delight" in shadows provides rich sources for fantasies, everyday life and garden design. Through the "ubiquitous" darkness, the Japanese discover essential ways to represent the beautiful. Tanizaki's proud self-exoticization fits into a mainstream discussion of how Japan is capable of competing with the West regarding its civilization, taste, and hygiene condition. As a part of the larger scheme of nation- building in modern Japan, this process of taste-building suggests a national awareness of formulating a Japanese taste as early as the Meiji Restoration (1868).[16] Through the praise of shadows, Tanizaki self-consciously constructs an unusual Japanese aesthetic sensibility as a cultural counterpart to the West.

Unlike Tanizaki's self-orientalising praise of shadows, Yohji Yamamoto's affection for shadow, darkness and black does not evoke the foreign, exotic Japan. To him, black is no

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[15] Tanizaki, 47-48.

[16] For a critical writing on the process of taste-building and nation-building in the nineteenth-century Japan, as well as the notion of taste and style in domestic space, architecture and interior design in modern Japan, see Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture*, 1880-1930 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003).

longer a color to evoke elegance, but a color of ambiguity that he aims to explore its complexity. He frequently uses black as an "intellectual," "contemporary" and "luxury" color and has made a line of clothing called "Noir" since 1993.[17] Le destroy's fondness of black is also in concert with the punks' black on the streets of London—a color of mourning and poverty, an expression of protests and social concerns. Eventually, black not only dominates fashion but is the color of the age at the end of the 1990s.[18] In Yohji Yamamoto's Spring/ Summer 1983 collections, he experiments with the poetics of the shadow not through color, but through holes carved on the cotton fabric.

Hiroshi Sugimoto's (1948-) photograph (Fig. 3) of Yamamoto's design for Spring/ Summer 1983 collections captures the virtuoso play of light and shade between the garment and the wearer's body. The white cotton plain-weave garment comprises of one jacket and one dress that are riddled with square holes. Asymmetrical garments blend a sense of everyday life into the high fashion. The simple design and natural tone highlight a new beauty of modesty and spontaneity, reducing people's attention to ornamentation. The loose-fitting dress reduces the evocation of an erotic silhouette, and creates maximum freedom and casualness in *ma*. The dress thus embodies an androgynous allure that features on Yamamoto's design for women's attire. The light texture of the cotton dress invites the movements of breeze, getting the nature into the haptic perception of the wearer's body. Myriads of square holes perform like little windows on the garments. When the light is cast on the dress, scattered holes cast soft, kaleidoscopic shadows on the wearer's skin like dappled sunlight. The ma mediates Yamamoto's poetic construction of light and shade, and creates another wondrous yet impermanent dress beneath the original one. Therefore, the cotton

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[17] Yohji Yamamoto interviewed by Akiko Fukai in WOWOW television programme, Tokyo, 19 November 2002. See also "In Praise of Shadow," in *Future Beauties: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii (London and New York: Merrell, 2010), 15.

[18] *Future Beauties*, 15.

dress is spatially doubled with a negative counterpart. Ma bridges a twin design of the black and the white. In this regard, the wearer is able to put on a "shadow dress," and the plain white dress becomes a cover for the inner one.

Moreover, the impermanent "shadow dress" and the unfinished look seem to evoke the Japanese aesthetic of *wabi-sabi. Wabi* is meant by a state of being without decoration or visible luxury; *sabi* refers to the old and atmospheric. The principles of *wabi-sabi* manifests the ultimate expression in the tradition of Japanese tea ceremony, which was created by the revered master Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591) in the sixteenth century.[19] The aesthetic of *wabi-sabi* values the "beauty of things modest and simple," treasure the "beauty of the passage of time expressed in material form," and represent a tradition of appreciating the "imperfect, impermanent and incomplete."[20] Holes on the dress embody a *wabi-sabi* sense of imperfection and incompleteness. Yamamoto described his design in a similar manner: "If one has only one piece of clothing in life, it becomes patched together, exposed to sun and rain, frayed from the course of daily life. I wanted to create clothing with the same kind of unconscious beauty and natural appeal."[21] On that account, Yohji Yamamoto's design wavers between classical aesthetic and avant-garde revision, between poetic image and spatial evocation, and between the shabby look and the aesthetic of wabi-sabi. His garments for Spring/Summer 1983 collections imbue a new beauty of subtle sensuality, modesty and the natural

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[19] Edo (1603-1868) merchant culture also endorsed the aesthetic of *wabi-sabi*, appreciating the opposite of luxury in the form of a shabby refinement. Regarding this, Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693), one of Edo Japan's foremost writers, depicted the fashionable men and women of the early Edo period in his novels and described in acute details that clouting was often the opposite of gorgeous extravagance.

[20] Akiko Fukai, "Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion," in *Future Beauties: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii (London and New York: Merrell, 2010), 9.

[21] Quoted in *Future Beauties*, p. 51.

appearance.

Issey Miyake first came up with the concept of "A Piece of Cloth" in 1976 to propose a different relation between two-dimension and three-dimension. The concept of "A Piece of Cloth" means wrapping the moving body in single length of fabric, exploring the *ma* born between the body and clothing. This concept confronts the high fashion in the West, and reviews the excessive *ma* produced by long, uncut kimono fabrics. Pursuing this concept, Issey Miyake's "132 5." collection transforms a folded piece of cloth into a three-dimensional dress when it is lifted from the center. Miyake describes the mathematics of folding suggested by the "132 5." line as the following: "The number '1' refers to the fact that one piece of cloth can become three-dimension ('3'), and be re-folded into its two-dimensional ('2') state again. The number '5' after the space signifies the temporal dimension that comes into being after the clothing is worn by people."[22] Here, Miyake goes beyond the metamorphosis of space between two- dimension and three-dimension, and further gives some thought to the spatial-temporal dimension of a garment after its production. The fifth temporal dimension exists from yet beyond the every day. It embodies a kinetic temporality that is continually constituted by the *ma* in its kinetic form.

The black garment in the "132 5." collection (Figure 4) comprises of one polyester top and one skirt pressed with metal foil. The top and the skirt can be folded into flat octagons like the technique of *origami* (Figure 5), which is the traditional Japanese art of folding paper into decorative figures and shapes. Miyake's Reality Lab uses *origami*-design software developed by Jun Mitani (1975-)—a professor of computer science at the University of Tsukuba, and creates patterns that feature thin accordion folds on garment. Hence, the folded octagons of unworn clothes juvenilize the *origami* tradition, and show a state-of-the-art

[22] MIYAKE DESIGN STUDIO website. http://mds.isseymiyake.com/mds/en/collection/#, accessed December 3, 2019.

experiment of designing beauty between algorithm and garment design. Scored lines on the dress are printed on the recycled polyester plain weave. Space is mapped out as a combination of human and nonhuman input. The glittering material embodies Miyake's long-time interest in new synthetic fabric, suggests a sense of futurity. When lifted up and put on the wearer's body, the multidimensional dress becomes a wearable architecture that moves along with the body inhabiting the *ma*.

Moreover, Miyake's innovation lies in his blending of environmental concern, practicality and sustainability into his design lines. Instead of designing the beautiful and the extravagant, he prioritizes an alternative of saving excessive space, using the recycled material and selling the affordable. The recycled material used in the "132 5." line embodies the growing environmental concern in the fashion design industry. The folded flatness of the dress considerately meets the need to save space in a Japanese household. In the late 1980s, Miyake experiments with "new synthetic" fabrics made from polyester and has incorporated this advanced textile into the groundbreaking "Pleats Please" line since 1993.[23] The "Pleats Please" line is machine washable, portable, affordable, and wearable for women of all ages and body types.

Miyake's following line "A-POC" further highlights his futuristic vision of materiality, form and function. "A-POC" is a term coined from his earlier concept "A Piece of Cloth" and puns on the word "epoch." Miyake developed this line with the textile designer Dai Fujiwara, who is then the designer and the former creative director of the Miyake Design Studio. The "A-POC" (Figure 6) produces a series of tubular knitwear that are made in specially-adapted Raschel knitting machines, and that are made without machine-sewn seams and finished on a roll.[24] As the garments are stitched into the tube, they can be cut freely when the roll is

[23] Fukai, 18.

[24] Future Beauties, 81.

unfurled.[25] Eventually, the "A-POC" line manages to boldly abandon the process of sewing in apparel production, extending Miyake's futuristic vision to the industry of fashion and textile manufacturing.

The fashion designs by Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto, and Issey Miyake show different forms of making the *ma* between the garment and the wearer—the topographical, the poetic, and the futuristic. Their virtuosity of designing and "re- making" the space glosses the brands with an indelible artistic value. Furthermore, all three designers also challenge the notion of the erotic in fashion design, and propose a new spatial construction of femininity. They all hide the revealing silhouette in tailoring, and use garments to wrap the wearer's body —a new eroticism constituted through concealment. I would like to further examine the kinesthetic construction of *ma* in choreography with a conjoined exploration of a spatial manifestation of femininity.

Rei Kawakubo's dance costume for Merce Cunningham's choreography work Scenario (1997)[26] is the Spring/Summer 1997 collection "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body"—the designer's personal favorite, which was first shown at the Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie in Paris. This groundbreaking collection is often known as the nicknamed "Lumps and Bumps" collection. Here, the ma between clothes and the human body is constantly shaped by dancer's moving body and kinesthetic movements. Not merely as an embodied decoration, the dance costume is too incorporated into the tempo, rhythm, and atmosphere of the dance performance. As the brand name *Comme des Garçons* indicates being "l*ike some boys*," Kawakubo's design proclaims a negative aesthetic of cross-dressing to

[25] Future Beauties, 81.

[26] Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Scenario, choreography by Merce Cunningham, music by Takehisa Kosugi (1938-2018), and stage and costume design by Rei Kawakubo, first performed 1997. Like Rei Kawakubo's participation in Scenario, Issey Miyake also collaborated with the American dancer and choreographer William Forsythe (1949-) and did costume design for Ballet Frankfurt's The Loss of Small Detail (1987).

reformulate the notion of eroticism and femininity.[27] Although making a name of oneself is crucial in the fashion industry, Kawakubo almost sacrifices her own name for the concept of *Comme des Garçons*. In this regard, this paper tends to address the designer's name Rei Kawakubo instead of the brand name, paying homage to Rei Kawakubo's talent and vision.

In the *le destroy* key, Kawakubo debunks the western coding of erotica— symmetrical beauty and sophisticated tailoring. Padding and lacing are often used to standardize and eroticize the wearer's body—for instance, shoulder pads for men's suits and corsets for women's hourglass figure.[28] However, Rei Kawakubo subversively puts padding in the "wrong" and "unexpected" places in the "Lumps and Bumps" collection—sides, shoulders and upper back (Figure 7). Therefore, Kawakubo exaggerates the female silhouette in a grotesque and extreme manner, producing a different body type that shocks the catwalk. The enlarged, removable down pads, sewn inside the garments, sexualize the *ma*, and reconstruct the spatial code of revealing and concealing around the female body. The wrapped body is not a fetishized object that subjugates to the violent male gaze, but an active agency that challenges gendered stereotype. Here, the garment design boldly gestures toward a statement that fashion is not only worn by the body, but also by the feminist mind.

Through the statement of "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body," Rei Kawakubo not only constructs a new code of femininity that has never been seen before, but also experiments with new possibilities for space, body, design and performance in the future. Like Kawakubo, the dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham unprecedentedly uses a computer program to create movements for his *Scenario*. He designs dance notations of

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[27] According to Barbara Vinken's article, Kawakubo, not speaking any European languages, claims that "she just liked the sound fo the words of the French singer Françoise Hardy's song of 1962, 'Tous les garçons et les filles,' which she heard by chance." See Barbara Vinken, "The Empire Designs Back," in *Future Beauties: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, ed. Catherine Ince and Rie Nii (London and New York: Merrell, 2010), 34.

[28] Vinken, 34.

different body parts and formulates a new choreography code of the arm, feet, torso and leg. In the dance performance, Kawakubo's movable pads and bumps become obstacles that challenge dancers' movements, partnering and improvisation. The wearer's body now becomes a dancer's kinetic body that moves, interacts and expresses. When adjusting to Kawakubo's unconventional costumes, dancers seek to interpret and express algorithmic movement continuously and naturally —at least not in a robotic manner. The kinesthetic *ma* is shaped by the extreme shape of the costume and the dancers' haptic navigation of the bumps flowing their bodies. In this collaborative work, both Kawakubo and Cunningham experiment with the artificiality of constructing the body and movement in live performance.

Regarding this experimental collaboration and the 1980s Japanese *le destroy*, they all carve out a niche for themselves. In terms of Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake, they all dwell in a social space that rejects conventions but embraces new possibilities. Their avant-garde concept composes various ways of designing space and proposes new spatial formations of gender and identity. I honor their artistic ideal of that generation, and attempt to explore the artistic value of the fashion industry that is often examined with consumer culture and commerce industry. This paper focuses more on the art value of the work produced by Japanese designers, instead of a social history of the "Japaneseness" or the national identity in postwar Japan suggested through their work. Last but not least, to me, the intersection of fashion design, costume design, dance and choreography is a thrilling field to review the porous boundary between visual art and performing art, and to reflect on the notion of *ma* through the kinesthetic construction of space in the future.

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Images

Figure 1. *Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons*, Autumn/Winter 1983-84, Photograph by Naoya Hatakeyama, 2009, Lambda print, Collection of Kyoto Costume Institute.

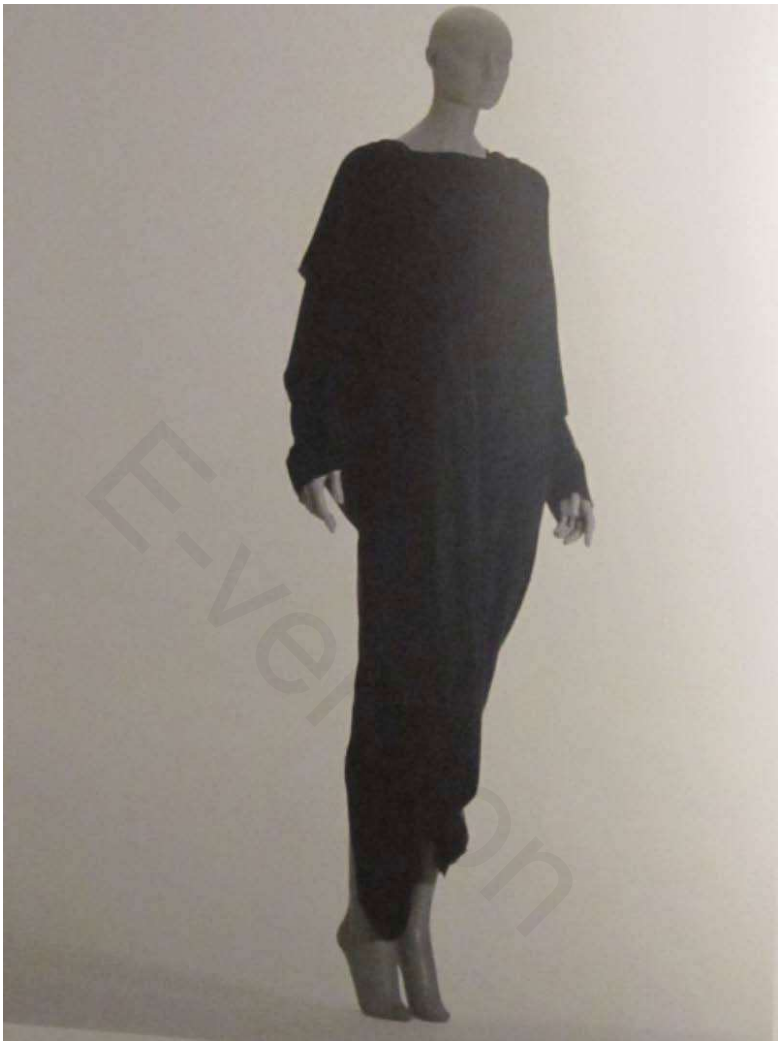

Figure 2. *Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons*, Autumn/Winter 1983-84, Black wool jersey dress, with a tube from front to back and a slit on the tube.

Figure 3. *Yohji Yamamoto*, Spring/Summer 1983, Photograph by Hiroshi Sugimoto.

Figure 4. *Issey Miyake*, "132 5." collection, 2010, polyester top and pressed with metal foil, photograph by Hiroshi Iwasaki/Stash.

Figure. 5. *Issey Miyake*, "132 5." collection, 2010, polyester top and pressed with metal foil, folded into octagons, photograph by Hiroshi Iwasaki/Stash.

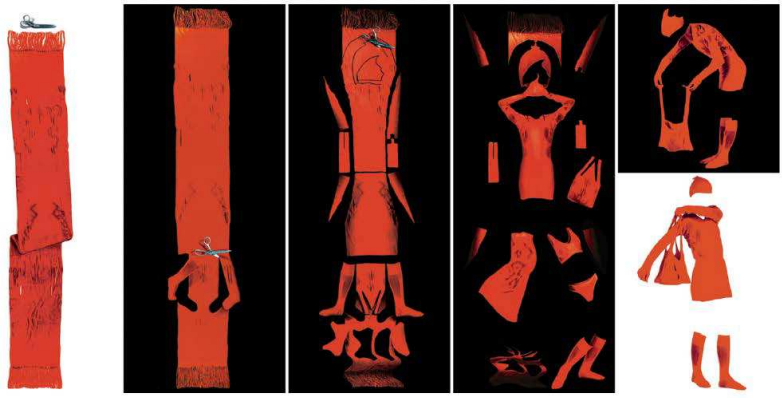

Figure 6. Animation by Pascal Roulin, *Issey Miyake Making Things* exhibition, A-POC, Foundation Cartier, Paris 1998-99.

Figure 7. Scene from *Scenario*, Merce Cunningham, Dance Company, 1997, Choreography by Merce Cunningham, Costumes designed by Rei Kawakubo/*Comme des Garçons*, Spring/ Summer 1997.

Research Notes

"Writ in Water": Passionate Entrance for Tears and Impassive Exit on Boat*[29]

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the religious implications of the living, death, grief, melancholy and predestination. Through a close reading of the 18th century novel *The Story of the Stone*, we look at the imagery of water and boats with the romance of the main characters Dai-yu and Bao-yu—the "debt of tears."

Key words: Lin Dai-yu 林黛玉, Jia Bao-yu 賈寶玉, The Story of the Stone 石頭記，religion 宗教

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[29] * This papers uses David Hawkes's translation *The Story of the Stone*.

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研究紀要

“聲名水上書:”入世之淚與出世之船

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摘　要

本文探討宗教引申義中的生命、死亡、哀傷、憂鬱與命運的巧合。通過細讀十八世紀長篇文學作品《石頭記》，我們通過文本中水與船的文學意象，去解讀主人翁林黛玉與賈寶玉的浪漫“還淚之說”。

關鍵詞：林黛玉，賈寶玉，石頭記，宗教

"Writ in Water": Passionate Entrance for Tears and Impassive Exit on Boat*[31]

Here lies One

Whose Name was writ in Water

——Epitaph, John Keats (1795-1821)

Based on the principle—"real events concealed and false words preserved," *The Story of the Stone* deliberately utilizes illusory brushstrokes to avoid definite time, location and events. The flexible text oscillate between truth and fiction, dream and reality, eliminating rigid boundaries in the novel. Unlike western classical novels, endless beginnings and middles exist in the text and many climaxes invite a catharsis of pathos. Without an "arch of the story," the infinite overlapping and contrasting between characters amplify ceaseless alternation and interlocking relationship within the text.

The same flexible nature is reflected in the flowing and shapeless nature of water. The unceasing but indefinite feature of water allows the text to break down the boundary of time and space, enhancing the illusion of the novel. In terms of mythic time and space, water enables romance to go beyond the boundaries among previous, current and after life. Geographically speaking, the "Drenched Blossoms Weir" (344, v.1.) breaks the boundary between the isolated Prospect Garden and the outside society. For the two main characters, Dai-yu enters the mortal world to pay her debt of tears, and the debt of passion; Bao-yu leaves red dust on a boat after entirely enlightened. Without the limitation of boundary, the

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31 * This papers uses David Hawkes's translation *The Story of the Stone.*

flowing water not only provides a means for entrance—the exit in real entities such as tears and boats, but also embodies the dualism of passion and non-passion within the imagery of water, eventually rendering an overall process from a passionate entrance to an impassive exit, from enchantment to disenchantment.

Water, in the form of tears, united three worlds in different time periods, provides an entrance for Crimson Pearl Flower into human life and enables her to reciprocate Divine Luminescent Stone-in-Waiting. The debt of tears brings about the debts of passion in the below world, and extends their love tangle to previous and after life in the Land of Illusion. Two parallel worlds—one in the sky and one on the earth—emphasize the predestinated romance between Jia Bao-yu and Lin Dai-yu, and Dai-yu's obligation to repay the tears; two myths of tears—the debts of tear and River Queen—magnify the significance of water for Dai-yu and elucidates her motive of entering the mortal world.[32]

Divine Luminescent Stone-in-Waiting waters Crimson Pearl Flower every day with sweet dew, and hence confers on her the gift of life. "[Owing] the stone for his kindness in watering her" (53 v.1.), the flower becomes obsessed with him and longs for reward debt of gratitude: "The only way in which I could perhaps repay him would be with the tears of shed during the whole of a mortal lifetime" (53 v.1.). The vitalization of sweet dew stands for stone's attentiveness for the flower, and lifetime tear expressed flower's obsession and gratitude for the stone. Their mutual care and affection continues in the below world, and Dai-yu carries out her promise by keeping crying. Dai-yu's title as "River Queen" (217 v.2.) and those bamboos called "Naiad's Tears" (217 v.2.) in "Naiad's House" (217 v.2.) reveal her innate

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[32] For a discussion of David Hawkes's translation of the Chinese term *qiao* 巧 into the English term "predestined" in HLM, see Kevin Michael Wilson, "Poetry as Dreaming, Dreaming as Poetry: The Dialogue Between Dream of the Red Chamber (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, *Story of the Stone* 石頭記) and Middle Tang 中唐 and Late Tang 晚唐 Poetry, Focusing on the Work of Li He 李賀, Li Shangyin 李商隱, and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠," [Ph.D. Dissertation], University of California, Riverside (2023), pp. 16-18.

sentimental tendency to cry. Daisy's prophecy also predestinates her lifetime weeping and woe for Bao-yu: "How many tears form those poor eyes could flow, Which every season rained upon her woe?" (140, v.1.). Since mostly her cry is associated with Bao-yu's bad behavior and words, her tears serve as an indication of her care, worry and affection for him. Bao-yu also uses the metaphor of water to prove his loyalty and constant love for her: "If all the Seas of Paradise were mine, with my simple gourd I'd be content" (241 v.4.). In Chapter 3, when Bao-yu and Dai-yu first meet, they both feel familiar with each other but cannot tell the reason. Due to Cao Xueqin's proleptic technique, their unexplainable familiarization echoes with their affinity in their previous life; readers actually know more contents than those unwitting characters per se.

Besides vertical watery connection between reality and the Land of illusion, water—in the form of canals—also links horizontal geographical locations together. One "essential consideration in the planning of a garden is the provision of an adequate water supply in order to ensure the continued growth of plant life, and literary descriptions of Chinese gardens often dwell at length on the configuration of their streams and ponds."[33] In the Prospect Garden,[34] "Drenched Blossom Weir" branches into numerous streams and ponds that link together Naiad's House, the gate, "Smartweed Band and Flowery Harbor" (338 v.1.) and etc. The network of "Drenched Blossom Weir" resembles that of the canals in the outside society, both connecting fragmentary houses or cities and extending in all directions. Outside networks of canals connects various major cities and transportation by water

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[33] Andrew H. Plaks, "The Chinese Literary Garden," in *Archetype and Allegory in the* "Dream of the Red Chamber" (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 158-159.

[34] For an economic analysis of the novel, and especially the cost of building the garden in HLM, see Tristan Gerard Brown **張仲思**, "The Metaphorical Dimensions of Symbolic Prices and Real-World Values in *Hong Lou Meng* **紅樓夢中象徵性物價與實際物價的隱喻層面**," *Tsingh Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* **清華學報**, *New Series*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (December 2011), pp. 803.

dominates the way people take a journey between north and south. Dai-yu once mentions the streams in the garden: "the water you see here is clean, but farther on beyond the weir, where it flows past people's houses, there are all sorts of muck and impurity" (463 v.1.). Concerning Dai-yu's words, it turns out that "Drenches Blossom Weir" not only parallel the outside as a whole, but also inherently belongs to broader river system outside. A channel leads outside river source to run into the south-east corner of the garden, relating the isolated garden to a broader outside world, which enables an ongoing exchange and communication.

With regard to transportation, water is naturally associated with boats. On the contrary to former manifestations of intense affections beneath tears, water here stands for more sorrow and impassive themes such as departure and death. Even for the same imagery of tear, it can also occur in the hostelry of the "Tearful Parting" (213 v.2.) to describe the sadness of a farewell. A departure on boat suggests a Buddhist practice in the memory of the dead, Dai-yu's possibility to return home in the south and Bao-yu's separation from the "red dust," all of which are indications of non-passion or disenchantment.

In Buddhism, departure on boat commemorates the passage of souls. According to Xu Fengyi, the answer to Bao-qin's "Red Cliff" poem is "a dharma-boat" (588 v.2.): during the Festival of All Souls, "ships of salvation" (588 v.2.) are launched on the nearest available stretch of water and set on fire. Carried paper banners inscribed with named of recently passed whose salvation is requested explain "naught but their names" (512, v.2.). The practice draws a close correlation among water, boat and human death; boat becomes a vehicle for the dead to continue their lives on the water. Though not precisely similar, the ending of *The Story of the Stone* still echoes the religious practice that Jia Zheng transports for coffins from the North all the way down to the South on the water, as if bidding a final goodbye to the family's past and wishing them happy in their mother-towns. The meaning in the riddle of boats extends a simple departure from home to a departure from current life into death.

For Dai-yu, due to a changing definition of her home, departure on a boat means both to leave home and to return home at the same time—in response to some death or mishap in the family. In Chapter 3, because of the death of mother and an insistent invitation from Grandma Jia, Dai-yu leaves her home in Yangchow on the boat and heads all the way up to the Jia family. Literally she accepts an adoption from Jia family. Later in Chapter 12, her father's serious illness calls her back to the South on boat, but now Dai-yu leaves her new home for her old home rather than a return. Since Dai-yu enters and leaves Jia family on a boat, the existence of a boat or other people with the same family name Lin allude to Dai-yu's departure from Rongguo Mansion and from Bao-yu, an indication of her cutting bonds with the family. When Nightingale tests Bao-yu and jokes that Lin family will pick up Dai-yu back to Soochow, Bao-yu takes the jest seriously and returns to his stone nature. When he sights "a little metal self-propelling boat—a West Ocean toy—which stood on one of the above shelves in the carved partition" (97 v.3.), he mistakes the toy for a real boat that comes to fetch Dai-yu and hides the boat to dispel his fear. Bao-yu's illusion reveals his over-passion for Dai-yu and Dai-yu's close fate with boat and water.

In addition, after her death, Dai-yu has repaid her debts of tear, so her passion and emotion are released. "Relentlessly the water flows, the flowers fade" (466 v.1.). As tears are sent away, Crimson Pearl Flower fulfills her obligation and ends her love affair in the world below. Her spirit returns to the Land of Illusion as a wooden River Queen; her physical body lies on the boat back to her hometown Soochow. Even if Bao-yu looks for Dai-yu again in the dream after her death, Dai-yu remains impassive and cold to Bao-yu's passion. In the end, water carries away Dai-yu's love, ends her earthly karma and offers her two exits to remain her indifferent material self.

For Bao-yu, departure on boat means to cut off his bonds with his family, see through the "red dust," and becomes a monk. At the ends of *The Story of the Stone*, Bao-yu reduces his

passion and desire by distancing himself from girls and romances and concentrating on preparing the examination. Even Bao-chai, Aroma and other girls complain Bao-yu's inconsideration and stone nature. After half-enlightened by the monk who returns the jade, Bao-yu often mentions "Amitabha" in his talk and enjoys reading Taoist and Buddhist books. He mentions that "True Buddha Mind Within/Is not in Sutras to be found/Beyond the Crucible/There leads a path to Higher Ground (内典语中无佛性 金丹法外有仙舟)" (332 v.5.). Reaching a higher level of enlightenment, Bao-yu realizes that he should take a boat to explore the truth in the real world rather than read books, a fancy that foreshadows his farewell to Jia Zheng on a boat.

Though with successful achievement in the examination, Bao-yu disappears afterwards and eventually shows up on Jia Zheng's boat in Piling fro his last farewell. After Jia Zheng settles down the coffins of Grandma Jia, Dai-yu, Qin-shi and Faithful in the South, Bao-yu becomes the fifth departure in front of Jia Zheng. "With shaven head and bare feet" (359 v.5.), Bao-yu is "wrapped in a large cape made of crimson felt" (359 v.5.). He "[kneels] down and [bows] to" (359 v.5.) Jia Zheng. He "[bows] four times, and now [stands] upright, pressing his palms together monkish greeting" (359 v.5.). Without saying any words, Bao-yu acts entirely as a monk to fulfil his final filial piety. Already cutting off his passion for girls, he spends the last moment creating with his father, who he always fear and seldom invests passion. Maybe out of a sense of guilty, or maybe merely a filial obligation, Bao-yu gives his last passion and concern to his father—"an expression that [seems] to contain both joy and sorrow" (359 v.5.), and then completes his earthly karma. Fully disenchanted, Bao-yu abandons human emotions and desires, returns to his stone entity and leaves the mortal world. The same boats send away four cold corpses and one phlegmatic monk, as if in the end the world is left as "desolate and bare" (144 v.1.) as the vast expanse of whiteness of the snow.

Both Bao-yu and Dai-yu enter the worlds with passion and exit the world without passion, resulting in a process of enlightenment from enchantment to disenchantment. The process resonates with Vanity's sudden enlightenment after reading *The Story of the Stone*. He "starting off in the Void (Truth) [comes] to the contemplation of Form (Which is Illusion); and from Form engendered Passion; and by communicating Passion, [enters] again into Form; and from Form [awakes] to the Void (which is Truth)" (51 v.1.). The process starting from no feeling echoes with the stone and plant nature of Bao-yu and Dai-yu. The distractions of form and passion corresponds to their romantic tangle intervened by rumours of gold and jade, financial benefits of Xue family and individual's schemings. Later with Dai-yu passing away and Bao-yu deciding to become a monk, they gradually stay away from the trivial distractions and return to the void and truth. They return to the simple and empty stage that resonates with the lyrics in Chapter 120—"In the Cosmic Void/I roam" (360 v.5.).

During the second stage, although Form, Illusion and passion disturb Bao-yu's and Dai-yu's initial interiority, they still experience enlightenment in different ways with different results. Although his insights are inferior to those of girls, Bao-yu has a final sudden and complete enlightenment; while Dai-yu always has insights into real life, she is trapped by her feminine attachment to the world to a half-enlightened half-attached state. In Chapter 22, when Bao-yu attempts to meditate on *Zhuangzi*, his imitation of a Buddhist *gāthā* shows that his heart is not detached enough to fathom Zen. However, before aware of his insufficiency to understand *Zhuangzi*, Bao-yu is absorbed in his personal interpretation and boldly writes: "Free come, free go, let nothing bar or hold me!…When I look back on it, it seems scarce worth the bother" (441 v.1.). The "Clinging Vine" aria discloses Bao-yu's world-weary perspective and potential tendency to become a monk, which is an ominous sign for a noble heir as Bao-yu. That is why Bao-chai tears his poem into pieces at once and even ask others to burn the paper. The danger of Bao-yu's enlightenment is that he will put his theory and

thought into practice with a "stoney" firm determination. No wonder in the end Bao-yu breaks free from the bonds of the mortal world.

On the contrary, even if Dai-yu is able to fathom religious or literary ideas, she runs away from her sudden enlightenment, and prefers to return to her role as an well-behaved lady. At the end of Chapter 23, after eavesdropping the lines in *Peony Pavilion*, she naturally fathoms the short-liveness and ill-fates of all girls. Nevertheless, except "weeping and comfortless" (467 v.1.), Dai-yu hides her sudden understanding, but will by no means think of becoming a nun or leaving the world. The contrast between male and female enlightenment complements the entire process from enchantment and disenchantment during the period between one's entrance and exit.

It is passion that causes Bao-yu and Dai-yu to enter the mortal world; It is non-passion that leads them to exit the world. It is tears that extend their one-world romance to a three-dimensional tangle; it is boats on water that carry them in and out throughout the story. In *The Story of the Stone*, water is a manifestation of passion and passion needs flowing water to intensify its illusory brushstroke. The flexible text crates an ambiguity between dream and reality along the medium of water, as represented in the foreign lady's poem—"Last night I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls;/Tonight beside the watery waste I sing" (542 v.2.). Water provides real mediums such as tears boat to create entrance and exit for characters vertically and horizontally. The duality of passion and non-passion and the process of enlightenment sow seeds of the passionate entrance and impassive exit.

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