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<p style="text-align:center">Final Project Proposal – Chinese Fantasy</p>

For the final project, I would like to continue my work from Reflection 1, where I looked at Will Wight's *Cradle* series, its influences, and the meaning of its popularity. I analyzed its Daoist influences and its parallels to Chinese works that we've discussed in class. There was a lot more I wanted to articulate in that reflection, primarily how the series serves as a Western take on Chinese fantasy and why that's important.

I first discovered the *Cradle* series two years ago, and I was inspired to look for more works like it. In an interview I found, the author talked about how *Cradle* was an attempt to "westernize" *xianxia* stories. I ended up looking into *xianxia*, *cultivation*, *litrpg*, and *wuxia* stories after reading *Cradle*, and I believe *Cradle* served as an entry point into these fantasy genres for many other readers as well. The last book released was the fourth in a row to reach #1 in the Amazon Kindle Store, and the Kickstarter to reprint the first three books stands as the fourth highest-funded fiction Kickstarter on the website. This success, its direct inspiration from Chinese fantasy, and the large online communities dedicated to recommending books like *Cradle* are why I believe many readers like myself are being introduced to Chinese fantasy through the series. For this project, I want to start by talking about present-day fantasy series like *Cradle* and why their Chinese fantasy influences make not only them more successful, but also the works they were inspired by through people looking further into the genre.

While looking into *Cradle* for the first reflection, I learned more about *xianxia*, *wuxia*, and their histories as fantasy subgenres. Diving further into the history of these genres, I found mentions of a lot of the texts we discussed in class, like *The Water Margin*, *Journey to the West*, and more. There is a line that can be drawn from *Cradle* all the way back to *Records of the Grand Historian* and with this project I'd like to trace the works we've discussed in class to fantasy works being written today.

Besides researching the history of the genres, I will also select different texts to analyze to see how Chinese fantasy has changed with these genres. One book I would like to look at is Jin Yong's *Legend of the Condor Heroes*. This book was written in 1957 and has been highly influential since its publication. Besides serving as a look into the past, the work also tells us about the spread of the wuxia genre today. An English translation of the story was published across four volumes from 2018 to 2021, showing the influence of Jin Yong's writing and reinforcing that these stories have become popular very recently among Western audiences. The work is extremely long, and I won't be able to read all of it, but just reading a portion would still be insightful.

I would also like to look at some cultivation novels. Cultivation is a subgenre of xianxia and focuses on Daoist ideas of cultivation. This genre seems to have been popularized due to the growth of online works and web novels published on websites like Royal Road. I have read bits and pieces of these works before but would like to explore them on a deeper level. I believe E-

novels may be the frontier for Chinese fantasy today in terms of their spread to Western audiences, and I'd like to find if these works share themes or influences with *Cradle* or the works discussed in class. I will likely find other works to add to the project as well as I continue my research.

      The project would be composed of either a writeup accompanied by a timeline or a website accompanied by a timeline. I would like to use the Obsidian extension Quartz (https://quartz.jzhao.xyz) to create a website with pages linked together that takes the reader through the same content as a writeup would, but with more interactivity and organization. I want to use this project as an opportunity to try out this format and see what I can do with it. Using these tools, I should be able to make a timeline like the one shown below, with each entry pointing to the related page on the site, as an alternate way to interface with the project.
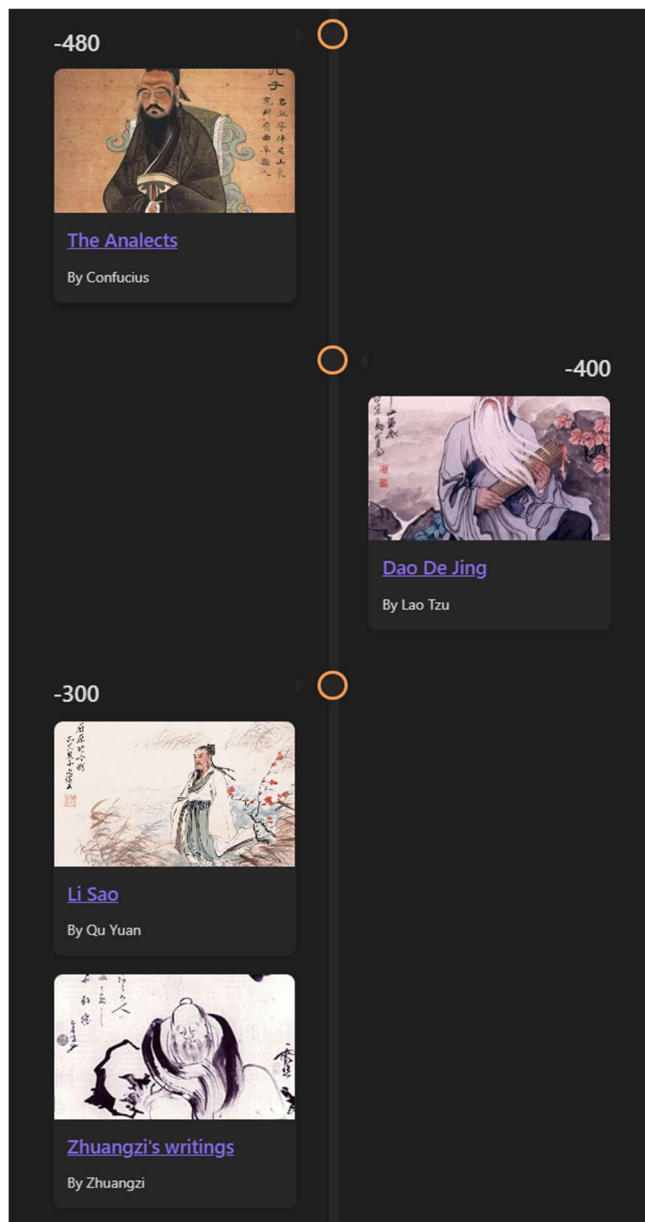
Example timeline

The final product would be a website detailing the history and evolution of Chinese fantasy (more specifically, the history leading up to xianxia/cultivation as a genre), analysis of specific fantasy works, and the increased interest in Chinese fantasy works today. I will discuss the works we read in class through their role in the history of the genre and their connections to the specific books I read for the project. I may also include a section on why these fantasy works should be considered literature and what makes fantasy an important genre to discuss. Finally, I would also like to organize the website with an interactive timeline view to visualize the history of Chinese fantasy and the works that were used for the project.

Sources

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