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Alfred Hornung's Transnational Mentorship and My Journey Between Worlds

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I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have met and studied with Professor Alfred Hornung during the trinational summer school courses at the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in Beijing in July 2011. At that time, I had just graduated with my master's degree and was working as an adjunct teacher at UIBE's School of International Studies, feeling uncertain about my career path. During the summer school, Professor Hornung kindly invited me to pursue my studies in the life writing doctoral program at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz with him and offered me a position as a junior faculty member in April 2012. Like a lighthouse, he illuminated my path and profoundly influenced my life ever since. Over the past 14 years, as my mentor, Professor Hornung's unwavering encouragement, support, and life wisdom have played a pivotal role in shaping both my academic and personal journey.

To begin with, Professor Hornung's encouragement has significantly boosted my confidence as a doctoral student. I still vividly remember my first year in Mainz, feeling overwhelmed as a Chinese student with limited German skills, struggling to adapt to a new academic and living environment. It was during this challenging time that he encouraged me to join the doctoral colloquium, attend his seminars, and present at several international conferences. By sharing my research proposal, engaging with my peers, and discussing my ideas, I gradually gained the confidence I needed. I will never forget his words, "Every time I see you, you make progress." I see this both a high compliment and a guiding philosophy. I strive to make progress every day, to live up to my mentor's trust in me, and to grow into the outstanding scholar he believes I can become. Ultimately, I graduated with a PhD in four years, earning Magna

Cum Laude honors for both my dissertation and oral exam. This achievement was witnessed by scholars from Germany, China, and America, and it reflects Professor Hornung's ideology of transnationalism.

Moreover, Professor Hornung's mentorship has been transformative in shaping my academic trajectory from a Chinese graduate student with no international experience to a globally connected scholar. When I first arrived in Germany to pursue my PhD, I had never traveled abroad before, yet under his guidance, my academic horizons expanded dramatically. His recommendation opened the door to Harvard University's Institute of World Literature summer school in 2013, where I studied with distinguished scholars including Homi Bhabha, Gish Jen, David Damrosch, and Karen Thornber while building connections with academics worldwide. The following year, his endorsement secured my admission to an exchange program at Georgia State University, where I worked with professors Pearl McHaney, Reiner Smolinski, and Lynée Lewis Gaillet. Professor Hornung's support has continued throughout my career development. After completing my studies in Germany and the United States, I returned to China as an associate professor at Hebei University, where his influence remains evident in my scholarly work. He wrote the foreword for my monograph *Identity Matters: Second-Generation Chinese American Life Writing* (2024), which evolved from the dissertation he supervised and was published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in Beijing. His expertise in poetic studies proved invaluable when I applied for the Chinese Academic Translation Project of the National Social Science Foundation to translate Mr. Fu Sinian's work *Lectures on Shijing* (The Book of Poetry). Additionally, when I translated his article "Confucius and America: The Moral Constitution of Statecraft" into Chinese, he provided detailed guidance to ensure his insights reached the Chinese academic community effectively. Most recently, Professor Hornung demonstrated his continued commitment to our academic partnership by accepting my invitation to deliver the opening address at the launch ceremony of Hebei University's Institute of Global and Regional Studies, where he became a distinguished member. This ongoing collaboration reflects not only his profound trust in my development but also his enduring connection to China and commitment to fostering international academic exchange.

Lastly, Professor Hornung's life wisdom has been a tremendous source of inspiration in my personal journey. He is an energetic and well-organized individual, adept at balancing work and life. His attitude and dedication to his family are truly admirable, characterized by love, responsibility, and respect. When I was struggling to balance my dissertation with the demands of my newborn son, he kindly reminded me that raising a child is just as significant an achievement as completing a dissertation, acknowledging the sacrifices inherent in motherhood. Inspired by his example, I strive to maintain a balance between work and family life, considering both equally important. My children Joe and Joy—who were born in Germany and the US and are now rooted in China—embody the transnational life Professor Hornung modeled,

wherein borders blur and priorities harmonize. In this way, I am living a transnational life that resonates my mentor's guidance and wisdom.

Professor Hornung's mentorship is not a static tribute but a living framework. By intertwining scholarly rigor with humanistic wisdom, he has shown me that transnationalism is not merely an academic concept but a way of being. As I mentor my own students at Hebei University in China, I channel his belief in progress, his borderless curiosity, and his conviction that scholarship and life, when nurtured together, create ripples far beyond the page. For all of this, and for lighting my path, my gratitude is as boundless as the opportunities he has helped me forge.