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## Writing and Displaying Herbs in China

Alice Fengyuan Yu, Shan He & Dian Li

(University of Arizona)

### Abstract:

Herbs, as *xiangcao* (香草) and *caoyao* (草药) in Chinese, have played a crucial role in constituting Chinese culture and history. A material object doubling as a sociocultural sign, herbs become the very site of interplay between everyday life and literary expressions from traditional to contemporary China. By examining herbs in various types of genres and texts and engaging with the scholarship of literary criticism and cultural studies, this study attempts to unravel the relationship between the visualization of herbs, the reimagination of traditional culture, and the symbolic power of China in the transnational context. In the figure of herbs not only do we find the representation for the modalities of literary and cultural life in China but also the reflection of deep desires for the beautiful and the subliminal across histories and through time.

**Keywords:** herbs in literature, affective symbolism, nostalgic trope, cultural performance

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Herbs, written as 香草 (*xiangcao*) and 草药 (*caoyao*) in the Chinese script, have played a crucial role in Chinese cultural history. A material object doubling as a sociocultural sign, herbs are the very site of interplay between everyday life and literary expressions since traditional to contemporary times in China. In

such a context, this paper traces the representation and visualization of herbs in Chinese literature and culture from the pre-Qin era (221 BCE) to the 21st century. By examining herbs in various types of genres and texts, we intend to address the following questions: How do herbs become a frequently-used imagery and motif in classical poetry? How does the writing of herbs change with the emergence of literary reform and the dawn of Modernism during the long twentieth century? What role do herbs play in forging and exhibiting the urban space in contemporary China? Engaging with scholarship of literary criticism and cultural studies, we aim to explore not only the diachronic genealogy of writing herbs in Chinese literature, but also to decode the sociopolitical connotations of writing and visualizing herbs at different venues.

Specifically, this section will begin with an examination of herbs used in classical Chinese poetry. This analysis will highlight the function of the imagery of “herbs and beauty” (*xiangcao meiren*) as a rhetorical device in traditional poetics. In this way, we try to understand how the symbolic and metaphoric writing of herbs consolidate the Chinese poetic tradition of “poetry expresses intents” (*shi yan zhi*), as well as redefine the convention of male writing. Then, our study will move forward to the early 20th century, when the New Literature Movement was in the process of transforming the ways in which literature was written and read. On the one hand, the writing and recording of herbs became a mark of modern scientific knowledge in contrast to what they had been in the Chinese tradition. On the other hand, herbs in the new literature serve as a means to invigorate the memory of modern writers who have suffered from social turbulences.

Subsequently, we will take the 2019 Beijing Garden Expo as an example to examine the exhibition of herbs in the contemporary urban space of China. We will show that the visual display of herbs is structured by the identity, ideology, and culture of the exhibition’s organizers, which has been similarly observed by other scholars.<sup>1</sup> However, our study will further unravel the relationship between the visualization of herbs, the restoration of traditional culture, and the symbolic power of China in a transnational context. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the argument that herbs have become a potent signifier that indexes the modalities of literary and cultural life in China through their written and visual representations to reflect the depth of human desires and the uncertainty over radical social changes.

1 For example, Meng Yue examined the relationship of the displays and organization of herbs and the level of civility in her book chapter “Reflecting upon semi-civilization: the transition and bifurcation of Chinese botanical knowledge” (*Fanguan banwenming: Zhongguo zhiwu zhishi de zhuangui yu fenliu*).

## Herbs in Classical Poetry: Affect and Symbolism

Writing herbs in pre-modern Chinese literature could be dated back to as early as 7th century BCE, when the earliest anthology of Chinese verse, *The Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*), was composed (Cai 13). In *The Classic of Poetry*, the evocation of herbs is a well-established rhetorical tool which commonly draws a symbolic connection to the ideal of virtue conceptualized by the poet. Despite the variety of subjects and themes in the anthology, scholars have identified three basic modes of presentations: “*fu* (exposition),” “*bi* (comparison),” and “*xing* (affective image)” (Cai 28). The reference to and depiction of herbs are intimately associated with these modes of presentations. In other words, the traditional rhetorical devices of exposition, comparison, and affective image are often practiced through writing about herbs and plants in *The Classic of Poetry*. For example, in the poem “Cai Fan,” the first two stanzas provide a vivid image of a woman gathering *fan*, the aromatic herb known as artemisia or southernwood. “She gathers the white southernwood; / By the ponds, on the islets. / She employs it; / In the business of our prince.” In ancient China, southernwood was commonly used for decoration, medicine, and sacrificial services. According to Cai Zongqi’s reading, this poem is “the plaint of a palace woman who is preparing a sacrifice for her ruler’s ancestors” (26). The gathering of southernwood at different places is a celebration of the woman’s labor. These opening lines could be considered an example of *fu*, employed to illustrate people’s daily life and particularly that of women at work. The tonality of the language suggests the labor of gathering herbs is repetitive and arduous activity, which carries a slight complaint, as reflected in the ending stanza, “With head-dress reverently rising aloft; / Early, while yet it is night, she is in the prince’s temple; / In her dead-dress, slowly retiring; / She returns to her own place.”

In addition to using as *fu*, the writing of herbs is more frequently seen in the last two modes of presentation: *xing* and *bi*. In another poem, “Cai Wei,” herbs are used as the affective image to evoke certain sentiments. Each stanza begins with the same first line, “Let us gather the thorn-ferns, / let us gather the thorn-ferns.” Then, the second line of each stanza describes three phases in the growth of thorn-ferns, from “the thorn-ferns are now springing up” to “the thorn-ferns are now tender,” then followed by “the thorn-ferns are now hard.” Here, the figure of people gathering thorn-ferns not only depicts daily labor, but also implies the flowing of time through the herbs’ growth process from sprouts to twigs. Lamenting the passage of time further evokes people’s longing for home, since the following lines repeat the same question, “When shall we return?” Being kept away from home in

order to serve the king, people's homesickness accelerates and their sorrow turns into distress. In this way, the herbs affectively channel the sentiments expressed in the poem, and foreshadow people's grief in the last two lines of each stanza: "Our sorrowing hearts are in great distress; / But we shall not return from our expedition." Yet it is worth noting that there is not always a definite distinction between the use of *xing* and *bi* in any one poem, such as in the case of the poem "Zhong Gu" in which herbs are presented by means of and for the effect of both *xing* and *bi*.

Each stanza of the poem starts with stating that herbs are growing in the village: "In the valleys grows the mother-wort." The writing of mother-wort, an herbal medicine, once again exemplifies the use of *xing*. In three stanzas, the poet depicts the gradual withering of the mother-wort: "But scorched is it in the drier places." Following this, each stanza ends with a woman's sigh and suffering as she is "forced to leave her husband." The sentiment of sorrow is precisely triggered by the herbs' process from blooming to scorching, which resonates with the experience of an abandoned wife. Here, herbs function as an affective image to evoke feelings of sympathy and melancholia. But more importantly, the poem draws a comparison between the life cycle of mother-wort and the experience of the abandoned wife. The woman and her marriage life start with the analogy of burgeoning mother-wort, which is lively and vigorous. However, when the woman is forced to leave her husband, her melancholia makes her wither as an herb does at the end of its life. In this poem, the life cycle of herbs functions as a metaphor of a woman's life and emotion which reflect the affect of the state of a woman's abandonment.

The diverse and recurring herb imagery in *The Classic of Poetry* established a precedent that will become a tradition for poets of later generations. Scholars of different times have also given plenty of attention to the language of herb imagery and its importance in poetics. Apart from its function to trigger certain emotions and ethos discussed above, the large cluster of herbs usually reveals the discontent that people suffer in the chaos of the time. Of course, the natural beauty of some herbs could allude to the passion of love or the harmony of interpersonal relationships (Chen 129). Another salient aspect of herb imagery is its evocation of women and femininity, such as women's feelings, experiences, and women's labor. In this regard, it is not surprising that many examples of herbs in *The Classic of Poetry* are related to the portrayal of feminine beauty. The poem "Shuo Ren," for instance, employs numerous herbs to depict the gorgeous look of a young woman. It compares the woman's fingers to a type of fragrant wild herb: "Her fingers were like the blades of the young white-grass," which is to say her fingers are slender and



soft. As such, certain characteristics of feminine beauty in traditional China were established.

After *The Classic of Poetry*, the semiotic relationship between herbs and ideas is continuously explored and expanded in other classical poetic genres, of which herbs as a signifier of women and beauty remain constant and paramount. *Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci*), for instance, is a celebrated example of the frequent and sophisticated use of herbs to represent beauty and splendor. Dating back to the Warring States period (403–227 BCE), *Lyrics of Chu* is an anthology of poems written and compiled by scholars in the Chu region. Among them, Qu Yuan is the most prominent poet who contributed “Encountering Sorrow” (*Lisao*) and “Nine Songs” (*Jiuge*), which are the heart of the *Chuci* canon. Notably, Qu Yuan’s poems are recognized as “a rich and exotic botanical image bank” (Mair 254) and praised for their representation of “metaphorical journeys” (Mair 254) in his use of herb imagery and his reference to a remarkable shamanistic style. Since herbs and flowers are the “important components of a shamanistic ritual” (Cai 39), they are associated with divinity in the religious practices of the time, which connote the qualities of “sincerity, beauty, and solemnity” (Cai 12). Moreover, Qu Yuan started the aesthetic tradition of endowing herbs with humanity, making them suggest not only divinity but also human virtuousness and righteousness as well. In Qu Yuan’s poetics, interestingly, beauty (*meili*) is not merely a signified to herbs. Rather, beautiful women (*meiren*) itself becomes a symbol of loyalty and patriotism, which is then superimposed onto herbs as a metaphor of purity, fragility, and other notions. With herbs and beauty being the most common rhetorical devices in *Lyrics of Chu*, its representation is also inseparable from the feminine voice that the poet often and deliberately employs. For instance, the reference to various kinds of herbal plants marks the voice of a woman in “The Lord of the Xiang River” (“Xiang Jun”).

In the poem, the poet mentions many different kinds of flowers and fragrant herbs, such as cassias, fig leaves, melilots, irises, and orchids. Most of these plants are decorations for the shamanistic performances portrayed in the poem. The poem adopts the voice of “a lovely lady with delicate beauty,” and depicts a ceremonial ritual performed by “a female shaman” (Cai 39) addressing the quest for a male river god, Lord Xiang. Here herbs are not only elements of a solemn religious performance but also the embodiment of sincerity and honesty. The motif of “Xiang Jun” is the female shaman’s quest for love, which is manifested by lines such as “Wafting my magic, I still have not reached him; / My women are upset and heave deep sighs. / My tears run down like small streams; / The thought of you makes me grieve” and “Our hearts are different: / all matchmaking is in vain; / Our love is not

deep: / it is easy to break.”

The female voice propelled by the botanical imagery accretes into Qu Yuan’s unique poetic style, which enables his poems such as “Xiang Jun” and “Nine Songs” to be read not only as the representation of a spiritual journey of self-discovery but also the performance of “ritual healing” (Connery 226). In this sense, the poetic and cultural connotations of herbs in *Lyrics of Chu* transcend the religious realm to allow the poet’s “spiritual world” to connect with the “realistic world” (Xiao 39). These poetic elements contribute to the reception of Qu Yuan’s persona as a “model scholar-official” who is “cultivated, pure, accomplished, steadfast, and loyal, but vulnerable to the slanders and attacks of venal contemporaries at court”(Connery 228). More specifically, the stylistic resources including shamanism, botanical imagery, and philosophical ideas have become a powerful tool of “self-expression” (Connery 228) for Qu Yuan. Apart from drawing on the symbolism of herbs, the tactful employment of a female voice is an implicit way to express the poet’s own virtue and his loyalty to the ruler. Therefore, when Qu Yuan stumbled in his political life, he found an outlet in the poetic imagery of herbs and beauty, which manifested his dissatisfaction with reality and his persistent pursuit of righteousness and justice at the same time. The rescue of his masculine pride through the employment of a female voice is the triumph of the poetics of *xing* and *bi* invested in the herb imagery.

The mode of male poets writing in the female voice, which started in *The Classic of Poetry* and was lifted to a new height by Qu Yuan, needs further comment, since it has been such a prominent and elaborate art form in pre-modern Chinese poetry. On the surface, it expresses the motif of women’s complaint and promotes a sort of “realistic” reading of poetry as a mirror of social reality. For instance, in “Cai Wei” discussed earlier, we read the woman speaker who pines for her missing husband and feel empathy for her. However, there is always a possibility to read poetry figuratively and metaphorically, i.e., the theory of literature as a “lamp,”<sup>2</sup> which has been a major feature of aesthetics in classical Chinese poetry. It is then plausible to suggest that the woman figure in “Cai Wei” is a representation of a male soldier in a state of grief and sorrow while away from home. Modern scholars are more likely to argue for the latter reading than the former, as Wang Li

2 M.H. Abrams proposed that the Romantics, as contrast to neoclassical poets, thought of literature as a lamp. While neoclassicists regard literature as a reflection of life, romantics believe that the literary creation illuminates the world through the light ignited by the writers’ inner feelings. See *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

points out that women were unlikely to write poetry considering their social status and level of education in pre-Qin China, and these poems in *The Classic of Poetry* were almost certainly composed by male authors albeit adopting the voice of a melancholy woman. To this popular convention of evoking the symbolism of herbs in association with the figure of the female voice, Kang-i Sun Chang poignantly refers as “gender mask” (Yin and Wan 52). By putting on the “gender mask,” Yin and Wan argue that the literati in traditional China are able to inscribe their gender identity in poetry writing while keeping a distance from possible political repercussions. In other words, herbs in classical poetry is not only an expressive device, but a medium that enables Chinese literati to displace their gender, transfer their intentions, and perform their social and political roles more safely and effectively. Speaking through the symbol of herbs reflects the predominant principle of “poetry expresses intent,” which dictates that “poems are always spontaneous, true reflections of the writer’s inner being” (Cai 211). In sum, a practice born out of the aesthetic value of metaphoric language in Chinese classical poetry, the herb imagery in *The Classic of Poetry* and *Lyrics of Chu* has set an example for poets in the later generations, from being the figure of love in the “music bureau” poetry (*yuefu*) during the Han Dynasty, to becoming a trope for lofty character favored by the poets of the Six Dynasties, and to the even more flourish of natural sublimity of Tang and Song poetry.

### **Herbs in Fiction: Knowledge, Science, and Chinese Modernity**

While the herb imagery in classical literature was commonly seen in the writings of scholars and literati who were considered as cultural elites in society, the functions and connotations of such imagery altered in response to the advent of the new literary genre—vernacular fiction, or novel. Since the 17th century, vernacular fiction established itself as a significant genre along with the social and cultural transformations during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Although writing in the classical Chinese language remained official and mainstream in the literary scene, the publication and circulation of vernacular fictions had seen substantial growth during this time. As manifested in many Ming Dynasty fictions including *Journey to the West* and *Plum in the Golden Vase*, the knowledge of herbs, especially herbal medicine, is the “popular knowledge” (Schonebaum 8) practiced and experienced in quotidian life. The continuity of using herbs as a symbol demonstrates that the rhetoric adapts to the new development of genre; however, the innovation in literary practice confronts the ideology of the cultural elite. During this time, fiction as a

new genre possesses an “encyclopedic nature” (Schonebaum 5) that incorporates practical knowledge produced by everyday life experience. The writing and use of herbs, in responding to and accommodating such transition, significantly contribute to the portrayal of everyday life. Herbs, in particular herbal medicine, are usually presented and represented in vernacular literature as common or popular knowledge, in distinction to elite or official knowledge (Schonebaum 7-8).

Writing herbs in fiction and the turn away from elite knowledge has a far-reaching impact on late-imperial literature and literary history. This legacy has carried through to the modern times. In the early 20th century, China experienced numerous social and political transformations, including the end of imperialism. Reacting to the drastic transformations brought by social and national revolutions, modern intellectuals called for reforms in the cultural and literary scene. During the early Republican era (1917-1937), writing of herbs was interwoven with the national enlightenment project with an urgency to reform literature in modern China. At the heart of the national literary reform was the promotion and popularization of vernacular writings. Among the modern writers who introduced new ideologies and styles into the literary scene at the beginning of the 20th century, Zhou Zuoren was one who consistently and deliberately incorporated the writing of herbs to the pursuit of his literary ideal. Specifically, he reinvented the tradition of recording various plants in an epistemological manner while highlighting the scientific nature of botany with an aim to capture the new structure of feeling.

Introducing the concept of “essay” into China, Zhou Zuoren was an ardent practitioner of this new genre. In his writing, Zhou consistently utilized this new literary form to illustrate his idea of “proletarian literature” and “literature of humanity” (1). In his earlier writings, Zhou aligned with other iconoclasts and promoted a new form of literature that aimed to emancipate people from the tethers of antiquated mentalities associated with the “old” literature. Zhou’s attempt is particularly manifest in his promulgation of “proletarian literature,” which sets guidelines for his writing of herbs. “Proletarian literature” is defined as a genre that tells common people’s tales in a common form; but in his eponymous article, Zhou cautions us not to equate “proletarian literature” to “popular literature.” To Zhou, caring for the underprivileged is not tantamount to writing for the common people. Rather, common people are treated as objects for intellectuals to observe and study. The elitist and utilitarian approach permeates Zhou’s writing of herbs in the way that human subjectivity is crucial in appreciating herbs as an organic component in a modern subject’s artistic life.

In the 1920s, his essays, represented by “Drinking Tea” (“Hecha”) and “Wild

Edible Herbs in My Hometown” (“Guxiang de yecai”), indicate the twofold function of introducing herbs into modern literature. First, “He Cha” epitomizes Zhou’s literary ideal that fuses artistic taste with humanism in the way in which he meticulously discusses how green tea is the prime choice for tea-drinking and how tea along with other exquisite utensils reflects the art of living. Such position situates Zhou in the romantic vein of modern literary tradition; whereas the writing of herbs embarks on a dialogue with Western romantic literature. Moreover, by locating and naming the specifics of various kinds of wild edible herbs like “huang hua mai guo,” Zhou aims to illustrate how the knowledge of plants helps to disenchant Chinese people from unreasonable belief systems and wishful thinking about herbs as a gift from nature.

The second layer of meaning in herb writing for Zhou could be traced back to his childhood reading experience. When recounting his admiration for Chen Zi’s *Mi Chuan Hua Jing*, an encyclopedic monograph on cultivation of plants published in 1688, Zhou noted in the essay “Flowery Mirror” (“Hua Jing”) that he saw the book as one of his old friends and always cherished it. Zhou stated that he has learned much about herbs that were easy to find in the countryside but not in historiography, since they were not “graceful” enough (86). Thus, Zhou intentionally makes an effort to incorporate the herbal knowledge into his writing projects and directs our attention to horticulture as a rigorously defined discipline of science. His agenda resonates with the prevalence of biological evolutionism during the time and indicates how scientific knowledge succeeds in warding off the unscientific penchant in traditional writing about plants.

For Zhou, one of the merits of *Mi Chuan Hua Jing* is that the author is anything but the traditional literati who sit in their study sifting through books and citing unfamiliar sources. On the contrary, Zhou particularly mentioned that Chen Zi had taken pains in categorizing these herbs to investigate their colors and predilections, which Zhou considered as a systematic and scientific way of studying plants. In premodern China, there was a general lack of interest in studying nature. “Although there were descriptions of vegetation, insects and aquatic life in famous works, local chronicles, medical and agricultural books of all dynasties, they had not become independent studies after all” (Han 141). This phenomenon, granted, has to do with the system of civil exams and the privileging of textual studies over fieldwork. Yet, it is the scientific characteristic of *Mi Chuan Hua Jing* that parallels Zhou’s own theoretical approach.

In the following decades, Zhou grew increasingly obsessed with presenting different kinds of sources when describing herbs. In “The Stalk of Amaranth”



("Xiancai geng"), Zhou listed a host of textual evidence to account for "xiancai," a common type of edible herbs in rural China. Such preference culminates in his 1939 essay "The Popular Names of Wild Herbs" ("Yecao de suming"), in which Zhou introduced popular names assigned for eight kinds of wild herbs of his hometown, Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province. In this essay, Zhou's intention is not to encourage people to study herbs so as to be professional herbalists. The knowledge of herbs, from Zhou's standpoint, is to instill some common sense into people's minds. In his essay "On The Women's Movement and Commonsense" ("Funü yundong yu changshi"), Zhou straightforwardly lamented that "Today's Chinese people, men and women alike, lack common sense. It applies not only to most people without education, but also to the so-called intellectual class who have received higher education in their own countries or abroad. They may have specialized knowledge that emphasizes one domain, but they have not integrated all the common knowledge. Therefore, their comments are somewhat puzzling and eventually become the 'stale and muddy wine in the new bottle'"(qtd. In Li 206). Here, Zhou's oeuvre could be considered as "a systematic and coherent construction of his alternative approach to enlightenment" (Li 208). In other words, Zhou envisions to use herbs as the alternative to reinforce the importance of acquiring common sense when dominant discourse of enlightenment becomes dogmatic and authoritative to the point that it has ceased to be productive and dialectical. This also bespeaks the reason why Zhou grew apart from his previous comrades when he realized that it was imperative to not mystify and canonize the May Fourth spirit. In this sense, the common knowledge represented by the herbs in Zhou's writing becomes an effective weapon with which to reflect upon enlightenment.

### **Herbs as Tropes of Nostalgia and Desire**

Throughout the Republican period, herbs became a common motif for writers who migrated from rural areas to urban cities that allowed them to express their nostalgia toward a disappearing countryside and to construct a site of memory. In the meantime, herbs also stitch together various discourses that revolve around Chinese modernity when modern intellectuals were facing a time of large-scale social transition and geographical dislocation. As the national crises escalated during the Second Sino-Japanese War, herbs served as a far-reached utopia for writers to express their lyrical bent. Xiao Hong, for instance, wrote about her grandfather's garden in a restorative and therapeutic way. Her idyllic portrayal invokes a sense of a nostalgia that is forever at loss, and a yearning that is endlessly

unfulfilled. Herbs thus assume a role of healing in the times of turmoil and bespeak how writers respond to trauma in its most intense moment. The solace provided by herbs soothes the traumatic aftermath of massive changes and their enduring repercussions. Inspired by the social and spiritual functions of herbs, Xiao Hong, originally from the northeast part of China, constructs a mirage-like garden in her writing which is saturated with herb imagery. Notably, herbs constitute an essential component in Xiao Hong's nostalgia for childhood and hometown while simultaneously serving as a foil for the remoteness of China's rural northeastern region.

In Xiao Hong's novels and short stories, there is the recurring imagery of the "back garden" where herbs grow to their full capacity. The vitality and the wide variety of herbs glorify a long-lost past, which makes the desolate town into a vibrant presence in Xiao Hong's memory. The binary nature of herbs in Xiao Hong's writing unfolds her own conflicted attitude towards her Japanese-occupied hometown during a time when she was sojourning in and outside of China. In alignment with the symbolic meaning of herbs as a virtual and vicarious home-coming, Xiao Hong took pains in describing the color, variety, growth and most importantly, the resilience and tenacity of herbs. In "Back Garden" ("Hou huayuan"), Xiao Hong wrote, "Flowers grow on cucumbers despite the fact that the silky tendril of the annoying melon is wrapping around them, much more, pulling them down. Even though the flowers fall to the ground, they are still blooming. The shovelers always pluck them when they meet the flowers, but the more they pluck them, the faster they grow. The flower seeds fall to the ground and soon they give birth to new ones"(4). The way those unattended flowers manage to survive and thrive parallels the loneliness and resilience of Xiao Hong's life of constant migration at the most turbulent time in modern China.

Similarly, in her well-received autobiographical novel *Tales of Hulan River* (*Hulanhe zhuan*), Xiao Hong devoted much space in reminiscing the "big garden" of her childhood home from a child's perspective. The garden is like a wonderland in the sense that every creature is doing things of its own without any tethers.

Flowers bloom, just like flowers wake up. Birds fly away as if they are disappearing into the sky. Insects bark as if they are talking. Everything is alive. Every little thing has unlimited ability to do whatever it wants. All are free. Pumpkins climb onto the shelves if they want to, and climb onto the house if they want to. If a cucumber is willing to bear a yellow flower, it will bear a yellow flower; if it is willing to bear a cucumber, it will bear a

cucumber. If a cucumber does not want to bear anything, then it will bear nothing and nobody would bother it. Corns grow as tall as they like, and nobody cares if they want to go to heaven (1).

These freewheeling plants in the garden constitute an idyllic utopia in which Xiao Hong conserves her most precious recollections with her grandfather. This highly idealized garden is Xiao Hong's old playground and is forever fixated onto her memory. The feeling of familiarity and safety is unreachable to the wandering Xiao Hong and the days of being a happy-go-lucky child like those carefree plants are gone; yet she nevertheless reconstructs a mnemonic palace to restore the past by writing. Through revisiting and reliving the childhood memory, the garden in her novel summons Xiao Hong into affectionate reminiscence with her grandfather, which finally grants her an opportunity to come home from her diasporic journey.

Ironically yet unsurprisingly, the freedom and the mobility of the plants in the gardens that Xiao Hong meticulously conjured up are constantly illustrated in conjunction with the dead-end future and the daily grind of local residents. In "Back Garden," the protagonist who works as a miller suffers from long-time repression of desire and immediately loses his wife and his newborn after his belated union with an equally unfortunate widow. In the story, Xiao Hong does not comment on the character's fate directly or explicitly; instead she goes on to outline how the plants in the garden still grow healthily.

In the summer of the following year, the flowers and plants in the back garden were so lively that cucumbers climbed up the tree mischievously. Sunflowers bloomed, causing swarms of bees to stir up trouble. Big potts, *parthenocissus tricuspidata*, 'Horse Snake Cabbage' and 'Yan Powder Bean' all blossomed. They were dazzling, and scattered fragrance as well. The cucumber that climbed up the window lattice of the mill year after year has climbed up again this year. Those who bear fruit year after year bear fruit again this year. After several times of prosperity and withering in the back garden, the big purple flower seems to be going on for generations. After winter and spring, it keeps blooming in the garden year after year (89).

The cyclical nature of plants vis-à-vis the ephemeral and fragile human beings bears witness to Xiao Hong's rumination about her ill-fated hometown folks. Considering the backdrop of Xiao Hong's times, even in her most lyrical and private expressions, the reality sinks in and a heavy dose of sympathy is expressed subtly



via the seemingly nonchalant recounting of the herbs. Perhaps it is not far-fetched to argue that the lusciousness of herbs permeates Xiao Hong's writing and points to a utopian time-space as Xiao Hong is facing a cascade of crises in her endless days of roaming. The trope of plants reveals Xiao Hong's personal nostalgia for a lost hometown; whereas it also functions as a reminder for the hopeless peasants who are torn by the Japanese invasion and their poverty-stricken daily lives.

Apart from echoing with the changing literary trend and enriching her experience of everyday life, Xiao Hong's nostalgic writing of herbs mirrors another trope in Chinese literature—lyricism, or the expression of emotion (*shuqing*). Lyricism of Chinese literature has been a long-standing tradition, which had been observed by generations of scholars. If the notion that “poetry expresses intent” dominates classical Chinese literature as we discussed earlier, it stands to be modified into “poetry follows from emotion” (*shi yuan qing*), which seeks to redefine literature in its purpose and presentation.<sup>3</sup> By such a literary paradigm, herbs once again play a crucial role in connecting the depiction of nature and the authors' perception of their internal world. The way that herbs are represented in modern literature not only carries on this function, but further develops and rewrites the lyrical tradition of classical Chinese literature.<sup>4</sup> However, lyricism in literature was disrupted during the socialist era (1950s–late 1970s). With the flourishing of socialist and revolutionary literature, lyricism is allowed only for the cause of extolling socialist causes. Meanwhile, excessive revolutionary zeal and political messages have overshadowed the expression of individual and personal feelings. During this time, herbs together with other imagery are overdetermined to carry out the symbolic meanings of communist revolution. Two important literary schools emerged during the socialist period, “the School of Lotus Pond” (Hehuadian pai) and “the School of Potatoes” (Shanyaodan pai), both devoted to depicting the transformation brought by the sweeping revolutionary projects in local villages. Although the writers of these two groups mainly set their stories in the countryside, the natural scenery of the rural areas was downplayed while the ongoing conflicts between disparate classes were put under the spotlight (Wei 147). When natural scenery, including the description of herbs, occurs in the writings of socialist

3 “Poetry follows from emotion” (*shi yuan qing*) was proposed by the poet, Lu Ji (261-303), from the Western Jin Dynasty. For more discussion, see Wang David Der-wei. *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 8-9.

4 The concept of “lyrical tradition” was proposed by Chen Shih-Hsiang in the 1970s, which helped to conceptualize the temporality and sensibility of lyricism in modern Chinese literature. For more discussion, see Wang David Der-wei, 37-38.

realism, it nevertheless functions to underline the stereotypical images of socialist subjects.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, significant changes occurred in the writing of herbs echoing with the ebbing of revolutionary projects and the accentuating trend of global neoliberalism. Herbs have ceased to convey the revolutionary message, and no longer contrast the negative image of enemies against the positive image of proletariat comrades (Ke 117). As a gesture of farewell to the period of high socialism,<sup>5</sup> writers like Wang Zengqi (1920-1997) reestablished the connection between herbs and the personal expression of lust and desire. After a nearly three-decade pause in his writing, Wang Zengqi published his novella “Buddhist Initiation” (“Shoujie”) in 1980, which instantly earned him a reputation as “China’s last scholar-official” (Chen 72). A protégé of Shen Congwen (1902-1988), Wang inherited Shen’s “lyrical archaeology” in the way that he synthesized trivial subjects with larger socioeconomic context and “reflected China’s ‘old life’ with the new philosophy of his era” (Yan 101). This feature is particularly manifest in Wang’s use of herbs in “Shoujie,” expressing a common sentiment of reflecting upon the remote native soil, which further adumbrated “root-seeking literature” in the late 1980s.

“Shoujie” represents a young boy’s journey of being ordained as a monk while capturing the secular manner of living in a Buddhist temple, named “Water Chestnut.” “There is no rule in the temple and nobody even mentions the word ‘rule’” (Wang 66). The monks who live in the temple lead an unrestricted life and take joy in marrying, eating meat and other activities that are usually forbidden to monks, yet common for lay people. Such portrayal of an iconoclastic temple alludes more to the social atmosphere of the 1980s than that of Republican China. As the political control of literature lessened after China entered the “new phase” of openness and reform in the late 1970s, articulating personal emotions and desires became a new trend in order to dispel the myth of political dogma. Nevertheless, “Shoujie” is still criticized for taking on such a lighthearted tone in depicting the deviant monks. Such depiction, as one scholar points out, indicates that the discourse of enlightenment has been surpassed by the longing for hedonism (B. Wang 22). Despite its poignant tone, the criticism indeed reveals that the natural desire of monks embodies the open-mindedness of the cultural scene of the 1980s. Hence,

5 “High socialism” is the historical periodization referring to the timeline through the 1950s to 70s in China, characterized by the politicization of everyday life, the fluid class label system, and the grassroots’ massive engagement in state political campaigns. For more discussion, see *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China’s Era of High Socialism*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D Johnson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

what once had been repressed again resurfaces onto the historical horizon; and the exploration of human desire returned to writers' agenda.

In "Shoujie," the burgeoning romanticism between the teenage monk Minghai and his childhood sweetheart Yingzi is indicated by the symbolic meanings of the pomegranate flowers and cape jasmine. These two kinds of plants recur three times in the story. Each time, their presence guides us towards the development of the budding love between the two protagonists. Both flowers as literary imageries have the same sort of characteristic of being a token for romantic love (Hua 45). The flowers first appear when Wang describes the surroundings of Yingzi's family house, gesturing towards a potential romantic relationship in the following passage. After Minghai and Yingzi get to know each other, Yingzi asks Minghai to draw a picture of the pomegranate flowers and cape jasmine. Such an action indicates how proactive Yingzi is in this relationship and reinforces the linkage between flowers and romance. Towards the end of the story, Yingzi wears these two kinds of flowers as hair accessories and proposes to Minghai. From drawings to Yingzi's headdress, the flowers become a witness of Yingzi's love, implying how Yingzi audaciously and straightforwardly expresses her feelings to Minghai through action.

The story ends with a detailed depiction of reed marshes, where, as the author implicitly hints, Minghai and Yingzi have sexual intercourse. Interestingly, Wang Zengqi adapted the Shanghai opera *Tinders from the Reed Marshes* (*Shajiabang*), which also took reed marshes as an important stage scene. The reed marshes in *Shajiabang* were the hiding place for the New Fourth Army from which they launched their attacks against the Japanese occupying forces. Therefore, in this play, reed marshes are a symbol for the great cause of revolution (Hua 52). As a contrast to the symbolic meaning of reed marshes in the revolutionary period, "Shoujie" employs herbs as a literal and figurative bed for the young couple in love. Such innovative use of plants unveils Wang's attempt to subvert the previously constructed connection between plants and revolutionary tenets. Herbs no longer serve as a token of revolution; rather, they function as a medium to give voice to people's free will and pure love. Through disassociating herbs from the revolutionary narrative, Wang's writing practice bears witness to the reestablishment of using herbs to express personal desire and pleasure. As a practice of restorative nostalgia,<sup>6</sup> Wang's writing retraces the Chinese lyrical tradition and recalls a literary convention that was temporarily repressed. As a result, the metaphoric

6 "Restorative nostalgia" was proposed by Svetlana Boym, referring to the reconstruction of the national past, and a return to national symbols. See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

herbs resume a crucial role in initiating the transformation from the literature dominated by politics to the literature of humanism and individual fulfillment. In a significant way, Wang Zengqi's depoliticization of herb imagery has opened a new path for Chinese writers to redefine the relationship between human and nature in the context of rapid social and cultural changes in contemporary China.

### **Visualizing Herbs and the Performance of Culture**

Indeed, herbal imagery is crucial in enriching the literary practice and in reflecting transformations in literary history. Writing herbs is also intrinsically related to how human activities and culture are structured. The reference to over 30 species of plants and herbs in Chi Zijian's award-winning novel *Last Quarter of the Moon*, for instance, makes the fiction a work of ethnobotany that not only informs the "indigenous knowledge" (Zhang 157) of the Evenks, but also portrays the ecological and social changes in the Evenki society over 50 years. Furthermore, the knowledge of herbs and plants represented in the novel challenges the conventional perception which regards Evenki society as primitive and backward. Their "indigenous knowledge" based on their expertise in using herbs precisely reflects how the Evenks are familiar with ecological conditions and their changes, and how they use such knowledge to fulfill their needs. Their botanical and ecological knowledge, therefore, is much more comprehensive and possibly more advanced than those belonging to people from a modern society (Zhang 173). In contemporary ecological writings, the descriptions of plants and herbs provide traces of human activities and native culture. Such an indexical relationship, on the one hand, reminds us of the modern literary trend in the early 20th century that treated botany as common and scientific knowledge. On the other hand, herbal knowledge has become a marked catalogue of human civilization at both literary and cultural venues in the 21st century. In fact, the ways herbs are categorized, planted, recorded, and used are substantially affected by the paradigm of knowledge, the level of civilization, and the relationship between power and culture. As Meng Yue aptly suggests, the intersection between botanical knowledge and civilization potentially represents the development of human consciousness and the prospect of future (Meng 410-411).

The association of knowledge of plants with level of civilization, according to Meng Yue, could be dated back to the 19th-century travel journal written by Robert Fortune (1812-1880) (Meng 408). At that time, tea, of all Chinese plants and herbs, became the measurement of Chinese civilization in regard to "civilized

nations” such as those of Western Europe. Although the industrial, political and legal situation rendered the 19th-century China “semi-civilized” in the eyes of Westerners, the knowledge and production of tea made Chinese civilization irreplaceable compared to other cultures (Meng 424). In her examination of herbal knowledge and the notion of “semi-civilized,” Meng sees these levels of civilization as a mode of discourse rather than merely as a concept of colonialism or imperialism. She argues that civilization as a discourse helps us probe into the “production of modern botanical knowledge” and trace the origins and conflicts between Chinese and Western cultures (Meng 416). Meng’s approach foregrounds the relationships between civilizations and the botanical knowledge developed in the modern context. Such relationships, we contend, continue to play a crucial role in contemporary Chinese society. Precisely, we will use the concept of indigenous botanical knowledge as an entryway to examine the 2019 Beijing Garden Expo and to uncover the expo’s ideology that supports and advocates for the splendor of Chinese civilization.

The Garden Expo is a state-sponsored recurring “garden landscape fair” and has been held in 10 different cities in China since 1997. The Beijing 2019 Expo was hosted by the Chinese government and the Beijing Municipal People’s Government. On its official website, the aims and goals of the event are described as such:

It aims at boosting communication and cooperation between China and other countries in landscaping industries and displaying latest achievements in landscaping construction and management, as well as spreading landscape culture and ecological concepts. Besides, it also leads the trend of technological innovation; at the same time, it devotes to promoting the construction of energy-conserved and environmental friendly society so as to advance the coordinated development of social economy, population, natural resources and environment (Lyu, *The Beijing 2019 Expo*).

It seems that the statement proclaims three major goals for the Expo: promoting technology, spreading Chinese culture, and drawing international attention. It is through the visualization of herbs and botanical knowledge that these goals will be realized. The entire Expo is composed of four pavilions, of which the Chinese pavilion is the largest. The Chinese pavilion consists of 34 individual theme gardens that feature the plants, environment, and landscape of each province in China. These gardens are supposed to be not only a site of leisure and beauty but also an embodiment of traditional Chinese culture. For instance, the Jiangsu Garden has



replicated the famous Suzhou-style architectures, and planted various herbs and flowers throughout the landscapes of the garden. When describing the design of the garden, the introduction on the official website draws the visitors' attention to the culture-related elements, such as couplets, Suzhou-style embroidery, tea and floral art. Above all, the garden is named a "poetic and picturesque province," which highlights the connection between the display of plants and landscape and classical literature and paintings.

The cultural history of herbs displayed in the Chinese pavilion goes back to 1600 BCE. For example, in the main exhibition hall, there are sculptures of ancient Chinese characters found on the oracle bones that are related to herbs, plants, and gardening. These sculptures are surrounded by pictorial introduction of the herbs mentioned in *The Classic of Poetry*. By the side of each live herb specimen, the prose text of introduction for each type of herbs (origin, medical use, and social function) is enhanced by original quotes of poetic lines from *The Classic of Poetry*. In addition, the exhibition in the Chinese Pavilion gives prominence to the traditional paintings that feature mountains, rivers, and plants. The art work that catches visitors' eyes is the replica of the Song Dynasty painting, *A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains* (*Qianli jiangshan tu*). According to the official website, the replica exemplifies the combination of modern technology and traditional art, since the artwork uses preserved fresh moss as its main material to recreate the original painting. The organizers would not let this minor detail escape the visitors' attention because it is a good example of the tradition of herbs being kept alive by modern technology. Other than the artistic values of herbs, their cultural and social functions are a major theme emphasized in the Expo. To this end, the Expo specifically designs an outdoor theme garden, "The Hundred Herbs Garden" which grows a variety of medicinal herbs, such as *carum carvi*, basil, and *radix isatidis*. It is explained that the herb garden is designed to educate the visitors with traditional Chinese herbal knowledge as well as to promote Chinese medicine to the world. While visiting the garden, visitors shall have the immersive experience to see how herbal medicine is grown, processed, and utilized. In this process, visitors are no longer the passive receivers of information; rather, they become subjects of culture as they participate in the procedure of cultural (re)production themselves.

Apart from displaying Chinese culture to its own citizens, the Expo aims to present China as an eco-friendly, techno-advanced, and culturally powerful nation vis-à-vis other countries in the world. In order to attract international attention, the Expo establishes an international pavilion, the second largest in size, and welcomes foreign designers, suppliers and exhibitors. Interestingly, the official website draws

a comparison between China and the U.S., attempting to reveal the “harmony in diversity between the Oriental and Western gardening spaces.” By constructing an exhibition garden that grows plants from both China and the U.S., the organizer argues that, despite the “differences” between the two countries, the fact that native plants of China have thrived in the U.S indicates how “Chinese native plants influence public space design” in western countries. Expanding the herb imagery into the intercultural space, plants and herbs are now regarded as a tool for exploring the interaction between Chinese civilization and Western cultures.

The narrative of herbs and plants orchestrated by the official organizer and its state sponsor begins with their history that juxtaposes the written text with the live example, continues with their privileged status to celebrate China’s traditional culture and its modern achievements, and then ends with their reference to China’s reach and influence to the world. Herbs are things of natural beauty and also a token of civility within and without one’s own culture. In term of displaying China to its own people and to the outside world, it could be argued that visualizing herbs in the 2019 Beijing Expo has become a process of interpellation,<sup>7</sup> in which herbs are vital to the performance of culture inscribed in the discourse of national pride in present-day China. In this process, herbs as an artistic and cultural sign mitigate the hint of hegemony inherently embedded in the narrative of claiming them as emblems of national pride. In one way or another, and much like the use of other cultural signs from Chinese tradition, herbs help reproduce the nationalist ideology by obscuring the relationship between a dominated state subject and a subjugated civilian object. Within the environment of immersion and affect created by the Expo, visitors/ individuals recognize themselves as subjects located in the nationalist ideology and are incorporated into the power and social structure based on this very ideology.

## Conclusion

From premodern to contemporary China, herbs undergo a long journey from articulating human emotions to reflecting on human activities. It is through this journey that herbs realize both a practical function as a material object and a symbolic function as a cultural sign. In this chapter, we traced the representation of herbs in Chinese literature and culture from the 7th century BCE to the 21st

7 Interpellation process was introduced by Louis Althusser in his 1972 essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” Althusser believes that the interpellation process enables individuals to recognize themselves as subjects while being “complicit” with state ideologies that dominate them.

century. By analyzing herbs in written text and visual exhibition, we explored herbs' metaphoric and symbolic connotations, and how they persist or evolve in the face of or in response to social and political changes in Chinese society.

In classical poetry, herbs are used as a symbol for humanity's beauty and virtue. While writing poetry, poets tend to articulate their innermost emotions and ambitions through the mirror image of natural objects such as herbs. Therefore, the poetic writing of herbs consolidates the literary convention of "poetry expresses intent," which enables the poet to speak in metaphoric language tactfully and circuitously. Herbs thus are coded and reformulated into a set of symbols in order to transmit the poets' interior thoughts in moments when their sensibilities are held back by social or political restrictions.

Entering the modern era, the sentiments of anti-tradition spurred reform-minded intellectuals to creatively reassess the pre-existing modes of lyrical writing. Responding to literary innovation, herbs have been employed as a specific kind of modern knowledge that represents rational and scientific thinking. Being upheld as an agent for Chinese modernity, herbs in literature at the same time invoke a sense of nostalgia in the face of massive social turbulence. It is the tension between onward- and backward-looking that instills meanings to herbs in modern Chinese literature and, to a certain extent, has made herbs an overdetermined signifier.

Yet, as the revolutionary enthusiasm faded away in the 1980s, Chinese writers began to reemphasize the association between herbs and lyricism with an aim to deconstruct the grand historical narrative of enlightenment or high socialism. By restoring the connection between herbs and human desire, herbs resume the key role in writing individual-centered literature. At the same time, in the face of a heightened environmental awareness, herbs appear more frequently in contemporary ecological writings. In this context, herbs are not only a symbol of human feelings but also a testimony of human activities. Through visualizing herbs in contemporary urban space, herbs have been assigned with two roles: as the miracle cure constituting an essential part of Chinese medical culture, and as the exquisite flora which bears the aesthetic values at the heart of traditional painting and architecture. Either way, herbs became a standard bearer for native and national cultural heritage and have been prominently used in contemporary China's nationalist discourse.

Above all, our discussion foregrounds the interrelation and interaction between humans and herbs in various forms of literature and at different sociocultural venues. Yet, herbs show a greater prospect in future research as we shift away from a human-centered point of view. The contemporary Hong Kong-based artist



Zheng Bo (1974-), for instance, probes into the potentiality of plants and envisages a larger worldview by extensively engaging with herbs in his artworks as a proactive response to the ever-escalating ecological crisis. For Zheng, accentuating the agency and self-containability of organisms like herbs is a good way for us to rectify the tendency of subjugating flora and fauna to human beings. In his own words, “ecological art practices as a whole is not an art school or an art movement, but a paradigm shift. The key is to extend the scale from humans/society to everything/the Earth” (Zheng 5). Needless to say, Zheng’s innovative approach to herbs undermines the hierarchical structure among living beings. His attempt to construct a symbiotic relationship not only among plants per se but also between plants and the human race calls for a new imagination in regard to the meaning and the significance of herbs to the human world.

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# Focus on Translation

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## Editors' note

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It is axiomatic to insist on the importance of translation in the study of comparative literature and world literature. Regardless of one's particular conception of world literature, translation is at the heart of its textual formations. On the other hand, any strand of comparative literary study, if it does stand up to its name, must consider the inherent connotation of comparison in translation. The worlding of world literature is inconceivable without the force of translation that brings cultures together and yet maintains their separate identities.

*CL&WL* has been promoting translation studies since its founding. With the current issue, we once again bring translation into focus. The four articles cover translation activities that occurred in different times and spaces, from the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures to the relay translation of Mark Twain's short story "The Californian's Tale" into Japanese and Chinese, from the adaptive translation of William Somerset Maugham's play *Sacred Flame* in Hong Kong in the 1950s to Ba Jin's translation of Alexander Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts* in China in the 1980s. While linguistical variation in translation informs their historical summary and textual analysis, those authors have presented a common theme on the creative power of translation that bears upon the target culture and the intended audience. How translation generates innovative energy that can be harbored for cultural and social change is laid bare for readers to appreciate. In this connection, translation studies may well be called "translational studies," a term rich in interdisciplinary meanings that also reflects the expansive cultural contextualization in current translation studies. This is the value of proper translation-themed comparative literary studies in our time.

With this in mind, I would like to renew our open call for quality manuscripts on translation studies and other subjects from scholars and researchers in comparative literature and world literature. *CL&WL* has been and will continue to be the forum for the discourse of literature and its divergent manifestations in our globalized world.

**Dian Li**  
**Associate Editor**

# Translation and National Literary Style Reforms: An Analysis of the Relay Translation of “The Californian’s Tale”

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## Abstract:

From “The Californian’s Tale” to “Mountain People’s Love” to “Adventures in the Mountains”, the relay translation of this short story linked together style reforms in America, Japan, and China. In this process, translation was connected with style reform in different ways. Hara Hōitsuan translated Mark Twain’s revolutionary “colloquial style” into the relatively conservative “detailed style” at a time when detailed style was faced with increasing challenges from newer styles. The anachronism of his translation in the context of radical style reform led to a significant cultural event in Japan’s modern history: the “mistranslation debate.” Wu Tao created the “new vernacular style” based on the literal translation of detailed style. While it also departed from the original style, his choice of style set the trend for Chinese style reform. It showed how Japanese functioned as an intermediary in the Europeanization of Chinese language and how relay translation through Japanese contributed to modern Chinese style reform.

**Keywords:** style reform, relay translation, “The Californian’s Tale”, Mark Twain, Hara Hōitsuan, Wu Tao

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The translation of Western literature, especially English literature, played an important role in the literary style reforms in modern China and Japan since Europeanization was a common trend for both modern Chinese and Japanese. This generalization is true when we look at the overall evolution of modern Chinese and Japanese languages. However, if we focus on a particular translator or translated text, it can be seen that for some Chinese and Japanese translators, Europeanized style was not a necessary option. Moreover, literary style could even



be far from being their major concern in a translation. In fact, most translators in modern China or Japan failed to represent the original style of the source text in translation because they had either no intention or lacked the abilities to do so. It is understandable that to represent the original style was a nearly unreasonable requirement for translators when there were still no universal fixed linguistic norms of literary translation and even literary writing in their times. In Meiji Japan or the late Qing and early Republican China, literary styles were changing dramatically and several transitional forms of writing coexisted during these periods. Therefore, in the study of modern Japanese and Chinese literary translation, in comparison with simply making judgments about whether the original style is represented in the translation or not, it will be more meaningful to pay closer attention to the reasons for the translators' stylistic choices and to understand their choices in the context of the different national literary style reforms linked by translation activities, as studied in this paper.

The relay translation of Mark Twain's short story "The Californian's Tale" (1893) strung together different literary style reforms from America, Japan and China in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this process, three different writing styles from different languages encountered and influenced one another. It also revealed how translation and style reforms could interact with each other in different ways. "The Californian's Tale" was firstly translated into Japanese by Hara Hōitsuan<sup>1</sup> as "Mountain People's Love" (Yamaga no koi) and was published in the magazine *The Sun* (Taiyō) in 1903. Chinese translator Wu Tao translated "Mountain People's Love" into Chinese as "Adventures in the Mountains" (Shanjia qiyu) which was published in the magazine *Tapestry Portrait Novel* (Xiuxiang xiaoshuo) in 1906. From "The Californian's Tale" to "Mountain People's Love" to "Adventures in the Mountains", this short story changed its writing style every time it crossed the linguistic boundaries through translation: from "colloquial style" to "detailed style" (Shūmitsu buntai) to "new vernacular style" (Xin baihua wenti).

### Mark Twain and the Colloquial Style

Faulkner once called Mark Twain the father of American literature because he was the first American writer to forge a writing style out of actual American

1 "Mountain People's Love" was published under Hara Hōitsuan's pen name "The owner of Hōitsu hut" (Hōitsuan Shujin).

colloquial speech. He made it possible for American literature to establish its own identity and differentiate itself from European literature in the sense of language and style. In doing so, he contributed to the reform of American literary style. In previous studies of Mark Twain's colloquial style, the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is often seen as a representative work (Bridgman 78; Trilling 104). In comparison, the style of "The Californian's Tale" seems relatively plain. But we can still see basic characteristics of the colloquial style in the text of this story.

A colloquial style of writing is one style which conveys the effects of informal spoken language. The linguistic stylist Richard Bridgman lists "stress on the individual verbal unit, a resulting fragmentation of syntax, and the use of repetition to bind and unify" (12) as the three key characteristics of the colloquial style. Lionel Trilling argues that a colloquial style is not a matter of pronunciation or of grammar, but rather "has something to do with ease and freedom in the use of language. Most of all it has to do with the structure of the sentence, which is simple, direct, and fluent, maintaining the rhythm of the word-groups of speech and the intonations of the speaking voice" (116). Malcolm Cowley highlights the key features of colloquial writing as having a simpler diction, looser sentence structure, a tendency on the part of the narrator to combine flat assertions with striking physical images, and an increased use of intensifying adverbs (3-14).

If we condense the three stylists' conclusions together, we see that fragmentation and repetition are essential to colloquial writing. They are also the two major linguistic features of the text of "The Californian's Tale." In this text, fragmentation of sentences firstly consists in the listing of things in a disordered way. Secondly, as Cowley and Trilling point out, short sentences and simple structures are common to colloquial writing which mimics the patterns of speech. Some of these sentences are formed by cutting long sentences with loose structures into short sections. As for patterns of repetition, they frequently appear in syllables, words and sentences.

The narrator's description of the host Henry's bedroom is just one example of a single run-on sentence far more reminiscent of oral communication than the detailed prose one would expect:

such a bedroom as I had not seen for years: white counterpane, white pillows, carpeted floor, papered walls, pictures, dressing-table, with mirror and pin-cushion and dainty toilet things; and in the corner a wash-stand, with real chinaware bowl and pitcher, and with soap in a china dish, and on a rack more than a dozen towels... (Twain, "The Californian's Tale" 268)



It merely lists off the things found in the room with only a few prepositions to indicate the spatial relationships between these objects and their locations in the room. The description is fragmented in such a way that it can only convey the most basic information. People can hardly form any detailed picture of the room in their minds when they read this paragraph. Normally, oral communication is aimed at conveying basic information just like the existence of certain objects as shown in this paragraph while literary writing tends to use modifiers or add details to distinguish itself from everyday speech. By deliberately fragmenting the syntax, Mark Twain created a colloquial style that is more intimate for readers, a style which is similar to that of a conversation between friends.

Mark Twain's obvious preference for short sentences results in the other form of fragmentation. He cut many long sentences artificially into small segments by the use of punctuation, conjunctions or discourse markers. This feature is typically shown in dialogues like the following:

You see, she likes to have people come and stop with us-- people who know things, and can talk--people like you. She delights in it; for she knows--oh, she knows nearly everything herself, and can talk, oh, like a bird. Don't go; it's only a little while, you know, and she'll be so disappointed. (Twain, "The Californian's Tale" 269)

The host Henry is trying to persuade "me" to stay at his place to wait for his wife to come back. The whole paragraph comprises two types of sentences: simple sentences and sections of long sentences. Twain made the deliberate choice to take one sentence like "She delights in it because she knows nearly everything and she can talk like a bird" and to transform it into something more hesitant through the use of discourse markers and repetition. Furthermore, the cohesion is disrupted through the insertion of unnecessary punctuations like commas, dashes, conjunctions like "and", "for", discourse markers like "oh". This results in Henry saying, "She delights in it; for she knows--oh, she knows nearly everything herself, and can talk, oh, like a bird." Along with the use of the interjections "you see," "you know," the fragmentary expression imitates Henry's speech with constant pauses. The constant pauses and the repeated use of words like "oh" convey Henry's anxious tone when he is eager to stop "me" from leaving.

Repetition is used to bind and unify broken sentences that are caused by fragmentation and loose structures. In this way the consistency and coherence of

writing can be restored. Repetition in the text of “The Californian’s Tale” can be seen from syllables to words, to phrases and even to sentences. Firstly, we can see the repetition of words in the following paragraph where Henry praises his wife’s special skills in housekeeping:

She always does that. You can’t tell just what it lacks, but it does lack something until you’ve done that-you can see it yourself after it’s done, but that is all you know; you can’t find out the law of it...though I don’t know the law of any of them. But she knows the law. She knows the why and the how both; but I don’t know the why; I only know the how. (Twain, “The Californian’s Tale” 267-268)

In this paragraph, words like “does,” “done,” “don’t,” “lack,” “know,” and noun phrases such as “the law,” “the why,” and “the how” all appear at least twice. Repetition tends to happen immediately in the next sentence, thus creating connection in meaning and prosody between two sentences. The repetition of simple words in such a short passage also indicates Henry’s limited vocabulary, revealing the low educational attainment of a miner like him.

Repetition in the syllable level is shown in the alliteration, rhyme, prefix and suffix of words. The opening paragraph of this text is an example of repetition in the suffix of words:

Thirty-five years ago I was out prospecting on the Stanislaus, tramping all day long with pick and pan and horn, and washing a hatful of dirt here and there, always expecting to make a rich strike, and never doing it. (Twain, “The Californian’s Tale” 266)

We can see that the suffix “-ing” repeatedly appear in the words “prospecting,” “tramping,” “washing,” “expecting” and “doing.” The repeated use of the continuous tense conveys a sense of constantly trying despite fruitless results. It shows the narrator’s perpetual passion and great patience for gold panning. In addition, a certain prosodic structure is loosely formed by the repetition of syllables. Rather than the formal metrical system of poems, this prosodic structure is so simple that it is closer to a casual word play in speech.

Repetition also conveys an emphasis on certain important points embedded in the seemingly loose structures and casual speech of the texts. It is typically shown in the repeated sentences, which have relatively complete expression of

meaning compared to words or phrases. The sentence “All her work, she did it all herself—every bit” (Twain, “The Californian’s Tale” 267) is said twice when Henry is leading the narrator around his house. Henry’s repeated praise for his wife contributes to the shaping of the hostess’s image as a good housewife and conveys his love for her.

From my understanding of this short story, the ideal image of the missing hostess is, for the frustrated miners, a metaphor for the beautiful past, which partly explains Henry’s and the other characters’ love for the hostess. The repetition of this sentence is not a coincidence but has close relation to the central theme of the story: criticism about the cruel gold rush which left miners with nothing but illusions of the idealized past.

### **Hara Hōitsuan and the Detailed Style**

Before we discuss Hara Hōitsuan’s translation of “The Californian’s Tale,” we will first touch upon the different translation styles popular in Japan since Meiji era in order to contextualize his choice of the detailed style.

Detailed style is defined as “delineat[ing] or narrat[ing] something, usually some daily trivialities or one’s inner world, in a detailed way. Even if it is to describe the heaven and earth, the mountains and rivers, the nation and the society, the description should still be exquisite” (Yanagida 428). Japanese detailed style is close to the style of Chinese prose in Ming and Qing dynasties. The detailed style used in translation is also called “the literal translation of Western writing in the style of Chinese writing” (Kanbunchō ōbun chokuyakutai), which is “a kind of writing style used in literal translation, based on Chinese words and added with Western-language grammatical elements like nominative and objective cases” (Takahashi 557). By using a foundation of detailed Chinese writing, it overcomes the crudity of “the style of reading Chinese writing in Japanese” (Kanbun kundokutai) and absorbs the rigorousness and precision from Western-language writing through literal translation.

The history of Japanese modern literary translation could be divided into three periods according to its writing style: In the first ten years of Meiji era (1868-1877), most translators used “Chinese writing style” (Kanbuntai), “the mixing style of the elegant and the colloquial” (Gazoku setchūtai) and “the colloquial style” (Zokutai) to do free translation like paraphrasing or introducing the main plots of the original texts. Between the eleventh and seventeenth year of the Meiji period (1878-1884), word-for-word translation grew popular. The main translation style was “the style

of literal translation of Chinese writing” (Kanbun chokuyakutai), also known as “the style of reading Chinese writing in Japanese”. With the development of the literal translation method, “the style of literal translation of Western writing” (Ōbun chokuyakutai) gained popularity after the eighteenth year of the Meiji era (1885). Morita Shiken created the “detailed style” through the combination of “Chinese writing style” and “the style of literal translation of Western writing”. Futabatei Shimei went further in his use of the “the style of unification of writing and speech” (Genbun itchitai) in translation. Therefore, according to the chronological order of these styles, the “detailed style” has more syntactical elements borrowed from Western writing compared with “the style of reading Chinese writing in Japanese” but also maintains the style of Chinese writing to certain extent, which makes it less flexible and colloquial than “the style of unification of writing and speech”. As said by Yanagida Izumi, “texts in the detailed style look rather dense and awkward today” (9) because of its overreliance on Chinese writing. Hara Hōitsuan’s translation of “The Californian’s Tale,” “Mountain People’s Love” was written in the “detailed style” inherited from his teacher Morita Shiken, who was recognized as “the king of translation” in the Meiji era, also called by Yanagida Izumi as the “finisher” (428) of the detailed style.

The style of Hara Hōitsuan’s translation is grave and detailed. “Mountain People’s Love” has two obvious typical features of the detailed style: The Chinese writing style is shown in its large proportion of Chinese characters, conjunctions and the forms of its sentence endings. The writing style is detailed, with large amounts of modifiers added to exemplify the exquisite description that Yanagida calls for.

Firstly, there are large numbers of difficult Chinese characters in the translated text: 「獨棲」 (Dokusei), 「際會」 (Saikai), 「瓦破」 (Gaha), 「一舛」 (Ittai), 「挨拶」 (Aisatsu), 「颯然」 (Souzen), 「讚歎」 (Santan), 「煖爐」 (Danro), 「無寐」 (Bushitsuke), 「差支」 (Sashi), 「凝手」 (Gyoushu), 「懇親」 (Gonshin), 「筈」 (Hazu), 「豫定」 (Yotei) and 「畢變」 (Hihhen). These words are obviously inherited from Japanese traditional kanbun writing. The use of conjunction words like 「然し」 (Shikashi), 「而し」 (Shikashi), 「斯て」 (Kakute), 「然らば」 (Saraba) and 「然れども」 (Saredomo) also reveals a distinct Chinese writing style.

One important marker for the style of Japanese writing is its use of auxiliary words in the sentence endings. For kanbuntai, auxiliary words in sentence endings are very limited: tense indicators are restricted and other types of indicators are rarely used (Mizuno 5). It can be considered similar to Chinese writing in that temporal reference is attained through meaning rather than morphological changes

(Kaji 123). In writings using kanbun kundokutai style, auxiliary suffixes used to indicate the past or perfect tense are normally restricted to 「き」 (-ki), 「たり」 (-tari), 「り」 (-ri), 「けり」 (-keri), 「つ」 (-tsu), and 「ぬ」 (-nu). In “Mountain People’s Love” written in the detailed style, the categories of auxiliary words are still limited although compared with kanbun kundokutai, the use of 「し」 (shi) 「ぬ」 (nu) 「のみ」 (nomi) increases. Most sentences end with 「き」 「り」 「たり」 in a rather monotonous way.

It is intriguing that Hara Hōitsuan used the detailed style to translate a short story written in an American colloquial style. The detailed style calls for detailed writing with relatively complete or rigorous sentence structures while Mark Twain’s colloquial style has concise expression and casual speech as exemplified by the list of things in environmental descriptions. In order to fulfill the requirements of the detailed style, Hara Hōitsuan made some changes to the original text in his translation. He added modifiers to the object nouns, supplemented nouns with verbs to specify the actions and gave information about the localities or order of things to help readers to form a clearer picture of the scenes. These changes can be witnessed by a comparison of the original and translated texts of the following paragraph.

Thirty-five years ago I was out prospecting on the Stanislaus, tramping all day long with pick and pan and horn, washing a hatful of dirt here and there, always expecting to make a rich strike, and never doing it. (Twain, “The Californian’s Tale” 266)

今より三十五年前、余は鶴嘴を肩にし鐵葉鍋を腰に着け、木の根を堀り岩角を碎き、土砂の一と握を掬ひては分拆し、今にも目覚ましき金塊に探り當ることもやと欲望を燃しつゝ、カリホルニヤとオレゴンの間なる緑山の峽間、  
杣道を日又日辿り暮らしたることありき...(Twain, “Mountain People’s Love” 275)

In the original text, “pick,” “pan,” and “horn” are simply modified with one preposition “with.” By contrast, in the translated text, “put on the shoulder” (肩にし Katanishi) is added to modify “pick” (鶴嘴 Tsuruhashi) and similarly, “carry at the waist” (腰に着け Koshi ni tsuke) is added to “pan” (鐵葉鍋 Tehhanabe). While it deviates from Twain’s original, Hara Hōitsuan’s decision to include active verbs and the locations of the things makes the description more vivid.

## Mistranslation Debate and Style Consciousness

The contrast between detailed style and colloquial style indicates that Hara Hōitsuan was not conscious of the original style. In his late years, he admitted that he had failed to grasp the unique style of Mark Twain's writing. In May of 1904, he looked back on all of his translations of Mark Twain's works in the foreword of "A Strange Story on the Foot of the Rocky Mountains" (Rokkīmaunten no shita no kimyō na hanashi)<sup>2</sup>: "I read Mr. Twain's twenty-eight works and translated seven of them. However, I turned a blind eye to the real essence of his writing..." (Twain 296). This penitent tone was quite different from his attitudes in another commentary on Mark Twain about one year earlier. He said in the foreword of one translation called "Advice" (Jogen)<sup>3</sup>: "American Twain.....whose thinking is not mature enough and writing not fine enough.....has not become a major character in the literary holy ground" (Twain 128). "Advice" was published less than a year earlier than "A Strange Story on the Foot of the Rocky Mountains" and the dramatic shift in his opinions of Mark Twain's writing is more than evident. His change in opinion was a direct result of the "mistranslation debate," an important event in the translation history of Meiji era. Hara Hōitsuan was one of the chief participants in this event.

Hara Hōitsuan (1866-1904), original name was Hara Yosaburō, was a renowned translator in the Meiji era. He used the detailed style inherited from his teacher Morita Shiken to translate a large number of works of detective fiction and children's literature. His translations were popular among readers at the time. He initially gained fame through a translated novel called *Saint or Bandit* (Seijin ka tōzoku ka)<sup>4</sup> which was serialized in *Tokyo Asashi Shimbun* (Tōkyō asahi shinbun) from March 15<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup> in 1900, and which was later published as a two-volume offprint in 1903. The prologues and postscripts of the novel came from forty-seven famous writers including Yano Ryūkei and Mori Ōgai. It indicates that Hara Hōitsuan's talent for translation achieved widespread recognition from other distinguished men of letters.

However, in the same year (1903), the event which turned out to be the turning point of his career happened. It started with a letter from a critic named Yamagata

2 Translated from Mark Twain's "A Double-Barreled Detective Story", originally published in *Literary World* (Bungeikai) in December of 1904.

3 Translated from Mark Twain's "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man", originally published in the *Asahi Shimbun* on March 30<sup>th</sup> of 1903.

4 Translated from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Eugene Aram*.



Isō. As the head of the English column of *Yorozu Morning Paper* (Yorozu chōhō), Yamagata Isō was proficient in English. He wrote to Hara Hōitsuan with the following comments on Hara's translation "The Killing of Caesar" (Shizā zansatsu jiken)<sup>5</sup>: "Your grave and rigorous writing style...is not appropriate for the translation of Mark Twain's works in a humorous and free style" (Twain 241). He questioned Hara's choice of style in translation by pointing out the difference between the styles of Hara's translation and Twain's writing. Hara defended himself in his reply and then Yamagata debated with him again. Their correspondence was published in the newspaper, attracting widespread attention from the public. After several rounds of debates, the whole issue escalated into the exposure of Hara Hōitsuan's "mistranslation." Yamagata Isō accused Hara of making several mistranslations by providing his own word-for-word retranslation of "The Killing of Julius Caesar 'Localized.'" The "mistranslation debate" was a huge blow to both Hara Hōitsuan's inner confidence and external reputation. Soon his translation career and even his life came to an end. He died in a psychiatric hospital in August 1904. As said by Kawato Michiaki, the death of Hara Hōitsuan did not only mean the end of his individual literary career, but also marked the end of the literary school represented by him. It indicated that the detailed style as a unique style of translated literature had finally withered away faced with the critique from the rising forces of new translation methods and styles (351).

The "mistranslation debate" was not just a debate on the translation method (literal or free translation). It is worthy of note that this debate started from a controversy over the translator's choice of writing style. Yamagata Isō had been right to point out that Hara Hōitsuan lacked awareness of the style of the original text. In fact, he just did not care much about accurately representing the style of other authors. He chose the detailed style to cater to the tastes of readers rather than as a reflection of his judgement about an original style. At the time, the detailed style created by his teacher Morita Shiken was already very popular among readers. Hara Hōitsuan followed his teacher's lead and his translation also gained widespread popularity amongst the public and earned him enormous fame.

However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the detailed style, which was close to the style of Chinese prose writing, was faced with more and more challenges from the ongoing writing style reform. There appeared other styles of writing that were closer to speech and more appropriate for the literal translation of modern English-language literature, such as "the style of unification of writing and

5 Translated from Mark Twain's "The Killing of Julius Caesar Localized", originally published in the *Asahi Shimbun* on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1903.

speech.” When it came to Mark Twain’s colloquial style, which was the trend-setter of American literary style reform, the use of the detailed style to translate Twain’s work was literally “anachronistic.” The collision of these two notably different writing styles led to the influential “mistranslation debate,” which in turn led to further reforms of the translation methods and ideas in modern Japan.

### **Wu Tao and the New vernacular style**

Wu Tao’s translation “Adventures in the Mountains” is in new vernacular style. The “new vernacular style” has more colloquial features compared with the “classical Chinese style” (Wenyan wenti) and absorbs vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation from Western languages in comparison with “old vernacular Chinese.” The dominant writing style in modern China changed with the Vernacular Movement starting from 1917. Before 1917, most Chinese texts were written in classical Chinese, while after 1917 writings in vernacular Chinese greatly increased and took up the dominant position. The styles used in translation showed the same trend. Although the Vernacular Movement in the late Qing period played a part in the popularization of the vernacular writing style, before 1917 the main style used in translation was still the classical Chinese style. Wang-chi Wong points out that “As for the translated fiction in late Qing, although [.....] there did exist some translated fiction in the vernacular style, classical Chinese still remained the dominant writing style of translated literature. It was always the translated works in classical Chinese that got more attention and wider circulation. They even sold better” (210). Therefore, the new vernacular style used by Wu Tao in 1906 was ahead of the times considering the typical reception of the classical Chinese style. Wu Tao’s bold and innovative choice of style is also what made him a pioneering figure among all the modern Chinese translators.

In the text of “Adventures in the Mountains”, the new vernacular style has two characteristics: colloquial features and the hybridization of different cultures. The colloquial tone is shown in the frequent use of disyllabic or polysyllabic words, reduplicated words and colloquial words. The use of paragraphing, syntax, punctuation, loan words, and expressions from foreign languages shows the translator’s active attempt to embrace foreign linguistic and cultural elements and to incorporate some of them into Chinese writing.

To begin with, Wu Tao turned single character into disyllabic words and double-syllable words into four-syllable words in his translation. The expansion of syllables made the expression more explicit. For example, he translated 「盡くる」 (Tsukuru)



into “淨盡 (Jing jin)”, 「拭ふ」(Nogou) into “拂拭 (Fushi)”, 「燻らす」(Kuyurasu) into “燃吸 (Ranxi)”, 「賑はしき」(Nigihashiki) into “繁盛熱鬧”(Fansheng renao), 「閑雅」(Kanga) into “幽雅清靜 (Youya qingjing).” Although some of them are not exactly what we call “double-syllable words” in contemporary Chinese or what we commonly use today, the expansion of syllables still reveals Wu Tao’s inclination to use polysyllabic words. It is also noteworthy that most four-syllable words used by Wu Tao are not four-character set phrases with strong features of the classical Chinese but made up with simple two-syllable words.

Wu Tao also showed a preference for reduplicated words in his translation. There are words like “悠悠忽忽 (Youyou huhu),” “滔滔娓娓 (Taotao weiwei),” “殷殷勤勤 (Yinyin qinqin),” “欣欣歡喜 (Xinxin huanxi)” in the text. These words add some rhythm and rhyme to the text, similar to the aforementioned repetition of suffix in Mark Twain’s writing. Again, they are simple rhymes found in daily speech rather than features of poetic language.

Wu Tao’s translation also has obvious colloquial features shown in the frequent use of casual words, syntax and modal particles. The colloquial style can be seen clearly from words like “好一箇,” “想是,” “遇着我,” “大大,” “好一会,” “眞眞,” “今兒,” “九下鐘,” “末了.” Colloquial syntax is used in some sentences which depict the psychological status of characters and convey strong emotions because colloquial expressions tend to convey one’s emotions in a freer way than formal written languages. For instance, in the sentence “我聽了不禁失了大望” (Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 3), “失了大望” is typical of daily speech and shows the narrator’s disappointment after knowing that the hostess will not come home soon. Similarly, the sentence “可是大大的遺憾了” (Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 3) also intensifies disappointed feelings through the use of colloquial syntax.

The frequent use of modal particles is also an indicator of the colloquial style. There are words including: 喔喔, 哈, 哦哦, 噢噢, 咧, 咦, 喳, 啊, 啊啊, 麼, 嗎. Some of them are translated from Japanese words with similar sounds. Interrogative auxiliary words 麼, 呢, 啊, 嗎 are translated from 「や」(Ya), 「歟」, 哦哦、噢噢 from 「オ」(O), 啊 from 「よ」(Yo), 啊 and 啊啊 from 「ア」(A). The rest of them were added by Wu Tao. Usually when modal particles are added, they are intended to intensify the emotions that are being described. As shown in the following example, from the modal particles “咦 (Yi)” and “呢 (Ne)” in the translated sentence, we can feel the secret rejoicing and anticipation in the tone of the narrator more directly compared with the original sentence:

此語美なる渠女自身の口より出んには、更に一層吾耳に快かりしならん。

(Twain, “Mountain People’s Love” 277)

咦這話若是出自那女子自己口裏豈不是更叫我快樂萬千呢。(Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 3)

Another important feature of the new vernacular style is that it absorbs foreign words, syntax, paragraphing and punctuation. Wu Tao transliterated all the proper nouns in the original text. Originally, these words were transliterated from English into Japanese. Later these names of people, places or brands were again translated into Chinese like “嘉利福尼亞 (Jialifuniya, California),” “奧列貢 (Aoliegong, Oregon),” “布流曼騰山(Buliumantengshan, Blue Mountains),” “阿加希斯樹 (Ajiaxisishu, Agassiz Tree),” “威斯機酒 (Weishijijiu, Whiskey),” “杜姆,” “約翰 (Yuehan, John)”.

As for the syntax, most sentences in Wu Tao’s translation have the “Subject-Verb-Object” structure which is the basic sentence structure in English writing. By contrast, the original text, Hara Hōitsuan’s “Mountain People’s Love” is closer to classical Chinese writing with a considerable number of sentences without subjects. Wu Tao added subjects to these sentences in translation, revealing the influence of Western languages.

Traditional Chinese writing has no paragraphs, so Wu Tao’s decision to retain most of the original paragraphing from “Mountain People’s Love” is another example of how translating foreign-language literature contributed to the modernization of Chinese writing.

Similarly, Wu Tao’s innovative spirits were revealed in his use of punctuation. While punctuation was extremely limited in traditional Chinese writing, Wu Tao absorbed several types of punctuation from the Japanese texts in his translation and it is indicated that he could already employ them rather freely. In the text of “Adventures in the Mountains,” four kinds of punctuations are used: “——” “!” “.....”(has not been regulated to be six points) “『』”. “——” and “!” are left in their original positions in the translated text. “『』” takes the place of “『』” used to quote the contents of the letter. Taking the example of ellipsis, we can see that Wu Tao was able to freely use this punctuation. In “Mountain People’s Love”, there is only one ellipsis: 『吾親愛なる....』 (Twain 278). However, Wu Tao used it for four times in his translation. The original ellipsis was retained, and three more were added, with different functions. The three ellipses and their functions can be seen in the following examples:

然らば御身は渠女を——オ、余はあまり語り過ぎてはならず、(Twain,

“Mountain People’s Love” 276)

但則閣下可……女子——噢噢非是我言語太誇 (Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 2)

In the original text, there is no ellipsis and the dash indicates a shift of topic. However, an ellipsis is added in the translated text. It is possible that Wu Tao saw the sentence before the dash as incomplete with something omitted, so he added an ellipsis to indicate the omission. He also retained the positions of the subject and object in the original sentence and put the ellipsis in the place of the verb between them.

御身、渠女の歸るを待て」

余「御身の妻は只今に居らぬにや、(Twain, “Mountain People’s Love” 277)

閣下且待拙妻回來然後……我答道。尊妻如今不在家麼。(Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 2)

Originally, the sentence ends with “待て,” which indicates the imperative mood. Wu Tao mistook the function of “て” and saw this word as a conjunction. He also took the end of the sentence as an interruption of the host’s speech from another speaker. Therefore, he used an ellipsis to indicate the interruption.

杜牟「御身に差支へなくば」

主人は大事そうに内懷より一通の書狀を取出し、(Twain, “Mountain People’s Love” 278)

只聽他應道。你老既不錯誤那……主人不等說完連忙打懷裏取出一封書信來(Twain, “Adventures in the Mountains” 3)

The ellipsis used here once again indicates the interruption of one’s speech. However, its use also reveals Wu Tao’s misunderstanding of the original text. Tom’s sentence is not complete because Japanese people tend to express their requests in a euphemistic way by omitting the requests when their meaning is clear to other people. Here an ellipsis can be added to indicate the omission. However, Wu Tao added “不等說完” after the ellipsis, which means that he intended to use it to show the interruption of words. In addition, Wu Tao mistranslated a word. The meaning of 「差支へなく」 was mistaken. Wu Tao mistranslated it into “不錯誤” while the right translation should be “不介意”.

Although sometimes Wu Tao misunderstood the original text, the four ellipses and their different functions in the text reveal his mastery of the use of this punctuation. The introduction of modern punctuation from foreign languages into Chinese writing is one important characteristic of the new vernacular style.

### **Relay Translation through Japanese and Chinese Style Reform**

Wu Tao's translation was based on Hara Hōitsuan's "Mountain People's Love" in the detailed style, but he chose to use the new vernacular style. His choice was closer to the colloquial style of Mark Twain's original text. Could it have been possible that Wu Tao knew about the style of Mark Twain's writing in advance so that he attempted to represent the colloquial style in his translation? Not really; in view of Wu Tao's translation experiences and the reception history of Mark Twain in China, it was impossible for Wu Tao to grasp Mark Twain's writing style before his translation.

Wu Tao might not have been a very productive translator in modern Chinese translation history, but the diversity of his translations was absolutely remarkable. Here diversity means that he translated works by multiple writers from different countries. During the years between 1903 and 1913, Wu translated twenty-four works of fiction by different writers from seven countries including Germany, England, America, Japan, Russia, Poland and France (Cui 92). Except for works written in Japanese, which were direct translations, he translated all of the fiction written in other languages indirectly through their Japanese translations. Therefore, all of Wu Tao's translations were based on Japanese texts. This indicates that he only knew Japanese and he was incapable of reading Mark Twain's original text, let alone grasping his writing style. According to the catalogue by Tarumoto Teruo, "Adventures in the Mountains" was the only work of Mark Twain translated by Wu Tao, again showing that his contact with Mark Twain's writing was limited. In addition, Mark Twain was only introduced to Chinese readers after 1905 when Yan Tong introduced Mark Twain in a detailed way in the afterword of his translation of Mark Twain's "the Czar's Soliloquy" — "the Czar's Soliloquy" (E'huang duyū). In this passage, Yan Tong transcribed Mark Twain as "马可曲恒 (Makequheng)". However, Wu Tao transcribed the name as "马克多槐 (Makeduohuai)," different from Yan Tong's transcription. This fact rules out the possibility that Wu Tao knew about Mark Twain's writing style through Yan Tong's introduction. Therefore, it can be concluded that Wu Tao's decision to translate Mark Twain's colloquial style into the new vernacular style was merely a coincidence. Wu Tao could only read Hara

Hōitsuan's translated text in the detailed style and his choice of style was contrary to Hara's. This hints at the fact that, similar to Hara Hōitsuan, Wu Tao also lacked a conscious understanding of the original style, and that he chose the new vernacular style for other purposes.

As mentioned before, Wu Tao's choice of style was ahead of its time. His choice of the new vernacular style could be explained to be due to his radical ideas and his intention to enlighten the masses. Although there remains much uncertainty about Wu Tao's biographical information, the limited historical records show that he was a versatile man of letters. He was not only a translator, but also a calligrapher, a textbook editor and a teacher. Apart from working at the Commercial Press as a translator, he also taught in a modern school called "Patriotic School (Aiguo xueshe)". According to the memories of Jiang Weiqiao,

At the time, Cai Jiemin established the Patriotic School. Zhang consulted with Cai as his good friend. Cai put forward the suggestion: Since translation seemed useless, what about abandoning it and compiling primary school textbooks instead? ...Cai thus selected several teachers to compile textbooks of Chinese, History, Geography and other subjects. Yu was responsible for the Chinese textbooks, Wu Danchu was for History and the original editor Yao was for Geography. (396)

"Danchu" was the style name of Wu Tao. Since Wu Tao was a teacher of the modern school—Patriotic School which advocated patriotism, democracy and revolution, it was highly possible that Wu Tao personally believed in values which could be called radical at the time. Revolution could not succeed without the support from the masses. To mobilize them, enlightenment was a necessary task for intellectuals like Wu Tao. Whether as a teacher or a translator, Wu Tao shouldered the responsibility of enlightening the masses. Vernacular writing was a good tool for enlightenment, which explained for Wu Tao's choice of the new vernacular style in translation. According to the foreword of the magazine *Tapestry Portrait Novel* in which "Adventures in the Mountains" was published, the purpose of translating foreign fiction was to enlighten all the ignorant people. Wu Tao's new vernacular style in translation served the same purpose.

With innovative spirit and the responsibility of enlightening the masses in mind, Wu Tao translated all foreign texts through "word-for-word translation" (Zhuzi yi) in order to push Chinese writing style reform forward by absorbing foreign linguistic elements. Although Wu Tao failed to represent the original style

in his translation, his new vernacular style formed by the literal translation of the detailed style was already a modern style compared with classical Chinese or old vernacular Chinese, setting the trend for the literary style reform in modern China. The new vernacular style directly absorbed some Japanese language features from the detailed style and indirectly absorbed elements of Western syntax found in the Japanese text.

Thus a literal translation of a rather conservative Japanese writing style could help to form a new style in modern China. Considering the prevalence of relay translation through Japanese in modern China, its influence on Chinese style reform should not be underestimated. During the late Qing and early republican period, relay translation through Japanese was common among Chinese translators because of the limited number of translators proficient in other foreign languages. At the time Japan was an important destination for Chinese students to study abroad. The relatively close relationship between Japanese language and Chinese language also made it easier for Chinese to learn Japanese. Thus the Japanese language became a useful intermediary for Chinese people to learn about European-American literatures and cultures. Japanese also played an important part in the Europeanization of Chinese language by serving as an intermediary in the relay translation. However, this phenomenon has not received enough scholarly attention, as stated by Chen Liwei who calls for further exploration of Japanese's role in Chinese language reform:

As for what we call “Europeanization” (of the Chinese language), how much of it directly came from the influence of English language? How much from the relay translation through Japanese? How much in fact directly from Japanese language? Each of these three channels of Europeanization should be clarified. Especially the latter two channels, should have caught our attention earlier. (43)

Relay translation through Japanese contributed to the new vernacular style's absorption of Western and Japanese linguistic elements. One premise for this phenomenon is that Japanese style reform was earlier than that in modern China so that Japanese language was Europeanized first. However, it is noteworthy that this phenomenon also has profound historical roots in the intimate interaction between Chinese and Japanese languages that can be traced back to ancient times. Chinese characters used to be the *lingua franca* in East Asia. Although Japanese was reformed earlier and the influence of Chinese writing upon it was largely



reduced with the Europeanization, the common use of Chinese characters by these two languages is what made possible the popularity of relay translations through Japanese in modern China.

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# The Cross-cultural Translation of Maugham's British Play in Hong Kong in the 1950s: A Study of the Translation of *The Sacred Flame* into *Xin Yan*

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## Abstract:

William Somerset Maugham's 1928 play *The Sacred Flame* was translated and adapted into the Chinese play *Xin Yan* staged in Hong Kong in the 1950s. In this article, I examine how this British play was turned into cultural resources for Chinese intellectuals and dramatists to fight against feudalism rooted in China and Hong Kong. At the same time, I also discuss how "female sexuality" is shown in both the original and the adapted texts. In the first part of this article, I lay out the personal story of Maugham to examine how his life experiences shaped the theme of his work. Though *The Sacred Flame* is easily recognized as an example of melodrama, its main theme goes far beyond the typical plots of romance and marriage. In fact, it could be regarded as a subtle gay/queer text where Maugham poses a challenge to traditional family structure and heterosexual marriage. In the second part, through examining the Chinese translation of *The Sacred Flame*, I emphasize how the play was localized by making modifications to suit the Chinese context and finally performed as *Xin Yan* by The Chinese Drama Group of the Sino-British Club of Hong Kong in the 1950s.

**Keywords:** William Somerset Maugham, *The Sacred Flame*, *Xin Yan*, the Sino-British Club of Hong Kong, cross-cultural translation

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## **The Cross-Cultural Translation of Maugham's British Play in Hong Kong in the 1950s: a Study of the Translation of *The Sacred Flame* into *Xin Yan***

William Somerset Maugham (毛姆1874-1965) was a renowned British novelist and scriptwriter and his playscript titled *The Sacred Flame* was written in 1928. According to the Chinese translator Fang Yu (方于1903-2002) who translated the French version of *The Sacred Flame* (*Le Cyclone*) into Chinese *Wuning Si* (毋寧死) in the 1930s, the play has been staged more than a thousand times in London and New York. Since becoming a big success in English-speaking countries, it has also been translated and widely performed in Germany and France. It was still very popular there and was highly praised in the drama fields of all countries. It got complimentary remarks for its fresh subject matter, as well as its witty storyline. Audience tended to be excited by the mysterious plots from the beginning to the end. (Fang 1) Yet, it has never been valued by scholars and in-depth research on this particular play has been under-researched. Therefore, this research paper focuses on the scholarly underestimated *The Sacred Flame* and I would like to discuss how it was translated and adapted into the Chinese play *Xin Yan* (心燄) that was staged in Hong Kong in the 1950s.

I position my research in the field of translation studies. According to Susan Bassnett, it is “a discipline that demands both close reading and broad cultural and historical knowledge, based as it is upon the premise that all texts are created in one context and are read in another. The figure of the translator, once seen as a marginal second-class writer has been revised so that the translator is seen as a (re)writer, as a creative artist in his or her own right. After all, it is the translator who acts as the voice of the original writer when that writer’s work is transposed into another language.” (Bassnett 2) While referring to the general practice in translation studies as mentioned, I will do a textual analysis of both the original text and the translated and modified versions in this paper. As the texts have been circulated in different countries at different period, I would like to investigate the cross-cultural interaction between these texts. Apart from giving an overview of the background and context of the original play, I discuss how the text has been creatively reinterpreted, modified and used by different scriptwriters and dramatists. Specifically, this paper focuses on addressing how an originally British play could be turned into cultural resources for Chinese intellectuals and dramatists to fight against feudalism rooted in China and Hong Kong. At the same time, I also discussed how female sexuality is shown in both the original and the modified texts. In the first part of this paper, I lay out the personal story of Maugham to examine how his life experiences shaped the theme of his work. Though *The Sacred Flame* was easily recognized

as an example of melodrama, its main theme went far beyond the typical plots of “romance and marriage”. In fact, it could be regarded as a subtle gay/queer text where Maugham poses a challenge to traditional family structure and heterosexual marriage.<sup>1</sup> In the second part, through examining the Chinese translation of *The Sacred Flame*, I examine how the play was localized with modifications that suit the Chinese context through the case study of *Xin Yan*, the translated and modified version performed by The Chinese Drama Group of the Sino-British Club of Hong Kong (香港中英學會中文戲劇組, hereinafter referred to as “Chinese Drama Group”) in the 1950s.

## **Part 1) Queering the British Play in the 1920s: Maugham and *The Sacred Flame***

### **Maugham’s Personal Experience of Love and Marriage**

In *Straight Acting: Popular Gay Drama from Wilde to Rattigan*, the British scholar Sean O’Connor (1968-) began his discussion of Maugham’s works by using an illustration published in the British satirical magazine *Punch* in June 1908. (O’Connor 60) This image undoubtedly serves as a starting point for us to understand Maugham’s achievement. The illustrator presented the “ghost” of the British playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616) as the main character and placed him in the West End of London in June 1908. Four advertisements of upcoming performances are hanged on the wall behind him, all written by Maugham, including *Lady Frederick* (1907), *The Explorer* (1908), *Mrs. Dot* (1908) and *Jack Straw* (1908). Shakespeare, the dramatist of many generations before Maugham, appears jealous and uncomfortable in the scene when four of Maugham’s plays are staged at the same time. Bringing people from different generations together and associating Shakespeare with Maugham was simply an imaginative way to demonstrate Maugham’s achievement at the age of 34. However, regardless of the aesthetic quality of the plays as it is still debated among drama critics, we must at least recognize that Maugham’s play has gained wide popularity in Britain in the early 20th century.

Apart from gaining traction as a scriptwriter, Maugham’s involvement in a marriage dispute also caught much public attention. As early as 1913, Maugham

1 My PhD supervisors Prof. Lee Ou Fan and Prof. Cheung Lik Kwan met me on January 20, 2020. At the meeting, Prof. Lee pointed out that Maugham’s gay identity and his travel experiences with a male partner had significant influence on the content of his created works. This inspired me to come up with the argument of *The Sacred Flame* as a subtle gay/queer text in this paper. Special thanks should be given to both teachers.



had an affair with a married woman named Syrie Barnard / Wellcome (1879-1955). Syrie's husband Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853-1936) filed a formal divorce lawsuit in 1916 after discovering that Syrie was pregnant with Maugham's child. Maugham was then cited as the co-respondent in this "very ugly and very public divorce" and was forced by the Court to marry Syrie in 1917. (O'Connor 64-65) Though Maugham had a relationship with Syrie, he developed same-sex relationships with men from time to time and was explicitly close to Frederick Gerald Haxton (1892-1944). The Chinese scholar Qin Hong (秦宏1978-) pointed out that Maugham had already participated actively in gay organizations in London and New York in his college years. However, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), the renowned scriptwriter and role model of Maugham was imprisoned for his homosexual behavior in 1895 and the case led the British government to tighten controls on homosexuality. Maugham was even warned by police to behave properly and he did not openly disclose his sexuality anymore. Therefore, the heterosexual marriage he engaged in could be a cover for his homosexuality. After marrying Syrie, he traveled frequently with Haxton to avoid seeing his wife and even lived overseas for a couple of years. Maugham and Haxton's footprints reached the United States, Tahiti, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and their relationship lasted until Haxton's death in 1944. (Qin 87) Another scholar O'Connor also claimed that Maugham, Syrie and Haxton had an unhappy triangular relationship and Maugham's trips all over the world were just an attempt to avoid his tenacious wife. Maugham and Syrie's unpleasant marriage lasted for ten years and they eventually divorced in 1927. (O'Connor 65)

### **The Representation of Triangular Love and Unhappy Marriage in *The Sacred Flame***

The British critic John Randolph Whitehead (1924-1999) suggested that "marital infidelity and adultery" have always been Maugham's favorite themes in his works. (Whitehead 5) Maugham saw heterosexual marriage negatively and he once bluntly stated in an interview,

"A marriage, at best, is the most abnormal of relationships between man and woman. I refuse to believe that it was ever intended for man and woman to be bound together by a legal contract under one roof. It constitutes an invasion of privacy, an encroachment on individuality, the shattering of peace-of-mind, the interruption of independent thought and action, and the engulfment of an innocent human being in a bog of boredom." (Menard

He claimed himself as a “three-quarters queer” and said: “I tried to persuade myself that I was three-quarters normal and that only a quarter of me was queer—whereas really it was the other way round.” He also said to his openly gay nephew Robin Maugham (1916-1981), “there’s no point in trying to change your essential nature.” (R. Maugham 201) Heterosexual writers could write gay stories and the sexual orientation of a writer is not necessarily related to the content of his creations. However, if we take Maugham’s sexual identity into account, we can interpret the triangular love story of two men and one woman in *The Sacred Flame* as a representation of the writer’s personal experiences. Published in 1928, it was indeed Maugham’s first play written in the year after he got himself out of the unpleasant marriage. While Maugham’s plays have always been known for their comedic quality, this was the first that foregrounds moral and important social issues besides focusing on entertaining audience. (Whitehead 9)

### The Storyline of *The Sacred Flame*

In this first part of my paper, I would like to discuss the representation of female sexuality in *The Sacred Flame* and how the story could overthrow our deep-rooted traditional marriage and family values. The overall structure of this three-act play is in line with the “classical unities (三一律)” of Western traditional dramas. The story took place within 24 hours in the Gatley House near London. The first act is set at night, the second act in the next morning and the third act depicts what happens half an hour after the second act. The play has four male and four female characters including Mrs. Tabret, Maurice Tabret, Colin Tabret, Stella Tabret, Dr. Harvester, Nurse Wayland, Major Liconda, and Alice. The widow Mrs. Tabret has two sons, the eldest son Maurice and the second son Colin. Maurice is married to Stella, while Colin is single. (See Figure 1) Major Liconda is a close friend of the Tabret’s family. Dr. Harvester and Nurse Wayland are respectively Maurice’s attending doctor and caregiver, and Alice is the family maid.

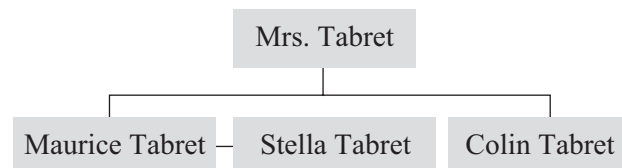


Figure 1

Maurice, a pilot in the air force, was injured in an accident the following year

after his marriage with Stella. The accident left him paralyzed from the waist down, making him permanently disabled and having to spend the rest of his life on a wheelchair. His younger brother Colin left home to run a coffee plantation in Central America a few years ago and he did not manage to meet his sister-in-law Stella before he left. Four years after the accident, Colin went home to visit his family and stayed there for almost a year. At the beginning of the first act, Colin and Stella just returned home from a date to the theater. They watched the romance opera *Tristan and Isolde* (1865) by Wilhelm Richard Wagner (1813-1883) upon Maurice's recommendation. Though it is a tragic love story, Maurice and Stella watched it before they got engaged and this is why Maurice wanted his wife to remember some past sweet moments through watching the same show. After Maurice has fallen asleep, Stella meets Colin in private and they show strong affection toward each other.

The second act is set in the next morning. Maurice died of a drug overdose and Nurse Wayland was suspicious of the cause. She insists that he could not reach the medicine bottle due to his disability and he was probably drugged by someone in the house. Stella is suspected because she is pregnant with someone's child. As Maurice lost his sexual capacity after the accident and was infertile, he could not have been the father. Wayland believes that Stella had an affair and killed Maurice for the sake of her new lover. Half an hour later, in the third act, Stella confesses that she is pregnant with Colin's child and declares that they are in love, but Maurice's death had nothing to do with her. Mrs. Tabret suddenly explains to everyone that Stella is not the murderer, and she herself is the one who killed her son. She knows about the affair committed by Colin and Stella. Also, she has noticed that Stella is pregnant, and Colin would like to take her away. To save Maurice from suffering from the predictable loss of his beloved wife, as well as to support the forbidden love between Colin and Stella, Mrs. Tabret therefore drugged Maurice with an excessive dose of sleeping pills to end his life. Everyone is appalled by Mrs. Tabret's decision to perform such an act of "mercy killing" of his own son, but none insists to report it to the police. They agree to lie together, claiming that Maurice drugged himself. Nurse Wayland even promises to make up a story on leaving the medicine bottle for Maurice by mistake. In other words, Maurice's death would change from a case of "murder" to a case of "suicide". (W. Maugham 223-319) "Mercy killing" is undoubtedly the main theme of *The Sacred Flame*, at the same time, it deals with the struggle and tension between love and sexual desire of a married woman. If we regard it as a text with subtle gayness and queerness, Maugham's intention to depict the tragedy and misfortune of traditional marriage and family structures was a

challenge to the hegemonic position of compulsory heterosexuality.

### **The Frustrated Heterosexual Marriage and the Engagement of Forbidden Love**

Throughout the play, Maugham put a sturdy effort to deliberate on the representation of female sexuality and there is an excessive display of intimacy. For example, while Maurice and Stella are alone in the first act, the stage instructions demand Stella give Maurice “a long, loving kiss” directly on the lips. In return, Maurice puts his arm around Stella’s neck. (W. Maugham 239) The intimacy scenes have repeatedly appeared and created a romantic atmosphere between Maurice and Stella. They are a happy couple despite Maurice being a disabled character and in a condition that is no different from a castrated man. Stella even openly calls Maurice her “husband only in name” after the accident to indicate they no longer have sex life. (W. Maugham 292) Maurice also feels sorry for not having a child with Stella and believes she would have the feeling of wasting her entire life without fulfilling women’s destiny of becoming a mother. (W. Maugham 247) A queer perspective would perhaps shed light on their sexless and childless relationship. According to Qin Hong’s research, stories on heterosexual marriage generally end happily with the presence of children, but gay dramas often resist this normative gender order by not including the theme of reproduction and child characters. She studied Wilde and Maugham and concluded that even though the subject matters of their comedies are based on marriage and family, they seldom wrote about children. This setting can be regarded as one of the criteria that proves the scriptwriters’ homosexuality. (Qin 87) Other scholars have also studied queer life and childhood. Sara Amed in “Happy Futures, Perhaps” stated that children in traditional heterosexual family are normally regarded as an essential element that makes a couple happy. Therefore, a queer life with no children is constructed as no real family life and the absence of children became the main cause of unhappiness. (Amed 165) Lee Edelman in *No Future* criticizes the excessive images of children in social and political campaigns. Children are often depicted as innocent and should be protected to maintain a better human future. As opposed to this logic of “reproductive futurism”, queerness can be radically associated with a negative force and offered an alternative way to fight against the normalization of linkage between children and future. (Edelman 3-6)

While the absence of children can be seen as an indicator of queerness in *The Sacred Flame*, I suggested the depiction of forbidden love is also a highlight. Huang Yonghua (黃永華), the translator of Maugham’s novel *The Painted Veil* (1924), highly commended Maugham’s exclusive writing style that foregrounds

personal feelings in his works. He explicitly pointed out that Maugham never wrote about people and things that he was not familiar with. After the ten-year torturous marriage, Maugham had finally developed a life-long hatred for his wife. Apart from that, the profound impact is the absent of “touching love and happy marriage” in his works. (Huang 2-3) Back to discussing the plots in *The Sacred Flame*, Stella and Colin claim to love each other deeply. Whether we should consider their relationship as a “touching love” as mentioned by Huang is debatable, but there is definitely no “happy marriage” in the play. Stella’s biggest misfortune in her marriage is her frustrated sex life and the fact that she is unable to get sexual satisfaction from her husband in name. Resonating with the plot, Maugham was also trapped in a triangular relationship. During his traveling years with his gay partner, it was obviously impossible for him to have physical contact with his wife and satisfy her sexual desire. At the same time, he probably did not find it necessary to receive sexual pleasure from her.

### **Female Sexuality that Transgresses Social Norms**

According to the plot, Nurse Wayland has a one-sided love for Maurice. Therefore, she is very shunned for Stella’s affair with Colin. When she learns that Mrs. Tabret has approved their relationship, she is shocked and disappointed. On the contrary, Mrs. Tabret is always calm and peaceful. She says to Wayland in a caring tone that sexual instinct is as normal as hunger and the desire to sleep. A young and healthy woman like Stella deserves to be satisfied sexually. After Maurice’s accident, she comes to terms with the fact that he and Stella would no longer have a normal (sex) life like normal couples, hence, they are only trapped in a “false relationship” that should not be supported. She emphasizes that passionate love between a husband and wife anchored in sex and morality should not be imposed on individuals. Therefore, Stella and Colin should not be blamed because they are simply driven by basic human instincts. Given Mrs. Tabret’s is a decent and noble woman of high social standing, her advice to her daughter-in-law is quite unconventional. In fact, she even publicly admits that she fell madly in love with Major Liconda while married with two children when she was young. Since she had a similar experience as that of Stella and Colin, she understands their current situation and is especially considerate about their emotional predicament. Now recalling with regrets for her decision to restrain personal emotions and maintain loyalty to her family, she thinks Stella and Colin are more courageous than her to pursue love and their behavior is understandable and forgivable. (W. Maugham 249-303) Apart from Stella’s misfortune, Mrs. Tabret’s love for Major Liconda also



demonstrates that there is no such thing as a happy marriage. In the play, the only way for the heterosexual couple to fulfill their sexual desire is to leave unpleasant marriages and engage in forbidden relationships.

### **Going beyond Heterosexual Marriage**

Maugham's ironic view on the so-called happy heterosexual marriage and family in *The Sacred Flame* serves as a foundation of the queerness and gayness in his text. The difficulties to abide by social norms for same-sex couples are similar to those of the heterosexual characters in the play. O'Connor, a scholar who specializes in gay drama, stated that many Western gay playwrights tried to represent the tensions and ambiguities of homosexual desire through heterosexual relationship as they are unable to examine homosexuality directly. Take Noël Coward (1899-1973)'s *Private Lives* (1930), Terence Rattigan (1911-1977)'s *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) and Maugham's other play *The Constant wife* (1926) as examples, the married heterosexual couples in their stories all end up committing adultery. "The relationship between men and women is exposed as extraordinarily fragile. The ideal heterosexual love for which people die or kill, so relentlessly depicted in art and literature, is challenged. Romantic love is exposed as the stuff of fantasy or delusion." (O'Connor 21-22) Generally speaking, treating drama characters directly as the identification of the author is a superficial and narrow reading. O'Connor agreed that this interpretation devalues the imaginative and artistic achievement of the scriptwriters because they are supposed to have the ability to distance themselves from the characters. Having said that, some gay writers tend to identify with the female characters as it is impossible for them to publicly express their homosexuality. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) identified himself with the middle-age lady Blanche DuBois who has a rather complicated background. She not only engages in a marriage with a gay man and is in love with an underage student but also previously works as a prostitute. The most important thing is that she has a strong desire for young and sexually attractive male characters. According to Williams, he would like to "have men like Blanche does". (O'Connor 23)

For Maugham, he can be identified with Stella who is trapped in a triangular relationship and unfortunate marriage, unable to obtain sexual fulfillment from the married partner, and has finally developed a relationship with another male character. While Stella's affair with her brother-in-law is acceptable as she is simply following her essential nature, Maugham's decision to stay with Haxton instead of Syrie should not be criticized. His view on sexuality is reflected in the character:



One should fight for their sexual satisfaction and his or her sexual desire should not be suppressed in the name of morality. In general, Maugham displays a sympathetic treatment toward the female characters in this text. To understand his tendency, the context and the social atmosphere of his times should be considered. Feminism and the suffrage movement began to proliferate in the early twentieth century and there was an increase in public awareness of women's rights, especially concerning the rights to marriage, divorce, and own properties. Women started to question the once inviolable authority of their husbands and challenged patriarchal society. Their agendas were then developed and linked to the gay movement. All the oppressed groups, both women and gay men finally came together to fight for social change. (O'Connor 25) Therefore, Maugham made use of the figure of the suffering women to highlight the struggle faced by individuals who long for personal freedom. Specifically, he paid great attention to female sexuality as this could best reflect the social and moral norms imposed on individuals because of their gender. Taking all the above complex factors into account, it is reasonable for us to examine *The Sacred Flame* from a queer perspective. Given that this play has been translated and introduced to the Chinese-speaking community, it is worthwhile to consider how the queerness and gayness of the original text have been consumed and transformed.

## **Part 2) Localizing a British Play in the 1950s: The Sino-British Club Chinese Drama Group and *Xin Yan***

### **The Translation and Performance of *The Sacred Flame* in Mainland China**

Chinese translator Fang Yu translated the French version of *The Sacred Flame* (*Le Cyclone*) into Chinese in 1933. The first and second acts can be found in volume 3, issue 11 of the journal *Wenyi yuekan* (*Literary Monthly* 文藝月刊) (May 1933) and the third act in issue 12 (June 1933). In July 1934, the complete play was published by Nanjing Zhengzhong Bookstore (南京正中書局). It was the first publication of Maugham's works in China in a book form. Fang Yu adopted the method of direct translation (文本直譯) and did not make any changes to the character settings and plots of the original text. The only slight modification she made was to take out some dialogues that had to do with female sexuality and sexual desire. For example, the episode where Mrs. Tabret describes Stella to Nurse Wayland as "young, healthy and normal" and comments that sexual instinct is a basic need as normal as our desires to eat and sleep. (W. Maugham 294) In Fang Yu's translation, she simply wrote "Shi dila nianji you qing, tige you zhuang, ta de rouyu bi lizhi qiang,

zhe shi wo dongde de (史狄臘年紀又輕，體格又壯，他的肉慾比理智強，這是我懂得的Stella is young and physically strong, her sexual desire is stronger than her reasoning, which I understand.)”. (Fang 97) Moreover, in the original text, Nurse Wayland argues against Mrs. Tabret’s view and criticizes that “the modern world is obsessed by sex”. She says people can survive without having sexual satisfaction but not without food and sleep. (W. Maugham 294-295) The above dialogues cannot be found in Fang Yu’s translation. It is difficult to verify her reason to remove them. However, at least she was capable to keep Maugham’s idea of depicting a female character with sexual instinct rather than simply dismissing it.

In the 1930s and 1940s, while Chinese audience could read *The Sacred Flame* in Chinese, they came to know about this play through stage performances. A drama critic named Long Ling (龍靈) once recalled his experience watching dramas in the Mainland China. He mentioned that he had watched the performance of Weiming Jushe (未名劇社) in Guangzhou around 1936. The play was called *Shensheng de Mure* (神聖的母熱*The Sacred Mother Love*) instead of *The Sacred Flame*. Performers included Tan Guoshi (譚國始), Huang Huifen (黃惠芬), and Lei Haoran (雷浩然). Later in the 1940s, Long also watched different drama groups performing the same play under the name *Shengsi Lian* (生死戀*Love Affairs*). Although it is difficult to trace performance information of the relevant troupes, we can still understand them through rare stage images published in old journals and magazines.

Take the Shanghai Spring Performances Showcase (上海春季聯合公演) held by Shanghai drama troupes in 1937 as an example, the Sishi niandai Jushe (四十年代劇社Forties Theatre Drama Club) performed *Shengsi Lian* from March 30 to April 3, with Sun Shiyi (孫師毅) as the director. The actors included Wang Ying (王瑩), Jin Shan (金山), Liu Qiong (劉瓊), Lan Lan (藍蘭), He Wei (何為) and Zong You (宗由). As shown in the styling photos of the main characters and the stage images published in *Lianhua huabao* (聯華畫報), some of them wore wigs and were dressed in Western clothes. It is obvious that the troupe adhered to the British setting of the original text and did not make any changes to adapt it to the local contexts. Fudan Jushe (Fudan Drama Club復旦劇社) used Fang Yu’s translation and performed the play in 1939. Directed by Wu Minzhi (吳仞之), the play was also staged in a Western setting. The troupe shared the same intention with Sishi niandai Jushe to keep the original Western background.

## From an Unfortunate Marriage to Anti-feudalism

Maugham’s work entered China before 1949, but he was not well known by the

general public as much as in his home country. According to Qin Hong, there has been no complete and systematic translation of his works in China. She believed that Chinese translators in the early twentieth century were not interested in his works because readers tended to accept works solely according to Chinese cultural traditions, thinking patterns, and practical needs. (Qin 6) At that time, China was frequently at war and the entire country was often in a state of chaos. Chinese intellectuals who usually worked as translators of Western literary works were picky on the subject matters. In their point of view, Chinese people were already busy dealing with national crises and what they needed were some compelling, powerful and revolutionary works that could help develop their country into a better living place. Therefore, works foregrounded by important political and social issues were always favored. For example, *A Doll's House* (玩偶之家1879) written by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (易卜生1828-1906) was introduced to China during the May Fourth period. The run-away female character Nora (娜拉) in the play can be associated with the awakening of women's consciousness and be read as a symbol of individual freedom. Moreover, the play was interpreted as a challenge to the deep-rooted "fengjian (封建)" social ideology as it calls for a normative family order being restructured by weakening the power of the father or husband over women and children.

We cannot say Maugham completely avoided revolutionary subject matters because *The Sacred Flame* does discuss the moral and social issue of mercy killing and present an unconventional view on female sexuality. Nevertheless, Maugham did show less interest in handling political and social topics in great depth as he was most interested in writing about the ways in which individuals struggle in their marriage and family life. Even if that was not Maugham's intention, *The Sacred Flame* was frequently introduced as an "anti-feudalism drama (反封建道德戲)" by Chinese translators and readers in the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, any other non-revolutionary subject matters in his plays were not mentioned. When the Fudan Jushe published its upcoming performance schedule in newspapers in 1939, both *The Sacred Flame* and *A Doll's House* were listed under the "country-rescuing drama campaign (救難演戲運動)". Same as *A Doll's House*, *The Sacred Flame* was interpreted as having similar concerns of individual freedom and served as a form of powerful resistance to the traditional Chinese family order. Thus, it fitted perfectly in the trend of anti-feudalism in China. In other words, its awareness of problematic heterosexual love and marriage was modified and revised to fit into Chinese culture.

## Bringing *The Sacred Flame* to Hong Kong and the Establishment of the “Chinese Drama Group”

There was no translation of Maugham’s works in mainland China between 1949 and 1978. (Qin 6) However, his plays appeared on the Hong Kong stage. In the 1950s, dramatists from South China came to Hong Kong under the name of the Chinese Drama Group. They actively participated in drama events in this British colony and adapted *The Sacred Flame* as the Chinese drama *Xin Yan* (心燄 *Flame of Heart*), which was performed three times on 29, 30, and 31 October 1954, at Queen’s College (皇仁書院) in Causeway Bay, and later performed for another three consecutive days from November 12 to 14 in the same year at Grantham College of Education (葛量洪師範學院) in Kowloon. (see Figures 2 to 4). The Chinese Drama Group was a literary interest group (文藝興趣小組) under “The Sino-British Club of Hong Kong (香港中英學會)” and all the founding members were Chinese intellectuals and dramatists committed to promoting friendship and understanding between the Chinese and the British through drama. Ma Jian (馬鑑 1883-1959) took up the role as the chairman; other key members included Chen Junyi (陳君葆 1898-1982), Jian Youwen (簡又文 1896-1978), Hu Chunbing (胡春冰 1907-1960), Li Xipeng (李錫彭 1908-2001), Tan Guoshi (1908-1982) and Huang Ninglin (黃凝霖).

The Chinese Drama Group was rooted in the Chinese Drama Movement. Yao Hsin-nung (姚莘農 1905-1991) (also known as Yao Ke 姚克) was an active member in this group and served as the scriptwriter and director of various performances. He wrote an article on post-war Hong Kong drama (戰後香港話劇) to highlight the historical development of Hong Kong drama. According to him, many Chinese dramatists moved to Hong Kong from Guangzhou after 1949 and they regularly participated in events organized by the Chinese Culture Group of the Sino-British Club of Hong Kong (香港中英學會中國文化組) to promote Chinese culture, and subsequently joined the Chinese Drama Group. Yao affirmed the contribution of the Chinese Drama Group and regarded its establishment as a turning point in the Hong Kong drama field. The Chinese Drama Group not only united all Hong Kong dramatists, but also constantly assisted the performances of various drama groups and local schools’ drama clubs. (Yao 45)



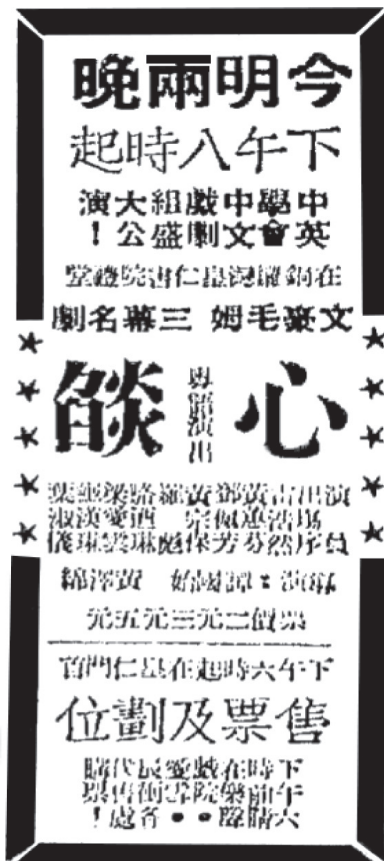


Figure 2: Advertisement of the performance *Xin Yan* on newspaper, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, October 30, 1954.



Figure 3: A stage photo of the performance *Xin Yan* (1), *Sing Tao Daily*, November 4, 1954.

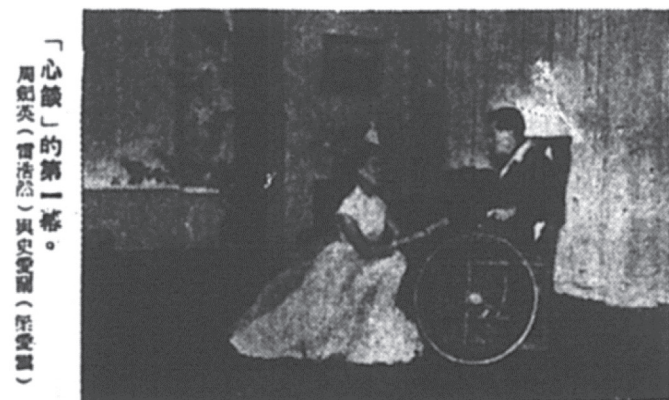


Figure 4: A stage photo of the performance *Xin Yan* (2), *Sing Tao Daily*, November 11, 1954.

## Rescuing Chinese through Drama

In the 1930s, Xu Dishan (許地山1894-1941) invited Ma Jian to move from Beijing Yanjing University (北京燕京大學) to the University of Hong Kong (香港大學). (Dai 92-93) He returned to the mainland during the Japanese Occupation but came back to Hong Kong immediately after the war. He then became the Head of the Chinese Department at the University of Hong Kong where he held the position until his retirement in 1950. (Yang 2) After his death (died on May 23, 1959), Hu Chunbing wrote a eulogy in which he mentioned Ma Jian's most important duty in his late years being the chairman of the Chinese Drama Group. He held this position for more than seven years without any interruption; he not only gave a great effort to establish the group but also actively promoted, planned, organized numerous performances. In his last years, his major concern was the development of the group. (Hu 9) The above statement made by Hu Chunbing proves that Ma Jian had made a significant contribution to the Chinese Drama Group. His opinions on Hong

Kong drama can be seen from the group's publications, "*Xiju shuang zhoukan* (戲劇雙周刊*Drama Biweekly*)" and later "*Xiju zhoukan* (戲劇周刊*Drama Weekly*)" on the *Sing Tao Daily*. According to Ma Jian, "drama" is closely connected to nation (民族) and culture (文化). In his article titled "Wo dui Xiju shuang zhoukan de xiwang (我對戲劇雙周刊的希望My expectations for Drama Biweekly)" published on August 8, 1952, he claimed that we could understand the cultural standard (文化水準) of a particular country by its development of drama. Therefore, he spoke highly of this art form and had great expectations of dramatists. He believed that it was their responsibility to provide their audience with high-quality performances. After arousing people's interest in great drama works, the overall cultural standard in their community would be improved.

Ma Jian's attitude toward drama was no different from that of the Chinese intellectuals who cared about the national fate (國家民族命運) during the May Fourth Movement. In the second issue of *Drama Biweekly* published on August 22, 1952, Ma Jian continued to encourage Hong Kong dramatists to shoulder the social responsibility by educating the public through drama. Their ultimate goal was to promote Chinese culture and reform society and people's living (發揚中國文化, 革新社會生活). The Chinese Drama Group kept up with Ma Jian's thoughts on drama and started their first performance in May 1952 with the Chinese historical play (中國歷史劇) *Bixue Hua* (碧血花) (also known as *Mingmo Yihen* 明末遺恨, written by A Ying 阿英 1900-1977). This starting point shows that the group members were determined to promote China and Chinese culture through drama. Bao Hanlin (鮑漢琳 1919-2007), the chairman of the Chinese Drama Group in the 1960s, discussed past Hong Kong performances in an interview. He believed that *Bixue Hua* was the most frequently performed play by various Hong Kong drama groups in the 1930s. Since the political environment in those years did not allow the general public to openly express anti-war opinions, dramatists made use of ancient stories and historical events to satirize events in the present. Through *Bixue Hua*, they promoted hidden agendas to call for a rescue of their country (救國). (Zhang and He 199) According to Jiang Faxian (蔣法賢 1903-1974), the then chairman of The Sino-British Club of Hong Kong in 1952, the performance of *Bixue Hua* by the Chinese Drama Group was in fact a demonstration glorifying the Chinese traditional virtue of "loyalty, filial piety, and integrity (忠孝節義)" and "patriotism (愛國)".

### Localizing *The Sacred Flame* as *Xin Yan*

Following the first attempt performing a Chinese play, the Chinese Drama



Group then began to translate British plays into Chinese and modified the original text to match the local Chinese context. In 1953, they first performed *You Jiashi de Ren* (有家室的人), which was adapted from *A Family Man* written by John Galsworthy (1867-1933). In the following year in 1954, the group presented Maugham's *The Sacred Flame* as the localized version *Xin Yan*. *Xin Yan* was directed by Tan Guoshi and Huang Zemian (黃澤綿), while Lei Haoran modified the script (he also played Zhou Jianyin 周劍英, the character corresponding to Maurice in the original text). As mentioned by Long Ling, both Tan Guoshi and Lei Haoran had performed *The Sacred Flame* in Guangzhou in 1936 under the name of Weiming Jushe. Though Tan and Lei were already familiar with the original play to a certain extent, they still faced a big challenge when adapting *Xin Yan* to a Chinese setting. As mentioned in the first part of this paper, *The Sacred Flame* was created undeniably in a specific British context and the story took place in London in the 1920s. When it was adapted into *Xin Yan* in Hong Kong in the 1950s, there was a crucial need to consider the locals' reception and standard of acceptance. In the article titled "Xie zai *Xin Yan* kaimu zhiqian (寫在「心燄」開幕之前 Before the Opening of *Xin Yan*)" published on October 28, 1954 in *Sing Tao Daily*, Tan Guoshi specifically acknowledged Lei Haoran's effort to set the story in a local setting. He declared that the new version was a perfect match to the Hong Kong local culture and it was a play "happening right here and now" (合乎此時此地). This view can be explained by the following three modifications.

### **Minor Adjustments to Suit the Chinese Context**

Lei Haoran used Fang Yu's translation to modify the play and his biggest step was to change all the British characters to Chinese and the background from London to a modern city in the 1950s and 1960s. As the storyline remained unchanged, Lei Haoran captured the spirit of Maugham in the original version to a great extent. He slightly amended the content with reference to Chinese customs and traditions and removed elements that were deemed too Western for a Chinese audience. For example, Maurice and his doctor play chess in the first act, the corresponding characters in *Xin Yan* play Chinese chess instead. The original story arranged Maurice's younger brother Collin to run a business on coffee plantations in Central America, his corresponding character is involved in a gum tree business in Southeast Asia (南洋).

Characters in <i>Xin Yan</i> and the corresponding characters in <i>The Sacred Flame</i>		
<i>Xin Yan</i>		<i>The Sacred Flame</i>
Zhou Jianying	周劍英	Maurice Tabret
Zhou Jianlei	周劍雷	Colin Tabret
Mrs. Zhou	周老太太	Mrs. Tabret
Shi Ailan	史愛蘭	Stella Tabret
Dr. Jiang	蔣醫生	Dr. Harvester
Lawyer Cui	崔律師	Major Liconda
Nurse Lan	藍看護	Nurse Wayland
Yalian	亞蓮	Alice

### The Deletion of two Orientalist Elements from the Original Text

Apart from the above minor adjustments, Lei Haoran removed all the dialogues on African killing customs and Indian soul rebirth belief in Maugham's original text. At the very beginning of the play, it tells us about a custom of killing elderly in an Africa tribe through Mrs. Tabret. She casually mentions her deteriorating physical condition to Major Liconda and confesses that she is no longer young and has been suffering from different health problems. She then talks about what some African tribes do to the elderly like her: they simply "take us to the river's brim and push us gently but firmly in." Liconda does not take it seriously and treats it as a joke. He then asks what happens if the elderly can swim. Mrs. Tabret points out that the family relatives would be well prepared with brickbats in hand. If the elderly dare to swim back to the shore, they would be cruelly killed immediately. (W. Maugham 234)

In addition to this so-called African custom, Maugham wrote about another Orientalist imagination. It again has to do with the discussion of life and death. After the sudden death of Maurice, his family wonders whether he had thought about committing suicide before. Mrs. Tabret recalls that she used to hire Indian ayahs to take care of the young Maurice and those foreign caretakers might have taught him some "strange ideas". Stella then frankly states that her husband had been deeply rooted in the Eastern notion of soul transmigration ("Indian soul rebirth" belief). It is believed that the soul would be reborn via another "container" after leaving the original wounded body. To Mrs. Tabret, this idea of reincarnation of life is contrary to Christian beliefs, and if one believes in that, she will give up the chance to rest in God's eternal peace. However, she admits that the concept of "soul rebirth" could make people feel more comfortable. (W. Maugham 269) Stella

later says that she would not deny this belief and even hopes that Maurice's spirit would enter her body as a fetus. (W. Maugham 290)

Maugham's strong obsession with Asian culture is highlighted in the play as he made wise and good use of the cultural other to argue for alternative views on life and death. Thus, he made a strong statement to positively support his avant-garde concept on mercy killing, and the foreign customs and beliefs appeared to be thought-provoking resources that facilitated building a sound and steady storyline of the play. To be specific, Mrs. Tabret ends her son's life because she believes he would be reincarnated and the Asian belief has given her an excuse to commit mercy killing. The exact purpose for Lei Haoran to remove those dialogues in *Xin Yan* is unknown and the most educated guess of such a modification was a consideration of British-Chinese cultural differences. On one hand, the brutal way the African tribes treat the elderly is not compatible with the Chinese idea of filial piety. On the other hand, the concept of reincarnation could be easily found in Buddhism and has long been taken for granted by Chinese society. Therefore, it might not be necessary to present this to a Chinese audience.

### **Introducing a New Ending and Calling for Alternative in Moral Standard**

Lastly, the ending of *Xin Yan* is worth discussing. Maugham ended his story by allying all the characters with the mother, agreeing to cover her crime. The nurse even promises to claim that it is her fault to leave the sleeping pills by the patient's bedside. Mrs. Tabret is touched by her and gratefully admits that they both love Maurice deeply and he would always be in their hearts. (W. Maugham 319) In *Xin Yan*, Lei Haoran chose to end the play at the very moment when everyone is shocked by and screams after learning the truth. Apart from the murderer, other characters' views on the killing are unknown. This sudden ending reflects Lei Haoran's serious consideration of the expectation of the local audience. Moreover, as the Chinese Drama Group aimed at educating the general public for moral goodness through drama, it might be inappropriate for them to deliver messages contradicting with existing laws of modern society. Ma Jian compared Maugham's *The Sacred Flame* with Galsworthy's *A Family Man* in an article written before *Xin Yan* was performed. To him, similarities could be found in the two British plays as they share the same message that morality should "keep up with time (與時偕行)" and a sense of humanism (人道主義) is highlighted in the original texts. He had a positive view on the local acceptance of *The Sacred Flame* and believed that Maugham's awareness of the social and moral issues could go beyond time and place and this play still worth performing in Hong Kong in the 1950s.

Ma Lin (馬林) wrote a review of *Xin Yan* in *Sing Tao Daily* after watching the premiere performance on October 28, 1954 and his comments reflect the locals' evaluation of Maugham's *The Sacred Flame*. He believed that the play had rich messages on personal life and society. Although its theme followed the trend of depicting "love and death" in modern European literary works, it did not generally accept the deep-rooted moral and ethical standards of Western society. Maugham not only undervalued traditional heterosexual romantic love, but also redefined human love with a wider meaning from a new perspective. This is why it is important to bring his work to a Chinese audience because they should be educated with such revolutionary moral standards (道德革命) through drama. Chen Youhou (陳有后1915-2010), an active member of the Chinese Drama Group also wrote an article on the creative spirit in Maugham's works on October 21, 1954 in *Sing Tao Daily*. He believed that the so-called revolutionary moral standard should be associated with the struggle against woman chastity (婦女守節). According to Chinese traditions, it is normal for the wife to remain loyal to her dead husband. If the husband becomes disabled, the wife should stay with him for the rest of her life. The legitimacy of the disabled person's life should never be questioned, and his wife is therefore not allowed to pursue happiness outside marriage. Yet, Maugham's play provides Chinese women with an alternative by creating the character Stella as a role model. There is nothing wrong with a woman to follow her heart and she should "overcome this feudal barrier to find her new life (跳出這封建藩籬去找尋她新生的生活)". Though Chen Youhou's comment was a bit subdued and did not dare to mention the term "female sexuality" directly, he was able to read the play from a rather feminist perspective. By connecting Chinese traditions and the past situation of Chinese women with a new moral standard put forth by Maugham, the contemporary value of localizing this British play can be recognized.

### **Reflections from *Xin Yan* and the Next Step of the Chinese Drama Movement in Hong Kong**

A. C. Scott (1909-1985), a British writer and deputy representative of the British Council in Hong Kong, was in the audience at the performance *Xin Yan*. He pointed out that the moral and ethical concepts shown in Maugham's play were incompatible with the Chinese traditions. It was a big challenge for the Chinese Drama Group to translate and modify the original text, yet they successfully transformed the story into a Chinese one and made people believed that it really happened at that time. He paid special attention to the crucial position of Hong Kong and stated that the new version should be dedicated to somewhere here, a city with "Chinese traditions

as the foundation and everywhere else is covered with fog”. Scott did not make his statement very clear, but he was probably referring to the East-West hybrid cultures in Hong Kong. Therefore, to perform such a localized British play as *Xin Yan* in the 1950s was to open up possibilities for Chinese drama. By modifying the story in a local setting, the Chinese Drama Group could modernize drama without going too Western. Scott also insisted that after the success of *Xin Yan*, the next step for the Chinese dramatists was to create plays of their own. They could not truly own the plays unless they learned to faithfully express the local colors.

It is worth mentioning that after the Chinese Drama Group performed *Xin Yan*, the drama critic Qiu Zhu (秋竹) compared it with *Lei Yu* (雷雨) written by the renowned Chinese dramatist Cao Yu (曹禺1910-1996) in 1933. He said Chinese audience was more familiar with the *Xin Yan*-style (《心燄》式的) drama *Lei Yu*. In this story, a pair of young lovers do not know they are half-siblings and accidentally engage in incestuous love. Thus, the complex relationship of their parents has led to their sufferings. By criticizing the authoritative father image and disclosing the ugliness in traditional families, *Lei Yu* could overthrow the deep-rooted feudalism that oppressed the Chinese new generation. Coincidentally, Ma Jian came together with the British professor F. S. Drake (林仰山1892-1974) of the School of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong to organize an English performance of *Lei Yu*, known as *Thunderstorm* in English. It was performed by university students at the auditorium of the University of Hong Kong on November 19 and 20, 1954. Yao Ke was invited as the director and scriptwriter, and the script he used was his own translation completed as early as in 1937, first published in *T'ien Hsia Monthly* (天下月刊) in Shanghai. Yao modified his translation to be easy for the actors to grasp and even shortened the play from four to five hours to one and a half. F. S. Drake introduced this performance as a pioneer to display Chinese modern drama in English. Through this drama, Westerners in Hong Kong could have a better understanding of the inner thoughts and feelings of their Chinese friends. (See Figure 5 to 8) Actually, *Thunderstorm* gave us a significant overview of the Hong Kong drama field in the 1950s on the other way around by introducing a Chinese story to the English-speaking community. While the Chinese Drama Group worked very hard to adapt foreign plays, at the same time, some dramatists were active in promoting China and Chinese culture through translating Chinese modern play into English. No matter what languages they used, drama was always a medium for them to carry their thoughts and ideas.





Figure 5. A stage photo of the performance *Thunderstorm* (1), *Wah Kiu Yat Bo*, November 19, 1954.

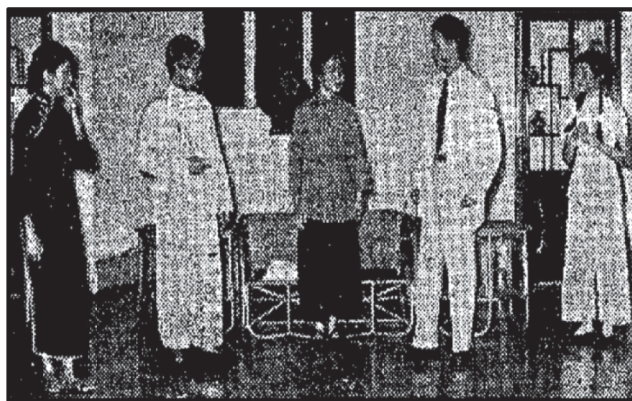


Figure 6. A stage photo of the performance *Thunderstorm* (2), *Wah Kiu Yat Bo*, November 19, 1954.



Figure 7. A stage photo of the performance *Thunderstorm* (3), *Wah Kiu Yat Bo*, November 19, 1954.



Figure 8. Photo of the performance team, *Wah Kiu Yat Bo*, November 18, 1954. (First row: Yao Ke sat at the second left and F.S.Drake sat in the middle)

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have positioned Maugham's *The Sacred Flame* as a subtle gay text with queer qualities and traced how its unique gayness and queerness challenged traditional heterosexual marriage and family values. These revolutionary and satirical qualities were then modified in the Chinese modern drama *Xin Yan* and became beneficial resources for Chinese people to fight against the deep-rooted feudalism in their own culture. While Maugham's plays were banned in Mainland China after 1949, Chinese dramatists managed to have them performed in Hong Kong in the 1950s. Indeed, Hong Kong was a unique testing site for developing Chinese modern drama. Take the Chinese Drama Group as an example, the group members took advantage of the support of the Sino-British Club and promoted their performances as a way to foster cultural exchanges between the British and the



Chinese. In fact, they focused explicitly on fighting against old-fashioned moral and ethical values and what they really cared about was how to reform Chinese modern drama and educate the Chinese population.

The Taiwanese scholar Peng Hsiao-yen (彭小妍1952-) made use of the concept of transculturation created by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) to describe intercultural dynamics as a process of “two-way give and take (雙向的施與受)” in her book *Dandyism and Transcultural Modernity: the dandy, the flaneur, and the translator in 1930s Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris*. To her, when texts travel, there is never a “one-way imposition of the dominant culture”, and translators, writers and artists always participate in a process of creative transformation. (Peng 25) In fact, the “two-way give and take” process that occurred during the long journey of *The Sacred Flame* and *Xin Yan* performed by the Chinese Drama Group in 1954 is still ongoing. After the stage performance, this play was then adapted into a Chinese novel and a film. Interestingly, the theme song of the film was later translated to English and set off a trend in the Western music world. Therefore, Maugham’s British original play went through a cross-language and cultural process and “traveled” from Britain to Mainland China and to Hong Kong. Finally, it returned to the Western world in a different medium. In short, my attempt in this paper is to rearticulate the missing link. Within the cross-cultural translation movement, the scriptwriters and dramatists of each stop could creatively reinterpret and modify the original sources vis-à-vis their own preferences and needs in different time and place, thus continuously adding new cultural meanings to the text. Their contributions deserved our attention and all adaptations could be singled out as unique and independent texts that demand further discussion and research.

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# The English Translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist Classics: History and Method

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## Abstract:

Chinese Mahayana Buddhism is an important part of traditional Chinese culture. In the process of continuous integration of local ideas, it has been established not only as a belief system represented by eight main sects, but also as a huge knowledge system based on Sutras, Disciplines and Sastras. The history of the translation and introduction of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classic scripts into English began in the mid-nineteenth century. At present, hundreds of classics have been translated. A comparative study of important Buddhist classics translated by translators from different eras, regions, and cultural backgrounds shows that the social attributes of the translators' identity is the main factor affecting their choices of translation strategies. Some translators rely too much on "Domestication," which is an important cause of "cultural variation." Comparing the history of the translation of Chinese Buddhist scripture with that of the English context, it can be said that a more faithful and accurate translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics depends on the establishment of the Buddhist conceptual system in English.

**Keywords:** Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics, English translation, history, translation strategy, conceptual system

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The beginning of Buddhism in China can be traced back to the period of Emperor Ming (57-75 AD) of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Prior to this, Buddhism may have been spreading along the Silk Road in the Western Regions for a longer period of time without being documented. It is commonly agreed that China's large-scale translation of foreign cultures began with the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures. The translation of Buddhist scriptures can be regarded as the



first collision between Chinese and other cultures. In the process, Buddhism from India started its localization in Chinese soil and later produced a huge and lasting influence on Chinese history and social life.

“Chinese Buddhism” comprises three aspects in meaning, “its classics are written in Chinese; the time of its formation is in the Han Dynasty; the people of its belief are mainly those living in the circle of Chinese culture” (Li Shangquan 2). During the Tang Dynasty, the editor of *The Buddhism Catalog of Kaiyuan* (《開元釋教錄》) grouped the Chinese Mahayana Buddhist Classics into five divisions: Prajñā (般若), Ratnakūṭa (寶積), Mahāsaṃnipāta (大集), Avataṃsaka (華嚴) and Nirvāṇa (涅槃). The eight major sects of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism emphasize different scriptures, but basically all come from the five divisions above. More specifically, the Tiantai sect adheres to *The Lotus Sutra*, *the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra*, *The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sutra* and *The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sastra* (《法華經》《大般涅槃經》《大品般若經》《大智度論》). The Huayan sect adheres to *The Avataṃsaka Sutra* (《華嚴經》). The Sanlun sect: *The Mādhyamaka Sastra*, *The Śata Sastra*, *The Dvādaśamukh Sastra* and *The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sastra* (《中論》《百論》《十二門論》《大智度論》). The Weishi sect: *The Yogācārya-bhūmi Sastra*, *The Avataṃsaka Sutra*, *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* and *The Vidyā-matrāṣiddhi Sastra* (《瑜伽師地論》《華嚴經》《楞伽經》《成唯識論》). The Discipline sect: *The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*, *The Four-division Vinaya*, *The Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya* and *The Five-division Vinaya* (《十誦律》《四分律》《摩訶僧祇律》《五分律》). The Chan sect: *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Vimalakīrti Sutra* and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (《楞伽經》《金剛經》《維摩詰經》《六祖壇經》). The Pure-land sect: *The Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra*, *The Vision of Sukhāvātī Sutra*, *The Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra* (the minor) (《無量壽經》《觀無量壽經》《阿彌陀經》). The Esoteric sect: *The Vairocana Sutra*, *The Diamond Crown Sutra* and *The Susiddhi Sutra* (《大日經》《金剛頂經》《蘇悉地經》). The above-mentioned scriptures and some of the other most widely circulated and influential scriptures, such as *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra*, *The Śūraṃgama Sutra*, *The Heart of Prajñā-Pāramitā Sutra* (shortly, *The Heart Sutra*) (《大乘起信論》《楞嚴經》《般若波羅蜜多心經》) constitute the core of the Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics.

Since the nineteenth century, with the rise of comparative religious studies, the Western world began to realize the importance of Buddhism as one of the sources of Chinese philosophy, and began to translate and introduce Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics. After more than a century, and even though a large number of classics have been translated into English and gradually exerted a greater influence, academic studies still lack a historical survey of the translation of Chinese

Buddhist classics. “The scholars of the Western world have paid great attention to the dissemination history of Buddhism since the 1960s, and there are many famous works...but there is still a lack of systematic studies of Buddhist scriptures in Western languages. Scholars have done less research on translations, and they are basically focusing on the ideas of Buddhism” (Zhu Feng 82). At the same time, discussions on the influence of translators’ subjectivity regarding their translations is still lacking, as well as their translation strategies and specific methods. Addressing this problem, this article examines the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics by translators from different countries and regions as the research object, and summarizes the translation history of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist literature since the second half of the nineteenth century. The article selects representative and important translators and their translations as examples to analyze the impact of their subjectivity on translation, and aims to engage in discussion on the establishment of the Buddhist conceptual system in English.

## I. A Historical Overview of the English Translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist Classics

According to the list of the Buddhist canon in various Western languages based on the catalog of *Taishō Canon* started by Marcus Bingenheimer with the aid of scholars all over the world, to date as of October 8, 2020, 903 scriptures have been translated into English<sup>1</sup>. If the author of this article lists all the English translations of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics on Bingenheimer’s website, then the reader will see an overly lengthy list. Therefore, the author attempts to have the history of translation as a clue, and make a general analysis of the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures since the second half of the 19th century.

The large-scale English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures began with a group of British Protestant missionaries who came to China in the second half of the nineteenth century. The earliest translation practice can be traced back to *The Ekaśloka Sastra* (《壹輸盧伽論》) translated in 1857 by Joseph Edkins, a member of London Missionary Society. Later, Edkins also translated the first volume of *The Śūraṅgama Sutra* and published it in the year 1880 (Li Xinde 52). The most productive translator of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures among the British missionaries was Samuel Beal, who successively translated *The Sutra of Forty-two Sections* (《四十二章經》) (1862), *The Diamond Sutra* (1865), *The Heart*

1 Marcus Bingenheimer. *Bibliography of Translations from the Chinese Buddhist Canon into Western Languages* [EB/OL].[2020-10-08]. <https://mbingenheimer.net/tools/bibls/transbibl.html>.

*Sutra* (1865), *The Sukhāvatīvyūha Sutra* (1866) and other classics into English and published them in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Zhao Changjiang 243). Other scriptures translated by Beal include *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha* (《佛本行集經》) (1875), *The Dharmapāda Sutra* (《法句經》) (1878) and *The Buddhacarita-kāvya Sutra* (《佛所行贊經》) (1883), etc. (Li Xinde 54-55). In addition, Beal's *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese* (1871) also includes some abridged translations of Chinese Buddhist scriptures, among them *The Heart Sutra*, *The Mahā-Prajñā-Pāramitā Sutra*, *The Four-division Vinaya*, *The Sutra of Forty-two Sections*, *The Śūraṅgama Sutra*, *The Sitātapatroṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī with Annotations* (《首楞嚴咒注釋本》), *The Candī-dhāraṇī* (《準提咒》), *The Sukhāvatīvyūha Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra* and *The Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra* (《大般涅槃經》) etc. (Ban Bai 276). After Beal, in 1894, another missionary Timothy Richard worked together with Chinese scholar Yang Wenhui to translate *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra* (with the title *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna Doctrine*) into English (formally published in 1907). In addition, Timothy Richard also translated part of *The Lotus Sutra*, part of *The Bhaiṣajyaguru Sutra* (《藥師如來本願經》) and *The Heart Sutra*. Other British missionaries who have translated Mahayana Buddhist classics include: William Gemmell, who translated *The Diamond Sutra* (1912), and William Soothill, who translated *The Lotus Sutra* (1930) (Ban Bai 277-278).

Many Japanese scholars also translated Chinese Buddhist scriptures into English during the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. The most famous among them was D. T. Suzuki. In 1900, *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra* translated by D. T. Suzuki was published by the Open Court Publishing Company owned by Suzuki's patron Paul Carus, and *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* translated by Suzuki was published in London in 1932. In 1935, the Oriental Buddhist Society published *The Manual of Zen Buddhism* edited by D.T. Suzuki, which included Suzuki's translation of *The Heart Sutra*, *The Pūmen Chapter of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra* (partial), *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* (partial) and *The Śūraṅgama Sutra* (partial). The Chinese Buddhist scriptures translated into English during the period by other Japanese scholars include *The Vision of Sukhāvatī Sutra* (1894) translated by Takakusu Junjiro and *The Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa Sutra* (1898) translated by Ōhara Masatoshi (Ban Bai 278).

American intellectuals' attention to Buddhism can be traced back to at least the first half of the nineteenth century. As early as 1844, Henry D. Thoreau published his translation of part of *The Lotus Sutra* in *Dial* magazine, his translation was not based on the Chinese text, but rather on a French text by Eugene Burnouf in 1843

translated from a Sanskrit version. The translation of Chinese texts of Mahayana Buddhist classics in America roughly began in the late 1920s and early 1930s. An important scholar who focused on Chinese Buddhist scriptures in this period was Dwight Goddard. *A Buddhist Bible* edited by him was published in Vermont in 1932, including the three important classics of the Chan sect: *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra* and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*<sup>2</sup>. Soon after Goddard, the philosopher, Clarence Herbert Hamilton translated *Wei Shih Er Shih Lun or The Treatise in Twenty Stanzas on Representation-only by Vasubandhu* (《唯識二十論》) (1938), which constitutes some of the slight attention given from American academia regarding the classics of Weishi Sect.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, the representative scholars who translated Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics from Chinese into English in the United States were Philip B. Yampolsky and Burton Watson. Yampolsky's main focus is on the classics of Chan sect, among which important translations are *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (1967), *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writing* (1971), *Selected Writing of Nichiren* (1990), *Letters of Nichiren* (1996) and many more. Watson is a famous sinologist in the United States. His translation and introduction of Chinese history, culture and philosophy are very extensive. Watson's translations of Buddhism scripts include *The Vimalakīrti Sutra* (1999), *The Lotus Sutra* (1993), *The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi* (1993) etc. Recent famous American scholars who endeavor in the English translation of Mahayana Buddhist classics from Chinese texts are Bill Porter (also known as Red Pine) and Thomas Cleary. The translations of the former include: *The Diamond Sutra: The Perfection of Wisdom* (2001), *The Heart Sutra: The Womb of Buddhas* (2005), *The Platform Sutra: The Zen Teaching of Hui-neng* (2006) and *The Lankavatara Sutra: Translation and Commentary* (2013). The latter's translations include *The Sutra of Hui-neng, Grand Master of Zen: With Hui-neng's Commentary on The Diamond Sutra* (1998), *The Blue Cliff Record* (2005), *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra* (2014).

Compared with the above-mentioned translation practice of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures in Britain, Japan and the United States, the translation by Chinese nationals began relatively late. One of the representative translators of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist documents during the period of the Republic of China is Wong Mou-lam, a Hong Kong Buddhist layman who moved to Shanghai. His most important translation is *The Platform Sutra of Hui-neng* (1930). Before his

2 What needs to be pointed out is that Goddard did not translated the three classics himself, but edited, reorganized and interpreted others' translation.



death in 1933, Wong Mou-lam also translated *The Diamond Sutra*, *Vijñaptimātratā Siddhi Sastra* (《成唯識論》) (Chapter 1), *The Buddhābhasita Dasabhadra Karmamarga Sutra* (《佛說十善業道經》), *The Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sutra* and some other Mahayana classics. Another important translator is Charles Luk, a Cantonese Buddhist layman who settled in Hong Kong in his later years. His translations include: *The Altar Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Supreme Zen Sutra of the Hui Neng* (1962), *The Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa Sutra* (1972), *The Śūraṅgama Sutra* (1966), etc.

After 1949, the English translation of Buddhist scriptures in mainland China stagnated for a long time due to various reasons. It is not until the last 20 years that scholars have gradually begun to translate Chinese Buddhist scriptures into English, but in terms of quantity, it is obviously relatively small. For example, in the influential project of the Library of Chinese Classics in English Edition, only two Buddhist classics are included: *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-Yang* (《洛陽伽藍記》) and *The Sutra of Hui-neng*. Compared to Chinese mainland, the English translation of Buddhist scriptures in Taiwan is more active. As early as 1970, Shen Jiazhen, a Buddhist layman, established an institute for the translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures in Hsinchu. Recently *The Mahāratnakūṭa Sutra* (《大寶積經》) and other scriptures have been translated into English and published in the United States by the organization. Similar Buddhist scripture translation agencies include the Neo-Carefree Garden Buddhist Canon Translation Institute established in Taipei in 2011 by Ven. Cheng Kuan, and the institute has retranslated *The Sutra of Forty-two Sections*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Dharmic Treasure Altar-Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (The Platform Sutra)* and other classics. In addition, other Chinese Buddhist institutions across the globe have also begun to translate the Mahayana Buddhist classics into English. For example, in 1973, Venerable Master Hsüan Hua established the Buddhist Text Translation Society in San Francisco, USA, and translated *The Śūraṅgama Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra*, *The Sutra of Forty-two Sections* and other Mahayana classics; Venerable Master Hsing Yun established the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center in Los Angeles and translated *The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sastra* (with the title: *The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise*), *The Amitabha Sutra*, *The Lotus Sutra's Universal Gate Chapter*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra* (with the title: *The Original Vows of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra* 《地藏菩薩本願經》) and other Mahayana classics.

Besides the above-mentioned translations, according to the “Historical Materials

on the Translation and Introduction of Chinese Culture to Foreign Countries (1929-1949)” edited by Zhao Ying, some other translations include: *Vimśatikā-vijñaptimātratā-siddhi Sastra* (《大乘唯識論》) (1931) translated by Indian scholar Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, *The Heart Sutra* (1934) translated by Chinese sinologist Li Shaochang, *The Brahma Net Sutra* translated by James R. Ware (1936), *Yung-chia’s Song of Experiencing the Tao* (1941) and *The Treatises of Seng-chao* (1948) translated by Austrian scholar Walter Liebenthal, *The Diamond Sutra* (1947) translated by A. F. Price, and *The Zen Teaching of Huangbo on the Transmission of Mind* (1947) and *The Zen Teachings of Hui Hai on Sudden Illumination* (1948) translated by John Blofeld etc. The author notes that there are some Mahayana Buddhist classics (such as the many Buddhist scriptures translated by Rulu) that have been self-published on the internet, but that there is still a lack of access to the detailed information on the translator and his (or her) translation works.

## II. The English Translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist Classics under the Perspective of Socio-Translation Studies

Since the 1990s, under the influence of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, a sociological surge has appeared in the field of translation studies. Many Western scholars have begun to explore a new model from a sociological perspective, emphasizing the relationship between the production, dissemination and reception of translation and various other social constraints (Wolf 125-138). Among the various social constraints mentioned above, the translator’s background is a key issue. Specifically, the influence of translators’ social attributes on his or her translation are mainly reflected in the fact that “the political, economic, legal, religious, ethical and other factors will affect the selection of source language texts, the setting of reader groups, and the formation of translation strategies” (Wang Hongtao 251-252). A survey of the history of the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics since the late nineteenth century summarizes that the characteristics of the translation during various periods differ significantly and these differences reflect the different strategies adopted by translators (represented by different methods and techniques in a specific way). The choice of the translation strategy is often closely related to translators’ social attributes. In the next part of this article, the author takes Timothy Richard’s translation of *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra* (with the title *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna Doctrine*) and Yampolsky’s translation of *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* as examples to discuss the impact of social constraints on translators in their translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics.



1. Timothy Richard: a missionary who interprets Buddhism from a Christian ideology

In the second half of the nineteenth century, under the influence of comparative religious studies initiated by Max Muller, many British Protestant missionaries who came to China discovered that many ideas in the Buddhist faith in China are similar to that of Christianity, and thus found the possibility of preaching in China with the help of Buddhism. As Li Xinde pointed out, “Joseph Edkins, William Alexander, Timothy Richard and other missionaries advocate using ready-made Chinese Buddhist terms to explain Christian doctrine. Although it is to make it easier for the Chinese to understand Christian thought, the ultimate goal is to make Chinese convert to Christianity” (Li Xinde 119). The Protestant missionaries used concepts of Chinese Buddhism in the spread of Christian dogma in China; inversely, they used the Christian conceptual system when introducing Chinese Buddhism to the Western world. This is most evident in the translation of Buddhist scriptures by Timothy Richard.

Timothy Richard (1845-1919), an Anglican Baptist missionary, lived in China for nearly half a century. He had extensive contacts with well-known figures from all walks of life in China during the late Qing Dynasty and exerted a great influence on the Reform Movement of 1898. Richard’s interest in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism originated from his experience reading Buddhist scriptures translated by Samuel Beal, in which he claimed to find shocking similarities with Christian spirituality. In 1907, Timothy Richard’s English translation of *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra* was officially published. This translation adopts an obvious “domestication” strategy, and in large-scale employs Christian concepts to explain Chinese Mahayana Buddhist concepts as interpreted by the translator. For example: Richard translated “Tathagata (如来)” as the “incarnate God,” “Bodhisattva (菩薩)” as “Pusa Saints,” “Dharma body (法體)” as “the divine spirit (Holy Spirit),” “one practice of samadhi (一行三昧)” as “the divine peace,” etc. It is obvious that the concepts in translation used by Timothy Richard deviates from the original meaning of the Buddhist terms, which explains why the publication of his translation aroused strong dissatisfaction from his original Chinese collaborator, Yang Wenhui<sup>3</sup> (Yang Wenhui 491).

In fact, there were doubts about Timothy Richard’s translation even within the

3 Chinese: 楊文會(1837-1911), a famous Buddhist layman and scholar in late Qing Dynasty.

Western missionary community. In June 1911, *The Chinese Recorder*, founded by the American Christian Church, published an editorial entitled “Wanted: More Evidence” in the name of Editorial:

Into certain of the writings of the Mahayana school Dr. Richard reads the tenets of the Christian Gospel to so great an extent that he feels justified in the use of Christian terminology when translating these writing into English. Here he parts company with almost all other Buddhist scholars, Christian and non-Christian alike. All those who are interested in this branch of religious enquiry, and especially missionaries to the Far East, anxiously await the presentation of the argument which is to justify the use of Christian Theistic terms in the translation of Buddhist literature. That argument has not yet appeared. So far as we are at present acquainted with the position, or are able to follow it, we can not find upon grounds either of philology, history or theology sufficient warrant for so momentous a departure (Editorial 313)

Although there are criticisms and doubts, it is evidential that Timothy Richard used Christian terms to translate Buddhist classics deliberately. As early as 1884, Timothy Richard had already completed the English translation of *The Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda Sastra*, but it was not until Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki published another translation in 1900 that Richard published his own translation in 1907 as a response to Suzuki’s translation. For more than a century, in the Buddhist community and in the field of academic research, it is generally agreed that D. T. Suzuki’s translation is more accurate and has the better academic value. But accuracy and academic enquiry were not the objects that Timothy Richard attached the most importance to. As Professor Lai Pan-chiu pointed out:

He made it clear that his translation and introductions were not merely academic exercises, but were aimed at explicating the meaning of these Buddhist texts for Westerners, especially from a Christian perspective...In fact Richard did not claim any technical superiority for his translation. What he claimed is that his translation should be more faithful to the Buddhist tradition and could harmonize most fully with Christian philosophy and religion (Lai Pan-chiu 28)

In short, the reason why Timothy Richard translated Buddhist scriptures with

the strategy of domestication is to express his Christian ideology (Li Xinde 57). Although Timothy Richard himself claimed that his motivation is to promote the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, so as to build a forthcoming “world peace kingdom” (Lai Pan-chiu 24), he resorted to too many Christian concepts as a medium in the process of translation. This is indeed inseparable from his religious stance: “When Richard translated these basic concepts of Buddhism in English, his starting point was Christianity, and his goal was to convey to Western readers that ‘Chinese Buddhism are actually talking about Christianity.’ Therefore, the difference is erased, what is presented is the similarity. This kind of assimilation is at the cost of dislocation, and the consequence is that the concepts in Buddhism are not reproduced, but added a new interpretation for the spread of Christianity” (Yang Jing 118).

## 2. Yampolsky: the translation of Buddhist scriptures as academic research

The translation that avoided the influence of Christian religious concepts and the more scholarly translation of Buddhist scriptures can be traced back least to William Soothill who came after Timothy Richard. In terms of translation strategy, compared with Timothy Richard, William Soothill’s approach was to be as faithful as possible to the original text, and literally translate the Buddhist terms with specific meanings through Latin transliteration of Sanskrit, thus giving the translation a more academic flavor. Jiang Weijin and Li Xinde analyzed the English translation of William Soothill *The Lotus Sutra* and stated,

William Soothill was already a professional sinologist in the process of translating this scripture, not just a missionary...Soothill is not completely constrained by the Christian culture like Timothy Richard who focused on the Christianity in translation and distorted the original meaning of Buddhist scripture, but treated the translation of the scriptures in an objective manner. In the process of translation, Soothill abandoned the inherent Christian prejudice and translated it more objectively, accurately, and concisely. He tried to express the connotation of this classic clearly, so that Western scholars can better study Chinese Buddhist culture and serve for the religious and cultural exchanges between China and the West (Jiang & Li 77)

After the 1950s, more in-depth studies of Buddhism in universities and

academic institutions gradually emerged with the wider propagation of Buddhism in European countries and America. Against this background, many English translations of Buddhist classics that are characterized by rigorous academic research employing translation strategies more prone to “foreignization” appeared. Yampolsky is an outstanding representative of such a translator. Philip Yampolsky (1920-1996) is an excellent American researcher of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism who is especially known for his translation of Chan Buddhist classics. From 1954 to 1962, Yampolsky went to Japan to study Buddhism as Fulbright Scholar. Later on, Yampolsky returned to Columbia University to continue his study. In 1965, Yampolsky went to work in the East Asian Library and earned his doctoral degree. Since 1968, he’d been the director of the library and engaged in research work until his retirement in 1990.

The most important work of Yampolsky’s translations of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics is *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript with Translation, Introduction, and Notes*. As the title indicates, this work by Yampolsky is not only an English translation of the Tun-Huang manuscript of *The Platform Sutra*, but also includes the translator’s in-depth research on this Chan classic in the introduction and various annotations added to the translation. American scholar Appiah proposed the “Thick Translation” theory in 2000, and argued “that, namely, of a translation that aims to be of use in literary teaching; and here it seems to me that such ‘academic’ translation, translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context, is eminently worth doing. I have called this ‘thick translation’” (Appiah 427). According to Appiah’s definition, Yampolsky’s translation is undoubtedly a model of “thick translation.” In this work of more than 200 pages, the introduction written by Yampolsky comprises 121 pages, far exceeding the translation of only 62 pages. Readers can fully comprehend the extensive background knowledge of *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* by reading this introduction. At the same time, Yampolsky added a total of 291 notes to his translation, which clearly shows the depth of the translator’s research. In many annotations, Yampolsky carefully corrected the mistakes or clarified the ambiguities in the Tun-Huang manuscript through his philological studies and discriminates between different versions of the Sutra. In addition, Yampolsky pays special attention to citing other scholars to support his methodology. The scholars he cites include Hu Shih, D. T. Suzuki, Ui Hakuju, Iriya Yoshitaka, etc. Among them, there are almost 20 citations to Hu Shih’s research alone. Finally, Yampolsky pays special attention to comparing his own translation with other translations,

and presents the differences to the reader. For example, he mentions at least 10 significant differences between his translation and that of Wing-tsit Chan in his notes. And the many places where he is not sure how to translate, or where he has the concerns about the accuracy of the translation, Yampolsky indicates that with “tentative” or “translation tentative,” which undoubtedly reflects the honest and rigorous academic attitude of the translator.

In term of translation strategy, Yampolsky mainly adopts the “foreignization” approach, using the Latin transliteration of strict phonetic transcriptions for most Buddhist terms and retaining the semantic and stylistic features of the original text to the greatest extent. At the same time, this translation provides readers with rich information to understand the original text and incorporate it with the translator’s own academic views. Yampolsky’s translation of *The Platform Sutra* is so important to Buddhism research in America that Bernard Faure pointed out: “It was only with the translation of *The Platform Sutra* by Philip Yampolsky in 1967, and his research about the legend on the origin and inheritance of Chan Patriarchs, the research about Chan sect obtained its academic qualification” (Faure 241). In short, it can be said that Yampolsky raised the standard of the English translations of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures to a new level and his translation became a model of academic translation.

Comparing the translation of Timothy Richard with that of Yampolsky, it can be proved that in terms of translation strategies, the former adopts a method that centers on the target culture and the translator’s pre-understanding, while the latter is basically centered on the in-depth study of the original text. The two translators adopted different strategies, which are directly related to the social attributes of their identities. More exactly, they are strongly influenced by the socio-historically defined habituses. As Daniel Semeoni said, “The habitus of a translator is the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history...For future research in mental processes underlying translation performance to be compatible with this socio-cognitive framework, new protocols may have to be designed following prior observations in habitus-governed and governing practices” (Semeoni 32). Wang Dongfeng also pointed out with regard to Evan-Zohar’s poly-system theory that “the decisive factor of translation strategy is ultimately the translator himself. Because whether to adapt to the target culture or the source culture is largely determined by the subjective decision of the translator. If the poly-system hypothesis takes into account the role of the translator’s subjective choice when facing the two cultures in the translation process, it will be more convincing. After all, the choice of translation strategy is a subjective process” (Wang Dongfeng 4-5). As a

Protestant missionary and social activist, Timothy Richard's aim was to highlight the similarities and the historical links between Buddhism and Christianity, while Yampolsky, as a scholar, paid more attention to reestablishing the true history imbued by the classics through rigorous academic research.

### III. “Geyi (格義)”: “cultural variation” in the translation of Chinese Buddhist classics

By surveying the English translations of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics for more than a century, it may be ascertained that the strategy of “domestication” is more likely to be adopted by Western translators who adhere to Christian culture and belief. Whether it was Timothy Richard as discussed above or translators such as A. F. Price and Cleary in the following decades, many people consciously or unconsciously matched Chinese Buddhist concepts with those of Christianity. The application of domestication strategies to the translation in this way has produced a lot of “cultural variations”, and many Chinese scholars call this phenomenon “Geyi”.

The concept of “Geyi” first appeared in the teaching and translation practice of Buddhist scholars in China in the period of the Dynasties of Eastern Han (25-220), Wei (220-265), to the Western Jin (265-316) and the Eastern Jin (317-420). In the very early stages of Buddhism's spread to China, many of the terms and concepts in Sanskrit scriptures have not yet achieved definite translation, so Buddhist monk-translators such as Zhi Qian (支謙) tended to translate Buddhist concepts with corresponding concepts taken from the works of Chinese thinkers, especially those of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu and Confucius. This practice was called “Geyi,” or “matching the meaning” (sometimes also rendered as “matching the concept”) (Cheung 97-98). For example, the monk-translators once used the Taoist concepts “wuxing”<sup>4</sup> to explain the “four tanmātra,”<sup>5</sup> “shouyi”<sup>6</sup> to explain “dhyana,”<sup>7</sup> and used the Confucian “wuchang”<sup>8</sup> to explain the “pañca-sīla.”<sup>9</sup> But in fact, such kind of “Geyi” did not occur for a long time in the history of Chinese Buddhist scripture translation, and there were not many representative monk-translators translating in this fashion. Only a few people such as Zhi Qian and Zhu Faya (竺法雅) who valued “free translation” adopted this method. As the Dutch scholar Erik

4 Chinese: 五行, namely, metal, wood, water, fire and earth

5 The four tanmātra or elements, earth, water, fire, air (or wind). Chinese: 四大

6 Chinese: 守一, means meditation with concentration in mind.

7 Chinese: 禪定

8 Chinese: 五常, five ethic norms: benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and honesty.

9 Chinese: 五戒, five precepts.



Zürcher pointed out, “the importance of Daoist terminology has generally been overestimated: terms of undoubtedly Daoist provenance actually constitute a very small percentage of the Chinese archaic Buddhist vocabulary” (Zürcher 34).

Different from the limited scope and relatively short duration of “Geyi” in the history of Buddhist scriptures translation in China, Western scholars and translators have extensively interpreted and translated the Mahayana Buddhist classics in the style of “Geyi,” and it has continued from the 19th century to the present day. Prior attention to the “Geyi” of western academia in the research of Chinese Buddhism comes from Lin Zhenguo, a Taiwanese scholar. In 1987, the American scholar Tuck proposed in his doctoral dissertation “Isogesis: Western Reading of Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Scholarship” that “It is the ‘productive’ or creative aspect of interpretation that I refer to as isogetical. There are no interpretations that are not the result of some creative effort on the part of the interpreter, and it is difficult to imagine what would be gained from an interpretation that did not exhibit the isogetical interference of the commentator” (Tuck 24). Tuck argued that the interpretation of Mādhyamika philosophy by Western scholars is highly subjective. Lin Zhenguo accurately found that the term “isogesis” Tuck used is conceptually a counterpart to what Chinese scholars call “Geyi,” and keenly perceives that “this kind of ‘Geyi’ is actually a universal cross-cultural hermeneutic phenomenon occurred as early as during the spread of Buddhism, and the various ‘Geyi’ in the West provide us with the most close examples of hermeneutic phenomenon” (Lin Zhenguo 282-283). Gong Jun, a scholar of mainland China also mentioned “Geyi” in his analysis of the methodology of European and American Chan studies. For example, he believes that Dale S. Wright puts contemporary ideas, history and cultural structure into the interpretation of the Chan writing of Huangbo, and conducts a “continuous” dialogue between readers and historical Chan texts. Gong Jun argues that Wright’s approach constitutes a typical “Geyi” (Gong Jun 242).

Although “isogesis” in Western academic studies of Buddhism has a different cultural background and etymological origin compared with “Geyi” in the history of Chinese Buddhism, the two words share a common thread by explaining or considering unfamiliar concepts with familiar or known ones. Returning to the topic of the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, through the above analysis of Timothy Richard’s translation, it can be found that Richard’s method can be regarded as a western parallel of “Geyi.” Compared with that of the history of Chinese Buddhist scripture translation, “Geyi” in the translation or philosophical interpretation of Chinese Buddhist scriptures in the Western world is more commonly seen and can potentially last much longer. The possible answer

to this may be related to the cultural environment in which Buddhism grew. After Buddhism was introduced to China, it at once conflicted with the local culture and was rejected by Confucianism and Taoism during a certain historical period, but it soon showed a strong adaptability and capacity for self-adjustment. This is not only because Chinese Mahayana Buddhism adheres to the ideas as “the use of appropriate means (方便),” “not in bondage to anything (無著),” “not abiding (無住),” but also because of the outstanding efforts made by the monk-translators of many dynasties who made a great effort to adapt Buddhism to the Chinese native culture. Different from China, although the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism is relatively peaceful and does not conflict much with Christian tradition, it is not easy for Buddhism to take root in the cultural background of the West. First of all, because they belong to the eastern and western civilization systems respectively, the heterogeneity between Buddhism and Christianity is quite substantial, and followers of Christianity tend to somehow have a conservative attitude towards Buddhism. The formal dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity in the modern age has only a history short of roughly more than 100 years since the World Conference of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In general, although Western academic circles have made considerable progress in the study of Buddhism, the influence of Buddhism in Europe and the United States is still relatively limited. Secondly, the cultural hegemony and western centralism discussed by scholars such as Gramsci and Said, as a potential way of thinking, still have an influence in the Western world, which also provides the soil for a long-term existence for “Geyi”.

#### **IV. The Future: the Establishment of the Buddhist Conceptual System in the English Language**

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics began by British missionaries has a history of more than a century, and a number of Buddhist scriptures have been translated into English. At the same time, the influence of Buddhism in Europe and America is also growing. In the United States, according to statistics on Wikipedia, the number of Buddhist believers currently accounts for about 0.9% of the total population of 300 million, only less than Christians, Jews and atheists. The dissemination of English translations of various classics is an important foundation for the growing influence of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. At the same time, the increasing interest in Buddhism in Europe and the United States has promoted the translation of Buddhist scriptures. According to statistics by Marcus Bingenheimer, since the 1960s, the translation of Chinese Buddhist documents by translators from

various countries has entered a stage of rapid growth. For more than one hundred years, although the quantity and quality of translation of the English translations of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics have greatly improved, there are still a lot of translations that adopt the strategy of “domestication” with the style of “Geyi.” In addition to the social attributes of the translator’s identity as discussed above, another issue may be more worthy of attention, which is the establishment of the Buddhist conceptual system in the English language.

As we all know, since the late Han Dynasty Buddhism has gone through a long process of evolution since it first took root in China. Although Buddhism from India is very different conceptually from Confucianism and Taoism in China, after centuries of development, Buddhism has successfully adapted its conceptual system into the framework of traditional Chinese culture. For example, whether with the method of transliteration in the translation of Buddha, Bodhisattva, Arhat, Amitabha, Samadhi, Dhyana, or with the method of paraphrasing in the translation of Mahayana, Karma, Klesa, Upasaka, a large number of Buddhist concepts were translated from Sanskrit in a relatively short period of time (and the method of translation in concepts were strictly inherited by later translators), and finally incorporated into the Chinese vocabulary system. In this process, Buddhism has continuously integrated into native culture and has become an important part of Chinese philosophy. As the famous scholar Chen Yinke once pointed out in his discussion with Wu Mi, “Buddhism introduced in the late Han Dynasty flourished in the Tang Dynasty. The civilization of Tang Dynasty was highly developed, and Buddhism widely spread in the Western Regions and is worth studying in the history of world civilization. Buddhism has high achievements in Metaphysics, which can make up for the lack of Chinese philosophy, so it has been welcomed by Chinese intellectuals<sup>10</sup>.” In the process mentioned above, “Geyi” gradually disappeared from the history of Chinese Buddhism after completing its mission.

Unlike “Geyi,” “isogesis” comes from the hermeneutic tradition of the West. This tradition evolved from Schleiermacher to Dilthey, and then to Hirsch, Heidegger, Gadamer and others. It has developed into one of the main paradigms of western philosophy research that has been used in Western Buddhist studies and will continue to play an important role. At the same time, “isogesis” (or “Geyi”) in the translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics will also continue. The main reason is that the translation of Buddhist scriptures in the Western world is far from complete. On the one hand, quite a lot of Chinese Buddhist scriptures still don’t

10 See diary of Wu Mi, Dec. 14th 1919.

have authoritative texts in major Western languages such as English; on the other hand, the Western world has not yet encountered a master of translation with similar status as that of Kumarajiva or Xuanzang in the history of Buddhist scripture translation in China. Therefore, it may be said that the Buddhist conceptual system in the English language is far from firmly established. This is an important reason why the translation of Buddhist scriptures has been unable to avoid the influence of “Geyi.”

In addition, the establishment of the Buddhist conceptual system in English is also related to the relationship between power and culture: “The so-called ‘power of discourse’ refers to discourses constructed and selected by various social powers, or influential ‘statements’ for maintaining the interests and superiority of certain people” (Zhang Shuguang 174). Scholars such as Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu have engaged in profound discussions on the topic of power and discourse. In their opinion, power functions through discourse, and discourse of conceptual systems is the basis of culture. The establishment of a new conceptual system is similar to the establishment of a new set of discourse powers. Compared with Buddhist culture, the Christian cultural system in the West undoubtedly occupies a stronger position, and that is why the establishment of the Buddhist conceptual system is undoubtedly not an easy task. As Martha P.Y. Cheung said, “Translation is not a simple (or complex) change of the codes of languages, but the actual scene of cultural communication. Cultural communication is not often the exchange of two idealized cultures that keeping away the prejudice and understanding each other. Two (or more) cultures in different historical atmosphere, political situations, cognitive models, power relations and discourse networks will definitely experience collision, confrontation, resistance, control, and wrestling in the process of contact” (Cheung 19). Chinese and English belong to very different cultural systems, the translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics into English will inevitably involve the transformation of cultural factors, and thus “cultural variation” arises. This explains why many translators of Western cultural backgrounds tend to have adopted the “domestication” strategy with the method of “Geyi,” which can also be regarded as a special “cultural filtering.” According to Cao Shunqing’s Variation Theory, “Cultural filtering refers to selection, transformation, transplantation, and penetration of exchanged information in literary communication” (184). Regarding the possible situations when local culture encounters foreign cultures during cultural exchanges, Li Dan put forward two scenarios: “In the first situation, the recipient culture may adopt a conservative attitude and use its own cultural traditions and habits as a defense against foreign cultures. In the second, the recipient culture

will distinguish, select and transforms the foreign culture based on its own, and absorbing what is beneficial to itself” (Li Dan 125). If Li Dan’s argument is true, the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures into Chinese obviously belongs to the second situation, while to some extent, the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist scriptures is still at the stage described in the first one.

By reviewing the history of the English translation of Chinese Mahayana Buddhist classics and by summarizing of the translations in different periods, the following conclusions can be made: Firstly, the “cultural variation” (Geyi) in the translation of Buddhist classics is due to some translators’ adoption of a “defensive” translation strategy that is closely related with their social attributes in identity; secondly, the Buddhist conceptual system in English is not accomplished, and it will take a long time for its development in the Western world to reach final maturity. The world today is in an age of constant conflict and epidemic. In such an era, Mahayana Buddhism may gain wider recognition with its basic idea of “saving all living beings” and its more remarkable spirit of tolerance. In the long run, as Buddhist culture spreads more widely in the Western world and with the acceptance of ordinary people to the Buddhist conceptual system, the translations of “cultural variation” may gradually decrease. This is evident to a certain extent by the history of Chinese Buddhism and the current trend of development of Buddhism in the Western world.

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# From “the Past” to “Thoughts”: Ba Jin’s Translation of *My Past and Thoughts* and the 1980s<sup>12</sup>

Yao Mengze

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## Abstract:

After the Cultural Revolution, Ba Jin “came back” as the translator of Alexander Herzen’s *My Past and Thoughts*. Through his translation, he tried to retrieve his anarchism belief on the individual from his past and express his condemnation on the Cultural Revolution. However, this condemnation became invalid while he introduced Herzen’s memoir into the “anti-feudalism” discourse, which was largely exhausted by the official historiography and reused by the authorities of the 1980s. In order to break these limits, Ba Jin in his *Random Thoughts* raised the issues such as “telling the truth”, “independent mind” and “confession”, and turned his condemnation to the intellectuals and himself. As a result, he not only paradoxically made the intellectuals scapegoats of history but also trapped himself into the reflective attitude. Meanwhile, through his moral cries, he made himself (along with intellectuals like him) and literature dynamic agents of transitional justice, and subjects that took the responsibilities of the history and the future.

**Keywords:** Ba Jin, Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, *Random Thoughts*, translation, the 1980s

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## I. “A Letter”: An Invitation to *My Past and Thoughts* and the 1980s

On May the 25th, 1977, an article titled “A Letter” was published in *Wen Hui Bao*, an official literary newspaper in Shanghai. The author of this public letter is Ba Jin, who was ranked the fourth of six most important writers in the literary Pantheon of contemporary mainland China, and the only one of them who not only lived through the 1980s but also kept writing on contemporary issues. After eleven years silence since 1966, this letter was the first piece that announced Ba Jin’s “comeback”. As one of the many articles that celebrated the 35th anniversary of Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art”(1942), this article, in the form of a letter to an uncertain comrade, accused “the Gang of Four” for how they ruined Chairman Mao’s “Two Hundred Policy” and abused the author; moreover, it mentioned a secret work that the author did during the cultural revolution, the translation of Alexander Herzen’s *My Past and Thoughts*(1870), says:

Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and their confederates in Shanghai expelled me from the literary circle, and just allowed me to work on some translations. [...]I got my strength and confidence by recalling how diligently Mr. Lu Xun had introduced masterpieces of world literature to China. Forty-one years ago, I told Mr. Lu Xun that I would translate Herzen’s *Memoir*, if I could fulfill my promise before the end of my life, it will be my utmost honor. The first several volumes of the *Memoir* depicted the rule of Nicolas I, Tsar of Russia. As my translation moved on, I felt that the “Gang of Four” were quite similar with Nicolas I, who suppressed the Decembrist Revolt. I translated just several hundred characters everyday, and I felt that I was walking with Herzen in the dark night of the 19th century Russia, I cursed the Fascist dictatorship of “Gang of Four” in the way that Herzen cursed Nicolas I. I believed that their days to ride roughshod over the people could not be longer. (“Letter” 516-517)

According to *Wen Hui Bao*’s editor Xu Kailei, Ba Jin’s article received tremendous responses. Thousands of letters wrote by common readers and some other survived intellectuals flooded to the editorial board, created a historical event in the editor’s career (117). Although this depiction of the editor was perhaps a result of the official rhetorical conventions, we could still recognize that writers



and literature hold an important position in the beginning of the 1980s. Of course, literature was always important in modern and pre-modern China, however, in the 1980s, literature and literati once played a heroic role: with its dynamic mediality and its power to bring cultural shock, literature gave the intellectuals the first and foremost ground for pursuing and practicing autonomy, hence the position to intervene politics. Therefore it was not surprising that the Tian'anmen Incident of 1976 which preceded the end of the Cultural Revolution was a poetry campaign, and in the beginning of the 1980s, people rushed to buy translations of foreign literature, especially European literature of the 19th century; also we should remember that the Misty Poets was celebrated as mentors and heroes by their fans in poetry reading sessions; and almost all the fevers in the 1980s, such as "Satre Fever", "Marques Fever", "Root-seeking Fever" and "Cultural Fever", were launched by literati and literary scholars. Because of the astonishing energy of literature, we could name the 1980s a "Literary Age".

With the idea of "Literary Age" in mind, we should notice three interesting points of "A Letter", which were also important characteristics of the 1980s. First, the astonishing reaction caused by Ba Jin's letter was largely coming from not only the identity of literature or literati, but also from its bold condemnation on the Cultural Revolution. Actually, we could say that the heroic role of literature at large in the 1980s relied mostly on its power of memorizing and reflecting the misery experiences of the reading public. Second, in order to bring up his condemnation, Ba Jin turned to Lu Xun and (more importantly) the pre-1949 era, an era (his own "past") in which he won his fame and prospect, and now in the 1980s gave him the seniority to speak. It is well known that literati in the 1980s were easily find themselves companions of the May-fourth generation, and view the history between the pre-1949 period and the 1980s as a deprived age. Third, for the same reason, Ba Jin also turned to his translation of Alexander Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*, a world literary work among many written in the 19th century which were often read and discussed in the 1980s.

The condemnation of the Cultural Revolution, the pre-1949 era, and world literature: these three points make "A Letter" an invitation to Ba Jin's new literary agenda as well as to the literary age, and a gate for us to inspect the possibilities for the intellectuals to engage the political milieu of the 1980s with (world) literature. With this invitation in hand, we could recognize that Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts* as a join point of Ba Jin's life as a writer, a translator, and a highly politicized intellectual.

However, when mentioning Ba Jin, scholars in Mainland China are easily

separated into two camps, loosely based on their “majors”: scholars who work on Modern Chinese Literature regard Ba Jin as a writer, do researches on his ideas and thoughts, and treat his translations as less-important materials and drop them to researchers from the field of Comparative Literature or Foreign Literature; on the contrary, the latter mainly handle those materials that are attributed to translator Ba Jin, do some fact-check works and provide more details about his translations, without considerations on his literary thoughts and practices.

Therefore, the main body of the studies on Ba Jin’s post-Cultural Revolution era focus on his *Random Thoughts* (Sui xiang lu, 1980-1986), such as Hu Jingmin’s *Studies of Ba Jin’s Random Thoughts* (2010), Zhang Jing’s *Ba Jin’s Confession Consciousness in Random Thoughts* (2015), Chen Sihe’s *Essays on Ba Jin’s Thoughts in His Later Years* (2015) and Zhou Limin’s *On Random Thoughts* (2016), but the deep linkages between this work and Herzen’s memoir are largely neglected. On the same time, the studies on Ba Jin’s translation, such as Zhou Qiong’s *Herzen and China* (2009) and Xiang Hongquan’s *Studies on Ba Jin as a Translator* (2016) easily separates this translation from Ba Jin’s whole literary life. This separation leads to at least two interrelated consequences: first, the deep meanings of this translation for Ba Jin’s literary life and his post-Cultural Revolution thoughts are neglected; second, without reviewing his writings and thoughts, translation researchers are easily exaggerate Ba Jin’s life-long favorite of Herzen, since he himself announced that for several times in the turn of the 1970s and the 1980s.

In consideration of this situation, this paper will set Ba Jin’s translation of *My Past and Thoughts* back into his literary life, and explore how the translation empowered Ba Jin to retrieve his beliefs from his early years, articulate his traumas about the Cultural Revolution, and at last bring out his new thoughts in the 1980s. Based on this exploration, this paper will also examine the energy as well as restrictions that literature in the 1980s received from some discourses, such as “independent”, “confession” and “humanism”.

## **II. The Shifting Faces of *My Past and Thoughts*: From Anti-fascism to Anti-feudalism**

The way that Ba Jin paralleled the “Gang of Four” with Nicolas I as a fascist in “A Letter” is very interesting, if we compare it with the first postscript of his translation written on Sept. 17th, 1978 (after one year and several months since “A Letter” was published). In that piece, Ba Jin added something new into that parallelism. He says: “Some people may think that there is no parallelism between Nicolas I and the ‘Gang of Four’, because feudalism has disappeared in our country.

I would not explain. The book is here, please read it, and you will know whether the ‘Gang of Four’ are in it or not.” (“My Past” 294) It is obvious that the “fascist” had been changed to “feudalism”. After this postscript, Ba Jin began to talk about anti-feudalism at various venues and no longer mentioned “fascist”.

Many scholars in mainland China, particularly the “new left” critics have discussed the anti-feudalism trend as the first cultural, political and ideological trend occurred in the 1980s. For them, anti-feudalism discourse in the 1980s was an ideological equipment to draw parallelisms between the May Fourth Movement and the New Era, and also between Imperial China and Socialism China, thus a collaboration between the intellectuals and the authorities to open China for the global capitalism and modernization (He 6-8). However, the anti-feudalism here Ba Jin exploited was quite understandable, and may not be that complicated and need to be read symptomatically, because for Ba Jin, the anti-feudalism was maybe a merely safe harbor that he had known well.

Herzen’s memoir was not the only text that be taken as an anti-feudalism text by Ba Jin. If we take a look at Ba Jin’s discussions on his own representative work, *Family* (1933), we could also find a shift on the issue of anti-feudalism. Even before 1949, Ba Jin had get used to anti-feudalism discourse while revising *Family*. Among all the important novels of modern China, Ba Jin’s *Family* is famous not only for its artistic or political achievement but also its frequency of revision, which is eight times. In the beginning, Ba Jin had always argued that the family of the protagonist Gao, which is the core image of the novel, is a capitalist family, however, in the 1940s, he begun to explain that Gao’s family is feudal landlord family or bureaucratic landlord family according to the left ideology and historiography which was largely influenced by Stalin’s *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, during the Cultural Revolution, *Family* was accused to be “poisonous grass” along with Ba Jin’s other works. These experiences could explain why Ba Jin embraced the anti-feudalism discourse enthusiastically even after the Cultural Revolution. On August 9th, 1977, in the postscript of the reprinted edition of *Family*, Ba Jin says: “Even my best work is just a diagnosis from a doctor who was not smart enough. I have seen the illness of the old society, but I cannot bring up a remedy. [...] In nowadays, my works have fulfilled their historical mission, and it is better for the readers to forget them. [...] however,] They may help the readers to understand the situation in the feudal society.” (“Postscript” 455) After one year later, on Nov. 26th, 1978, in the preface of his *Torch Fire* (Jue huo ji), Ba Jin says: “I

3 On Ba Jin’s revision of *Family*, see Jin (59-106); on feudalism in CCP’s historiography, see Dirlik (*Revolution* 95-136; “Universalisation”; “Social”).

said that my work has fulfilled its ‘historical mission’. It was not a lie. But I did not understand it. Today I know I was wrong. The specter of county magistrate Gao is haunting everywhere, I have to admit my ignorance and blindness.” (“Preface” 474)

What happened between the two paratexts? The most important cause was the ambiguous political atmosphere in 1977-1978. The period between 1977-1978 is sometimes called “two years of hesitation” in the official historiography in mainland China. The “hesitation” reflects not only the “hesitation” of the authorities but also the self-confrontation of the intellectuals who could and would speak of the Cultural Revolution. Because of the influence of “Two Whatevers” (两个凡是 Liang ge fan shi), the will for reformation could not be pushed forward promptly. As a maneuver, the reformers launched the “Movement of Discussing the Criteria of Truth” in the spring of 1978, and then published one talk of Mao Zedong dated on Jan. 30th 1962, which mentioned how to deal with the mistakes of Mao himself and the Central Committee. In that talk, Mao Zedong says that if he could not acknowledge his own mistake, he was worse than the feudal emperor Liu Bang (Mao 2). The talk was published on *People’s Daily* on July 1st, 1978, and also was broadcast on the air to the whole country. On the same day, Ba Jin wrote in his diary: “Got up at seven. Listen to Chairman Mao’s talk in 1962 broadcast.” (*Works Vol. 26* 258) After then, various articles began to discuss feudalism as one of the main causes and crimes of the Cultural Revolution, so did Ba Jin in his writings on *Family* and Herzen’s memoir.

It could be tell that the anti-feudalism discourse opened a certain space for Ba Jin and other intellectuals (even the new authorities) to criticize the Cultural Revolution. But the problem was that this discourse maybe not so handy as Ba Jin and some intellectuals like him wished. As Arif Dirlik termed it, “Feudalism” in contemporary Chinese historiography was not merely an economical and political concept, but a “conceptual trap”: as a concept that endured almost a century-long exploitation by the authorities and intellectuals, “feudalism” had already been a signifier just signifies some old things unwelcome by the authorities, and the concept has lost its function to depict the reality and form questions (“Chinese” 119-121). In this sense, the concepts of “feudalism” and “anti-feudalism” were exploited again in the 1980s by the authorities and the intellectuals with carelessness and willfulness. In Ba Jin’s pieces, “feudalism” was pointed to the political persecution, the destroy of cultural works, and the unpleasant family systems and conventions, so on and so forth. In other words, one does not have to define what does he or she mean by “feudalism”, but just “anti” it.

Ba Jin himself soon realized the danger of the “trap”. In May 1981, Tse-tsung

Chow interviewed Ba Jin and raised a question: “In oversea Chinese communities such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, people praise traditional Chinese culture highly, however, the evil legacy of feudalism that people in China are talking about nowadays, have not led to catastrophes that are similar to the Cultural Revolution in those communities. Therefore, [...] is there any other causes?” (Ba, “Talk” 567) Then Ba Jin gave a vague reply: “The feudalism issue and Confucianism is hard to explain, because I have not done enough researches.” (567) Chow’s question and Ba Jin’s replay indicated the core problem of anti-feudalism discourse, and Ba Jin obviously knew that the “feudalism” discourse was far from enough to carry on the reflections on the history and the responsibilities to build a better future. Therefore, after some equivocations, Ba Jin began to talk about the independent mind of intellectuals, while completely forgot the anti-feudalism issue.

When Chow visited Ba Jin, the latter had dropped his translation, and turned to his own work, *Random Thoughts*. Actually, at the time when “A Letter” was published in 1977, the translation of the first two volumes had already been finished (and got published at last in 1979). After that, Ba Jin went on his translation of the third volumes for a short time, and then abandoned it for his own writing thoroughly. In *Random Thoughts*, Ba Jin had scarcely talked about “feudalism” and “anti-feudalism” issues, instead, he did often raise the questions of the independence and confession of the intellectuals, deepened his critiques and reflections on the Cultural Revolution. What was more, in the whole volumes of *Random Thoughts*, Herzen and his memoir (the work that Ba Jin said in “A Letter” that it would be his “utmost honor” to translate) gradually vanished, while Leo Tolstoy gradually took the height as a mentor who could symbolize the notion of “confession”. Hence the questions here should be: Did Ba Jin really viewed Herzen in the way of anti-feudalism, so when he abandoned the issue, he abandoned Herzen altogether? If the answer is not, what did Herzen contribute to Ba Jin’s new “thoughts”?

### **III. Belated Anarchist Ba Jin and His Interpretation of Herzen**

Indeed, Herzen did not vanish from Ba Jin’s mind or new works, and Ba Jin did not just take Herzen’s memoir on the anti-feudalism ground. He announced that *Random Thoughts* was the byproduct of his translation (Ba *Random* 124). It was in this “byproduct”, Ba Jin turned from anti-feudalism issue to new issues such as “confession” and “independence” of the intellectuals, and if we stand back and take a distant look at Ba Jin’s life long relationship with Herzen, we could clearly see that Herzen in someway had inspired Ba Jin’s new thoughts.

In the postscript of his translation, Ba Jin says: “*My Past and Thoughts* is my



mentor. The first time I read it was on Feb the 5th, 1928. At that time, my first novel was yet to complete. My experiences were simple, but I got the fire inside of me. It was burning. I had feelings, love and hate, blood and tears. I need to turn them into lines. Unconsciously, I was influenced by Herzen.” (“My Past” 292) Like this postscript, Ba Jin introduced frequently his encounter with Herzen in the 1920s, or his promise to Mr. Lu Xun in the 1930s. However, if we take a look at Ba Jin’s literary life, we would be surprised that Herzen perhaps was not so important to young Ba Jin than he announced later. Back to the 1920s, Ba Jin has translated various political and literary works of Russia writers, and the two most important writers for him was Turgenev and Kropotkin, not Herzen. Hence in Olga Lang’s famous biographical study of Ba Jin, *Pa Chin and His Writings: Chinese Youth Between the Two Revolutions* (1967), the author discussed many Russia writers who have influenced Ba Jin’s thoughts and writings, only with Herzen missed (232-245).

The relationship between Ba Jin and his mentor (or mentors) should be set back to Ba Jin’s young ages, when he was not a novel writer, but an enthusiastic anarchist. Born in 1904, Ba Jin was a son of the magistrate of a county in Sichuan, far from those big cities like Shanghai and Peking, he got to know anarchism from magazines and pamphlets that were spread after the May-Fourth Movement. At the age of 16, Ba Jin devoted himself to the writings of anarchists like Peter Kropotkin, Leopold Kampf, and Emma Goldman. Just one year later, Ba Jin began his own writing on social issues and anarchist thoughts, and got contact with an anarchist organization named “均社”(jun she), which means the society of equality. In 1923, at the age of 19, Ba Jin went to Shanghai, and later Nanjing, to attend middle schools with his older brother. From this year on, Ba Jin became highly activated in translation and writings of anarchist materials, and even wrote letters to Emma Goldman, whom Ba Jin named his “spiritual mother”. Shortly, as a young student, he was involved in the heated debates between anarchists, communists and nationalists in the revolutionary atmosphere of the late 1920s (Li 516-520).

However, people in the 1920s would witness the downfall of Chinese anarchism. As Arif Dirlik (1991) has shown with rich details in his book, before the May-Fourth Movement, Chinese anarchists like Shi Fu, Liu Shipei and He Zhen, had spread anarchism thoughts for more than 15 years and cultivated the soil for various revolutionary discourses. When Ba Jin came to the stage in 1925 as a graduate of the middle school, the heyday of Chinese anarchism had largely passed, and it was now the Nationalists and Communists leading the way. Sakai Hirobumi notes that as a keen follower, Ba Jin at that time was not able to join in any actual anarchists’ activities but just writing and translation, and kept his anarchism as a conceptual

ideal (“Chinese” 54). For Sakai Hirobumi, this explains why Ba Jin would choose to go abroad to France in Jan 1927, when the Northern Expedition was pushed forward successfully. Sakai says: “When the unwelcome revolution was proceeding, it left Ba Jin no other choice, but leave this unpleasant country and exile himself, in order to keep the purity of his thoughts and critical position.” (“On *Destruction*” 63)

Though it is difficult for us to know the exact reasons for Ba Jin to go abroad, Sakai’s explanation reveals us a reasonable remote cause for it. As a reachable sacred land, France had a great attraction for Ba Jin. However, the problem was that he was not good at French, and as a poor tuberculosis patient, he felt gloomy and lonely soon after he arrived France. To soothe himself, Ba Jin began to write a novel titled *Destruction* (1929), with an anarchist, nihilist, and terrorist hero who committed suicide for his ideal. As Saikai Hirobumi has pointed out in his study of this work, literature was a depressive but at the same time a proper way for Ba Jin as a belated anarchist (“On *Destruction*” 65).

At this very point, Ba Jin encountered Herzen in his transformation from an idealized anarchist to a novelist. Though Herzen was versatile figure, or a “fox” in Isaiah Berlin’s term, for “liberals and radicals, populists and anarchists, socialists and communists have all claimed him as an ancestor” (523), in the beginning of the 20th century, Herzen got to be known by Chinese intellectuals mainly as a nihilist revolutionary, and at that time, the most famous work of him for Chinese readers was his political novel, *Who is to Blame?* (1846). We could not be sure when and how did Ba Jin get to know Herzen for the first time, but according to what did he say afterward, it was perhaps through Peter Kropotkin’s *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1889) and *Russian Literature: Ideals and Realities* (1905), and the time should be before his leaving from China (Zhou 132). In 1928, when lived in Château-Thierry, Ba Jin bought an English version of *My Past and Thoughts*, translated by Constance Garnett; and in the same year, he wrote a long essay on Herzen, titled “Herzen and Westernizers”. Several years later, this essay was inserted into Ba Jin’s volume *The History of Russian Social Movement* (1935), and Herzen in here was not viewed as a soul-stirring writer, but “the most outstanding figure among the waken Russian youths”, “mentor of the youth movement in Russia”, and a “desperado” (“The History” 560). In other words, Ba Jin at this time recognized Herzen as a comrade of Bakunin and Kropotkin, and one of his many spiritual mentors during his depressive spiritual exile.

In 1929, when Ba Jin came back to China as a rising novelist, he began to translate a part of Herzen’s memoir, and titled it as “Death of My Mother”, which is a short piece selected from the fifth volume of the English version of the memoir

that depicts the death of Herzen's mother. Ba Jin may find his own condolences from this part, for his mother died in pain when he was only 10 years old. Later, after Ba Jin had established his identity and fame as a young novelist who was a symbol of emotion and passion, he translated another piece from this volume in 1936, and combined the two pieces together with other parts of this volume and published it in 1940, titled "The Story of a Family Drama". It seems that the fifth volume of Herzen's memoir attracts Ba Jin very much, for it is the most miserable and passionate part of the whole book. According to Isaiah Berlin, the events and scenes in this volume, including the affair between Herzen's wife and his friend, the death of his mother, son and wife, were the original drive for Herzen to write his memoir (511). However, this private volume was deleted from the memoir and published posthumously. In the preface of *The Story of a Family Drama*, Ba Jin says that "this is a 'study of the psychology of passionate emotion', or in the author's words, 'a psychopathological story'" ("The Story" 206).

We could see that there was a divergence between the anarchist Ba Jin's studies of Herzen and the novelist Ba Jin's translation of the memoir. In his studies, Herzen was a thinker and activist in social movement, while in his translation, Herzen was an individual with psychological depth and personal emotions. If we locate this phenomenon into the literary life of Ba Jin, we could find that this divergence did not come out occasionally or unintentionally, but a result of long-term spiritual and identical transformation. Chen Sihe has argued that because the democratic space for China had been more and more narrow from May Fourth Movement to the 1940s, and also because the social movement had totally failed, writers of Ba Jin's generation concerned more about their vocation as literary writers, rather than intellectuals on the square like Lu Xun ("From"; "The Significance"). This argument is rightful enough, if we narrow the scope to those writers who were outside of the communists' camp of left-wing, as Ba Jin was. This transformation could also be seen in Ba Jin's novels, "from advocating revolution to sympathy for nonentity" (Chen "The Significance" 9).

From this point, we could easily understand why Herzen could be the choice for Ba Jin during the Cultural Revolution. Of course, among all Ba Jin's idols like Kropotkin or Turgenev, Herzen was a relatively safer choice. After all, Herzen was not really conspicuous in the political spectrum of mainland China even during the Cultural Revolution, while Kropotkin or Turgenev were accused as poisonous grass. In 1951, Lenin's *In Memory of Herzen* was translated into China by Cao Baohua. In this article, Lenin praised Herzen as a great writer who helped the preparation of Russian revolution (76). This article was reprinted again and again along with

some other articles on literature and art by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, hence gave Herzen a safe place. But the concrete reason for Ba Jin to choose Herzen again may be his personal experiences of the Cultural Revolution. In “A Letter”, Ba Jin mentioned that “Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and their confederates in Shanghai” allowed him to translate. This should be dated back to the late period of the Cultural Revolution, After Ba Jin’s wife, Xiao Shan’s miserable death in 1972 which was a knockdown destruction to Ba Jin. And then Ba Jin was released from the Cadre School in suburban Shanghai and returned to his home. In 1973, Ba Jin himself asked to translate Herzen’s Memoir, and got the permission. The miserable death of his wife which was vividly depicted in his famous essay “In Memory of Xiao Shan”(1978) may sent him back to his “past” along with Herzen’s touching depictions of the death his mother, son and wife, and at last made Ba Jin to restart his translation.

Therefore, Herzen for Ba Jin in and after the Cultural Revolution was not really a figure who promoted “anti” any “isms”, but a wounded individual and sympathetic old friend, who could be retrieved from Ba Jin’s own past as well the political history. Ba Jin valued Herzen’s own words on his memoir: “the reflection of history on an individual who had occasionally set foot on the history’s path” (“Translator’s” 281). If we read the paragraph below from the memoir, we may find what Ba Jin felt in the late period of the Cultural Revolution:

All that is personal soon crumbles away, and to this destitution one has to submit. This is not despair, not senility, not coldness and not indifference: it is grey-haired youth, one of the forms of convalescence or, better, that process itself. Only by this means is it humanly possible to survive certain wounds. (Herzen xlviii)

The “means” here for Herzen was writing this memoir, and for Ba Jin at that moment, it was translating, which helped him to “bury everything personal and return to his youth” (Herzen xlviii). Here is another paragraph:

Life...lives, peoples, revolutions, beloved faces have appeared, changed and vanished between the Sparrow Hills and Primrose Hill; already their traces have almost been swept away by the pitiless whirlwind of events. Everything round me is changed. (Herzen xlix)

Obviously, on this path of history, Ba Jin believed Herzen and himself as fellow

travelers, witnesses and victims who had promoted, participated in and wounded by revolutions, and through his translation, Ba Jin was trying to revive his belief of the individual that was supposed to be the real agent of history. For Ba Jin, his sense of “individual” and his/her relationship with the total history was the real lesson that he got from Herzen, and that “individual” was inevitably an “intellectual”, whose responsibility in the 1980s was to take the burden of historical reflection on the Cultural Revolution, and even the responsibility of the history itself. To take over this burden and responsibility, Ba Jin stopped his translation to begin his own writings on history, that is *Random Thoughts*. From this point, we could tell that Herzen was still living in Ba Jin’s new issues of the intellectual in *Random Thoughts*.

However, the next question is, to what extent, this “individual”, or the discourse of “individual” in the 1980s could bring out the reflections on history, like Herzen did to Russia in the 19th century?

#### **IV. From *My Past and Thoughts* to *Random Thoughts***

The work *Random Thoughts* was written between 1978 to 1986, which is a compilation of almost 160 short pieces written on history, memories of friends, daily news, travel experiences, comments on social and cultural events, so on and so forth. Of course, although the topics were chosen “randomly” based on the daily news, matters and thoughts, most of these pieces are meant to draw some reflections on the Cultural Revolution.

As Ba Jin’s term “byproduct” indicated, the linkage between the two texts is very important, but has been somewhat neglected by researchers in mainland China who read Ba Jin as mainly a Chinese novelist and essayist, rather than an intellectual who was both a writer and a translator. Hence we should stop for a few seconds at the titles of the two works. The first Chinese title of Herzen’s memoir employed by Ba Jin in 1940 was “我的过去与思想 (wo de guo qu yu si xiang)”, which was a literal translation of the English title “my past and thoughts”. However, in 1977, Ba Jin employed a new title, “往事与深思 (wang shi yu shen si)”, which means “the past and contemplation”, or “the past and deep thoughts”. Compare to the earlier title, this one is more lyrical, rhetorical, and even nostalgic, and it suggests that the author would express his serious thinking and deep feelings. And then, after “A Letter” was published, some other intellectuals who were translating or were just interested in Herzen’s memoir got to know this news, and they not only wrote to Ba Jin to appreciate his hard-working, but also mailed their drafts or materials to him. One of them was Zang Zhonglun, a translator who at last



completed the whole translation from where Ba Jin ended, and published the whole translation along with Ba Jin as a co-translator. Zang suggested that considering Herzen's versatility and improvisations, maybe "random thoughts" was better than "deep thoughts". Ba Jin accepted the suggestion, and thanked Zang for inspiring him to title his own work as "Random Thoughts" (Zang 4).

Actually, the inspiration for Ba Jin was not only a matter of the title, but also a method to articulate his thinking responsibly and properly. Being trapped in various concepts, idioms and doctrines that are largely shaped in the history which Ba Jin could hardly recognize, Ba Jin and intellectuals like him who survived the Cultural Revolution may feel frustrated and dangerous to bring out the so-called "deep thoughts", and by contrast, "random thoughts" maybe an easier and more ambiguous choice, which gave Ba Jin more space and flexibility to write and (maybe more importantly) to don't-write. Therefore, the shift from "deep thoughts" to "random thoughts" may be read as a symptom of the way of Ba Jin's thinking on the Cultural Revolution and the total history.

In the preface (1987) of the bound volume of *Random Thoughts*, Ba Jin says that during the writing, he "did not have the confidence for himself. To be honest, I felt exhausted, like one stuck in the half-way, and does not move forward or backward. [...]I tried to find self-comfort by keep telling myself: just have a try." (*Random* 1) From these words, we could easily tell the author's difficulties of attempts to express and the biting-back of his words at the same time. For the reasons of these difficulties, Ba Jin says in this preface that he got many passive criticism on his writings, while felt more stronger desire and more necessities to write, but yet hard to figure out the ins and outs of the Cultural Revolution. So, how to solve this problem? Ba Jin finds a personal way: "dissect myself", and then "tell the truth".

By "dissecting himself", Ba Jin at one hand induced the idea of "individual" which got from the translation and later understanding of Herzen to his new writings on the Cultural Revolution, and at the other hand, he exchange the image of the individual from the one who was wounded by history to one who was not only wounded but also responsible for the wound. Of course, the "individual", was definitely an "intellectual", like Ba Jin himself. And by this tactical exchange, Ba Jin carefully shifted his target of critique from the subject who (such as the "Gang of Four" whom he condemned in "A Letter") may be truly responsible for the Cultural Revolution to the intellectuals. That was why when Tse-tsung Chow raised the question on the shortage of "anti-feudalism" discourse, Ba Jin turned to issues such as the independent mind of intellectuals. After all, while there were no possibilities to raise deep critiques toward history and reality, to reset the target to

the dependency and obedience of the intellectuals maybe a handy maneuver.

However, without the “deep thoughts” of the real subject who should take the responsibility of history, his reflections would always be unable to answer the questions haunted himself over and over, and while his reflections and confessions intensified, the pain and desperate of himself would also be raised. As a result, his writings and reflections were largely a text of self-scapegoating and self-torturing. In the preface of *Random Thoughts* that was cited above, Ba Jin depicts his “dissection” with creatural vividness:

These 150 articles are all about the feelings of a nonentity. I called them ‘feeble howl’, but they are really pus and blood from the open wounds. [...] To know myself, I have to dissect myself. I thought it would be easy, and it could at last reduce the pain, however, I was so clumsy to use my pen as a scalpel to cut my heart again and again. I could not do it, for it was so painful. I used to say that to treat myself harshly, but yet soft-handed while stabbed myself. I dared not to do deeper. On every page of these five volumes, there is blood, which was almost pus and blood from the wounds of the 10 years. Nevertheless, I knew that if I could not clean out the pus and blood, it would poison the whole body. (*Random* 1-2)

In this passage, Ba Jin brings the motif of “wound” that echoed the one in Herzen’s memoir, and adds the creatural elements similar to Christian martyrdom. Such martyrdom, leveled the morality of the whole volumes up, and turned the reflections or critiques to moral cries. However, the problem was still there: without reflections on the foundations, subjects and limitations of the “reflection”, while Ba Jin stressed on the necessities of “reflection” harder and harder, the moral cries were more and more desperate. At last, as the words “feeble howl” that Ba Jin exploited shows, such kind of moral cries may not bring out “deep thoughts” on the history, for the author unexpectedly yet predictably turned the suffer to some kind of power or capital to write and reflect, and the result was no more than an image of suffered individual in the text, and a new idol of intellectual in the contexts of the 1980s. By this time, he was trapped, again, but into his own conceptions. We could say that Ba Jin had shown the highest morality of reflection and independence in the 1980s, rather than reflection and independence themselves.

The way that Ba Jin’s raised his moral issue was not unusual in the 1980s. We should notice that when Ba Jin’s translation of the first two volumes of *My Past and Thoughts* along with the first volume of his *Random Thoughts* was published in

1979, the debates on “humanism”(人道主义) had been launched by writers, literary scholars, and some Marxism theoreticians. “Humanism” at large in modern China is certainly a trans-lingual issue, but the 1980s’ understanding of it was quite local and temporal. In 1993, Ba Jin wrote a short piece titled “No Gods” for Writer’s Publishing House edition of *Random Thoughts*, says:

I obviously remember that I transformed into a beast, but someone told me it was just a dream that last 10 years. Would we dream again? Why would not? My heart is still aching and bleeding. But I would not to dream again. I will not forget that I am a human being, and I decided not to transformed into a beast again. No matter who flog me on the back, I would not fall asleep again. Of course, I will never believe in any nonsense!

While there were no gods, there would be no beasts. We are all human beings. (*Random 1*)

These words has shown the common understanding of “humanism” among the intellectuals in the 1980s: the Cultural Revolution was inhuman and beast-like, therefore we need “humanism”, to treat human as human, to value and cherish humanity, that were largely belong to humanists, i.e. intellectuals. Unfortunately, such a pursuit for humanism was basically a passive reaction to history, rather than a active intervene into that history. Even we could say that the “humanism” discourse was basically a result of incapability of historical intervene, just as Ba Jin’s case has shown. “Humanism”, along with Ba Jin’s “reflection” or “independence”, were turned to be moral cries, and would always become “traps” for the intellectuals themselves.

However, we should also note that in the last line of “No Gods”, Ba Jin stressed out that the “beast” was brought or created by “gods” or the cults of “gods”. This sentence is printed in front of the “preface” cited above, should be read as radiocontrast agent for the implicit meanings of his esoteric writings. In this sense, those moral cries of the intellectuals did entrust literature to play a heroic role in the 1980s, and give not only intellectuals but also the authorities and the reading public to negotiate. Around literature sphere, there was a sense of autonomy (rather than real autonomy) that let the intellectuals viewed themselves active agent to restore order, energy and sympathy to our collective memory, hence a leadership for this country to heal itself and foster the transitional justice.

## V. Conclusion

Bei Dao argues that after 1949, “the profession of translating foreign literature became a haven under the severe pressure of the dictatorship. Many writers could hide within it to evade the threats and the harassment posed by the official discourse, and thereby partially satisfy their own creative desires. This enabled translation style to develop as a marginal form.” (61-62) He even named the “translation style” during the 1950-70s as “a quiet revolution” (64). Here we may regard the translation of *My Past and Thoughts* as a “haven” for Ba Jin, both politically and psychologically, and also it was one of those revolutionary translations which paved ways for the 1980s.

At last, we may get a better understanding of Ba Jin in the 1980s and his translation of *My Past and Thoughts*. With limited competence of Russian, Ba Jin’s translation may not be a good one, not to mention he never completed it. But it was a translation that Ba Jin employed to translate his past to the 1980s, translate his feels and thoughts of the Cultural Revolution to words, and translate the experiences of history to future generations. As a life-long anarchist, he was always searching for a sense of autonomy through political or literary writing and translation. By using the universalized concept “anti-feudalism”, Ba Jin revived his identity as a writer and find a way to articulate his condemnations on the Cultural Revolution, while trapping himself into the narrow space of the anti-feudalism discourse. With the issue of “individual”, “independent mind”, he was trying to break the limitation of anti-feudalism discourses, and bring out a kind of intellectual autonomy in the moral sense of self-discipline and confession. Although since there were no possibilities to raise “deep thoughts”, such self-discipline and confession was a sort of self-mutilation and self-sacrifice, which unintentionally made himself and the intellectuals scapegoats of the history. However, at the same time, he made himself and the intellectuals, as well as literature to be a new agent of history, to take the responsibilities of the history and the future, and made the 1980s a “Literary Age”, an age full of intellectual vigor.

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**Zhang Zhejun. *The Conception of the Third Type of Comparative Literature: Potentialities of Literary Archaeology*. Beijing: Peking University Press. 2016. ISBN 9787301265734. 402 pp.**

Mao Jianlei

(Shandong Normal University)

In 2016, Professor Zhang Zhejun (張哲俊) published his seminal work on theory of Comparative Literature, *The Conception of the Third Type of Comparative Literature: Potentialities of Literary Archaeology*, which was published by Peking University Press. Whereas the book's earlier companion volume, *The Image of Willow: Material Interchange and Sino-Japanese Ancient Literature*, is devoted to examining the material exchange and literary communication case by case, Zhang's latest work further builds a general theory of comparative literature which is grounded on Eastern Asian classical poetics. Since the third relationship of comparative literature which the book brings up is rooted in the specific research background and impressive accumulation of preceding findings, its theoretical pattern and methodological significance both merit more attention and closer analysis.

### **1. Proposing the Third Type of Comparative Literature**

Zhang Zhejun who graduated from Beijing University with a degree in Comparative Literature and World Literature, well-trained in Chinese, Japanese and Korean, has always been dedicated to East-Asian comparative literature studies. Exhibiting Zhang's hard work for many years, *The Image of Willow* focuses upon the image of "Yangliu" (楊柳) in Chinese and Japanese literature to restore the factual existence of "Yangliu" and the following effect on the expression of meaning in the context of Sino-Japan literary communication. The idea of the third type of comparative literature had already existed in the book. A special literary phenomenon was actually discovered when Zhang was engaged in empirical studies: the similarities are as striking as the dissimilarities between Chinese and

Japanese specific literary works; the positivistic relations seem as arguable as the aesthetic analogies seem defensible. The fact that it was the historical space or the life-world rather than the textual level in which the literary connections established themselves inspired Zhang to originate the term, the third relationship of comparative literature, quite distinct from the first relationship espoused by the French school in positivistic studies and the second relationship intended by the American school in parallel studies, which indicates the literary relationship mediated by the material exchange within the life-world consisting of different countries.

However, it is worth noting that the third relationship is quite different from the curves, which are employed to delineate multiple links between the releasers and the receivers in the studies of influence. “Authentic Comparative Literature usually works at the binary relationship between any two items only,”<sup>1</sup> declared Paul Van Tieghem, “and the item here can be a volume or an author or a group of each of them: the relationship thereof concerns the substance and content of the artistic works.” Also, Marius-François Guyard reckoned that comparatists “keep their eyes on mutual infiltration of genres, ideas, books and sentiments betwixt two or more types of literature.” Obviously, the study of influence, which the French School undertakes, concentrates on the causal chains of writers and their works. The third relationship, meanwhile, refers to the life-world as medium for connections: for Sino-Japan comparative literature, whilst the evidence for literary influence cannot always be corroborated, the similarities between literary texts can just stem from the affinities between the material circumstances which were indebted to the historical communication between China and Japan.

*The Conception of the Third Type of Comparative Literature* develops and expounds the theoretical system of the third type of Comparative Literature on the basis of Zhang’s previous studies on the image of “Yangliu” in Chinese and Japanese classical literature. Based on East Asian traditional poetics in which the poetry was deemed as historical records, Zhang’s theory distances itself from the discourse of western literary theories and studies, utilizing the rich indigenous theoretical heritage to interpret the classical literary phenomena of East Asia. In this way, Zhang accelerates the modernization of classical oriental poetics and sets up an academic discourse system with Chinese characteristics.

The debate over the relationship between literature and history in Chinese traditional poetics, especially the compelling argument which Zhang Xuecheng

1 Tieghem, Paul Van. *On Comparative Literature* 比較文學論 (Bijiao wenxue lun). Translated by Dai Wangshu 戴望舒. Changchun: Jinlin Publishing Group. 2009, 138.

(章學誠) put forward, “the six classics were all history” (六經皆史), contributes significantly to the discursive formation of the third type of comparative literature. The differentiation between literature and history, which the modern professional academy takes for granted, may be traced back to Aristotle. Aristotle believed that the poet’s function is to describe, “what is possible as being probable or necessary,” whereas a historian describes “the thing that has happened,” which suggests that imagination and fictionality are essential to the poet’s craft. Nevertheless, the poetics derived from the western classical literature may be challenged by the actual situation of Chinese classical poetry. When Zhang Xuecheng declared that “the six classics were all history,” he meant that *The Book of Songs* (詩經) could be viewed as history as well as poetry. In other words, the ancient Chinese perceived their earliest collection of poems as historical documents as well as literary texts, for in their minds history and literature were one and the same. While, however, it is uncomplicated to explain the relationship between *The Book of Songs* and history in light of Zhang Xuecheng’s framework, there are still several academic issues pending further discussion: How can one defend the identity between classical poetry and history? Was it a common phenomenon? How widespread was the phenomenon?

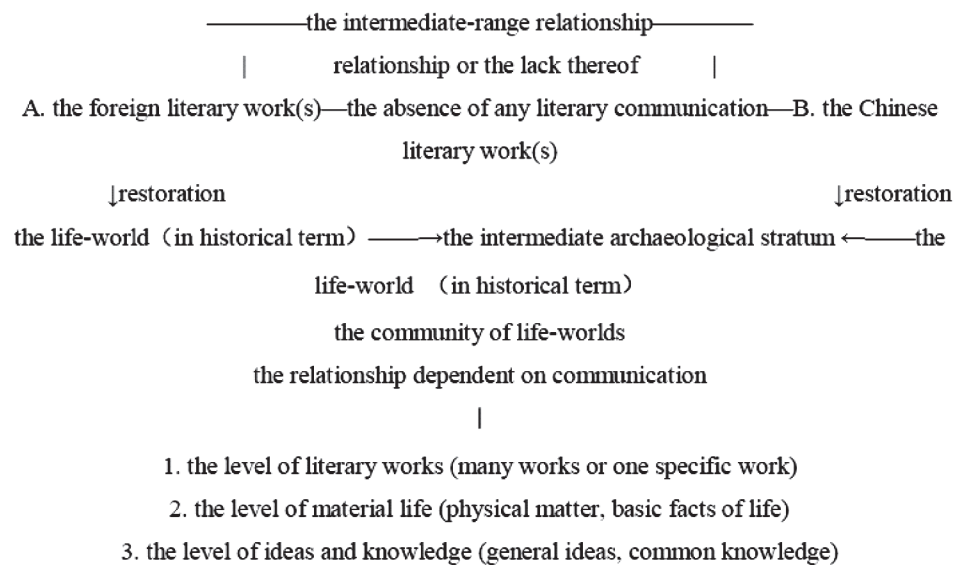
Chapter 2 of *The Conception of the Third Type of Comparative Literature* deals with the basic pattern of Chinese classical poetics, “poetry as history.” The historization of poetry, as the significant innovative approach of Zhang Zhejun, is the crucial factor in the construction of the third type of comparative literature. As early as ten years ago, Zhang raised the proposition, “journalization as historization,” which met with general approval in classical Chinese academic circles. In the mode of “poetry as history,” the principle of authenticity was an integral part of the writing criterion for the documentation of classical poetry, not to mention the time, space and causes of the events as well as the participants chronicled in the titles, prefaces, postscripts and texts. In fact, since the journal was barely deemed a prevailing genre by the literati of ancient China, poetry partly became the alternative genre to perform the journalizing function, which is not only the rationale behind the historization of poetry, but also the grounds for restoring history or the life-world via poetry. It is therefore well-founded to conclude that the close correspondence between literature and history was a general phenomenon in ancient China, revealing the yawning gap between the occident and the orient along with the conceptual change from ancient to present China. In ancient East Asia, historical writing didn’t exclude the use of rhyme at all; on the contrary, poetry was acknowledged as historical records “filling in blanks of history” (補史闕), reflected



also in “reciprocal corroboration of literature and history” (文史互證) which Chen Yinke (陳寅恪) promoted. In the vision of the third type of comparative literature, it was comprehensive historical communication rather than mere literary contact between countries that shaped the comparable life-worlds whose resemblance could be explored through the study of poetry characterized by journalization and historization.

## 2. The Construction of the Third Relationship of Comparative Literature

In order to make his theory easier to understand, Zhang Zhejun did provide an illustration of the construction of the third relationship of comparative literature in his book.



The fundamentals of the third relationship of comparative literature includes the Chinese and foreign literary works as well as the Chinese and foreign life-worlds (concerning historical items); besides, there is still a community of life-worlds beyond, i.e. the intermediate archaeological stratum through which the Chinese and foreign literary works built relationships, suggesting the connections between the transmitters and the receivers here, as previously mentioned, in contrast to the direct literary contacts, which existed in the life-worlds. Thus, while the object of the study of the third relationship is simply a set of Chinese and foreign literary works, the objective of the study is to restore the life-worlds and the exchange between them, which can be reached only when the physical matter and life-worlds are taken into account. Furthermore, only if the concrete situation of historical

communication is represented and the seemingly separate life-worlds of different countries make up a community of life-worlds together is there the third relationship of comparative literature. Finally, it is no surprise that great significance is attached to the study of the intermediate archaeological stratum in view of the third type of comparative literature since the historical communication between life-worlds by which the literary works of divergent countries were linked is of vital importance.

In his book, Zhang Zhejun diagrams three levels from the intermediate archaeological stratum. The first one is the level of material life, which consists of physical matter and the basic facts of life. In this respect, the transnational identical or similar phenomena resulted from extensive communication: Although the writings of poets from different countries seemed to be parallel cases, there were nevertheless indirect relations between them as physical matter and the basic facts of life were shaped under the influence of comprehensive international exchange. Accordingly, to address the issues in the level of material life, one must tackle the following questions: How did the material exchange happen? How did the material exchange affect literary writing? Which literary image reflected it? How was the literary imagination of physical matter generated? For example, “Song of the Tower of the Prince of Yue” (越王樓歌) by Du Fu (杜甫), “Visiting Chourakuji Temple” (游長樂寺) by Minamoto no Tsunenobu (みなもと の つねのぶ), “Staying Home” (不出門) by Sugawara no Michizane (すがわら の みちざね) and “A Five-character Companion Piece on Springtime” (五言奉和春日作一首) by Ono no Minemori (お の の みねもり) without exception represented “tiles” and hence similar scenery which was the symbol of status. However, the relationship between Du Fu and his Japanese counterparts was not a parallel one despite the impracticality of corroborating any direct literary exchange between them. The fact was, more importantly, that Chinese and Japanese poets witnessed similar physical matter with comparable social significance and therefore composed verses sharing resembling images. In brief, it was the intermediate level of material life that connected Chinese and Japanese poetry.

The second level of the intermediate archaeological stratum is the level of ideas and knowledge. That is to say, universal ideas and common knowledge also constitute the intermedia of the third relationship of comparative literature: If an idea, or a kind of knowledge, traveling abroad, becomes a sort of ubiquitous opinion in daily life, then the opinion as the intermedium is as reliable as the aforementioned physical matter. For example, many Buddhist ideas and Confucian concepts widely disseminated in East Asia had permeated the Chinese and Japanese literary works and facilitated the affinities between the works lacking in

direct literary communication. Nonetheless, the first and the second levels can be transformed to each other, so there is no dichotomy between them. In ancient Japan, willows were always planted at the front entrances of various buildings, which was not only a basic fact of life but also public knowledge, for the willows which were connected to the worship of life in ancient East Asia would bless the family with health and prosperity. In other words, the reason why Chinese and Japanese poets could convey similar meanings by willow imagery was due to the willow's commonness both in a material and epistemological sense. However, it was the second level in which the exchange of material culture such as the significance, imagery, imagination and aesthetics of physical matter occurred.

Lastly, there is the level of literary works that refers to the specific literary works with particular spatial extension and temporal duration, which share similar or identical factors or depict analogous material phenomena. From the point of view of the third type of comparative literature, it doesn't matter whether direct literary exchange existed, for the noteworthy interaction actually took place between the works and two other levels, which consist of physical matter and ideas. Then it is preferable here to restore the life-world, i. e. the first and the second levels, from the literary works, based on which the intermedia and the third relationship can be further explored. Thus, the three levels of archaeological stratum keep a kind of vertical relation: At the top of the stratum is the third level of literary works, with the first and the second levels found below. The literary works whose contents must be checked against historical reality are definitely the most important part among the three levels for the restoration of the life-world.

While the traditional research of comparative literature on direct literary communication has always been carried out in two dimensions, the communication of materials, ideas and knowledge, which is supposed to be the third relationship, should be explored in three dimensions. As previously mentioned, the material exchange and information exchange are always interlocked with each other: If the material exchange can be authenticated in the course of study, probably so is the information exchange, and vice versa. The message that the material takes along would change in the process of communication, and Zhang coined the term, "consistent communication" (同向交流), to refer to the variation whose basic logic hardly ever deviates from the original sense. Interestingly enough, Zhang also created the term, "reverse communication" (逆向交流), to indicate the situation when the signifier moves across the national boundary with the revolutionary mutation of the signified and the connotation. "Yangliu," for instance, initially supposed to be the divine tree, became the symbol of goblins and ghosts in Edo

literature in Japan. The fundamental change actually occurred in the life-world. The custom of planting “Yangliu” in the cemeteries originated in China and was spread to Japan later, but the very same “Yangliu” which signified willows in the context of the Chinese cemeteries denoted the white poplars instead in the Japanese burial sites. So, since the willows and the white poplars shared the same term and the cemeteries were regarded as haunted space, it was no wonder that the willows lost the function of exorcism and were converted into the symbol of ghosts in the Edo era. The simple comparison between Chinese and Japanese texts, confined to the traditional framework of the French and American schools, easily leads to the misjudgment that there was a typical parallel relationship without any concrete contact as both the physical matter and meaning were different. Conversely, if the intermediate life-world could be taken into consideration, it would be much easier to observe the indirect contacts on the level of material life, which gave rise to the radical textual mutation.

### **3. Literary Archaeology: An Approach of the Third Type of Comparative Literature**

Distinct from the recently popular model for literary studies as being centered on ideological themes and artistic characteristics, the third type of comparative literature attaches great importance to the study of material objects, which has been neglected for a long time. Specifically, Zhang’s distinctive study, as his case studies such as *The Image of Willow* show, in consideration of the objectivity of the object of the study, is fully different from the traditional studies of images and motifs. As a result, Zhang has developed a methodological system, literary archaeology (文學考古學), to meet the special requirements of the third type of comparative literature. Literary archaeology, which is an unprecedentedly new academic term, showing the influence of the methodologies of archaeologists and historians, intends to restore historical and life facts by examining the representations of materials in literary texts. In other words, Zhang means to delineate the lost quotidian facts in the historical space and further reinterpret literary works on the basis of historical reality and then carry out the research on international literary relationships as the aim of his study. Taking objectivity and scientific empiricism of his positivistic study seriously, Zhang has renounced the prevailing literary criticism, which in his opinion could be regarded as a sort of self-justification, and for many years, Zhang has always been working towards the establishment of the verifiability and repeatability of literary research.

In some sense, literary archaeology is primarily an interdisciplinary approach

reliant upon the natural affinity between literature, archaeology and history. And again, the theoretical foundation of literary archaeology is based on the tradition of East Asian classical poetics, “poetry as history,” for if the essence of literary works is fictionality instead of authenticity, which means historical reality has not been incorporated into the texts and the foregoing restoration has no grounding, so literary archaeology as a method of literary study is doubtless out of the question. When Zhang gives priority to the historical study of which Zhang makes literary study a special component, the comprehensive model of former research is certainly needed to be replicated in the latter field. So, literary archaeology, as an attempt at comprehensiveness, is not a cheap collage of literature and archaeology. On the contrary, it is all-inclusive research on literary occurrence and development within the historical framework, in which the relationship between literature and other academic sectors can be viewed from the standpoints of divergent disciplines.

Literary archaeology as a methodology for the third type of comparative literature, to cut a long story short, aims to refix the material facts and life-worlds in the course of history by re-examining the poetry and prose from different countries. Then, Zhang provides a pragmatic approach to the delineation of the third relationship in history in his book. That is, to restore the life-worlds from different national literature, one must start from the individual fact within the spatial-temporal continuum, which is the point of departure to restore the general material fact across time and space and demarcate the border of it. For only when the study is promoted to the universal level can one prove the existence of a community of life-worlds and then represent meticulously the communication process in which the intermediate archaeological stratum came into view. Clearly, the isolated occurrence and accidental being can hardly lead to the substantiation of any communities. Moreover, since the concrete facts are always dispersed, the researcher needs to hunt for the “fragments” in different countries and revitalize them in order to conduct the comparative study in which the specific circumstance of communication within the community of life-worlds can be exhibited. For example, the scenery of a Buddhist temple with pine trees had frequently found its way into the classical poetry of China and Japan, and it is especially notable that the image of pine trees at the entrance of Chourakuji temple (ちょうらくじ) in Kyoto constantly recurred in the Chinese poems in the Heian period. For the practice of literary archaeology, the first step is to collect the Heian writings concerning pine trees at the doorway (門松) of Chourakuji temple, which is aimed at the restoration of the individual fact within the spatial-temporal continuum. And the following research can be classified into two aspects: On the one hand, the researcher should



learn the circumstances of pine trees in front of the other Buddhist temples in the other periods of Japan and assess the extent to which the planting of pine trees in front of the temples had become normal, which is the systematic restoration of the general case of the pine trees featured in the Japanese context; on the other hand, the historical situation, appearance and lineage of pine trees at the doorways of Chinese Buddhist Temples should also be explored for the bilateral comparison. Lastly, since the pine trees, as a sort of universal fact, existed in the life-worlds of so many Chinese and Japanese ancient poets and the relevant historical communication could be dated to the Tang Dynasty, the third relationship between the pine trees in front of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist temples can eventually be confirmed—there was no direct exchange between the literary texts depicting the temples with pine trees, but the indirect communication between life-worlds in the historical level truly contributed to the faithful representations of the pine trees by the Chinese and Japanese poets.

As a whole, *The Conception of the Third Type of Comparative Literature* exhibits a Chinese comparatist's intellectual endeavor to construct a discourse system of comparative literature, which is based on native theoretical resources and linked with the tradition of East Asian poetics. The third type of comparative literature, as a new academic paradigm, manifests the existence of the third relationship which is beyond the field of view of influence and parallel studies, for the kernel of the third relationship is the communication between life-worlds which requires reconstruction in the light of literary representations and other documentation. Thus, literary archaeology, which Zhang has initiated as another theoretical innovation in his book, deserves further attention and debate in academia for its serious reflection and innovation of comparative literature and general literary criticism.

(Translated by Jiang Haitao)

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**David Damrosch. *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2020. ISBN 9780691134994. 386 pp.**

Jiang Haitao

(Beijing Normal University)

Since the comparative literature is always connected to the world literature in Chinese academic regime and the latter is doubtless one of the most promising undertaking in the international literary academia nowadays, it is little wonder that some Chinese comparatists tend to picture a scholar who specializes in the world literature comparing the literatures. But it doesn't follow that the theoretical construction of comparative literature is somewhat neglected in China. Quite the contrary, the comparative theories are consecrated here to the extent that the most of scholars in this field are haunted by the taboos and commandments of the discipline and some comparatists are so obsessed with finding, sharing and following the recipes for comparison that they barely have the opportunity to give the underlying model a rethink despite all their efforts to innovate the theoretical frame. In a word, what's missing here is not a creative passion, or the theoretical commitment, but a sort of alienation effect, a sense of alienation from the myth of theory, which can indeed be found in *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* which Damrosch published in 2020.

However, looking back on Franco Moretti's famous paper, *Conjectures on World Literature*, we will realize that it was not the first time that a specialist in the theory of world literature imparted his understanding of comparative literature. Backed up by his eloquence on the construction of the analytical model of comprehensive literary history, Moretti stated that there is only one simple reason for being a comparatist: that viewpoint is better (Moretti 61). Anyway, the viewpoint that Moretti mentioned is rather a theoretical perspective centering around the metaphors about tress and waves, a perception of the law of literary evolution which is also an abstraction constantly calibrated by the localized researches. If Moretti seems an author in favour of theoretical prescriptions, it is definitely not the general impression about Damrosch. With plenty of brilliant polyglot case studies, Damrosch's seminal work, *What is World Literature*, just gave a triple definition

for the world literature in the end, which in fact merely demarcates the scope of his subject. Nevertheless, persisting in his all-inclusive writing style in *Comparing the Literatures*, Damrosch re-examined the relationship between the various theoretical conjectures and the comparative literature as an academic field, leading to assimilation of propositions of literary theories, translation studies, studies of world literature and interdisciplinary researches. What is noteworthy is that although the reflection upon diverse academic paradigms does certainly not amount to the simple rejection of theories, it also doesn't indicate entire absorption of them. Rather, it is a revisiting with critical consciousness at varied assumptions whose valences are now re-evaluated in a holistic context, exhibiting a self-constraint attitude towards utilization of any single theoretical frame. Thus, Damrosch actually took an in-between position between different theoretical propositions, and more importantly, between the material standpoints and the theoretical perspectives.

As it is known to all, the dichotomy between the empirical and the abstract is a vital issue for Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* which intends to overcome the supposedly insuperable antinomy between internal criticism and external criticism. For Casanova, the literariness as a mysterious quality can be disenchanted when the single work is checked according to its relation to the entire literary universe of which it is a part (Casanova 3-4). It seems that totality of the research of world literature could endow the researcher with a vantage point through which one can transcend the general epistemological limit to relocate, renovate and even revitalize the trite academic notions. The same goes for Damrosch's *Comparing the Literatures*. With a seemingly chaotic outward appearance, the book investigates nearly all prevailing issues of comparative literature such as its-to quote the titles of each chapter-origins, emigrations, politics, theories, languages, literatures, worlds and the last but not the least, comparisons. In fact, the logic behind the sequence of chapters is rather narratological than academically speculative, and in consideration of the writing style which is quite entertaining and appealing, the arrangement could be reckoned as Damroschian which means that the line of reasoning dormant inside the text needs to be reconstructed by engaging readers who could actually take the proper position between the sheer fragmental and the absolute systematic.

After all, Damrosch delineated the internal struggle of Herder, that is, the contradiction between systematic thinking and a deep suspicion of all systems, in the opening chapter of his book. It seems to Damrosch that the intellectual irresolution inflicting Herder throughout the whole life led to his open-mindedness which not only facilitated the constant mutation of his thought but also drove his

philosophical introspection into continuous collision with the varieties of social reality (Damrosch 21-22). And Herder's impatience with the received ideas and methods was historicized by Damrosch who depicted meticulously Herder's personal experience within the panorama of his world. In other words, the spirit of the life in the end of 18th century was projected on the pioneering comparatist whose portrait could finally be sketched by a series of oxymorons: a localized universalist, a secularized pastor, an internationalist nationalist... Thus, his complex character should be regarded as, to appropriate Damrosch's words, "the fruit of deep reflection on the uncertainties of cultural belonging in a radically relativistic world" (Damrosch 19). However, at the same time, Damrosch suggested his own world is also a "radically relativistic" one: a world suffering from varied disasters "from the crisis of migration and of the environment to the worldwide rise of inequality, together with violent conflicts that have the United States involved in an Orwellian state of perpetual war" (Damrosch 4). In a word, the *Zeitgeist* of our life in the present moment gave Damrosch an irrefutable reason to reinterpret the significance of comparative literature which is supposedly able to respond to the crises of our time.

Let's be more dramatic: it is the epoch of belief, and it is the epoch of incredulity. Anyway, a world rushing off the rails cannot be imagined with any existing consensus and the rampant rises of xenophobia and populism are real threats which signal the danger of ideological void without timely filling of sound judgement. It was why Damrosch highlighted the internationalism, realism and humanism of comparative literature in his book. To trace the discipline's origins (a plural term), Damrosch re-established the foundations of comparative literature on the progression of emigrations in the global context, which arouses my interest to juxtapose the readings of the first two chapters, "Origins" and "Emigrations". In the narration of Damrosch, the rise of comparative literature was also a process of emigrations which cannot be presented without the demonstration of the diasporic experiences of the predecessors such as de Staël, Posnett, Hu Shih and Auerbach, to name a few. Thus, the discipline's universalism was rooted in the situation of its birth that was not a transient incident but a story of long duration, which remind us of Walter Benjamin's illumination that the origin "is meant not the coming-to-be of what has originated but rather what originates in the becoming and passing away" and as a category it is not "purely logical, but rather historical" (Benjamin 24-25). For instance, the historical consciousness was clearly manifested in Damrosch's statement that the comparative literary history "gained a sure footing only with the inclusion of the Oriental" (Damrosch 14), amending the stale one-sided impression



about eastward spread of western knowledge and visualizing the relevance of the contact between the occident and the oriental in the global academic history. Just like Herder's internal conflict between the secular philosophy and the mystical theology, besides the opposition between the absent genesis (a singular term) and the origins, the tension in Damrosch's thought also found other expressions in the dichotomies such as the institutional politics versus the wider political scene, the close reading versus the distant reading, the globalization as a mega trend versus the principle status of nation-states, and finally, the viewpoint of theories versus the viewpoint of materials. Although most of the issues by no means broke away from the traditional concerns of our discipline, they were still given new prominence in the context both academic and ideological which Damrosch offered.

In Damrosch's opinion, the correspondence between institutional academic research and construction of public consensus constitutes the basis for further discussion of other issues, and this was probably the reason that "politics" came to his attention just following "origins" and "emigrations" which as suggested above actually together unfold the historical map of the discipline in the early stage. As far as the American comparative literature, Damrosch pointed out again that the broader-based studies of American school had always been carried out "at the price of a pervasive dissociation from American literature and from the country's cultural and political debates" (Damrosch 97). The consequence of the turning inward of most American comparatists was the absence of the discipline from the most part of the history of radical ideological struggle during the second half of 20th century. However, Damrosch still brought an unnoticeable line of the disciplinary history to the fore, an obscure politically engaged marathon proceeded by succeeding generations of (American and non-American) brilliant scholars including Northrop Frye, Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Gayatri C. Spivak who played important roles in the recent comparative literary history and who built organic connections between their academic careers and political concerns. As a senior professor surviving the drastic struggle of institutional politics, Damrosch also devoted many pages to discuss the strategies of comparatists for acquiring the greater share of budget, but obsession with "the storm in a teacup" would be against Damrosch's own intention especially because the core of institutional politics is ultimately an issue of disciplinary orientation whose permanent settlement need turn to the constantly further intervention of the department into the cultural politics of the United States and beyond.

To raise the prestige of comparatists, Damrosch declared that "a committed internationalism remains a hallmark of comparative studies today" (Damrosch

102), but in specific studies, the internationalism undoubtedly implies the polyglot competence which remains a challenge for many researchers though it is definitely one of the primary weapons for them to defend their own research against the accusation of “amateurishness” from other departments. For Damrosch, the prime concern is rather an ideological one: Will the sacred original-language texts be desecrated by the translations? Should the various translations be excluded from the field of comparative studies to maintain the purity of philological interpretation? As for the opposition between the close reading and the distant reading which are respectively promoted by Emily Apter and Franco Moretti, is there any possibilities of integrating one with the other? Obviously, Damrosch, a polyglot himself, is an opponent of dogmatism of sticking to original-language texts and quite different in this regard from his forerunners such as Harry Levin and Thomas Greene who insisted on the linguistic elitism of comparative literature in their reports on professional standards to the ACLA (Bernheimer 21-23, 29-32). What’s more, a sense of alienation from any exclusive preoccupations with a certain methodology, be it the close reading or distant reading, was suggested in the book. In Damrosch’s narration, as the reflective semifluency in language could be endowed with a critical consciousness of pre-set cultural roles in the milieu, the distant reading which makes full use of various renditions and existing research was highly rated for its undeniable value for expanding horizons of comparative studies. Nevertheless, without an intermediate knowledge of a language, the utilization of translations would work successfully only when the researchers have the basic reading ability “to check key passages” of original texts and the sufficient knowledge to pursue the topic at issue (Damrosch 191). So, Damrosch really appreciated Spivak’s idea of a sliding scale of language learning which help researchers develop the ability to read scholarship in other languages and to work their way “through literary texts in a bilingual edition or with a translation at hand” (Damrosch 192).

The duet of globalization and the closed state of nation-states was another subject for Damrosch. In fact, it’s no surprise that the story of internationalism of comparative literature need be retold in an era of fierce competition of major powers, particularly because the trend of reverse globalization has become a simple fact in the days of Trump. If the globalism is no longer a self-evident truth in the international opinion environment, how should our discipline be re-oriented toward the cultural debates in the moment? “Increasingly I’m thinking in the last ten years not so much about circulation globally but in the way the world comes into a given national market,” declared Damrosch in an interview, “so I actually think that world literature should not be thought of primarily in terms of

globalization or global literature, which is only one kind of literature, but there are many kinds of world literatures” (Chen & Damrosch 4). The world literatures aside, for comparative studies, the attention paid to the given national markets which is also an independent unit of global literature circulation promoted the conception of internationalism of the single national literature. On the one hand, Damrosch recognized national literatures as a major force in our age; on the other hand, perceived as an assemblage of works influenced by foreign literature and even containing various literary translations as a part of it, the national literature with the sense of isolation was also deconstructed in the book. For Damrosch, the point is that “a dismissively antinationalistic stance can’t do justice to the internationalism of many national literatures” (Damrosch 208), and he took the British Literature as an example to show the role of literary translations in the ideological construction of a nation-state. In some senses, the strategic goal of national ideological construction Damrosch represented here recalls the “cosmion” of Eric Voegelin which “is as a whole a little world” albeit with “externality as one of its important components” (Voegelin 27). For with the world literature cultivated in the national market, the elaborate symbolism of a nation-state could more probably be experienced by its people “as of their human essence” instead of “an accident or a convenience” (ibid.). Thus, the workable subject of comparative studies is neither a totally open society nor the absolutely closed one, but a society which is working continuously on literary symbolism inside and outside its national boundaries to elaborate its ideological tradition. When Damrosch talked about “understanding the importance of multilingualism within national cultures” and “works that genuinely become part of the literary culture into which they are translated” (Damrosch 213-4), he had, consciously or unconsciously, referred to the underlying political philosophy of comparative literature of our time. In other words, although the international democratism and cultural liberalism remained Damrosch’s basic positions, these propositions must be dealt with against the pragmatic knowledge of the various social realities. Anyway, in the vision of comparatists, the heterogeneity of nationalist culture is a theme as interesting as the homogeneity of globalization is, but talking about both of them doesn’t imply the conformity to the logic of authoritarianist or imperialist politics. Rather, it is an attempt at apprehending the state of hybridity rooted in the modernity. At the same time, it also indicates the revolt of the empirical knowledge to the accepted rules of existing theories, which was discussed as a major concern later in the book.

The critical literary theories such as post-colonialism are usually supposed to be theoretical weapons of researchers to eliminate the hierarchies of literary

reading and liberate the suppressed meanings of literary texts. However, Damrosch demonstrated the sub-hierarchy of literary texts which was replicated by the post-colonialist reading, indicating that even within the post-colonialist criticism the old-economy authors “continues to be more strongly represented in the survey anthologies than almost any of the new discoveries of recent decades” (Damrosch 224). For example, the old modernist James Joyce is now shifted to the representative author of the semicolonial society meanwhile the writers working in the nonhegemonic languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Turkish are still not appealing enough to change their status as the lower major authors. Besides, the blind spot of theorists is also manifested in the Hermeneutic circles of theoretical interpretations which is embodied in the case studies of Michael Ondaatje and Amitav Ghosh whose value for criticism has always been reduced to their blame for imperialism or capitalism. Then, for the marginal figure such as Kukrit Pramoj who has little relevance to the predominant theories, a large range of academic discussion is almost unattainable though he is verily quite interesting in many aspects. In addition, Damrosch also wrote about the violence present in the cross-civilizational comparison and recommended the Osaka-based scholar Takayuki Yokota-Murakami’s work, *Don Juan East/West: On the Problematics of Comparative Literature* (1998), on the subject, for it is not uncommon that the comparatist distorts the material from a distinct civilization to pander to the theoretical model which he employs and hence cancels off the basic connotations implied in the text and its context. So, in the sense, the “tremendous impoverishment of literary studies” that Damrosch mentioned is not only the consequence of prevailing obsession with “contemporary world literature”, but also the end result of the fetish of invincible theoretical interpretation (Damrosch 298-9). To advocate a positive attitude for comparison, Damrosch cited Ming Xie’s words from *Conditions of Comparisons* (2011) that “critical comparativity is not just about comparing existing ways of thinking but also, more important, comparing against them”, and finally it is about “how meaning is constituted” (Cited in Damrosch 316).

However, in Damrosch’s own narration, it appears that the critical comparativity is more concerning about a sort of perspective through which one comparatist can digest literary texts as many as possible, including new works as well as the classics, with little reduction in their aesthetic and ideological richness. Thus, there seems to be sufficient evidence to believe that Damrosch’s construction of comparativity was centering around the materials rather than the theories. It should be at least noted that in Damrosch’s comparative study of Joyce, Ibsen and Higuchi Ichiyo, the comparability of Joyce and Ichiyo is relatively weak especially in consideration of

their quite indirect historical connection. It could be said that the inclusion of Ichiyo in this case was rather based on the compassion for her marginal status in the world literature. And the problem is, in such a manner, Damrosch actually preserved the crisis of comparability of the American school which has never provided a solid foundation for the parallel studies of aesthetic comparison. Anyway, Damrosch never took the crisis of comparability seriously in his book to say the least.

All in all, *Comparing the Literatures: Literary Studies in a Global Age* is a very impressing, inspirational and instructive book on comparative literature. Damrosch would never like to confine the discipline in any methodological systems, as he confirmed in the conclusion that “a theme running throughout this book has been that the different strands of comparison that we find today have long been intertwined” (Damrosch 336). However, for the comparatists whose distress is usually as profound as the joy is, what is needed is the courage to maintain their diversity “in archives, approaches and perspectives” (ibid.). Moreover, we witnessed that Damrosch as a humanist infused his strong sense of political responsibility into his academic writing which also exemplified the “secular criticism” Said once promoted. As a comparatist, he shared his knowledge as well as his sensibility with all of us.

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**Pheng Cheah. *What is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2016. ISBN 9780822360780. 397 pp.**

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In the historical context of capitalist globalization, the hegemonic rule centered on Europe is the Greenwich time of the world, putting other regions under its rule and cutting the globe into unequal areas in the form of a world map in order to achieve control over the world. Pheng Cheah holds that capitalism's control over the world is actually to spatialize time.

For Pheng Cheah, contemporary world literature theory seeking to establish a spatio-geographical category literary exchange to analyze literary works across national borders tends to define the world as part of the circulation of commodities, so that world literature will become part of the transnational market, and analyze literature in the context of capitalist globalization through a spatialized lens. Of course, Pheng Cheah acknowledges that there is some legitimacy in understanding world literature in the framework of cross-border literary circulation, and that contemporary world literature theory's focus on periphery literature is also conducive to breaking the Eurocentric perspective. But the drawback of this is that it equates the world with capitalist globalization, i.e., the global market creates the world and this view places literature in a passive position, thus limiting the scholarly understanding of the relationship between capitalist globalization and literature.

"Auerbach emphasized that Weltliteratur was governed by two principles. First, it presupposed the idea of humanity as its rational kernel. Second, Weltliteratur has an irreducible temporal dimension" (Cheah 24-25). By comparing Auerbach's account of world literature with the mainstream theory of world literature today, it can be found that the essential feature of contemporary world literature is its spatial expansion and its value is mainly considered through the production, circulation and acceptance of literature which is limited to a purely spatial dimension. At the same time, contemporary world literature theory makes an attempt to keep a certain distance from politics and turns a blind eye to the power relations discussed by postcolonial theory, which directly leads to the failure to explore world literature

from the perspective of postcolonial countries. Therefore, Pheng Cheah is fiercely critical of contemporary world literature theory represented by Damrosch, Casanova, and Moretti.

Pheng Cheah considers that Damrosch's view of circulation as a process that enhances the value of world literature fails to account for the relationship between world literature and global culture, while the transnational circulation of world literature compresses the world into a spatial entity, making it impossible for world literature to be independent from the global political and economic contrast of power (Cheah 30-31). Casanova, on the other hand, argues that although the core and periphery of world literature represent an unequal political relationship, literature, with a degree of relative independence, is not entirely impeded by political hegemony. According to Pheng Cheah, the relative autonomy of the political and economic power of world literature is weak, unable to break through the political and economic structure of reality (Cheah 36).

Moretti's view of world literature focuses on the study of market forces and the analysis of "trees" and "waves" as the internal law of the development of world literature. Thus, despite Moretti's suggestion of a direct causal relationship between literature and social forces, literature, manipulated by external forces, becomes part of the world market, that is to say, "A work of world literature merely acts by reflecting and refracting the stronger primary social forces operative within it and to which its form corresponds via a natural symbolic relation" (Cheah 33). In Pheng Cheah's opinion, Moretti's discussion of world literature based on Bourdieu's sociology is bound to weaken the cosmopolitan power of literature, reducing it to a social force that takes the market process as its criterion.

Through the analysis of the mainstream thinking of contemporary world literature theory, Pheng Cheah deems that contemporary world literature theory has neglected two basic issues: one is the question "What is a world?" while the other is "literature's causality in relation to the world" (Cheah 37) which also prompted Pheng Cheah to trace back to the philosophical concept of the world in order to reconceptualize the meaning of the world. Pheng Cheah's concept of the world is mainly derived from four main philosophical theories: idealism, Marxist materialism, phenomenology and deconstructionism which, in his view, "are opposed to each other, but do not cancel each other out" (Cheah 191). Hegel emphasized the important role of violence in world history. Materialism analyzes the alienated world created by the capitalist global market to distinguish it from the real world. Both Heidegger and Derrida stress the importance of time in the constitution of the world. Arendt underlines that human intersubjective practical

activities create the world. According to Pheng Cheah's interpretation of the world by idealism, materialism, phenomenology and deconstructionism, it can be seen that the four theoretical perspectives together reinforce the argument that the world is temporal rather than spatial, and that contemporary world literature theory interpreting world literature from a spatialized perspective is to articulate world literature from a perspective of capitalist globalization. Pheng Cheah believes that although one of the major aims of contemporary world literature theory is to decentralize and focus on periphery literature, this world literature theory is still an echo of capitalist globalization, weakening the worldly forth of literature.

According to Pheng Cheah, the literature of the postcolonial South is committed to creating an alienated world different from the colonial world and capitalist globalization, so as to construct its own national identity. The aspirations of the colonial zone were not only to eradicate poverty and hunger, but also to embark on a path of independence and autonomy rather than relying on imperialism. Therefore, the literature of the postcolonial South has a special connection with the normativity of world literature. Based on this, Pheng Cheah presents his four points of reflection on world literature.

First, the writing in heterotemporality competes with the globalized world of capitalism. Second, as the nation is an indispensable part of the world, the world in world literature transcends the mutual opposition of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Third, is to break away from the monolithic imperial discourse of developmentalism and to view the pluralistic world shall be viewed from the perspective of dynamic contestations by getting rid of the monolithic imperial discourse of developmentalism. Fourth, "world literature must also exemplify the process of worlding, or in the current argot, performatively enact a world" (Cheah 210-212).

To understand Pheng Cheah's four points of reflection on world literature, it is first necessary to understand the linear control over postcolonial regions by capitalism and its destructive effects. By analyzing colonial history and literary texts, Pheng Cheah argues that capitalist globalization imposes control and destruction on postcolonial regions mainly through three means.

One is to exert control over the colonized area over time. For example, the development of the global sugar industry was accomplished by the time control over the people in the colonized areas. The sugar industry planted sugarcane according to the season and time, and assigned slaves different jobs according to their age and gender under a whole set of production processes, forming an industrial configuration of production that removed slaves from primitive agricultural

production and prevented them from allocating their time based on their individual will, so that capitalist globalization obtained the control over people in time. This industrial model, which has revolutionized the social structure of post-colonial regions, persists today and has revolutionized the social structure of post-colonial regions.

The second is to stabilize the existing globalized order on the grounds of development. Pheng Cheah argues that although the colonial era no longer exists, tourism has reinforced the social order of the colonial era in the form of another variant. First, tourism repeats the broader neocolonial model of economic dependence in which postcolonial economies are driven by foreign capital investment and raw agricultural exports, becoming a tool for Western capital to make profits. Second, tourism is characterized by racialized social hierarchies in which postcolonial people become cheap workers for foreigners. Third, in order to expand their market share, social elites in the post-colonial regions became regional agents of the former colonial countries, promoting the former colonial culture in order to establish ties with the former sovereign countries, thus attracting more capital and tourists to the country, which is to the detriment of the post-colonial regions' construction of their own national cultures. Finally, post-colonial tourism covers up the living situation of the post-colonial regions with a false marketing strategy.

Third, in the name of cosmopolitanism, ignoring the actual situation in the post-colonial region undermined the social order of the post-colonial region. In *The Hungry Tide*, the transnational environmental movement intervenes in India's environmental problems in order to protect the natural ecosystem, with the aim of wilderness conservation, resulting in the displacement of people in the Sundarbans. Pheng Cheah likewise analyzes the humanitarian disasters caused by contemporary humanitarian aid. Set in Mogadishu, the novel *Gifts* critically exposes the dehumanization of the Somalians by humanitarianism and the political, social and economic devastation caused by the various "gifts" of aid from northern countries and international NGOs.

When analyzing postcolonial fiction, Pheng Cheah employs the concept of heterotemporality, which, in contrast to capitalism's linear temporal control of the world, seeks to escape from capitalist globalization's control of the postcolonial region mainly through the following three ways. One is to trace the pre-colonial history so as to construct one's own national identity. In *No Telephone to Heaven*, the heroine, Claire, is a Jamaican and English mixed-race person who is always ashamed of her Jamaican origin, which she deliberately conceals, receiving a



British education. However, when she returns to her hometown estate, in close contact with the guerrillas, she seems to return to the pre-colonial way of life, a kind of living environment different from capitalist globalization. This primitive and unsophisticated traditional style builds upon Claire's identity as Jamaican nationality.

The second is to create a new world by revolution, but this approach is often unworkable and ends in failure. Both in *No Telephone to Heaven* and *State of War*, revolutionary narrative is an important part of resistance to colonial or authoritarian rule. Although the revolution as heterotemporality writing expresses the determination of national self-determination and the efforts to build a national identity, and is committed to building an ideal society independent of the Western colonial system, the authors of the novels obviously disagree with violent means. In the end, the revolutionary movements often go to extinction, while the national spirit of resisting colonial oppression is inherited as an important part of the national culture.

The third is to create a social system different from capitalist globalization with a cosmopolitan moral practice, i.e., to transform the world with an ethical-political vision. In *The Hungry Tide*, although the untouchables are expelled from the land where they have lived for generations, they construct a temporary social form based on human love, which enables people to help each other and work together to resist the threat of hunger, and to survive tenaciously in a harmonious social order. The novel *Gifts*, however, aims to construct a model of life that is different from that based on the commodity economy. Marcel Mauss points out in *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*: "Things still have sentimental as well as venal value, assuming values merely of this kind exist. We possess more than a tradesman morality. There still remain people and classes that keep to the morality of former times, and we almost all observe it, at least at certain times of the year or on certain occasions. The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it" (Mauss 83). The characters are linked together by mutual giving and helping, forming a world in the story. This kind of mutual help to those in need, is different from the logic of thinking in a commodity economy and will not insult their dignity. In such a harmonious world we see a different Somalia than the one reported in the West.

Pheng Cheah's view of world literature, differing from the mainstream contemporary world literary theories based on globalization, departs from the world literary theories governed by market circulation to construct his own view from

the perspective of the post-colonial South that expresses the efforts made by the post-colonial regions to escape from their marginal status, build national cultures, and embark on the road to independence and autonomy. The concept of “world literature” since proposed by Goethe, contains a kind of imperialist discourse, influenced by classical thought. Goethe believed that “We must not give this value to the Chinese, or the Serbian, or Calderon, or the Nibelungen; but, if we really want a pattern, we must always return to the ancient Greeks, in whose works the beauty of mankind is constantly represented. All the rest we must look at only historically; appropriating to ourselves what is good, so far as it goes” (Damrosch 20). It can be said that Goethe, while elaborating upon the concept of world literature, has clarified the hierarchical order inherent in literature. According to Damrosch, the works of European travelers, based on Orientalist discourse, have exerted an influence on the creation of this concept. Thus, the concept of world literature was born with an imperialist perspective (Goethe 42). Although he saw the phenomenon of literary inequality, Brandes set an extremely high threshold for world literature and denied the role of translation, thus unconsciously strengthening literary hegemony. Auerbach is keenly aware that the formation of the present standardized world is posing a serious threat to cultural pluralism with cultural monism. Although the theoretical constructions of world literature represented by Damrosch, Casanova and Moretti are to some extent based on the logic of the market, they all oppose the phenomenon of literary hegemony, revise the earlier concept of world literature, and make efforts to decenter world literature from theory and practice. From this point of view, the efforts of decentering world literature theory are consistent. Pheng Cheah’s greatest innovation lies in his thinking about the concept of the world, forming a circulating literary reflection distinct from capitalist globalization, and exploring the normative power that literature can exert on the world. However, from another point of view, blindly negating market forces and emphasizing the specificity and worldly power of postcolonial Southern literature can neither change the weak position of postcolonial Southern literature, nor change the fact that students are not interested in postcolonial Southern literature in Pheng Cheah’s teaching of postcolonial literature. Therefore, for all its flaws, the global market is a real driver of the construction of cultural pluralism. At the same time, the worldwide power to reshape the cosmopolitan power of literature solely in terms of English literature and Western philosophical concepts is also flawed, as Emily Sibley points out, first, Pheng Cheah only analyzes English postcolonial literature and barely avoids the issue of language and translation, which is a kind of invisible imperialism; second, when expounding upon the concept of the world, Pheng Cheah

focuses only on the European philosophical tradition, while many contemporary Western scholars have extended their vision beyond the Western tradition in their interpretations of the world and literature (Sibley). Of course, we cannot completely reject Pheng Cheah's academic achievements on this basis, and the study of world literature detached from the global capital market deserves the consideration and attention of every researcher.

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