

The Construction of the Images of Hu Shi in the Era of 1910–1949¹

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Abstract

This paper broadens the scope of the research domain of imagology to describe and contrast the images of Hu Shi in the English-speaking world, mainly in the United States, and in China during the years between 1910 to 1949, focusing on the interaction and the variation in the process of image-building of Hu Shi. This paper mainly explores the following issues of that period: What are the respective images of Hu Shi inside and outside China? How are these images constructed? What is the variation in the process? Emphasis is placed on the producers of the images as well as the juxtaposition and interaction of the self-image of Hu Shi with the impressions of his contemporaries towards him.

Keywords: Hu Shi, imagology, English-speaking world, the variation

The research of imagology has developed with the great efforts of the French comparatists of several generations. Recent studies in this field have shifted from the examination of the accuracy of images to the scrutiny of creators as well as the process of the formation of images. Scholars continue to elaborate on the theoretical models of imagology in order to probe into the more and more dynamic communication between different cultures. Birgit Neumann proposed a framework of cultural and historical imagology to study the construction of images of national character and national identity via the dialogue between literary and media studies, history, and social psychology (275). Shunqing Cao proposed the Variation Theory of comparative literature to suggest that in the process of cultural communication, it

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is an inevitable phenomenon that images would undergo loss and deformation from the beginning to the end of the circulation under the influence of aesthetic, psychological and other uncertain factors (51). This paper pays attention to the gazer and the producer of images to maintain that images are not merely the representation but the production of the mixture of objective environment and subjective emotions and thoughts. Besides collective images of a nation or images of fictional characters in a heterogeneous culture, this paper argues for the expansion of the domain of imagology to focus on the specific individuals whose images are also the narration of different discourses in the diversified cultural exchanges.

With the above stance, this paper focuses on a historical figure, Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), a Chinese philosopher, essayist, and leading liberal intellectual in the May Fourth Movement. During the period from 1910 to 1949, Hu Shi spent accumulatively half of it in the English-speaking world (September 1910–June 1917, July 1926–April 1927, June 1933–October 1933, July 1936–November 1936, September 1937–June 1946, April–December 1949) and approximately half of it in China. Hu Shi's intercultural experience itself enabled him to be a perfect choice to be illustrated from the perspective of imagology. This paper summarizes the images of Hu Shi in the eyes of Americans and in Chinese as the basis for the following discussion on the construction of these images.

Hu Shi has always been one of the most important intellectuals in the Chinese academy since 1917. From the 1980s onward, there has appeared a revival of the studies on him, and “re-evaluation” of Hu Shi has become an important issue in China. “In the past thirty years the complete works of Hu Shi have come off the press, many conferences have been held and more than two thousand articles and more than one hundred monographs about him have been published in China.” (Geng, “The Opening Speech” 5) Because of his studies and work in the United States, Hu Shi has also been the focus of some English-speaking researchers in America. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the emergence of many studies on him in the format of English journal articles, theses, dissertations, and monographs. After that, monographic studies were rarely conducted, and the study of Hu Shi was put into a larger framework such as the modernization of Confucianism and modern Chinese poetics since the 1980s. However, there has been so far no systematic research in either Chinese or English about the images of Hu Shi.

There are many names, both Chinese and English ones, used by Hu Shi throughout his life, such as the following ones:

Hu Shi's nickname is Simei (嗣糜) and his formal name is Hongxing (洪驊). He changed his name to Hu Shi (胡适) with a style name Shizhi (适之) when he attend-

ed the Boxer Indemnity scholarship examinations. He has many pen names, such as Qizishengsheng (期自胜生), Xijiang (希疆), Tie'er (铁儿), Die'er (蝶儿), Xing (骢), Dongxin (冬心), Shian (适庵), Shiguang (适广), Canghui (藏晖), Tianfeng (天风), and some English pen names such as Q, QV, H.S.C., etc. (Chen 3)

His English name could be spelled as Suh Hu, Hu Shi as well as Hu Shi. As numerous as his different names, the images of Hu Shi change continuously with his personal experience in different cultures.

The Image of Hu Shi in the English-speaking World

Notably, in September 1910, Hu Shi arrived in the United States as one of the seventy Chinese students known as “indemnity students.” This term referred to their participation in the Boxer scholarship program, which was supported by funds transmitted to the Chinese government from the United States as part of the Boxer Indemnity of 1901. Hu Shi embarked on a seven-year academic journey in American universities, during which he demonstrated exceptional diligence and active participation in various extracurricular activities. His remarkable achievements not only surpassed those of his Chinese peers but also gained recognition among his American counterparts, establishing him as a distinguished student within the Ivy League campus.

The first major Hu Shi studied was agriculture. It was Hu Shi's personal choice after careful consideration of his career plans as well as a common choice for indemnity students of that time. “Among all the Boxer Indemnity students, those who chose majors of science related to industry and agriculture accounted for seventy to eighty percent”(Tang Y. 2). Later, Hu Shi recorded in his diary that studying agriculture was a folly decision and a waste of his time, for it was far away from his interests. So at the beginning of 1912, he transferred to the College of Arts to major in philosophy with politics, economy, and literature as his minors. The change of his major marked the beginning of Hu Shi's excellent academic achievements and unique standing among other overseas Chinese students. Yelong Han in his doctoral dissertation conducted a survey which shows that only 128 Chinese students over a hundred-year period [1854–1953] chose philosophy as their major, which accounts for 0.62%, far behind sciences majors (20.7%) and engineering majors (16%) in the distribution of academic fields (80). From these statistics, we can tell Hu Shi's choice was uncommon from that of the majority of Chinese overseas students at that time.

Another specialty about Hu Shi is the following fact: different from other Chinese students who suffered from inadequacy of their English, Hu Shi excelled

academically because of his excellent command of English. In 1913, Hu Shi was elected as a member of the honorary student association Phi Beta Kappa. In 1914, Hu Shi won a philosophy scholarship at Cornell University. In the same year, Hu Shi won the first prize in a writing competition at Cornell. In 1916, Hu Shi's essay "Is There a Substitute for Force in International Relations?" was awarded the first prize by the American Association for International Conciliation.

Hu Shi's outstanding university achievements won him the recognition from his American classmates and friends. "Louis P. Lochner, who had helped to found the International Club at Wisconsin in 1903 and later served as secretary of the Central Committee of the F.I.d.E. and editor of *The Cosmopolitan Student*, counted himself a good enough friend to advise Hu to give up his 'furious smoking [for] you are a rare genius [and] I think it is your duty to society to preserve your intellectual powers to their fullest extent'" (Grieder 55). From this message, we can tell what an outstanding student Hu Shi was in the eyes of his American peers.

When Hu Shi was awarded The Award of the Hiram Corson Browning Prize, he also began to win the recognition from the American Press in 1914 who . Since he was the first Chinese to win this competition, he "attracted the attention of a number of papers in upper New York State, and as far afield as New York city" (Grieder 40). There was a picture of Hu Shi in *Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*: "It is a handsome and sober face that looks out at us, the eyes wide-set behind rimless glasses, the mouth straight and unsmiling, the necktie carefully knotted. It strikes one as the face of a young man who takes the world, and himself, very seriously" (Grieder 40). As a young man with considerable academic distinction, Hu Shi became known to the local people and became a student at Cornell University and Columbia University.

"In China's traditional education, since no campus or student dormitory existed along with schools, there was no such a thing as an extracurricular activity that took place within an institutional environment" (Han 92). Therefore, the newly arrived Chinese students often did not know how to look for opportunities, which resulted in feelings of isolation and helplessness. Hu Shi seemed to be an exception to this kind of distress. On February 4, 1915, he wrote in his diary: "there are numerous student groups, the so-called *Wenxuehui* (Literary Societies) ... *Caogaohui* (The Manuscript Club)... I just mentioned several of them to give a glimpse of my campus life" (Songping Hu 192). From this entry, the self-portrait of an active participant in campus life was given to show how vigorously Hu Shi plunged himself into the extracurricular activities at the university. Besides his academic excellence, Hu Shi was also noticeable for his distinction from other Chinese students.

Because of different norms of behaviors and poor proficiency in English, Chinese students found it not so easy to communicate with their American classmates and complained that they made few American friends. However, Hu Shi's circle of friends was very extensive. Yunzhi Geng, a famous Chinese expert in the study of Hu Shi's works, once summarized what kinds of friends Hu Shi made in the English-speaking world in the following way: "He also won a large number of foreign friends of different social strata, from students to professors, from the clerks to billionaires, from nurses to USA president"(Geng *Works* 560). The reason for this is that "He [Hu Shi] was by nature too gregarious, possessed of too quick a curiosity and too lively an aptitude for friendship, to trapped into austere academic seclusion"(Grieder 40).

During the period when Hu Shi was studying in the USA, "many Chinese students tended to absorb everything provided to them without maintaining a critical mind" (Han 91). Though on some issues, he was unavoidably influenced by the American views, but Hu Shi still managed to keep his own judgment, adhere to his independent views, and frankly exchange ideas with the local people, even if sometimes it meant challenging the American tradition and authority and receiving their opposition and criticism.

Some examples can demonstrate Hu Shi's insistence on his own standing. On February 28, 1915, Hu Shi was invited to his friend Edith Clifford Williams's home. With Edith's mother, Hu Shi had a debate over a Christian issue. Williams's mother was too shocked to accept his "extreme" comments (Jiang 499–500). In June 1915, the first session of the Conference on International Relations was held in Ithaca, New York. The meeting was held by pacifists, but some non-pacifists were also invited, including Sir Hudson Maxim (1853–1927), aiming to train the students so as to prepare them for becoming the future leader of the peace movement. Hu Shi recalled that the speech given by Maxim had no argument but stories, jokes, or groundless statements. This perfunctory attitude angered the students. It was Hu Shi who stood up to call the meeting to a halt. Though his calling was not granted after the discussion and he was forced to apologize to Maxine, Hu Shi's courage to protest against the authority was clearly shown.

Hu Shi received high praise and evaluation from his American friends and the press because of the honors he won in his studies and activities. Besides his teachers and classmates, the praise towards Hu Shi also came from some American Christian families who provided accommodation for Chinese students. Tang Degang唐德刚(1920-2009), the interviewer of Hu Shi, in *The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu Shi*, added a note about his personal experience with these Christian families in the 1950s:

“These kind people are not missionaries. They just help us through the difficulties out of their sympathy. Generally speaking, they have numerous virtues such as being mild, warm-hearted, honest with self-respect, open-minded, and liberal. At that time, we regarded them as a bunch of ‘saints’” (41–42). In Tang’s judgment, they were very interested in the history and culture of China and were concerned about the Chinese situation. Chinese indemnity students were the first group of Chinese youth offering an opportunity for them to carry out close observation and judgment. And they were not only landlords of Chinese students but also teachers and friends to them.

The role played by Hu Shi in the New Culture Movement also brought the attention of foreigners staying in China. In 1922, the Swiss scholar Philippe de Vargas delivered a speech titled “The Chinese Renaissance,” which was among the earliest descriptions referring to the literary revolution in China as “Renaissance.” Vargas was also among the earliest critics to tie Hu Shi with the “Chinese Renaissance.” From 1923 on, Hu Shi noticed this new trend and started to write and publish introductions to the literary movement in China under the title of the “Chinese Renaissance” too. He also attended the conferences, delivered academic lectures, and even published a monograph under this title. Gradually, he became addressed as the “father of Chinese Renaissance” by other foreign researchers such as Paul Hutchinson (1890–1956), the missionary who came to China and published newspapers in China. So the title was first used by foreigners in China at that time and was stabilized by Hu Shi himself with conscious efforts.

Since then, this term has been adopted by American and British media too. In 1926, when Hu Shi went to London to attend a meeting of the British Boxer Scholarship Committee, he was invited to give about ten speeches in English. In the ads for one of these speeches, Hu Shi was introduced as the “father of the Chinese Renaissance” (Ouyang 28). After the visit, Hu Shi stopped by the USA on his way home. On January 20, 1927, the American magazine *Nation* reported his return to the country “after his departure in 1917. The article went on to introduce Hu Shi’s performance in the vernacular movement in China and held that Hu Shi’s contribution could be comparable with that of Dante and Petrarch of Italy” (Hu Shi, *Diary* 423).

In addition, some English-language researchers also started to use the “father of Chinese Renaissance” to introduce Hu Shi and evaluate his achievements. For example, in 1930 Arthur W. Hummel (1884–1975) in his introduction to “The New-Culture Movement in China” pointed out the important role played by Hu Shi in the 1920s to 1930s in the Chinese Renaissance (55). In 1936, when Richard Henry

Tawney wrote his review of Hu Shi's English book *The Chinese Renaissance* (1934), he also thought highly of Hu Shi as the only qualified Chinese to explain China to the West. Therefore, the "father of Chinese Renaissance" is the title adopted by the researchers to express their recognition of Hu Shi's contribution to the Chinese New Cultural Movement out of the interaction of Hu Shi and his counterparts in the English-speaking world.

In September 1938, Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石(1887-1975) named Hu Shi a replacement for C.T. Wang as the Chinese Ambassador to USA. Since then, the image of a scholar-ambassador appeared frequently in American media. After the appointment, there were a large number of reports of Hu Shi in *The New York Times*. Among the reports, Hu Shi's roles such as a modern educator, a courageous editor, and an advocate of cultural democracy were highlighted together with his experience of American education. Hu Shi was considered by the American press to be an integrated philosopher instead of a fanatic politician like other diplomats whose attention and focus were put on the American government and Congress. Hu Shi chose to deliver public speeches in which he helped American people understand the history and culture of China to win their attention, sympathy, and support towards Chinese people against the Japanese. His speeches attracted widespread attention in the USA.

Among his activities with wide media coverage, Hu Shi's attendance at many commencement ceremonies of the American universities was especially of great significance. Hu Shi exchanged his understanding of the trends of the world situation before World War II and outlined a series of fundamental laws to dominate the fusion of different cultures with the American youth. In this way, the Chinese ambassador won the opportunity to share his ideas with the young American graduates. For example, on June 11, 1940, the ambassador spoke at Union University and called for the graduates to be ready for the upcoming destruction brought by the World War II to the American government and civilization. Attending commencement ceremonies proved to be a very smart way for Hu Shi to make use of his access to *The New York Times* and other mainstream media to convey the courage and confidence of Chinese people in the war against Japan.

The Image of Hu Shi in China

With labels of a star student and a Chinese independent thinker, Hu Shi returned to China in 1917 and started his career as a professor at National Peking University. In 1916, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培(1868-1940) became the president of the National Peking University and employed Chen Duxiu 陈独秀(1879-1942), the edi-

tor of *The New Youth*, “China’s leading journal of radical opinion” (Grieder 75), to take charge of College of Arts. Chen soon recommended Hu Shi to Cai, who agreed to hire Hu Shi as a professor. Cai had heard about Hu Shi’s talent even before Hu’s arrival at Peking University. After the first meeting with Hu Shi, he was deeply impressed by Hu Shi’s talent and capacity: Hu Shi “had a complete command of the traditional Chinese learning and a thorough understanding towards Western knowledge” (Geng *Studies* 195).

Hu Shi’s acceptance by the students at Peking University was not as easy as that of its president. One of the courses Hu Shi taught at Peking University was the History of Chinese Philosophy. Unlike other teachers, he followed the American way of teaching and distributed the outline of his lectures in the form of handouts before his class, and he began to teach from *Books of Songs*, for he thought those poets were great philosophers according to his own research. These changes in the format and the content of the course dumbfounded all the students and aroused a big sensation. Two famous Chinese historians Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚(1893-1980) and Fu Sinian 傅斯年(1896-1950), who were both students at the university back at that time, were invited to attend Hu Shi’s class. Their praise of Hu Shi’s lectures stopped other students’ challenge towards Hu Shi. It was after this episode that Hu Shi became a popular and respected professor on the campus of Peking University.

When Hu Shi started to teach at Peking University, he was only twenty-six years old with a graceful bearing. Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰(1896-1981) (also known by his pen name Mao Dun 矛盾), a famous Chinese writer, once recalled his impression of Hu Shi when they first met: “I think the style of the professor’s clothes is strange. He is wearing a silk traditional Chinese gown, trousers of Western style, black silk stockings and yellow leather shoes” (Tang J. 467). This description revealed one of the prominent characteristics of Hu Shi in his work and life: the perfect combination of China and the West together. This could be proved to be true in his many photos taken at that time. In one of them, in a room full of thread-bound books Hu Shi was wearing a pair of glasses and writing with a brush pen.

After Hu Shi returned to China to start and participate in New Culture Movement, he became the most popular and the most influential scholar as well as a controversial figure. There appeared a series of debates between Hu Shi and his contemporaries: the debate about the literary revolution, the debate about “transvaluation of all values” and “individualism” as the core of the ideological and moral revolution, the debate about “problem and doctrine”, debates about free verses in vernacular Chinese collected in *Chang shi ji* 尝试集 (Collections of Experiments), to name just a few. Geng Yunzhi presented a very accurate picture of Hu Shi’s involvement

in these debates:

As a liberal intellectual with a systematic American education, Hu Shi almost got himself involved in every major debate of his time. Sometimes his thoughts conflicted with the traditional forces; sometimes in politics he directly confronted the ruling authorities; sometimes his liberalism was incompatible with the revolutionary forces; sometimes it was because of the partiality of different schools. (*Collections of Hu Shi's Debates* 1)

An examination of the years when Hu Shi became a professor of celebrity at Peking University leads us to another interesting image of him — Dr. Hu Shi. In May 1917, Hu Shi finished the oral defense of his doctoral dissertation, which meant his studies at Columbia University came to an end so he returned to China in June. When Hu Shi worked at Peking University, he was addressed by his colleagues and students there as “Dr. Hu.” This title was also stamped on the cover of the first edition of his Chinese monograph *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (1919), which was the modification and Chinese version of his doctoral dissertation. Moreover, “Dr. Hu” was also used in a variety of reports about him in newspapers and magazines (Yi 90). In 1921, the magazine *Journal of Peking University* published the pictures and a brief introduction to some professors in the university in its column “Celebrity on Campus.” There were altogether seven famous professors and deans including Hu Shi. Different from other directors who were addressed as Mr., Hu Shi was uniquely introduced as Dr. Hu Shi (19).

In fact, Hu Shi did not receive his doctorate until 1927. However, we could not say that Hu Shi lied and pretended to be a doctor before he actually got the degree. His fault lay in when he was addressed as Dr. Hu Shi — he did not deny it. An old acquaintance of Hu Shi fell out and became hostile towards him and leaked the secret. Then, rumors went that Hu Shi posed as a doctor without a degree. The rumors spread quickly to one of Hu Shi's friends, Zhu Jingnong 朱经农(1887-1951), who was still studying in America. Zhu wrote two letters to Hu Shi to warn him about that and suggested Hu Shi publish his doctoral dissertation to earn his degree. However, the publication of it did not bring Hu Shi the doctor's degree as predicted. On December 26, 1926, Hu Shi sent a telegram to his publisher to ask for a hundred copies of his book to be sent to Columbia University. Hu Shi remained a doctoral candidate until March 21, 1927, when he was eventually granted the degree.

Focusing on the mystery of the real or the fake doctor, many Chinese researchers in Taiwan and America joined in the discussion and debated about it in the

1950s and 1960s (Geng, *Debates* 209). In the 1980s, with the revival of the study on Hu Shi in mainland China, there were also many discussions around Hu Shi's degree. Some scholars conducted research to locate the exact time when Hu Shi earned his PhD, while others explored Hu Shi's psychological motivation to hide the truth. But attention was paid to the analysis of the causes of the delay. Some researchers argued that it was because of Hu Shi's failure in the oral defense, while some maintained that a timely submission of his dissertations to Columbia University would have avoided the delay of ten years. These discussions have continued to the present, and Jiang Yongzhen put forward a new interpretation: Hu Shi's doctoral dissertation was not the application of the methodology of his supervisor, American philosopher John Dewey. In fact, there were many arguments in contradiction with Dewey's views out of Hu Shi's misunderstanding of Dewey's works. Therefore, Dewey did not grant a pass of Hu Shi's oral defense. Jiang proposed that the only reason that Hu Shi was granted the degree was because Dewey witnessed Hu Shi's popularity in his motherland when Dewey was invited to give lectures in China and offered his help to Hu Shi to get the degree (342–3).

In spite of the effort Hu Shi made in order to get his PhD, titles such as “Dr.” (Li 18), and “Academic Authority” (Sun 42), and “Leading Thinker” (*Lao Shao Nian* 4) had always accompanied Hu Shi. In addition, because of the great contribution of Hu Shi to the New Culture Movement and his excellent work as a Chinese ambassador during World War II, many first-class universities in the world, including Harvard University and Oxford University, awarded Hu Shi honorary doctorates. Hu Shi received a total of thirty-five honorary doctorates, which means his prolific achievements have been widely recognized. Because of his enormous contribution and profound impact, whether Hu Shi had the doctorate will not detract him from his status as a great scholar recognized by his contemporaries.

The Construction of the Image of Hu Shi

An excellent student at Ivy League universities, a unique overseas Chinese student, the father of the Chinese Renaissance, a cultural ambassador, a professor of controversy at National Peking University, and “Dr. Hu Shi” are the most important images of Hu Shi during the period of the Republic of China. How do these images come into existence? Actually, these images are the results of Hu Shi's own construction, the coverage of news reports as well as the narration of his contemporaries.

Autobiographies and other biographical materials were the most important media in the construction of the image of Hu Shi. Hu Shi's personal records included

his many autobiographies in Chinese and in English. In June 1930, Hu Shi began to write the first article about his memories of his mother, “The Engagement of My Mother.” Later, he added several other articles that covered his life till his middle age and collected them together in the autobiographical writing *A Self-Account at Forty* (四十自述), which was published in 1933. At the same time, Hu Shi wrote a short English autobiography collected in *Living Philosophies* in 1931 by New York’s Simon & Schuster Publishing House. In April 1939, Hu Shi’s diaries of his study and life in America, *Notes of Cang Hui Shi*, were published in China, and later the title was changed to *Hu Shi’s Diary While Studying Abroad* in 1947. Hu Shi was also invited to take part in the project of Oral History of Columbia University in the 1950s, and he narrated his life experience, which was written down in English by Dang Degang as his interviewer and assistant.

In China, as early as the 1920s and 1930s, there started to appear some sporadic reports about the life of Hu Shi, but it was not until the publication of Hu Shi’s own autobiography that biographical articles and monographs written by his contemporaries about him began to boom. Both English and Chinese biographies shared a common characteristic—that is, frequent quotations from Hu Shi’s own narration and writings, including his diaries, various articles, and books. For example, Hu Shi wrote in *A Self-Account at Forty*: “I was weak when I was a child, so I could not follow the strong children to play wildly. Moreover, my mother didn’t allow me to waste my time playing. So my manner was gentle, different from those of other children of my age. So the elders thought I was like a gentleman and called me ‘Sir Mei’”(26). This nickname appeared in almost all the biographies Chinese or English. Besides this, Hu Shi’s self-portraits in *A Self-Account at Forty*, *Hu Shi’s Diary While Studying*, and *The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu Shi* all found their way into his biographies written by others. These autobiographical materials provide the basis of the representation of his image but also invite questioning of their authenticity at the same time.²

Media coverage is another very important component in the process of the construction of Hu Shi’s image. When he studied in the USA, Hu Shi drew the attention of the public through the awards and activities. When he went back to China, he continued this visibility. In the official journal of the university, *Peking University Daily*, his official correspondence, the adjustment of the time of his lectures, the publication of his works, his participation in various clubs, and advertisement for his speeches were published from time to time, making Hu Shi one of the celebri-

2 See discussion on this point by Jiang Yongzheng in his *If Not Me, Then Who: The Biography of Hu Shi 1891–1917*.

ties on campus. After Hu Shi came back in 1927 from his first visit to Europe, there were many detailed reports about Hu Shi's experience, including his early life, his study in America, and his work at Peking University. Hu Shi's friendly attitude and warm reception of the reporters could explain their frequency.

For example, in one of the articles the reporter gave a detailed record of his contact with Dr. Hu Shi. From the very beginning, the reporter felt Hu Shi's welcoming attitude. Hu Shi gave a quick reply to accept the interview and made an appointment with the reporter. In addition, Hu Shi was considerate enough to remind the reporter to call him beforehand in case he was not at home. On the appointed day, the reporter found Hu Shi's home easily following Hu Shi's detailed instructions. The first image grasped by the reporter was a diligent scholar who was writing his monograph: "At sight of me, Hu Shi immediately stands up and walks over to shake hands to welcome my arrival" (*Life* 44). Hu Shi introduced to the reporter that he was writing *The History of Chinese Vernacular Literature*. He just mentioned it casually, but when the article was published, this mention actually turned out to be a free advertisement for his book. The interview was carried out in a relaxing atmosphere. Hu Shi told the reporter that he knew the magazine very well and liked it very much. Such praise was sincere, and it was not difficult for us to imagine how happy the reporter must be after hearing this. After this interview, *Life* published many other articles about Hu Shi and made positive comments.

Hu Shi's image was also built by the impressions of his contemporaries. Xue Lin, the pen name of Su Xuelin 苏雪林 (1897–1999), was one of the female students of Hu Shi. In 1921, on one weekend she visited Hu Shi with other classmates. In one article, Su wrote about her impression of this visit. The article began with a description of the location of Hu Shi's home, a fashionable but bustling neighborhood. But the author found Hu Shi's home was surprisingly quiet so she admired Hu Shi's enjoyment of modern convenience without being disturbed. The author then offered a sketch about Hu Shi as a new-fashioned scholar busying himself answering phone calls and receiving many visitors to have no time to have his breakfast on weekends. So Su had the chance to see with her eyes what kind of breakfast Hu Shi was having and gave a detailed description of it: "a cup of coffee with milk and a plate of grilled bread" (221). Hu Shi's breakfast is a perfect combination of Chinese and Western food, which became the focus of their conversation. The breakfast was finished with an anecdote about the grilled bread, a traditional food of Hu Shi's hometown. Their following conversation was about the writing of the vernacular poetry. Su Xuelin contrasted Hu Shi with Wu Zihui 吴稚晖 (1865–1953), another Chinese scholar of the time, and felt Hu's humor was more interesting (223). Through her

recalling the details of this meeting, a Westernized Chinese and easy-going scholar was carved out.

The images of Hu Shi have not remained the same and have changed with age and environment. Different aspects of his experience and personality were highlighted in American and Chinese cultures. Grieder summarizes Hu Shi's American years as "a time of wide-ranging intellectual and social experimentation"(40). He thought, "Hu Shi became more thoroughly 'Westernized' and he was better able to understand the West—or at least America—in its own terms, and more appreciative of the appeal of American aspirations than were all but a handful of his Chinese contemporaries" (Grieder 40). In the eyes of his American classmates, friends, and researchers, Hu Shi's linguistic eloquence, academic excellence, rich extracurricular activities, independent thinking, as well as wide publicity distinguished him from the other Chinese indemnity students.

While in the eyes of his Chinese fellowmen, when Hu Shi returned to China and became a professor, then the dean of the College of Arts, and later the president of National Peking University in 1946, his professional roles constantly changed. To some extent, he reached the pinnacle of his status, for he became not only a leader in the field of education, academy, and culture but also a symbolic political leader with great influence in society, though he had no real power. At the same time, he also paid a great price for this prestige, and he became what he called a "public man" of controversy, and he involuntarily went up and down with the turbulence of the Chinese situation (Yu 225).

This interaction between Hu Shi and his contemporaries both in China and in the English-speaking world has formed a very interesting episode in modern Chinese intellectual history. The scrutiny of his interactions with the media and his contemporaries will help us understand better how Hu Shi's public image was constructed. In order to analyze the formation of the image of Hu Shi, this paper locates the image of Hu Shi in a large framework, focusing on the image of Hu Shi in the eyes of his contemporaries as well as his self-image, comparing the specific description of Hu Shi in the domestic studies and news media with the interpretation of him by the English scholars and reporters to broaden the dimensions of the present research. This paper treats different types of texts as documentary data, such as fictional writings, media reports, and serious academic research to interweave the meaning and reveal the image of Hu Shi in the collective imagination in Chinese and English cultures.

There is only one Hu Shi in the world, but there are numerous images of him out of different visions, partial or twisted. It is a challenge to obtain the one that is

closest to real Hu Shi (Sang 16). This paper focuses on the years between 1910 and 1949, during which period Hu Shi was a very active figure in the dramatic changes in China, and tries to offer suggestive images of Hu Shi during that period to lay a solid foundation for the accurate assessment of Hu Shi's historical position in the world.

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