

A Wartime Tale of Two Cities: Transnational Literary Interaction and Intellectual Cosmopolitanism from Madrid to Wuhan

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Abstract

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Wuhan was quickly given the name “Oriental Madrid.” The juxtaposition of Wuhan and Madrid points to the deep connection between China and Spain facing the harsh reality of the World War. This connection implies the leftist international front’s mode of action towards world revolution, as well as a leftist consciousness and a coordinated action plan within the wartime world intellectual community. Behind the reality of the anti-war and anti-fascist community, there is also an inherent transformation of literary imaginations, emotional mechanisms, life experiences, and even their perspectives on civilization. Taking the “Oriental Madrid” as a symbol, a method of cultural production and dissemination with the characteristic of “cosmopolitanism” was widely manifested during the 1930s to the 1940s and throughout World War II.

Keywords: literature and art during the Second Sino-Japanese War, Wuhan, Madrid, leftist intellectual community, wartime cosmopolitanism

Introduction

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Wuhan was quickly given the name the “Oriental Madrid.” The literary tendency that established a corresponding relationship between Wuhan and Madrid has become a common public discourse and social consensus, shaping the imagination and the mode of thinking of wartime China. The literary processes and historical reasons for Wuhan being named the “Oriental Madrid” need to be examined in the context of the cross-border interaction between China and Spain during the Second Sino-Japanese War, as well as the complex and globally interrelated state of affairs. The positioning of the “Oriental Madrid” within the context of battlefield imaginations serves not only to indicate that Wuhan has evolved into an international cultural front but also to underscore the presence of a globally interconnected approach to wartime literary production and action. Taking this as an opportunity, many aspects of Chinese wartime literature and art could be embedded and reinterpreted through the literary landscape and historical perspective of transnational interaction.

Wartime Odyssey: Julian Bell, from Wuhan to Madrid

From the 25 to 27 September 1938, the *Constellation* (*Xingzuo* 星座) supplement of *Sing Tao Daily* (星岛日报) published a three-part essay titled “A Memory of Mine: Remembering Julian Bell” written by Ma Er 马耳 (Ye Junjian 叶君健). The essay started with the grievous news of Julian’s death on the battlefield of the Spanish Civil War: “This man was dead. For an extremely long time, he was almost forgotten” (Ma “A Memory”).

Julian Bell, a young British poet, arrived at the National University of Wuhan in China in October 1935. Bell was quite famous for his celebrated family members: his aunt was Virginia Woolf, known for her “stream of consciousness” writing style; his parents (Clive and Vanessa Bell) were core members of the Bloomsbury Group (Stansky and Abrahams 181–253). In Ma’s detailed descriptions, Bell was presented as a tall, golden-haired gentleman radiating a noble Parisian air. However, this “highly well-bred poet,” who attempted to reform Chinese educational principles and taught modern British literature in Wuhan, often felt “indescribably lonely.” As his complaint goes, “[E]xcept Lin Shuhua 凌淑华, there are few people with whom I can simply converse” (Ma “A Memory”). This statement implies an anecdotal romantic relationship between Bell and Ling, who was the wife of Chen Yuan 陈源, Bell’s academic colleague. An interesting tidbit was that Ling published her short story *A Poet Goes Mad* (疯了的诗人, 1928), co-translated with Bell, in *T’ien*

Hsia Monthly (天下月刊)'s April 1937 issue.¹ Nevertheless, the origin of Bell's loneliness goes far beyond unfulfilled love. In fact, it might have revealed his cognitive chasm from the Chinese intellectuals. After Bell's one-year teaching job in Wuhan, he left China via Hong Kong in February 1937 and rushed to the frontier of the Spanish Civil War in June 1937. He first landed in Barcelona and then reached Madrid. Eventually, he died in mid-July 1937 during a bombardment while working as an ambulance driver in the battle of Brunete (Stansky and Abrahams 254–287). The battle was a part of the Republicans' heroic and persistent efforts to defend Madrid from Francoist armies' counterattack. In any case, Bell's death caused a small-scale commemorative activity among intellectual exiles in Hong Kong at the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

“¡No pasarán!”—A Transnational Warscape and Soundscape: Defense of Madrid, Defense of Wuhan

Among Bell's wartime transnational odyssey, it was Wuhan/Madrid rather than his real homeland—Britain—that became his original Ithaca, which then re-motivated his literary politics. The Spanish Civil War, which lasted for nearly three years from 1936 to 1939 and which made Bell a collective hero, galvanized a highly politicized literary movement on an international scale. Upton Sinclair's novella *¡No Pasarán!: A Novel of the Battle of Madrid* (1937), which was translated into Chinese in 1939 (Ji), made Madrid, the capital of Spain, a gathering place for large numbers of transregional intellectuals and turned it into a metaphorical heart of the entire wartime revolutionary communities. The siege of Madrid created a highly symbolic cosmopolitan warscape, and henceforward a soundscape, which brought forth several melodies that gained widespread popularity. One of these famous songs was *Coplas por la Defensa de Madrid*. Intriguingly, songs about the defense of Madrid were imported into China speedily and even aroused intense arguments in domestic media, such as in *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* (大美晚报). In Nie Gannu's 聂绀弩 words, the Chinese audience seemed to be able to comprehend Madrid's profound sadness, perhaps with their empathetic melancholy stemming from Li Zhi's 李贽 saying: “borrowing others' wine glasses and pouring in your own mood” (借他人酒杯, 浇自己块垒) (Nie).

In the summer of 1936, Chinese lyricist Mai Xin 麦新 and composer Lü Ji 吕

1 More details of this love affair can be found in Patricia Laurence's *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2003) and in *K: The Art of Love* (London: Penguin Press, 2011), a fiction work by Hong Ying 虹影, a famous Chinese contemporary female writer.

驥 created an indigenous soundtrack, “Defense of Madrid” (保卫马德里), which infused multiple generations’ wartime memories and came to represent a lyrical means of expression that entailed acoustic politics. The entire creative process also revolved around the historical context of the international communist movement. At that time, Lü Ji, who led the Song Research Association, first proposed to write songs to assist Spain in the discussion on “the integration of music with political circumstances” (歌咏如何结合政治形势). The materials used by Mai Xin came predominantly from current political publications such as *Jiuguo Shibao* (救国时报), published by the Communist Party of China in France. Ma’s enthusiasm and awareness of a “global mutual support for the war of resistance” mainly stemmed from his communications in Esperanto with a Polish worker. The worker’s letters not only expressed support for the Chinese people’s resistance but also related the story of how his younger brother joined the International Brigade and participated in the defense of Madrid (Zhang Shiyong 204). The song was published in the World Association’s magazine *Today’s World* (现世界) and was translated into ten languages by the Esperanto Academy for external distribution. It can be said that the song “Defense of Madrid” had been woven into the international literary and artistic framework from its conception, through its creation and dissemination, and was inherent in the development process of left-wing literature and art. Creators Lü Ji and Nie Er 聂耳 jointly formed the leftist music group, which was under the leadership of the Chinese League of Leftist Theatrical Figures and was involved with the Chinese League of Leftist Writers (Lü). The march mode presented by the “New Melody,” as well as the short and orderly structural arrangement, have some resonances with elements found in the “March of the Volunteers” (义勇军进行曲) composed by Nie Er. In addition, the Amateur Choirs and Song Research Association can both be considered branch organizations of the leftist music group. They mobilized groups such as workers and students to rehearse and promote choir movements from the inner cities for the frontlines of the battlefield.

The internationalist and anti-fascist song “Defense of Madrid” responded to and explored the activism of left-wing literature during the war. According to Liang Luo’s analysis, the Chinese left-wing avant-garde artists of the 1930s joined together and developed an internationally coordinated method of leftist literary practice (Luo). The internationalist organizational style and literary imagination established by the lyrics of “All World” and “All Humanity” further enhance the “affective power” (D. Wang) of lyrical forms such as songs, serving a left-wing political role in unifying national resistance and inspiring mass revolution internally. It is not difficult to understand that in the summer of 1937, Yan’an organized the Anti-Japanese War

parade and chose this song as a choir track. The slogan held high at the forefront of the procession was also written by American journalist Helen Snow in Spanish as “¡No Pasarán!” (Tsou N. and Tsou L. 164–166).

As a matter of fact, in contrast to Bell’s transnational trail in 1937, one particular case of literary heroism originating from Madrid also became a characteristic historical narration of Wuhan in 1938. According to *Shen Bao*’s (申报) interview with some militarists on 24 June 1938, based on the tendency of rhetorically referring to the defense of Madrid within Chinese intellectuals’ military discourse, Madrid indeed supplied strong inspirations for the recent defense of Wuhan. Just in the year of 1938, a propaganda slogan, “Defense of Great Wuhan” (保卫大武汉), was put forward by the National Government’s Military Commission and appeared frequently in reports, essays, movements, and daily conversations among citizens. Obviously, it is the Battle of Wuhan that mainly triggered this wartime glossary, but it was the “Defense of Madrid” which, to some extent, brought forth the birth of that literary discourse due to the parallelism between Madrid (Spain) and Wuhan (China), in turn further elucidating the wartime transnational tale of two cities.

The song “Defense of Madrid” also underwent local transformations and became widely broadcasted. In 1938, Chen Gexin 陈歌辛, who was then a music professor at the Shanghai Sino-French Academy of Drama, created the anti-Japanese song “No Enemy Passes Through” (不许敌人通过) and directly applied the slogan “Defense of Madrid” to the local context of China’s defense war. As a form of street-level political activism, collective singing activities were relatively easy to operate and had a significant impact on public mobilization. In order to stimulate the morale of the nation, strengthen mass cohesion, and intensify political propaganda, both the Nationalists and the Communists focused on Wuhan during the war, seizing the opportunity of mass activities such as celebrating the May Day (庆五一), commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Anti-Japanese War, and launching a singing movement. According to Stephen MacKinnon’s observation, Zhou Enlai 周恩来 served as the Deputy Minister of the Political Department of the Military Commission of the Nationalist Government at the time, while intellectuals such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Tian Han 田汉 served in the Third Office of the Political Department responsible for cultural propaganda work. They chose “Defense of Madrid” as a popular song in the Anti-Japanese War literary campaign in Wuhan. Similar to the creation process of the “Defense of Madrid,” the Wuhan Singing Movement was also part of the leftist revolutionary literature and art (MacKinnon).

The circuitous singing of “Defense of Madrid” was still insufficient in order to incite anti-Japanese sentiment. The literary recreation that directly combined

Madrid with wartime China needed to be put on the agenda as soon as possible, and the entire recreation process was still based on the activism of leftist internationalism. On the eve of the Battle of Wuhan in 1938, young students Sha Lü 沙旅, Sha Zijian 沙子建, and Er Dong 尔东 (Chen Erdong 陈耳东) from the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yan'an wrote lyrics, while art teacher Zheng Lücheng 郑律成 from the Lu Xun Literature and Art University composed the song "Defense of Great Wuhan." The central lyrics of the song demonstrated a continuing relationship with "Defense of Madrid":

Wuhan is the center of the Anti-Japanese War
Wuhan is the biggest metropolis today
We must defend her resolutely
Like the Spanish defense of Madrid

武汉是全国抗战的中心
武汉是今日最大的都会
我们要坚决地保卫著她
像西班牙人民保卫马德里

The composer Zheng Lücheng was born in North Korea and was exiled to China in 1933. As a member of international anti-Japanese organizations such as the Korean National Liberation Alliance, he was likely to express support for the North Korean Volunteer Corps in their international campaign to support Wuhan under the leadership of the Third Office and to express his support through composing this song (Li).

The concept behind "Defense of Great Wuhan" was to pair Wuhan with Madrid, establishing a spatial rhetoric of the two cities. Although the tone and melody were different from "Defense of Madrid," both were also related to Nie Er's "March of the Volunteers." In the mass movements, such as the donations and fundraising organized by Zhou Enlai and Guo Moruo from the Third Office, the singing parades became the most effective literary practice due to the number of participants and media coverage. "Defense of Great Wuhan" was designated as the core song and widely sung. In August, it had already resounded through the streets and alleys of Wuhan. Xian Xinghai 冼星海 presided over music work in the Third Office, personally organizing and directing a series of singing activities, while insisting on exploring more diverse and efficient singing forms. He was acquainted with Lü Ji, Mai Xin, and Zheng Lücheng and was familiar with the historical logic and internal

connections behind “Defense of Madrid” and “Defense of Wuhan.” Therefore, he attempted to create a more concise rhetoric of the dual city linkage on this basis. On 14 August 1938, Xian Xinghai wrote the song “Defense of the Oriental Madrid” (保卫东方的马德里) and guided several amateur singing training classes to perform this song (Figure 1). He wrote a special article, “How to Sing Defense of the Oriental Madrid” (怎样唱“保卫东方的马德里”), at the end of September, attempting to establish norms and models to promote larger choral movements (Xian, *Volume 1*: 227–230). At this point, Wuhan has been succinctly portrayed as the “Oriental Madrid” in the songs of the Anti-Japanese War, just as the lyricist Guang Weiran 光未然 wrote in the song “Defense of the Oriental Madrid”:

Great Wuhan, Great Wuhan, it is a golden city with iron walls
He is the Verdun of China, the Oriental Madrid, Madrid

大武汉，大武汉，他是金城汤池，铜墙铁壁；
他是中国的凡尔登，东方的马德里，马德里。
(Xian, *Volume 2*: 70)

The literary phenomenon of calling Wuhan the “Oriental Madrid” originated from these cross-border historical processes, from “Defense of Madrid” to “Defense of Great Wuhan.” This phenomenon is rooted in the global antiwar and anti-fascist historical context and zeitgeist. The spatial rhetoric of the juxtaposition of the two cities reveals the close connection between Chinese wartime literature and the international wartime conditions, and cross-border linkages and mechanisms of literary productions. This mechanism of literary cross-border action largely revolves around the left-leaning internationalist literary and artistic front, integrated into the movement of intellectual groups generally turning left and toward global solidarity. As the reporter James Bertram in Wuhan observed at that time, the “Oriental Madrid” came directly from the deployment of the CCP (Bertram’s report was dedicated to Griff McLaurin, who was one of the first international volunteers to be killed in the Spanish Civil War in November 1936):

The communists at this time had already worked out a plan for the defence of Hankow, which involved direct arming of the city’s industrial workers (the largest Chinese proletariat outside of Shanghai), and envisaged Hankow becoming another Madrid. This plan was still opposed by certain Kuomintang officials, and there was little immediate likelihood of this be-

ing adopted. Though the Chinese Communist Party had its own open organization in Hankow. (...) But the United Front held triumphantly through all this; and only those who knew the full story of internal intrigue and the difficulties to be surmounted, could appreciate the strength of this achievement. (Bertram 342–343)

The leftist literary and artistic practices based on these international linkages, as well as their awareness of the world's anti-fascist united front, contributed to shaping the literary imaginations and strategies of wartime China. Chinese literature and art also used this international connection to gain and strengthen national identity internally, thereby realizing the organization and mobilization of domestic resistance and revolution. The cross-border literary imagination of the “Oriental Madrid” was created through singing, and it quickly spread; it was incorporated by wartime writers such as Lou Shiyi 楼适夷, Kong Luosun 孔罗荪, and Lu Ling 路翎, and penetrated into the collective consciousness of the masses.

On the evening of 27 June 1938, shortly after the Battle of Wuhan started, Xian Xinghai went to room no. 30 of the Lodge Hotel in Wuhan to talk to Joris Ivens about “receiving the film” (Xian 223). In early 1938, Dutch documentary film director Joris Ivens, along with his assistant John Fernhout and the Hungarian photographer Robert Capa, set out to visit wartime China. With funding and commission from the American film company History Today Inc., they filmed a movie about the Chinese War of Resistance. As the main members of the leftist international front, the three had plans to go north to contact the Communist Party but were hindered by the control of the Kuomintang. Starting in February of the same year, they took Wuhan as their central stronghold, traveling back and forth to the front lines of the battlefield to carry out filming work. The film is the second installment of the *History Today* series, following the team's first film, *The Spanish Earth*, which was completed shortly before on the frontline of the Spanish Civil War and co-narrated by John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, and Prudencio de Pareda. The second film, *The 400 Million*, which was later released worldwide, was quite likely related to the film that Xian Xinghai and Ivens discussed in Wuhan. At this time, at a more macro level, it supports the international spatial linkage between China and Spain.

At the beginning of the movie *The 400 Million*, a subtitle informs: “Europe and Asia have become the western and eastern front of the same assault on democracy.” The words “Europe and Asia” clearly refer to Spain and China. In this context, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937

not only marked the beginning of World War II between the East and the West but also provided a path for cross-border joint action for the left-wing intellectual communities, as well as a sense of spatial linkage on the battlefield. Just as the cartoon in *The New York Times* showed (Figure 2), this kind of transregional parallelism successfully drew international attention and represented how the worldwide anti-fascist movement confronted similar wartime situations geographically and culturally.

Undoubtedly, this parallelism created a range of themes and tensions, which also laid the foundation for intellectual cosmopolitanism in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, due to this parallelism, several other topics also needed to be unraveled carefully. These topics include how Wuhan was construed literarily as the “Oriental Madrid,” especially under the effects of leftwing intellectuals, what position Wuhan had on the wartime world map, and how at the time, Chinese men of letters resonated with and then appropriated elements of the Spanish Civil War imageries. In other words, the last theme was expressed by David Der-wei Wang as follows: how literature takes its own action in view of the transboundary context (Wang). All the discussions above, by probing into the cross-boundary perspectives of the global system, attempt to broaden the network of urban studies and address other potential topics, problems, and tensions in the current research of Chinese anti-Japanese war-time literature and culture. Chinese activist intellectuals always echoed with Spain supportively. Around the date of Julian Bell’s death in Spain, a famous Chinese periodical *Yi Wen* (译文), edited by Huang Yuan 黄源 and once sponsored by Lu Xun 鲁迅, set up a special issue for Spain (西班牙[内战]专号).

F调 2/4 **保卫东方的马德里** 光未然词

(一人) 保卫大武汉
(众人) 保卫大武汉

5.3 2.1 | 3 5 0 | 5.3 2.1 | 3 5 0 | 3.2 1.2 | 1 6 0 |
 拿出你们 力量, 拿出你们 金钱, 加入正规 军,
 3.5 2.3 | 5 - | 3.2 1.2 | 3 5 0 | 3.5 3.2 | 1 - | 5.5 5 |
 坚持持久 战, 组成自卫 军, 发动游击 战, 不分男 女, 老的 少的 一齐上 前线, 大武 汉,
 5.6 3.3 | 2 2 0 | 5.5 5 | 5 3 | 1 - | 2/4 (稍快) | 1 6 5 - |
 大武 汉, 他是金城 汤 池钢墙 铁 壁, 他是中国的
 3.2 3 0 | 6 5.3 | 2 5 3 - | 2 5 1 - || 1 - - - |
 孔 繁 登, 东方的 玛 德 里, 玛 德 里。(口号)
 (一人) 武汉老百姓团结起来!
 (合) 团结起来团结起来!

Figure 1 The score of a song titled “Defense of ‘Oriental Madrid’ Wuhan” (Music by Xinghai Xian and lyrics by Weiran Guang, 1938. Source: Weiran Guang’s Manuscripts, courtesy of Central China Normal University Library)

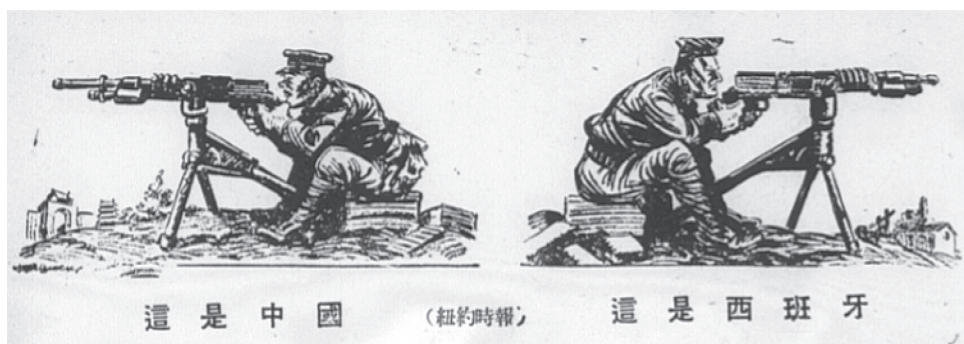


Figure 2 A cartoon about the transregional parallelism between China and Spain
 [Source: *Guowen zhoubao* (国闻周报) vol.14(42), 1 November, 1937]

A Tradition: Transregional Images of Battlefield Poets

In two of Bell's letters ("In Pyrenees Mountains" and "In Madrid") translated by Ma Er, some descriptions of Spanish sceneries provided an apparent analogy to Sichuan province's sceneries. Besides Bell's own narrations, it is rather interesting that Chinese writers also seem to emphasize Bell's transregional battlefield trails from China to Spain and created certain transregional images of battlefield poets based on the extent to which the poets built such transnational parallelism in literature. As in Ma Er's poem, China fought against fascism for freedom hand-in-hand with "the kingdom of Don Quixote," marked by Bell's death (Ma Er "Yearning").

Yet you are immortal in our work and memory,
 and the gunfire of the Fascists will not destroy your brothers across the world.
 Now, they shook their hands bravely and lovingly.
 In the East, as in the kingdom of Don Quixote,
 we keep up the struggle for liberation and bread.
 Oh, you eventually left us, when we're going to embrace the dawn.

然而妳永生在我們的工作和記憶裏，
 法西斯的炮火毀不了妳世界上的兄弟。
 現在，他們英勇和友愛地握起了手。
 在東方，正如在唐吉訶德的國度，
 繼續著妳為解放，為面包而奮鬥。
 呵，妳終離去了，在我們要黎明的時候。
 (Ma "Yearning")

The article “The Spanish Civil War and the British Intellectual” by writer Lin Shuai 林率 (Chen Linrui 陳麟瑞, Liu Yazi’s 柳亞子 son-in-law) indicated:

Last year, right after the tragic Battle of Shanghai (13 August 1937) broke out, there came the news that Bell was killed in Spain. (...) The number of sacrificed British in action was far more than this one, merely because Bell had come to China and was more familiar to us Chinese. (Lin)

Intriguingly, in the article, Lin associated “Bell’s death” with “a preserved valuable tradition” (Lin). But what actually does this “tradition” refer to? Perhaps further research could throw some light on this.

Continuity of the Two-Cities Tale: *the Auden Generation* from Madrid to Wuhan

Next, we will further discuss how the transregional images of battlefield poets between China and Spain were created and how the awareness of solidarity and cosmopolitanism between East and West was brought about. Actually, it was Bell himself who popularized and then embodied that tradition. In the *T’ien Hsia Monthly* issue from October 1936, he published a poetry review titled “W. H. Auden and the Contemporary Movement in English Poetry.” Bell had told Ma Er numerous anecdotes about this famous British poet Wystan Hugh Auden (Ma Er “Auden”). As Xu Chi’s essay “Introduction to Auden and Isherwood’s *Journey to a War*” indicated, Auden rushed to Spain together with Bell during the worldwide upsurge of efforts to defend Spain and its capital, Madrid (Xu).

As we all know, there was a group of young poets at Oxford University during the 1930s, led by W. H. Auden, and included members such as Cecil Day-Lewis and Stephen Spender, called the School of Auden (or the Auden Generation). Later on, some young poets at Cambridge University, such as Julian Bell and William Empson, also joined the literary activities of this Auden Circle. Under pressure from the “old masters” (such as T. S. Eliot), this new, younger generation developed their unique poetic qualities, such as pure intelligence, anti-romantic cynicism, a satirical method, and the incorporation of the mundane words and material facts of life into poetry. But what really matters is their conversion to socialism and communism to resist the poetic tendencies of the bourgeoisie and the Bohemian (Swingler). At the conclusion of Auden’s propaganda play *The Dance of Death*, the entrance of “Karl Marx and a couple of young communists” was introduced. In turn, William Empson once wrote a ballad, *Just a Smack at Auden*, to ridicule Auden’s political sen-

sitivity (Haffenden). It included the line “Treason of the clerks,” which originated from the French novelist Julien Benda’s work *La Trahison des Clercs* (1927), denouncing some political writers in contrast to belles-lettres authors, such as Maurice Barrès, Charles Péguy, and William James.

Just a Smack at Auden
Waiting for the end, boys, waiting for the end.
What is there to be or do?
What’s become of me or you?
Are we kind or are we true?
Sitting two and two, boys, waiting for the end.
(...)
What was said by Marx, boys, what did he prepend?
No good being sparks, boys, waiting for the end.
Treason of the clerks, boys, curtains that descend,
Lights becoming darks, boys, waiting for the end.
(Empson 81–82)

Most intriguingly, as Ma Er’s poem depicted, Bell’s travel plan to the Spanish battlefield was stimulated by his British poet friends, as Auden and his poetry mates shared the same transnational journey to Spain. In 1937, Auden acted as a broadcaster in Barcelona and wrote a famous but politically controversial long poem, “Spain” (then changed its name to “Spain 1937”); the poem contained many dramatic contrasting implications such as misery versus hope. The lines “Madrid is the heart” and “Our hours of friendship into a people’s army” reflected his consciousness of international solidarity (Auden 89–92). Meanwhile, the metaphoric line “the young poets exploding like bombs” vividly illustrated the Auden Generation’s wartime posture, which actually reenacted Bell’s tragic death in a bombing. Other members of the Auden Generation also wrote poems depicting the intellectuals’ Spanish battlefield experiences, some of which were translated into Chinese at the time. The British Volunteer Army, which walked through “the wasted olive-groves” symbolizing Spain, and the news of the fall of Spanish cities was circulated through the poetry of the Auden Generation to wartime China:

It was not fraud or foolishness,
Glory, revenge, or pay:
We came because our open eyes

Could see no other way.

Beyond the wasted olive-groves,
The furthest lift of land,
There calls a country that was ours
And here shall be regained.
Here in a parched and stranger place
We fight for England free,
The good our fathers won for her,
The land they hoped to see.
(Day-Lewis, "The Volunteer" 190–191)

这绝非奸诈，也不是愚蠢，
不是光荣，复仇，或是薪金：
我们来因为我们睁开眼睛，
再也看不到别的途径。

在那荒芜的橄榄林之外，
那最遥远的壹片土地，
是我们的祖国我们如此称谓，
而这里的壹个是必须光复的。

在这焦灼的异国的土地，
我们战争为了自由的英吉利，
为我们祖先争给她的诸般美丽，
为我们希望看到未来的土地。
(Tr. Yuan Shupai, "The Volunteer")

All the lessons learned, unlearned;
The young, who learned to read, now blind
Their eyes with an archaic film;
The peasant relapses to a stumbling tune
Following the donkey's bray;
These only remember to forger.

But somewhere some word presses

In the high door of a skull, and in some corner
Of an irrefrangible eye
Some old man's memory jumps to a child
—Spark from the days of liberty.
And the child hoards it like a bitter toy.
(Spender, "Fall of a City" 104–105)

壹切课程已学得，废弃；
幼小者，学习念书的，现在盲了，
由于壹张古旧的膜将眸子掩蔽；
农民们又回到那蹒跚的故态中，
跟随驴子的鸣声低低；
这些只有记忆可以忘记。

但，在什么地方有些字烙印
在高墙上壹个头骨，在墙角，
壹只不可毁灭的眼睛，
有些老人的记忆跳跃到壹个孩童
——火花来自往昔的力的时间，
孩子珍藏它如同壹个悲伤的玩具。
(Tr. Yuan Shuipai, "Fall of a City")

Backed to the brown walls of the square
The lightness lorry headlamps stare
With glinting reflectors through the night
At our gliding star of light.

Houses are tombs, tarpaulins cover
Mysterious trucks of the lorries over.
The town vacantly seems to wait
The explosion of a fate.

Cargoes of iron and of fire
To delete with blood and ire
The will of those who dared to move
From the furrow, their life's groove.
(Spender, "At Castellon" 67–68)

回到方场的棕色墙垣，
无光的卡车头灯注视
闪光的反射镜通过夜
向我们滑翔的光明的星。

屋宇是牧（墓）场，防水布遮盖
秘密的运输车辆。
城市静默的仿佛在等候/壹个命运的爆裂。

铁与火的货色，
用恚怒与血抹却/那些意志，敢于动弹/从沟壑，他们的生命之槽。
(Tr. Yuan Shupai, “At Castellon”)

The above three poems resemble Auden’s poetic principles, and they were widely used in describing the transnational battlefield experience of writers. For example, the usage of some rigid industrial images, such as lorry headlamps, glinting reflectors, tarpaulins, revealed their modernist style. The unique battlefield scene consisting of a skull, an irrefragible eye, and a child’s bitter toy represented abstract themes, such as life and humanity, war and death, and the relationship between extermination and rebirth, which were related to their poetic idol T. S. Eliot’s negative capability (and impersonality) theory.

Remarkably, the wartime tale of the two cities continued. During the first half of 1938, Auden came to the frontier of China’s battlefield with his novelist companion, Christopher Isherwood. They made this trip partially due to their publishers’ commercial interest in exotic locations and partially due to their own wish to escape the public censure of their homosexual relationship. Later, the couple published their rather famous travel notes compilation *Journey to a War*, which includes Isherwood’s long essay “Travel Diary,” along with plenty of photos and commentaries, Auden’s six travel poems (from London to Hong Kong), as well as Auden’s twenty-three sonnets under a collective title “In Time of War” with a commentary. With their passion still lingering from the defense of Madrid, they arrived in the “Oriental Madrid” Wuhan in March 1938. At the time, Wuhan was a hinterland city soon to be thrown under the wartime flames of defense. From Isherwood’s transnational observation, “[H]istory, grown weary of Shanghai, bored with Barcelona, has fixed her capricious interest upon Hankow,” while Wuhan was “the real capital of war-time China”(Auden and Isherwood).



Figure 3 A group photo of W. H. Auden (left), Ma Er (middle), and Christopher Isherwood (right). [Source: *Kangzhan wenyi* (抗战文艺) Vol.1(4), 14 May, 1938]

On 21 April 1938, they received a welcoming banquet (so-called literary tea) in Wuhan held by Chinese intellectuals, such as Tian Han, Hong Shen 洪深, Mou Mou-tien 穆木天, and militarists accompanied by politicians. During this occasion, they met Ma Er, “once a pupil of Julian Bell”; it is hard to imagine how they must have reminisced about this passed-away muse (Ma Er May 1938). In any case, Auden revisited Bell’s Wuhan University the next day and received a gift of a painted Chinese fan from Ling Shuhua (inscribed with the old poem: “The mountain and the river in the mist not broken in pieces / We should only drink and forget this immense sorrow,” beneath which Ling herself added: “During this national struggle / I paint in wonder to forget my sorrow”). On 24 April, they met the battlefield photographer Robert Capa at Agnes Smedley’s house, who found the somewhat mute expression commonly seen among the Chinese people during wartime unsatisfactory for the camera in comparison to the Spanish reactions and was aching to return to Madrid. It is no wonder that all the historical details above were in place to herald in the wartime tales of the two cities or two countries. More specifically, cosmopolitanism suited the transnational recognition of those intellectuals, as Auden’s sonnets manifested geographically here.

Think in this year what pleased the dancers best:
When Austria died and China was forsaken,
Shanghai in flames and Teruel retaken,

France put her case before the world: “Partout

Il y a de la joie.” America addressed
The earth: “Do you love me as I love you?”
(excerpt, XXII, *In Time of War*)

想想本年度什么让舞蹈家们最满意：
当奥地利死去，中国被丢到一边，
上海一片战火，而特鲁埃尔再次失陷，

法国向全世界说明她的情况：
“处处皆欢乐。”美国向地球致辞：
“你是否爱我，就像我爱你那样？”
——《战争时期（XXII）》（节选）
(Tr. Ma Mingqian, XXII, *In Time of War*)

Giving us courage to confront our enemies,
Not only on the Grand Canal, or in Madrid,
Across the campus of a university city,

But aid us everywhere, that in the lovers’ bedroom,
The white laboratory, the school, the public meeting,
The enemies of life may be more passionately attacked.
(excerpt, *In Time of War*, Commentary)

给我们勇气去直面我们的敌人，
不仅在大运河上，或在马德里，
席卷大学城的整个校园，

并且在每一个地方给我们以助力，在爱人的卧房，
在白晃晃的实验室，在学校，在公众集会上，
那些与生命为敌者会承受更加激越的攻击。
——《诗体解说词》（节选）
(Tr. Ma Mingqian, *Commentary*)

The compilation *Journey to a War* elicited Chinese intellectuals’ enthusiasm and was translated into nearly six Chinese versions by Hong Shen, Lang 朗, Wang Shen 王忠, Xu Chi, and Shao Xunmei 邵洵美. Poetry reviews written by Cecil Day-Lewis (such as 大众诗歌论: 评奥登编《牛津通俗诗选集》, translated by Yuan

Shuipai 袁水拍, and *A Hope for Poetry* 《一个对于诗的希望》, translated by Zhu Weiji 朱维基) and many special essays on Auden were published even in Chinese overseas propaganda periodicals, such as *Chinese Writers* edited by Dai Wangshu 戴望舒. Specifically, such awareness of anti-fascism solidarity, as reflected in these transnational battlefield experiences between China and Spain, was fully reciprocated by the Chinese intellectuals during the Second Sino-Japanese War. But, as previously pointed out, whether the aforementioned “preserved valuable tradition” merely referred to the Auden Generation was still in question. At the Wuhan welcoming banquet, the Chinese playwright Tian Han improvised a seven-character quatrain dedicated to Auden (Tian 244). Alluding to the wartime awareness of the international community, the poem evidently associated China with the British and Spain:

Really, the ends of the world are neighbours:
Blood-tide, flower-petals, Hankow spring,
Shoulder to shoulder for civilization fight.
Across the sea, long journey, how many Byrons?
(tr. Isherwood)

信是天涯若比鄰，
血潮花片漢皋春。
並肩共為文明戰，
橫海長征幾拜倫？！
(Tian Han's original classical version)

真地，世界的四端像鄰居壹樣；
血潮，花瓣，漢口的春天，
肩並肩地為文明作戰。
在海外，長長的路途，多少個拜倫？
(Zhu Weiji's colloquial version)

As the concluding line of the poem shows, the historical tradition seems to be related to another British poet, George Gordon Byron. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Byron, mostly known as a heroic and enlightenment poet, was eulogized as a Mara Poet 摩罗诗人 (Mara is the pronunciation of a Sanskrit word which means devil) by Chinese intellectuals such as Lu Xun. As Bertrand Russell's work *A History of Western Philosophy* indicates, “Byron inspired a corresponding

manner of thought and feeling among intellectuals and artists” (Russell 2007). Intriguingly, Byron was revived in the Chinese literary field during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Chinese translators such as Wang Tongzhao 王统照 (*Spanish Nostalgic Poetry* [西班牙怀古诗]) and Liu Wuji 柳无忌 (*Adieu, Adieu! My Native Land* [去国行]), and reviewers such as Ye Lingfeng 叶灵凤 also traced their lineages back to Byron and took him as a literary inspiration. The most important reason in this context may be that this romantic poet also went through a distinct transnational battlefield journey while pursuing revolution and freedom. He had rushed to Spain, fighting the invasion of Napoleon’s army at the time. Eventually, he died in Greece. The translator Wang Tongzhao even plainly connected Byron’s Spain-themed poem with the Spanish Civil War (Byron). More pertinent Chinese literary texts that mentioned British classical poets with Spanish battlefield experiences are recorded extensively. Before Lin Shuai published his essay “Byron in Spain,” another essay of his, “Spanish War and British Poets,” revealed an even longer spectrum of the above-mentioned tradition. During the period when the British government provided military assistance to Spain (1808–1814), the famous lake poets Wordsworth and Coleridge compiled pamphlets supporting the British army and strongly condemned the Cintra peace negotiation between the British and the French. Coleridge even published his letters on the Spaniards in the newspaper *Courier Daily*, which regarded Spanish patriots with strong combat experiences as endless bolts of lightnings with the rapidity of the flash. Another lake poet, Robert Southey, translated from Spanish *Chronicle of the Cid*, wrote *The Life of Horatio, Lord Viscount Nelson*, both about that Spanish war, and called for international revenge against Napoleon. What is more, poet Walter Savage Landor raised funds to establish a voluntary army supporting Spain and interweaved his Spanish experience into his tragedy *Count Julian* (Lin). So far, the Chinese wartime intellectuals had fully discovered the tradition known in the community of the British poets, who shared the transnational battlefield trails between Spain and China and the spirit of wartime solidarity, regardless of any synchronic and diachronic (contemporary and historical) dimensions. All of these factors resonated timely with China’s propaganda requirements against Japan’s violence.

Intellectuals at Wartime: Writers of Thoughts, Writers of Action

The wartime tale of two cities efficiently revived the literary tradition of taking part in real fighting and getting away from ivory towers to be a writer of action, notwithstanding the doubtful existence of a pure ivory tower. The heroic reality and the appearance of literature formed a co-constitute relationship. With their transna-

tional travels to various battlefields, even putting aside the communist emotion that had built Auden's popular success, the intellectuals could still achieve their aesthetic aspirations, a similar poetic rhythm, and a "non-lyrical" attitude that turned readily to satire or didacticism by way of returning to the central tradition of pre-Romantic poetry inextricably intertwined with experience. Thus, not only new literary genres (such as political essays) and principles but also intellectual thoughts contemplating the position and usefulness of literature could be radically transformed for Chinese wartime intellectuals. This tradition unraveled the internal mechanism by which Spain resonated with China via British intellectual poets, and this clearly transcended the structure involving only two cities.

This wartime tradition was directly inherited by a young Chinese poetic generation, the Nine Leaves Poem School (九叶诗派), a well-known Chinese modernist school consisting of nine young poets and students of literature. After Beijing was occupied by Japan in 1937, countless college professors and students were forced to exile to southern China. They flocked to Changsha and Kunming and joined the Southwest Associated University, which originated from Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Nankai University. There, William Empson selected some pieces from Auden as his core teaching texts, and he gave lessons on Modern British and American poetry (Zhang Songjian). This teaching group also included Robert Payne and Robert Winter. Most of Empson's Chinese students who made up Jiuye School, such as Wang Zuoliang 王佐良, Yang Zhouhan 杨周翰, Du Yunxie 杜运燮, preferred Auden to Eliot in terms of politics, and they all were quite familiar with Auden's poem *Spain 1937* (Wang Z.). Beyond the popular Auden style, the Jiuye members also followed the Auden Generation's political passion for participating in the war, valuing transnational experiences and being personally involved in society through activism. Undoubtedly, the young Chinese poet Mu Dan 穆旦 was the most typical among this group. In 1942, Mu joined Chinese expeditionary forces allied with the British army and participated in the Burma Campaign. The tragic battlefield scene was depicted in his poem "The Phantasm of the Jungle: An Elegy for the Dead Bones on Hukang River" (森林之魅: 祭胡康河上的白骨). Here, compared with William Empson, who taught the global awareness of the Auden Generation, including their support for the Spanish Civil War, to the young Chinese poets, maybe Julian Bell should be recalled as he advocated for André Malraux and Ernest Miller Hemingway's decisions to join the Spanish Civil War, during his time teaching in Wuhan.

“*Je ne discute pas: Je constate*”: Literariness via Heteroglossia, Interrogated Rather than Suppressed

However, under the literary tradition of calling for action, the young poet Julian Bell's contemporaries triggered his sympathy as well as anxiety. In Bell's 1936 poetry review titled “W. H. Auden and the Contemporary Movement,” young poets of that time were described as pitiful, “selling the *Daily Worker* or distributing subversive propaganda at the street corner rather than contemplating flowers and sunsets.” However, political tendency definitely had its reasonable role. Indeed, it was inappropriate to merely sustain old-fashioned romanticism in wartime or any other era. Nevertheless, one thing is rather clear—literary quality will be obliterated if we only have some political attitude left. What truly frightened Bell was that any literary students playing for safety would decide to prefer either Pope or Donne, both of whom nourished the Auden Generation's rough but definite meters, rather than Wordsworth, Keats, or indeed any of the great romantics. It was Byron who truly demonstrated the tradition by retaining a poetic personality while faithfully recording the public outcries of the era as a man of action. Therefore, Bell found Auden's clique's extremely brash attitude dangerous. I would argue that what matters most is not the rough difference between art and politics, some degree of detachment versus commitment, or the definition and possibility of being an activist writer because of the risk of doctrinism or opportunism. Literariness is suppressed when only one emotional doctrine dominates, no matter how transregional the external traits are. Literariness exists via heteroglossia.

There is no doubt that Auden also easily aroused controversy through his poetry. The eighteenth poem of Auden's *Journey to a War*, which was read aloud at that Wuhan welcoming banquet, became Auden's first poem translated into Chinese during the Second Sino-Japanese War. It provoked Chinese readers' doubt and complaints, as well as such responses from Pearl S. Buck 赛珍珠, the most well-known foreign female writer in Chinese literary circles, whose novel *The Patriot* on wartime China was highly praised in the same Chinese literature periodical that published negative reviews of Auden's *Journey to a War*. The ambiguous lines, such as “Far from the heart of culture he was used: / Abandoned by his general and his lice” (他被使用在远离文化中心的地方, /又被他的将军和他的虱子所遗弃) and “His jokes were stale; like wartime, he was dull; / His name is lost forever like his looks” (他的玩笑是陈腐的, 他沉闷如战时, /他的名字和模样都将永远消逝), seemed a brutally dangerous thought within the wartime context (Yao). As a result, certain Chinese translators, such as Hong Shen, Wang Zhong 王忠, Shao Xunmei, and Mu Dan, all made some sort of modifications to Auden's original lines. Its tone,

contrary to those Chinese heroic propaganda poems, may not be explained by any simple reasoning. As Bell pointed out, Auden was “a congenital moralist,” who doggedly persisted in a somewhat overbearing and hectoring morality in his work. For instance, George Orwell criticized Auden’s poem *Spain* and questioned the validity of the Auden Generation’s left-wing standpoint.

But notice the phrase “necessary murder.” It could only be written by a person to whom murder is at most a *word*. Personally I would not speak so lightly of murder. It so happens that I have seen the bodies of numbers of murdered men—I don’t mean killed in battle, I mean murdered. Therefore I have some conception of what murder means—the terror, the hatred, the howling relatives, the post-mortems, the blood, the smell. To me, murder is something to be avoided. So it is to any ordinary person. The Hitlers and Stalins find murder necessary, but they don’t advertise their callousness, and they don’t speak of it as murder; it is “liquidation,” “elimination,” or some other soothing phrase. Mr Auden’s brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled. So much of left-wing thought is a kind of playing with fire by people who don’t even know that fire is hot. The warmongering to which the English intelligentsia gave themselves up in the period 1935–9 was largely based on a sense of personal immunity. (Orwell 36–37)

From Orwell’s perspective, the lines “the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder,” and “History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help or pardon” seemed to be letting totalitarianism free without punishment. Auden then changed the line “necessary murder” to “the conscious acceptance of guilt in the fact of murder.” It is no coincidence that Bell felt suspicious toward the communist orthodoxy of the Auden Generation, who seemed more fascist rather than Marxist in Bell’s eyes. As he observed, their “emotion, morality, violence, the mysticism and the belief in leaders, the taste for romantic war, all these would fit so much better into a Fascist rather than a communist ideology” (Bell). Most interestingly, Auden, Stephen Spender, as well as other left-wing intellectual writers, such as Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, John Dos Passos, and André Malraux, rushed toward the opposite side of the left wing, which seemed to prove Bell’s observation. So, how should we analyze those conflicts and these ever-changing literary attitudes? Besides the definition of intellectual writers, maybe literature should be regarded as some indispensable dimension of intellectual history, or at least as an active, mo-

tivating factor that helped to develop the history of thoughts. Writing arguments is the way where literature boosts intellect while participating in and remedying the defects of propaganda. It is literature that triggers intellectual inquiries, sharpens the imaginary, and, most remarkably, encourages constructive discourses, thus circumventing a simple system with a single doctrine. So Bell concluded his review with “je ne discute pas: je constate” (I will not discuss or judge, I merely observe) selected from André Gide’s autobiographical novel *L’immoraliste* (*The Immoralist*), who also acted prudently in the transnational 1930s and will be further discussed in my research. From the perspective of a macro-historical scale, literature should be interrogated through a range of interrelated perspectives rather than totally suppressed by one certain propagandist mechanism.

What Is *T’ien Hsia* (天下): Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism

In the May 1938 issue of *T’ien Hsia Monthly*, an English periodical established by Chinese intellectuals, an essay titled “Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Modern Nationalism” by Harry Paxton Howard discussed the concept of *t’ien hsia*, or Chinese cosmopolitanism, in a modern context. As the old Chinese saying goes, “Within the four seas, all men are brothers” (四海之内皆兄弟), and the intellectual basis of China’s wartime unity abided by the old tradition of the Chinese literati. What is more, the foreign invasions continuously reinforced China’s modern nationalism. So foreign governments, such as Russia and Britain, unintentionally devised strategies to facilitate a strong Chinese wartime unity in their maneuvers to gain control over China. In this aspect, the Japanese invasion seemed to help rebuild China’s solidarity, which promoted Chinese literati to consciously and effectively collaborate with Spanish wartime literary movements. Thus, the wartime tale of the two cities reviving a transnational spirit had at the same time facilitated the rediscovery of the Chinese cosmopolitanist tradition itself. Perhaps further discussions should focus on the redefinition of cosmopolitanism beyond external interactions and the complex relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Indeed, to some extent, there should be further inner differentiations among the so-called cross-boundary coalitions and the global anti-war intellectual networks. For example, when Chinese translator Zhu Weiji 朱维基 analyzed Auden’s *Journey to a War*, he overwhelmingly indulged in the May Fourth literary tradition instead of being pinned down by Auden’s own intellectual concepts. Additionally, Julian Bell mentioned a situation in which his students were more fascinated by Percy Bysshe Shelley and Byron than his own favorites, such as Alexander Pope and John Dryden. Indeed, the aesthetic differences between Chinese sentimentalism and Western rationalism also revealed

the firm tradition that underlies the complexities of transnational wartime actions. In a nutshell, the wartime tale of two cities offers more potential and complex topics awaiting further research.

Coda

In 1938, Wuhan, located at the center of the Anti-Japanese War, was portrayed as the “Oriental Madrid” through literary creations and public discourses, thus demonstrating the production mechanism of Chinese literature’s cross-border linkages during the war and its close connections with international wartime conditions. In terms of literature and reality, Wuhan has become an international battlefield and a cultural space, which implies the leftist international front’s mode of action towards world revolution, as well as a leftist consciousness and a coordinated action plan within the wartime world intellectual community. The mobile and interconnected battlefield space shaped more open-minded experiences and global imaginations for the Chinese people in the Anti-Japanese War. In terms of public relations during the collective war, various literary groups and activists consciously carried out cross-border exchanges and organized individuals on a wider scale. Thus, a cultural production and dissemination method with the characteristic of “cosmopolitanism” was widely manifested during the war from the 1930s to 1940s and extended throughout the period of World War II.

During recent years, there have been many research breakthroughs on “cosmopolitanism” in wartime literature, such as *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture (1931–1941)* by Katerina Clark and *Transpacific Community: America, China, and the Rise and Fall of a Cultural Network* by Richard Jean So. This article discusses the “Tale of Two Cities” during the wars involving Wuhan and Madrid. Based on prior research, it seeks to further investigate the multifaceted phenomenon of wartime “internationalism.” Specifically, it aims to understand the origins of “cosmopolitanism” as a discourse, the workings of the wartime cultural networks and mechanisms underlying “cosmopolitanism,” and the improved recognition, analysis, and comprehension of the individual voices of intellectuals. Moreover, it seeks to discern the boundaries and distinctions between countries within the international cooperative context of the battlefield. The seemingly integrated wartime “internationalism” actually contains more tensions and complexities.

The spatial form of the juxtaposition of Wuhan and Madrid points to the deep connections between China and Spain that existed in the harsh realities of the World War. As both facts and symbols, the Eastern and Western countries, through

the international linkages of the antiwar and anti-fascist front, have formed a “war-time community.” Many aspects of this “wartime community” were highlighted in Wuhan, which rose to the status of the International Capital of Literature and Art in 1938 and emerged as an important venue in the trajectory of international poets’ cross-border aid to the war. The international poets at war were even shaped into a certain “tradition” by the Chinese and foreign wartime literary circles. Behind the reality of the forming of communities, there is also an inherent transformation of literary imaginations, emotional mechanisms, life experiences, and even their perspectives on civilizations. This transformation of mentalities and perspectives invites us to continue exploring new paradigms of literary research on the Second Sino-Japanese War.

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