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Studies in Comparative Literature and Translation

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Springer

Zuoliang Wang (1916–1995)
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Beijing, China

Sponsored by Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences (本书获中华社会科学基金资助)

ISSN 2195-1853 ISSN 2195-1861 (electronic)
China Academic Library
ISBN 978-3-662-45474-9 ISBN 978-3-662-45475-6 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015933008

Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer-Verlag GmbH Berlin Heidelberg is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

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Chapter 1
Literary History: Chinese Beginnings

Presumably there is more than one tradition of literary historiography in the world. The Western tradition is, of course, familiar to scholars. Is there also a Chinese tradition? On the face of it, hardly, for the first *History of Chinese Literature*, so-called, was published only in 1904.[1] And what has happened since then seems mainly a tale of succession of foreign influences—Japanese, English, French, American and, finally, Soviet—that Chinese literary historians have been subjected to, so that to this day there is no history of Chinese literature published in China, or elsewhere in the world, for that matter, that is found generally acceptable to most Chinese scholars. Their main objection to many of these "histories" is that there is little that is distinctly Chinese in them.

This is a curious situation, for the Chinese have never lacked of a historical sense. On the contrary, their historical writings have been among the most distinguished in the world. Neither have they lacked a critical sense. If anything, they have often been hypercritical, reaching a high stage of subtlety and sophistication in the sixth century, if not earlier. There have also been available other factors conducive to literary history, including para-compilations and precursors. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss some of these factors and explore a little the question why such favourable conditions did not yet reach their consummation in a Chinese literary history.

1.1 I

The survey of literary works of a past period has been an old established practice among Chinese historians, which can be traced back to Ban Gu (班固), the first-century Imperial Historiographer. He initiated the *Chronicle of Arts and Letters*

[1] 林传甲,《中国文学史》, 1904。(广州存珍阁, 甲寅年二月重校印行)

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_1

(《艺文志》), a superb annotated bibliographical record, which subsequently became a regular feature of many dynastic histories. This was supplemented, or substantiated, by the "lives" of writers among the notables, also in the official histories. These "lives", resembling entries in the *DNB*, are still incorporated as appendix in nearly every standard edition of a classical author's works published in China today.

Several developments occurred at the beginning of the sixth century which were conducive to literary historiography. There was a treatise written by Zhong Rong (钟嵘) entitled *Poetic Ranks* (《诗品》) which ranked poets according to merit. Two anthologies were also compiled. One, the massive *Selected Writings* edited by the Prince Zhao Ming (《昭明文选》), was to remain the standard comprehensive anthology for a millennium and more, giving rise to numerous glosses and commentaries in the interval. The other, *New Poems from the Jade Pavilion* (《玉台新咏》) by Xu Lin (徐陵), a large miscellany of mostly love poems by princes, courtiers and court ladies, also set a fashion, being the first of many specialist anthologies to come.

Now any attempt at ranking the poets meant an act of criticism involving evaluation and classification. Zhong Rong's treatise also showed a historical sense, for the poets examined ranged from ancients down to the author's own contemporaries. It is clear that work along these lines was excellent preparation for literary history. The connection with anthologies is also not far to seek. Many early literary histories, so-called, were really anthologies in disguise, the only difference being that the quoted passages were arranged chronologically—hence there was some attempt at periodization—and linked up with critical remarks of one sort or another.

But the work that more than anything else pointed forward to literary history was Liu Xie's *Wen Xin Diao Long* (刘勰:《文心雕龙》), a title which has been translated as *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*.[2] It is a book of literary theory which treats systematically—as few other books have done in classical China—of nearly every aspect of literary creation. To this day Chinese and Japanese scholars, meeting at numerous symposia, wonder at its scope and depth. Literary historians will also find it a rich quarry. There is, for instance, a chapter entitled "Time Sequence" (《时序》) which is an admirable mini-history of Chinese literature from the earliest times to the fifth century. In it the author reviews the main literary achievements in this wide span of time, ending with the observation:

> 文变染乎世情, 兴废系乎时序。
> (Literary changes are colored by the social situation,
> and artistic growth or decline depends on the times.)

In other words, literature evolves with society. Trite enough today, no doubt, but Liu lived at a time (c. 465-c. 520) when people's minds were still clouded by mythological and other arcane interpretations of literary works and their origins. In that context his was a surprisingly modern view. This is followed by a chapter entitled "Talented Spirits" (《才略》) which gives a rapid survey of 94 authors through 9

[2] Vincent Yu-chung Shih, trans. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*. First published in 1959. Bilingual ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese UP, 1983.)

dynasties in an attempt to establish a relationship between tradition and individual talent, again a modern concern.

The bulk of the book, 20 chapters in all, is given over to a discussion of various types of writings. Liu is able to enumerate and comment on 33 of them, beginning with poems, folk songs *fu*, moving on to historical and philosophical writings, ending with memorials, petitions, notes and letters. In between there are some curious types, such as pledges, oaths, jests, queries, repartees and "sevens", the last a kind of prose poem which sets out to raise seven questions or make seven points. This classification may strike us as a little too elaborate, but it also testifies to the enormous wealth of material, both in verse and prose, available at the time.

More to our purpose is the historical approach used by the author. Each of these 20 chapters contains a brief survey of important past works of the type of writing under discussion. Below is part of such a survey:

> 暨建安之初, 五言腾踊。文帝、陈思, 纵辔骋节; 王、徐、应、刘, 望路而争驱; 并怜风月, 狎池苑, 述恩荣, 叙酣宴, 慷慨以任气, 磊落以使才; 造怀指事, 不求纤密之巧; 驱辞逐貌, 唯取昭晰之能, 此其所同也。乃正始明道, 诗杂仙心。何晏之徒, 率多浮浅; 唯嵇志清峻, 阮旨遥深, 故能标焉。若乃应璩《百一》, 独立不惧, 辞谲义贞, 亦魏之遗直也。(《明诗》)
>
> (By the early years of the Jian An period, five-character lines became popular. The Cao brothers, emperor and prince, rode gallantly together. Wang, Xu, Ying and Liu raced along in their wake. They all loved wind and moon, frequented ponds and parks, gloried in honors, made merry at parties, generous of spirit, open in displaying talent, caring not for ingenious minuteness in description, striving only for clarity in expression. These were their common characteristics. Coming down to the Zheng Shi period, under the influence of Taoism, poetry became tinged with spiritual yearnings. Ho Yan and his ilk were mostly shallow, only Ji and Ruan stood out, the former with his austere purity, the latter with his great profundity. Ying Qu's cautionary poems, too, showed an independent spirit by being enigmatic in language but bold in thoughts, a legacy from the Wei era.)

Packed with names and epithets, the writing yet moves on at a great pace and has a clear line of development, mainly by grouping the writers and bringing out the contrasts between the two periods. David Nichol Smith once said, "When poets are grouped by families and clans and when their descents are traced, History is coming".[3] Certainly here we have a history of Chinese poetry in embryo.

There are other things in Liu's work which a literary historian might study with profit.

First, his use of terms. On the whole, Liu used terms sparingly, but of the handful he did use a few were capable of expressing a whole theoretical position in one short, telling phrase, such as *fenggu* (风骨). He didn't exactly coin the phrase. Other critics had used the two words before, though generally in connection with painting or calligraphy.[4] Liu made the phrase a key term in his system, not only applied to individual literary works but also used to denote the dominant character of the

[3] David Nichol Smith, *Warton's History of English Poetry*. British Academy Warton Lecture, 1929, p. 14.

[4] Thus Xie He (谢赫) spoke of *fenggu* as an outstanding quality of some artists in his *Critical Account of Early Paintings* (《古画品录》). Yuan Ang (袁昂) in his *Critique on Calligraphy* (《书评》) used the two words separately to distinguish the achievements of individual calligraphers.

literature of a whole period. Thus he spoke of the *fenggu* of the Jian An period (建安风骨), a judgement that was to be repeated by countless later critics. As to what *fenggu* exactly means, interpretations vary to this day. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that as applied to the writers of the Jian An period, who included the statesman-poet Cao Cao (曹操) and his sons, it stood for something akin to the Western conception of "sublimity". The interesting thing is how the Chinese critical mind preferred to think in metaphors: thus *feng*, literally "the wind", refers to uninhibited movement or imaginativeness, while *gu*, literally "backbone", denotes strength of character, or nobility. Combined, the term *fenggu* came to designate the kind of spare, sinewy, high-toned, but nonetheless beautiful, poetry associated with the warriors and eccentrics of the turbulent Jian An period.

Second, his concise way of writing. Conciseness has been a distinguishing mark of traditional Chinese critical writing up to the beginning of the twentieth century, when long-winded tediousness set in. Liu managed to say a lot in a few words and these few pointedly. His comments were built into the very texture of nearly every sentence, which, besides making for great economy, also gave the writing a greater critical sharpness. Thus when he wrote concisely, mentioning two writers almost in one breath:

> 嵇康师心以遣论, 阮籍使气以命诗。(《才略》)
> (In essays Ji Kang aired his stubbornly held views,
> In poems Ruan Ji gave his passions free rein.)

he was doing a lot more than merely giving the facts. Not only was there admiration behind the words, but the words were propelled by the combined force of the strong diction and the emphatic rhythm.

Third, his extensive use of comparisons. Liu loved to place two writers or two works side by side, for comparison and contrast, as in the example cited above. He did it consistently, sentence after sentence, throughout his long book. This was partly because the antithetical style he was writing in, the *Pian Wen* (骈文) prevalent at the time, lent itself to comparisons. But his comparisons were never *pro forma*. They always made good sense and were striking, even dramatic. Sometimes he paused for an extended comparison, as in the following passage:

> 魏文之才, 洋洋清绮, 旧谈抑之, 谓去植千里。然子建思捷而才俊, 诗丽而表逸; 子恒虑详而力缓, 故不竞于先鸣, 而乐府清越, 典论辩要, 迭用短长, 亦无懵焉。但俗情抑扬, 雷同一响, 遂令文帝以位尊减才, 思王以势窘益价, 未为笃论也。(《才略》)
>
> (The emperor Cao Pi's talent was like a clear broad stream, yet past opinion was unfavorable, putting him a good way below Cao Zhi, his brother. This was because Zhi had a ready wit and an easy grace, so that he could effortlessly turn out beautiful poetry and brilliant essays, while Pi liked to consider things carefully and applied his strength by degrees disdaining to shine before the others. Nevertheless his *yuefu* songs are strikingly fresh and his treatise *Dian Lun* pithy and well-argued. To avoid misjudgment, the proper thing to say would be that the brothers complemented each other. Yet such is the world's custom that one word of praise or censure invariably draws a thousand echoes from the vulgar crowds. Thus Pi's literary fame suffered because of his royal position, while Zhi's soared because he had been at a disadvantage at court. This cannot be considered fair.)

This is very good criticism, perceptive, judicious, commonsensical and forcefully but gracefully put.

Finally, his general literariness. We have already touched on the grace of his writing. In fact, all the specimens we have cited show this. Plain statement is generally livened up by figures. The key term *fenggu* is itself a metaphor. Contrasts and comparisons are not only abound but are invariably expressed in a pair of balanced sentences, with the two halves neatly contrasting in sound and sense, almost Popeian in poise and polish.[5] Of course, in doing this Liu was also meeting the requirements of *Pian Wen*, that curious, half-prose, half-verse style he used, that being the only learned style available to him, but he never allowed it to hamper his communication of ideas. On the contrary, he performed the feat of writing a long-learned treatise throughout in this artificial style without blunting his theoretical edge or, as one can testify even fourteen centuries later, tiring out his reader.

1.2 II

Thus, in some important ways, Liu Xie's *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* anticipated literary history.

A later development, occurring in the eighth century, contributed elements favourable to the rise of a history of a literary genre, namely, poetry.

This was the introduction of a new literary form—poetic survey of poetry—and the person who introduced it was Du Fu.

Du Fu (712–770), one of the two greatest poets in the whole history of Chinese literature, the other being Li Bai, had used verse to express his critical views before. He had written the famous lines:

> 清新庾开府, 俊逸鲍参军。
> (Pure and fresh as Yu Xin,
> Spirited and free as Bao Zhao.)

More succinct and more penetrating than Liu Xie or anybody before him, the master poet showed how he could sum up a writer's whole quality in just one striking epithet. But he had meant these epithets as a compliment to a friend, for the lines appeared in a poem entitled "Thinking of Li Bai is Springtime" (《春日忆李白), which mainly expressed his yearning for that other great poet. There had been equally quotable lines marked by great critical acumen in his other poems, but these too were isolated utterings mixed up with a lot of other matter.

[5] That Liu was a conscious artist in his use of balanced sentences can be further seen in the fact that he devoted a whole chapter of his book to a discussion of them. He would divide balanced sentences into four types, thus: "故丽辞之体, 凡有四对: 言对为易, 事对为难; 反对为优, 正对为劣。" (《丽辞》)

In 761, however, he did something different when he wrote a sequence of "Six Quatrains Composed in Jest" (《戏为六绝句》), for these six poems were new both in matter and manner, unlike any of the quatrains written before that date, by himself or others. Wholly devoted to the discussion of poetic art, they were in fact the first sustained poetic survey of poetry.

They combined to give an overview of the poetic situation in the past two centuries. Significantly, Du started by once again discussing Yu Xin of the sixth century. But the erstwhile "pure and fresh" poet now appeared as an old master:

痩信文章老更成, 凌云健笔意纵横。
(As Yu Xin grew older, he wrote still better,
Soaring and sweeping like a true master.)

The second quatrain was a comment on current poetic taste. This was written in a vigorous, forthright new manner, something unusual for a poet hitherto noted for his Confucian gentleness:

王杨卢骆当时体,
轻薄为文晒未休。
尔曹身与名俱灭,
不废江河万古流。
(Wang, Yang, Lu, Luo wrote the style of their time,
Have since been sneered as vulgar and shallow.
Ye scoffers shall perish body and name,
While rivers pursue their eternal flow.)

The poets under discussion were "the four masters of the early Tang", active in the opening years of the dynasty. They had written a rather ornate, sentimental poetry favoured by the court. By the middle of the eighth century, however, a revulsion against them had set in. People became harshly critical of their work. The point Du Fu was making in this quatrain was that the "four masters" did what was expected of them by their contemporaries and the ornateness was chiefly the legacy of a still earlier period. This was an eminently sensible view,[6] showing a historical sense that would do honour to any historian, literary or otherwise. What surprises us a little is the forcefulness of the retort in the last two lines, which indeed have since become a kind of proverb quoted and requoted by countless people of the later times in wit combats and political controversies, not excluding the Red Guards in their heyday in the 1960s.

In the other poems of the sequence, Du Fu made two general observations, equally sensible, equally quotable:

不薄今人爱古人, 清词丽句必为邻。
(Despising neither ancients nor moderns,
Chaste words and fair lines will knock at your door.)

别裁伪体亲风雅, 转益多师是汝师。
(Weed out the false, cherish the pure and noble.
Learn from all, and your teachers multiply.)

[6] A critic is reported to hold an opposite view, maintaining that here Du Fu was condemning, not defending, the four masters. However, this does not seem to square with Du's general position in regard to the ornate poetry of the early Tang, which he had defended in other poems.

When Du Fu wrote these lines, he was getting on. Like his admired Yu Xin, he too had had long years of soaring and sweeping behind him. But he was also looking ahead a little, eager to pass on his experience to the up and coming men.

Du Fu's example was followed by many poets in later ages, in a line stretching from the Song to Qing Dynasties (tenth to nineteenth century). In fact, a tradition has since been set up within a tradition, that of poetic survey of poetry within the general canon of Chinese classical poetry. One poet in particular played an important part in carrying this tradition forward, and he was Yuan Haowen (元好问, 1190–1257) of the Jin Dynasty. He also wrote a sequence of poems to discuss the state of poetic art from the Wei Dynasty onwards, but on a much larger scale—instead of Du Fu's six quatrains, he wrote 30, under the general title "On Poetry".

Yuan opened his sequence by announcing that his self-appointed task was to restore true poetry:

汉谣魏什久纷纭,
正体无人与细论。
谁是诗中疏凿手?
暂教泾渭各清浑。
(Han songs and Wei rhymes have been lost in strife,
True poetry looks for skilled defenders.
Where can master dredgers be found,
To separate the clean from the muddy?)

Thus determined, Yuan set out to discuss some 30 poets, from the Jian An period (which had fascinated, we remember, nearly all critics and poets, Liu Xie among them, with their quality of *fenggu*), all the way to the Song Dynasty, in a rough chronological order.

Yuan was a good poet himself and had many perceptive things to say about individual poets. Thus:

纵横诗笔见高情,
何物能浇磈磊平?
老阮不狂谁会得?
出门一笑大江横。
(Bold brushes display the force of high passion.
What can quench the bitterness in the heart?
Could there be anyone madder than old Ruan?
Laughing, he strode out to meet the river.)

The last line is a quotation from Huang Shangu (黄山谷), but it is incorporated skilfully as the quatrain's climactic ending.

However, for all these and other felicities, Yuan exhibited a static view of history. One of his chief contentions in this sequence is that Song poetry, represented by the work of Su Tungpo (苏东坡) and Huang Shangu (despite their quoteworthiness), represented a woeful decline of Tang poetry. Several quatrains were devoted to the subject, one of which ran:

奇外无奇更出奇,
一波才动万波随。
只知诗到苏黄尽,
沧海横流却是谁?

(Strange, stranger, strangest, endless novelty,
One ripple reverberates a thousand fold.
I only know poetry ends with Su and Huang.
Who opened the floodgate for the deluge?)

Actually, Su and Huang and other Song poets did something badly needed doing, namely, to strike out boldly on their own when an older poetic tradition had exhausted its use. They were original in their poetic thinking and achieved a new kind of technical mastery; Su's easy versatility and Huang's intricate allusiveness increased the appeal of the sinewy, intellectual, Song poetry, much as after the mellifluous splendour of the Elizabethan lyricists, the dry wit and conceits of Donne and other metaphysicals were welcomed by those who demanded something new. Yet it was precisely against this newness that Yuan pitted himself. He took a position much less enlightened than Du Fu's, who had argued that one should "despise neither ancients nor moderns" but should learn from them all. Lacking this historical view, Yuan in the twelfth century retreated further back not only than Du in the eighth century but also than Liu Xie in the sixth century who, we remember, had even then made the pronouncement that literature evolved with society.

Yet Yuan's attitude was shared by many other poets and critics, not only of his own time but right up to the twentieth century. Debates have gone on, at times heatedly and even acrimoniously, over the respective merits of Tang and Song poetry. They tended to consider the two schools, so wide apart in time, as having a simultaneous existence.

1.3 III

Thus we see that there were factors favourable to the rise of literary history in China. Liu Xie showed the way. Du Fu set up a tradition of poetic survey and commentary. Even the dynastic histories boasted bibliographical guides and biographies of authors. Anthologies abounded, as did also notes and commentaries by perceptive critics throughout the ages.

Yet for all that, no literary history emerged before the end of the nineteenth century. And when a work bearing the title of *A History of Chinese Literature* did appear in 1904, it was a hodgepodge of miscellaneous information based on a Japanese book by Taneo Sasagawa (笹川种郎).

How should one account for this?

Here one is no longer dealing with facts but in the elusive realm of speculations. Quite apart from the static view of history mentioned above, perhaps Chinese historiography itself was also at fault. History as written in classical China was too broad, too all-embracive to leave any room for a separate history of literature. Since literary activities were well integrated with social and other activities and all of these were duly recorded in the official histories, there seemed to be little point in treating of literature in isolation.

Second, the very strength of the classical literary tradition was a source of its own weaknesses. For instance, conciseness, a distinguishing mark of traditional Chinese critical writings, while productive of *bon mots* and sparkling epigrams, was not given to—indeed, was somewhat contemptuous of—extended argument or in-depth discussion. The attention paid to the literary qualities of historical and other writings, too, while making Chinese prose elegant and readable, could—indeed, did—lead to an overemphasis on belle-lettrist tendencies or mere fine writing.

Over and above these considerations loom other larger questions. Literary history is a late development in almost any country in the world. England's first literary history worthy of the name, Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry*, was published only in mid-eighteenth century. The idea of a history of a national literature did not arise until modern nations were formed and their national consciousness matured. De Sanctis's *History of Italian Literature* answered the needs, even as it expressed the aspirations, of a nation in the throes of unification.

The Chinese, secure for several millenniums in a self-contained empire, seemed to be in a different situation.

Or one might look into questions related to the overall development of a society. At the time of the Renaissance in Europe, the best brains of China were diverted from their early triumphs in inventing appliances for practical use to the examination essays or the intricacies of textual criticism. Busy with the minutiae of philological scholarship, they somehow lacked a large perspective. Or perhaps they had something vastly larger in mind? Who knows but that Yuan Haowen, with his static view of history, was not wiser than those of us still grappling with the outmoded idea of evolution?

Chapter 2
The Shakespearean Moment in China

China's first encounter with Shakespeare—an old civilization with a long, many-faceted dramatic tradition all its own confronting the foremost exponent of poetic drama from a European tradition—should have been a tremendous event, yet it turned out to be a rather muted affair. First recorded mention of Shakespeare's name was by a British missionary in Shanghai in 1856, in a Chinese translation he made of a book by Thomas Milner, a geography of Great Britain.[1] Nearly thirty years had to pass before Shakespeare was mentioned again, this time in a Chinese work by an American missionary, published in Tongzhou in 1882, in which Shakespeare was spoken of as "a poet noted for his plays which express man's joys and sorrows with a penetration unequalled since Homer". ("英国骚客沙斯皮耳者, 善作戏文, 哀乐罔不尽致, 自候美尔之后, 无人几及也。")[2] Soon there were other references to Shakespeare in the histories of Western European countries and biographies of famous men in the world which were then appearing in the book market in Shanghai and elsewhere. The Chinese literati began to take notice. That was the time when they were discovering European literature as earlier they had discovered European technology. Shakespeare came in at the right psychological moment.

However, the immediate impact was made not by his plays but by his plots as retold in Mary and Charles Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. For quite some time to come, Shakespeare in China was to be the Lambs's Shakespeare. The *Tales* had had several Chinese translations, of which the best was the one made by Lin Shu, published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1904. Now Lin Shu was one of those curious literary figures who made translation history without fulfilling the first requirement for any translator, for he knew not a word of English or any other foreign language. But he was a master of classical Chinese prose and, aided by

[1] 慕维廉译,《大英国志》, mentioned in 戈宝权, "莎士比亚在中国",《莎士比亚研究》创刊号, p. 332. 杭州, 浙江人民出版社, 1983。(Ge Baoquan, "Shakespeare's Works in China", *Shakespeare Studies*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press, No. 1, 1983.)

[2] 谢卫楼,《万国通鉴》。Quoted in Ge Baoquan. *Ibid*., 332–33.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_2

interpreters, succeeded in translating over 180 Western works, all of which are still readable today. Certainly his elegant prose won for the *Tales* many Chinese readers whose fastidious taste would not have otherwise inclined them to such lowly things as drama and fiction. Indeed, it made a lasting impression. Decades later, the poet-historian Guo Moruo recalled reading Lin's version of *The Tales of Shakespeare* as a particularly thrilling experience in his youth. "It was like reading fairy tales", he wrote, "an intimate experience not surpassed by my later reading of the original plays".[3] Perhaps this had not a little to do with the translator's extremely high opinion of Shakespeare. For Lin thought Shakespeare's "poetic genius simply matched that of China's Du Fu" ("莎氏之诗, 直抗吾国之杜甫"),[4] and Du Fu was one of the two poets who were considered to have reached the peak of poetic achievement, the *ne plus ultra*, in the long history of China's classical poetry.

The comparison wasn't really apt, for Shakespeare was more than a poet, while Du Fu had nothing of the dramatist in him. They moved in different spheres. On Lin's scale of values, of course, by calling someone a poet of Du Fu's stature was lavishing on him the highest praise possible.

Thus the true Shakespeare, Shakespeare the playwright, made rather slow headway in this ancient country where every mandarin was a poet of a sort. When the translators eventually got round to his dramatic works after 1910, their attention was at first confined to isolated scenes rather than whole plays. His real chance came in 1919, when there occurred the New Culture Movement, which demanded, among other things, the use of the spoken language in all literary works. This made possible the translation of Shakespeare's plays as spoken drama. A young playwright by the name of Tian Han seized the opportunity to translate two of his plays entirely, namely, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, published in Shanghai in 1921 and 1924, respectively. Although he did not fulfil his plan of translating other plays of Shakespeare, the effort he made marked the beginning of treating Shakespeare's work as something to be performed on the stage, not just read.

Other translators also set to work. Most of them, however, had little knowledge, much less experience, of the stage. They concentrated on putting Shakespeare across in readable Chinese. The best results were achieved by an obscure young scholar named Zhu Shenghao (1911–1944). He worked under very difficult conditions: no regular job, poverty, wartime migrations, lack of good editions and reference materials, above all failing health which eventually caused him to die in a remote village at the early age of 33. Yet before his death he had managed, by sheer hard work, to finish translating 31 out of the 37 plays extant. It was a feat, but not just quantitatively, for the translation was at once accurate and readable. Six of the remaining plays and all the poems were later translated by other hands, and the whole collection was republished in a set of 11 uniform volumes by the People's Literature Press in Beijing in 1978 as the *Complete Works of William Shakespeare*,

[3] 郭沫若,《我的童年》in《沫若文集》, Vol. 6, p. 114. 北京, 人民文学出版社, 1958。(Guo Moruo, "My Childhood", *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 114. Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1958.)

[4] 林纾,《吟边燕语》序。林纾、魏易译,《吟边燕语》。北京 商务印书馆, 1904, 1981。(Lin Shu, Preface to his translation of Mary and Charles Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*.)

which has since been hailed as a milestone in literary translation and Shakespeare studies in China.

New translations of individual plays continued to appear, however. They were mostly the work of poets, who had one bone to pick with the *Complete Works*, namely, that it was a prose translation and they would like to see verse translated as verse. Shakespearean blank verse was not just any sort of verse, though, and it took some time before a suitable Chinese metre was found which approximated in effects to the English iambic pentameter. By general consent, the translator who has persisted longest and achieved highest is the poet Bian Zhilin. Bian had started his poetic career as a modernist writing in the manner of Valéry, Eliot and Auden. After 1949, when he found his poetic wellspring drying up, he took to translation, that of Shakespeare's plays above all. The erstwhile dispenser of subtle resonances and complex images brought to the translation a keen intelligence and a rare sensibility which soon yielded a superb version of *Hamlet*. His secret lays in having established a verse line of five stresses punctuated by five pauses, thus corresponding to the iambic pentameter. Some critics find Bian's translation not colloquial enough, but Bian felt himself thoroughly vindicated when his version was used in dubbing Laurence Olivier's film *Hamlet* and found satisfactory.

With better translations available, Shakespeare also stands a better chance of being performed on the Chinese stage. From 1978 onwards, play after play began to be produced in Beijing and Shanghai, culminating in the mammoth Shakespeare Festival in both cities in April, 1986.

There were some memorable occasions. The performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Tibetan dialect by Tibetan students of the Shanghai Academy of Dramatic Art in 1981 was one. The director of that performance had these words to say:

> Some people doubted if the Tibetan students could put up a good show. They said to me, "You're crazy."… The rehearsals were an eye-opener. In many ways they did better than Han students. In expressing love Han students were more reserved. Tibetan students, on the other hand, were more spontaneous, more straightforward. The girls embraced passionately. The men fought the duels fiercely, breaking eleven swords during the rehearsals. All in all, they threw themselves into the performance with a youthful ardor that dispelled all doubts.[5]

A Peking opera production of *Othello* in Beijing in 1983 was another, proving that operatic adaptation in a Chinese milieu was not only possible but successful. Still another was *The Tempest* performed in the same year by students of the Central Academy of Dramatic Art in Beijing under the direction of Ms. Zaiching Zhou[6] of the London BBC fame, who brought in more fanciful costumes and a more natural, less rhetorical way of speaking the lines, which went down very well.

Finally, there was the 1981 production of *Measure for Measure* by the People's Art Theatre in Beijing. This was memorable for several reasons. It was the first

[5] 徐企平, "《罗密欧与朱丽叶》导演札记",《莎士比亚研究》创刊号, p. 295。(Xu Qiping, "Rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet*: a Director's Notes", *Shakespeare Studies*, No. 1, 1983, p. 295.)

[6] This is her name transliterated in *pinyin*, not the name by which she is known in Britain. She is a daughter of the famous Peking opera actor Zhou Xinfang, who died in the 1960s.

Chinese production directed by an English professional, Toby Robertson of the Old Vic, and it used a new translation specially made for the occasion by Ying Ruocheng, an experienced actor himself who had played important roles in plays, films and TV series, such as Kubla Khan in *Marco Polo* and Willy Loman in the Beijing production a few years ago of *The Death of a Salesman* directed by the playwright Arthur Miller Himself. Moreover, he was born and bred in Beijing and had read English literature at Tsing Hua University. Thus he had a combination of three qualities: an actor's understanding of stagecraft, a scholar's understanding of Shakespeare and a native-born Peking boy's complete mastery of the street language of the capital. This happy concourse of circumstances plus his individual talent made his version of *Measure for Measure* thoroughly stageworthy. And the People's Art Theatre was a first-rate company of actors and actresses, while Toby Robertson's directing was sophisticated but restrained. All in all, the production was a big hit.

Even with these triumphs on record, however, no one could have foreseen that the first Shakespeare Festival in China would turn out to be such a phenomenal success. From late April to early May, 1986, while flowers were blooming in both cities, Beijing and Shanghai vied with each other to put on more and better productions of Shakespeare's plays than the Chinese audiences had ever seen before. Altogether 27 performances of 18 plays were given, including *Richard III*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus and King Lear*. The last had two versions, put on by different companies, one following closely Shakespeare's text, the other departing from it in significant ways, such as giving the characters not only Chinese names but also Chinese backgrounds—indeed, Chinese motifs to the plot itself. Li Moran, the well-known actor from Liaoning, took the leading role in the "close" or Tianjin production and spoke enthusiastically about his new venture as a high point of his whole career. An equal, if not greater, success was *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Sir John Falstaff made his first appearance on the Chinese stage and was immediately popular, being loutish, wolfish, cowardly, cheeky and funny all at once, played by a Beijing actor noted for his boisterous wit seasoned with good sense.

Even more astounding, perhaps, were the operatic adaptations. The Peking opera *Othello* again attracted crowds. There was also an adaptation of *Macbeth* as *kunqu* (the play renamed as *The Bloody Hand*), *Much Ado About Nothing* as Huangmei opera, and *The Twelfth Night* and *Winter's Tale* as Shaoxing opera. These were all bold experiments. *Kunqu*, for instance, is generally considered the most refined kind of drama in China, beside which the better known Peking opera looks all too crude. Yet how it would deal with a play like *Macbeth* posed a big problem. It took Huang Zuolin, the veteran Cambridge-educated director noted for his productions of Brecht and others, all he got to marry the two traditions in a triumphant re-creation that won critical claim not only in Shanghai in 1986 but also during the Edinburgh Festival in 1987. Shaoxing opera has its own distinction. A relatively late development, it is noted for its elegance—in fact, all its roles are played by young women[7]—

[7] Except for some productions with contemporary themes, but the introduction of male actors, begun tentatively in the 1960s, is still treated as experimental.

and elegance suits a play like *The Twelfth Night*. Certainly the lovely ladies of the Shaoxing opera company of Shanghai gave a performance which sparkled with witty repartee and graceful movement, adding a new touch of sophistication to Shakespearean production that would bewitch any audience anywhere in the world.

With adaptation going on at this rate, wouldn't Shakespeare be adapted out of all recognition? Possibly, but the question is, would Shakespeare have minded, he being the greatest adapter of them all? Neither is there any real danger. For in the Chinese theatrical tradition, restraint and good sense have been valued as much as in the British, so that no madman could ever run away with Shakespeare or any other Western dramatist. Rather there is an urgent need for the opera in China, Peking as well as "regional", to break out of a convention-ridden mould, as the box office receipts have been falling and the TV-addicted young rarely go to an opera house these days. What the Festival has demonstrated is that Shakespeare is capable of helping the Chinese opera out of the doldrums by supplying it with plots and characters which are new but also familiar, as parallel stories can be easily found in many old Chinese dramas, quite apart from the fact that, physically as well as dramaturgically, there is a lot in common between the Elizabethan theatre and the Peking opera house. Thus *King Lear*, with its wilful king and unfilial daughters, readily appeals to any Chinese audience.

In this atmosphere, Shakespeare studies have also progressed. A Shakespeare Centre was established in Beijing in spring 1984, complete with a theatre and a library. Its director is Professor Sun Jiaxiu, a woman scholar who had done Shakespearean research in the USA. In December 1984, the Shakespeare Society of China was founded in Shanghai. Cao Yu the famous playwright was elected president. Now Cao not only achieved his early fame with his plays *Thunderstorm and Sunrise*, which are still popular today, but had translated *Romeo and Juliet*, in a version noted for its fluent dialogue and poetic resonance. He too had read Shakespeare at Tsing Hua.

Chinese universities have generally included Shakespeare in the core courses they have been offering, and among the teachers there have been scholars who once sat at the feet of Kittredge at Harvard, John Dover Wilson at Edinburgh and Allardyce Nicoll at Birmingham. The late Chang Cheng-hsien, for instance, wrote his thesis at Birmingham, which advocated, at a time when most purists scoffed at the idea, adapting Shakespeare for the Peking opera stage.[8] Qiu Ke'an, an Oxford man, has been editing a series of Shakespeare's plays with Chinese annotations for the Commercial Press in Beijing.[9] Younger scholars fresh from their graduate study abroad, for their part, are eager to apply hermeneutics, semiotics, *Receptionsästhetic*, new historicism and other theories to Shakespeare studies in China. In fact, essays

[8] Some of his ideas may be found in his article "Shakespeare in China", *Shakespeare Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, No. 6, 1953, pp. 112–16.

[9] To date, six plays have been published: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing and Henry V*, of which the first three are annotated by Qiu himself. Qiu has also published a bilingual《莎士比亚年谱》(*Shakespeare*: *the Chronological Life*, Beijing: the Commercial Press, 1988.)

and articles on Shakespeare far outnumber those on any other Western author, and they range in subject from Marxist interpretations of Shakespeare's ideology to explorations into Shakespeare's use of language. One recent trend is comparative studies, particularly of different dramatic traditions, which have great potentialities now that Chinese operatic adaptations of Shakespeare are going on apace.

The good thing about Shakespeare is that more than anyone else in literary history, he is "a largess universal". Just about anyone can find something in him to respond to: the theatre lover, his stagecraft; the poet, his poetry; the philosopher, his tragic view of life. He has enough sense of fact to satisfy any realist and is imaginative enough to please any romantic, popular enough to win any audience, venerable enough to qualify for a classic and modern enough to captivate all cultivators of the contemporary sensibility, from Pasternak in Russia to Bian Zhilin in China. His plurality and his plenitude make him as much Chinese as English. The Chinese read him, annotate and discuss him and perform and adapt him, and in the process he suffers a strange sea change, but in some subtle way, he also enriches the Chinese imagination. It is a mutually nourishing process. Recent performances of his plays in Beijing and Shanghai have been a test to Shakespeare as well as a challenge to Chinese translators, directors, actors and actresses and audiences. More illuminating than any academic discussion, the notes jotted down by the directors and actors during the rehearsals tell about their problems and solutions and perceptions and reflections, about what they've done to Shakespeare and about what Shakespeare has done to them. The interaction has pushed China's dramatic art forward. And greater progress may be confidently expected, as plans are already afoot to mount a second Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai in the early 1990s.

Chapter 3
Trends in Chinese Literature Today

3.1 I

There are many questions put to a Chinese, but there is one yet to be asked: what about your literature? Even when curiosity is strong and the point raised, the average Westerner is apt to be led astray. Not that guides like Giles and Arthur Waley are undependable, but that here as elsewhere the Westerner is often found, much to our amusement, adoring or detesting a China that does not exist. The translations, the 'gems' of the one, the 'Book of Songs' of the other, are all fine things, but they are anachronistic. It is all very well to go sentimentally into raptures over the classical yesterday, but what on earth is the expression of contemporary China? In other cases a study of the past will have oriented us, in so far as tradition will reveal to us a glimpse of the hidden background. But with the literature of the new generations in China, tradition has lost much of its prestige, and the shaping forces should be sought elsewhere.

On August 8, 1937, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the formation of the War Area Service Corps and appointed Major-General J. L. Huang as its director general to render services to the Chinese officers at the fighting fronts.

When American volunteers began to help China, in large numbers, in her war against Japan, orders were given to the organization in May 1941 to establish a number of hostels for their convenience.

Seven months later, the war developed into World War II. Since then the principal function of the WASC is to provide and maintain facilities for our Allied Forces in China.

From March 1943 onward, the War Area Service Corps, with its headquarters in Kunming, has published at various intervals information pamphlets on China covering all phases of Chinese life, thought, history and institutions. This work was interrupted when Japan surrendered, and WASC officers became occupied with more urgent tasks.

The Peiping-Tientsin District Headquarters, after being adequately reinforced by workers from the interior, decided to revive its literary efforts. Pamphlets on subjects of general interest or of academic value will come out periodically and can be had at the WASC Peiping-Tientsin District Headquarters or at your WASC hostel office.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_3

For there has been, acceleratingly in the last 25 years, a change that has gone to the root of things. Many reasons can be accounted for, but there is one stronger than all the others combined, namely, the coming of the Westerner. I need not go into the tremendous impact produced by this sudden meeting between two civilizations; that is already journalistic commonplace. We have been plunged into a flux out of which nothing, not even our souls, looks quite the same.

The history of modern China is not smooth sailing. It is rugged, full of sound and fury and burning questions. Coming through all this painful reality, the Chinese youth is mentally an old man.

But when he looks back to the literature of old, he finds it sadly lacking in the things that he thinks indispensable. The elegant old tradition has produced beautiful works, but there is in it a dreamy farawayness that is too soft and tender for this cut-throat world of ours. He needs something heavy, almost ugly, to fall back upon. He has got a lot to say and has said it uncompromisingly and without fear. However harsh and unsteady, his is a haunting voice, because it carries with it the authentic pulse of the change.

The product is what has been called the New Literature of China. Often crude, and most uneven in its accomplishment, it is nevertheless the embodiment of the new *zeitgeist.*

3.2 II

But when we come face to face with this New Literature, we find that it has not got a great many names to boast of and few works of real literary merit. This is, however, not to be wondered at; first, since it is all a matter of some 25 years, it being chiefly the harvest of the Chinese Renaissance of 1919, and, second, because of its very newness, it cannot but turn its back on the classical heritage of China and apply itself to imitate the literatures of the West. Following repeated humiliations in foreign wars, translation was reluctantly taken up, first, with the intention of prying into the secrets of the 'barbarian's' modern cannons and, then, as the inroad of Western ideas gained momentum, the further curiosity to look a little into his institutions, customs and passions. Two men became the precursors of the New Literature without their being aware of it themselves. Yen Fu translated Montesquieu and Adam Smith and Charles Darwin, while Lin Shu with the help of an oral interpreter rendered into elegant classical Chinese the works of Dickens and Haggard. Their translations are the triumphs of the old style. It is they who opened the eyes of the bewigged mandarins and the Chinese intelligentsia at large to other aspects of Western civilization than the mere efficiency in war.

The first real awakening followed in 1919, 7 years after the establishment of the Republic, when the whole question centred on the problem of language. Hitherto the written language was one handed down by the ancients and had little, if any, connection with the spoken word. This state of affairs virtually closed the books to all but a very few, illiteracy being the curse of the nation. But the public was tasting

the first freshness of democracy and eager in their desire to catch things up. And what was the good of democracy at all, argued the leaders of the New Culture Movement, men like Dr. Hu Shih and the late Chen Tu Shiu, if it did not break down the old barrier and make education accessible to all, so that even the humblest farmer could have a voice in the way the government should be run? They advocated therefore the use of the vernacular in writing. Opposition was strong, and it looked for a moment that the tiny battle cry of that handful of university professors might be overwhelmed by the countrywide protest, as bitter as it was violent. To the old scholars, the classical language stood much as the humanities had stood in medieval Europe, not only for culture and decency, but the *raison d'etre* of everything, on which hinged the whole destiny of man. Lin Shu, the translator of Dickens, wrote an open letter to the Chancellor of Peking University, demanding the immediate dismissal of those faculty members who were heretical enough to adopt in literary works 'the cant of the rickshaw coolies and street venders'. The new leaders were saved, however, chiefly by popular enthusiasm and the fact that the classical language had already died a natural death itself. It had become trite, wooden, sapped of blood and vigour by more than 20 centuries of continuous exploitation. Thus when Dr. Hu Shih wrote his famous Constructive Revolution in Literature, he found himself in the same situation as that confronting Wordsworth when the latter bombarded the complacent literary world of his day with the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. Both pieces are manifestoes, and both changed the course of literature for many years to come.

With the new medium firmly established and following the wake of the New Culture Movement, the nation suddenly found itself facing a new horizon. The age was constructive as well as destructive. The New Youth Magazine propagated the cult of democracy and science, with an enthusiasm that was singularly naive. Western political ideologies, from Anglo-Saxon representative government to communism and anarchism, found a ready soil in China. The plays of Ibsen were introduced for their iconoclasm, and those of Bernard Shaw their social satire. But there was really a good deal of anachronism in the foreign authors translated. We find Homer making his appearance in China together with Byron and Dumas novels prized in the same enthusiasm as Plutarch's *Lives*. Some 20 centuries of Western literature were compressed into a single moment to quench the thirst of the new generation. There was something like Elizabethan profusion, something of the robustness too, in the way the new works were produced. Girls walked out of their homes to tread on the independent path of Nora, while young men with dishevelled hair and pale faces, and above all a seriousness that beat down every obstacle, began to form clubs and societies, which had a mushroom growth all over China. It was a bliss 'to be alive in that dawn, but to be young was very heaven'.

Many of the works produced at that time, though historically important, lack intrinsic value to recommend themselves. But Lu Hsun's works, especially his *True Biography of Ah Q*, need special mention. A returned student from Japan, he gave up his medical studies early, which he thought of secondary importance in a country where the diseases of the soul had to be cured first, for the unprofitable life of an author. Nevertheless, the hand of the surgeon can still be seen at work in his anatomy

of Chinese characters, done in a way at once bitter and penetrating that has rarely been surpassed. Lu Hsun had a trenchant wit characteristic of the shysters of East Chekiang, which made him the most hated man in the country, not so much by the old group, who really respected his tremendous classical scholarship, as by what he mockingly called the paragons of virtue in the new camp itself. Their pretentions and indifference to the cry of humanity disgusted him. The attack was launched by essays of all descriptions, ranging from regular magazine articles to prefaces and postscripts of a few dashing lines. His stories are eclipsed by his essays in the very force of the satire launched. But whatever he wrote he wrote with a grand style of his own which is really the strongest point in his works. The style is a curious combination of a Chinese with a faint crown of the old elegant tradition and a deliberate Western construction in some of the sentences, a combination that is strangely fascinating. He can be very lyrical at times, as has been revealed by his *Wild Grass*, a collection of what might be called prose-poetry, in which we see the great man off his guard, softened by nostalgia, touched by a melancholy tinted strongly with old Chinese sentimentality. But even in those rare moments, he did not forget the grudge he bore the world; for, like Swift, whom he resembled in so many other ways, he used writing as a moral weapon and turned a deaf ear to the murmurings of art for art's sake.

There is yet another significance of Lu Hsun's in the influence he has exerted on the younger writers by his translations. Early under the sway of Gogol and Sienkiewicz as he confessed in an essay, he is almost the first one to introduce the Slav writers into China. It is, however, not his translations that are really remarkable, but the way he did them. He believed in and actually practised a word-to-word, exact-to-the-last-detail rendering. Where there is a vital difference in syntax, he twisted and manipulated the Chinese until some resemblance was established. To justify his method he gave two reasons. First, there is always the atmosphere and the rhythm of the original to consider. Secondly, the Chinese language, he argued, needs new structures to express the thoughts of a brave new world. He frankly admitted that his is a stiff translation.

By the early twenties, *pai hua*, as the vernacular has been called, was firm on its feet and the New Literature in its full swing. But much of the first enthusiasm was also over and a note of disappointment set in. For though the new vistas were opened, the new writers found in them no message and turned to ivory towers. Chow Tso Jen, brother of Lu Hsun the polemic, began to write with Montaignian ease, and grace too, on rain, Chinese tea, Greek poetry, pornographic literature and Havelock Ellis, whom he always quoted with respect, and small talks and life in general. He has a silent, unobtrusive wit and a shrewd eye for details, coupled with a style that is not unlike Lamb's in their common love of archaisms. A familiar essay writer, he yet is redeemed by his Chinese features, his studies of the prose masters of the late Ming Dynasty, smack too strongly of the cheaply smart kind of modern journalism.

The *pai hua* prose gained with the passing of time greater flexibility and greater freedom of movement, thus making possible the production of many notable works of fiction. But the greatest experiment was being carried out in the field of poetry.

From the very beginning poetry had been the most vulnerable spot in the New Literature. Dr. Hu Shih's *Book of First Attempt* contains a good deal of democratic poetry that is fresh; but the New Verse—with no rule and pattern to follow except the poet's innovation, extempore in most cases—was raw and crude beside the perfection and elegance of the old poetry. But, clearly, there was very little to learn from the old form which had really outlived all the possibilities. Nor was it desirable to adapt the new to the old. The new poets were therefore driven to adopt Western forms. They experimented on everything that came handy, from English blank verse to the Italian sonnet. They would count every Chinese character as an English syllable, since, they argued, there could be only one sound to it. The result was a poem not only strange in content but regular-to-death in shape, so regular that it was dubbed 'bean curd square' poetry by the unsympathetic native wits. Such were the extremes, indeed, reached by the new poets, that some of them would copy slavishly not only the rhyming scheme but even the accent pattern as well of English poetry, insisting on using the pause after every Chinese term as the equivalent to an English accent.

But, granted all its faults, the age saw a burst of lyrical poetry and a serious study of the literatures of the West. The poetic world was then dominated by a group of university wits, known as the New Moon School, so called because of their organ, the *New Moon Monthly*. English influence was predominant in this group, but most of them gave the impression of knowing the nineteenth-century Romantics only. They had some polish; to be sure, they built up some sort of form; they had a pleasing music, and here and there we find a few lines of great beauty. But the texture is threadbare, the versification stiff, the rhythm taxingly regular and above all the poets themselves did not have much conviction or a true romanticism that was necessary to sustain them through a poetry of that calibre. Sometimes their poetry is merely a jeu d'esprit or at best an artificial flower that has got nothing under it.

However, when all is said and done, they gave the New Poetry a timely lesson of technical innovation, and any survey, however short, would be incomplete if it does not mention the two leaders of the New Moon School, Hsu Tze Mo and Wen I To. Hsu was, from all reports, a lively and charming person, deeply read in English literature, and commanded the largest audience of his day. His love poems are perhaps among the best things produced by the New Literature, but none the less he is fettered by the limitations of his group and often led by his desire to achieve form to run into doggerel. A superficial optimism carries him successfully through most of his lyrics, but when he really gets serious, as when he condescends to describe a scene of two soldiers killed in the civil war, he is most unconvincing. His poetic contributions were cut short by his death in an air accident, and the sudden change of fate affected also the evaluation of his works. His is a tragedy that has often occurred to men of letters: their most ambitious works are not appreciated by posterity, which turns instead to their least pretentious bits and ends of careless writing, preserved only because their existence has been overlooked. In his own eyes Hsu was first and last a poet, and only in his spare hours, when he had nothing better to do, did he write any prose. With the change of fashions in literature, his poetry is now seldom read, if at all. But his prose has been steadily mounting in people's

esteem. It is a very ornate prose, image-beladen, with all the sensuousness of a Keats. *Cambridge As I Set It*, generally considered his masterpiece in prose, reveals to us his sensitiveness to all that is going on round him, colour, smell, the rippling of a river and the intoxication of a mind.

But from the poetic point of view, any of our indebtedness to the New Moon School is really that to Wen I To alone. He of all the persons had his eye on the technical possibilities of the New Poetry and was a much more careful craftsman than the rest of the group. He explored the mysterious Gothic vein of romanticism, and in his diction we find clearly a trace of Li Peh, whose sinister verse made him a Coleridge among the Tang poets. There is a greater play of imagination, more artistic finish and a depth of feeling that is as masculine as the lyrical quality of Hsu Tze Mo is feminine. In many places he showed himself a student of Baudelaire, whose *Fleurs du Mal* clearly influenced his *Dead Water*, a masterpiece that made much use of the suggestiveness of sound in symbolizing the political and intellectual deterioration confronting China of the day. But his disappearance from the poetic scene was as sudden as his presence was brilliant. After 1930 he plunged himself into the classics of antiquity and there, in the company of the dead, found at last not merely the sweetness of learning but the rare blessing of serenity which, transcending the narrow limits of time and space, has enabled him to interpret the buried past with so much understanding and love.

With Wen gone, the New Moon eclipsed and gradually retired into oblivion. Their place was taken over by the Creationists who, though coming into being much earlier chronologically, extended their activities well into the thirties. The Creationists have been pigeonholed as romanticists, but they really had very little in common except that they were all students returned from Japan and were eager to risk their fortune in literature. There was novelist Chang Tze Ping who learned from the Japanese the naturalistic way of depicting love and was the nearest resemblance produced by the New Literature to the popular novelist of the West. There was also critic Cheng Fang Wu, who wrote more slogans than literature, quarrelled with Lu Hsun and finally turned communist. There was Yu Ta Fu, too, in the best tradition of the old Chinese romanticists, forever fragile and poverty-stricken, yet nonchalant and haughty, whose ill fate was only matched by the brilliance of his talent. Yu's first appearance was as a novelist, when his *Downward Fall*, a combination of Chinese sentimentality and Western *fin de siècle* atmosphere, won him renown and popularity. Later he gave up fiction for essays, in which genre he has produced some of the finest travel sketches in the New Literature. But the leader of the Creationists was Kuo Mo Jo. Kuo's versatility is proverbial. In the field of translation alone, his contributions would have made him a name already. He translated such voluminous works as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and several of Upton Sinclair's novels. It is he too who made Omar Khayyám popular with a fine version of *Rubaiyat.* Above all he is the first man to introduce Goethe somewhat systematically into China. He translated *Faust* and *Werthersleiden*, the latter done in such a captivating style that Werther at once stormed the hearts of Young China, a sort of malady as he had been to the nineteenth-century Europe.

The position Kuo Mo Jo occupies in the New Poetry is even higher. I might be forgiven to say that he is the first really great new poet. He begins where the New

Moon School has ended, by taking up the passionate revolt against the old-order side. Everything is broad in Kuo, and there is always a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions. On the other hand, a stooping in traditional poetry, which emphasized correctness of form more than anything else, has helped Kuo to avoid the coarseness and pomposity that his kind of verse is usually subject to. He is sometimes found to be indulging even in ivory boats and gemlike moons and other finished mosaics and arabesques that could appeal to the best of Imagists. However, he is chiefly elemental and dynamic and not fettered by any intentional imitation or borrowing of other poets, foreign or Chinese. Consequently beside the frigidity and pretty-prettiness of the New Moon School, he is all expansion. His influence has been healthy: he taught the New Poetry to look outwards to Nature, not the Wordsworthian Nature of transcendental pantheism, nor the devouring, antagonistic, tooth-and-claw side of Nature in the early English ballads, but the Nature of a Goethe, thought-provoking, beautiful with great winds and gorgeous sunrises, abundant and wild with a meaning, which, intelligible to man only, is yet irretrievably blended with his destiny.

The Creationists were a much more vigorous organization and had a larger following than the New Moon School. But, though it is the Creationists who first used the term Revolutionary Literature, both of them were at the time too occupied with aesthetics and a much belated romanticism to take care of the demands of the people. The pendulum of literature had fallen from the moral-propagandist pole of the early stage to the aesthetic-retiring. Poetry, which was the chief contribution of the period, was further removed from the people. And *pai hua*, for which so many battle had been fought, began to acquire mannerisms that were unwelcome to the public. Meanwhile the country was steadily running to the dogs, and discontent began to take the shape of underground revolutionary activities.

There was therefore an undercurrent of realism and prose. Lu Hsun was still writing his miscellaneous essays; Chow Tso Jen had not yet become fussy with gossip; Lin Yutang began to appear, under the guise of a fighter, armed with an aggressive style, and wrote most of the essays later collected in the *Skirmishes.* For periodicals they had the *Yu Sze* in the north and the *Stories Monthly* in Shanghai, the latter of which was generally considered the stronghold of the group of writers under the name of Literature Research Society. The society had long been in existence and contained men of all colours, from Miss Ping Hsin, the first blue stocking produced by the new tradition, who distinguished herself at the very early stage as a poet and storyteller with typically feminine merits, to Shen Yen-Ping, the editor of the *Stories Monthly* who was later to write under the pen name Mao Tun of the coming revolution with such success. These writers, together with Lu Hsun, who was also a member, were at the time chiefly occupied with two things: the translation of Russian revolutionary writers and the literatures of the 'weak and small' nations of Europe and the preparation of the mind of the Chinese masses to greet the coming Kuomintang Northern Expedition which crushed before it all the reactionary forces and finally brought about the unification of China. The time was ripe for the New Literature to embrace, as it had embraced from the very beginning, politics again.

Thus when we come to the third phase, we find the New Literature full-fledged with ideologies but ideologies that alas clashed. The revolution had come, triumphed, but also changed hands. The much-hoped-for paradise, in spite of the blood that had been generously shed for it, did not come. An aftermath of sharp disappointment forced itself in, and disappointment spurred the radical factions to further action, while leaving the moderate elements to seek refuge in the false security of art. Literature went left.

We of this day cannot perhaps size up the difficult position the radical writers found themselves in and would therefore fail to do them justice if we say that much of their writings are mere crude propaganda. In those turmoil years following 1927, the young extremists, indignant and desperate, were too absorbed in the actual struggle, too occupied with the living issues, to have any regard for artistic performance. Most of them were therefore unconvincing, because always the moralist got the better of the poet or the novelist, and there was always the voice of dogma silencing the feeble protests of life and art. As things now stand, out of the whole bundle of philippics and declamations, we see only two persons emerge unscathed by the sieving process of time. Ting Lin, the brilliant Sophia in the movement, could really put out something at once beautiful and dangerous. She was of the headlong, temperamental type, had read *Madame Bovary* with dreamy eyes and revolted, as early as when she first appeared with her novel, *In The Dark*, against the conventions of modesty that had confined Chinese ladies to their isolated, tuberculosis-infested boudoirs for centuries. But she was not all ideas; for there was always the woman's instinct in her for the palpable facts to make her distrust mere abstractions. It may perhaps also be said that exactly to this she owed her success, which, however, when set against the dark background of her life, has made her look all the more tragic.

Less passionate, but more bitter, and perhaps of more lasting literary value, are the works of Mao Tun. They are always vast, well-planned and classical in their proportions. He reasoned out the breakdown of the old Chinese farming system in *Spring Silkworm* and the futility of China's new industries in the face of foreign competition in the *Twilight* which is, besides the most ambitious, also the longest work produced by the New Literature, being well over 500 pages of very small type. Revolution, however, was a bitter reality to him, and the titles of his famous trilogy, *Disillusionment*, *Dilemma* and *Pursuit*, bespeak the themes he took up. What renders him the infallible and most outspoken portrayer of the stormy early thirties is his unflinching realism, which is further strengthened by a vast Balzacian sweep. He is also the first novelist in the New Literature who knows how to weave isolated episodes into a good plot. Thus he is never dull, and some of his novels have been dramatized by the Chinese movies. He makes much use of satire, which accounts perhaps for the fact that many of his characters are more caricaturish than three-dimensional. His women, like Turgeniev's, are invariably more lifelike, more rounded off figures than his men.

Mao Tun has deviated from the beaten path of Chinese prose style in many respects. Most Chinese writers, even the very new ones, are sentimental and rely on the purple patches for effect. In that light Mao Tun does not even have a style to

speak of. His language is plain, even drab. He has no vanity for the frills and fancy stuffs of expression and says things in a hard direct way.

Speaking of style, it is interesting to compare Mao Tun with another writer, Shen Tsung Wen, who belongs to no particular school. For storytelling ability Shen is unsurpassed, but he is better known as a magician of words, a dealer in polished phrases and fugitive thoughts. The curious thing about Shen is that his progress as a stylist is the reverse of the experience of others. Whereas most writers, like Shakespeare, start with great elaborateness and gradually mature into sustained simplicity, Shen's style has changed reversely. When he first attracted popular attention, he was a true 'country rustic', as he has called himself writing his lovely little stories of the sailors and prostitutes of a forgotten valley in West Hunan. But very soon he became fond of edification, while his diction got increasingly flowery. He can, however, really write. Puritan in his strictures of others' conduct and lack of vistas, he is matchless as a student of the primitive desires in our body. There is a Renaissance splendour in his praise of a young woman's warm nudity, and at his best, as in the *Border Town*, he has certainly sensed, like Hardy, the essential tragedy in human existence.

I cannot pass by this period without a word on Pa Chin. A prolific writer, he yet resents to be thus labelled. His appeal to the middle school students is the strongest because of the presence in his works of certain stock types that strike home to the juvenile hearts the ideas of a revolutionary- romantic paradise. He is intensely individualistic and autobiographical too. The revolution in his *Turbulent Waters*, for instance, is more of an intellectual affair, supported by some lonely enlightened young men, than a real movement. The actions of violence are impulsive and always end in the death of the hero; the masses are nowhere. With such a temperament, it is only natural that he should have written with great facility. But no man has ever doubted his sincerity; and certainly it is a rare consolation for any writer to have aid before him and at his complete mercy the hearts of a whole generation of youth who have devoured him with tempests of passion and deep gratitude. All this sounds that the period was one of storms and great upheavals. Was there really nothing else? The monotony imposed by the dogmas and rules of the Left critics approached the state of tyranny, but human spirit admits of differences. The protest took the form of a magazine, the *Modern*. Of the two editors, Sze Tze Chun wrote psychological stories of great poetic beauty, and Tu Heng, besides a superb fiction writer, was also a critic versed in the art of dialectic. There were stylists, however, like the now killed Mo Sze Yin, who were cheaply smart and critics who sought to distinguish themselves by running after the fashions of the day. But the Moderns should not be summarily dispatched if only for one reason, and that a very substantial one, namely, they supplied what the Left group lacked, poetry. The whole Left Movement, for all the slogans shouted, had not produced a readable poet. But now from the Moderns, there came a poet of rare qualities, the leader of a new poetic movement, in the person of Tai Hwang Shu. In spite of the vagueness of his moods and feelings, Tai is gifted with lucidity of style; and against the prevailing Russian influence, he brought in the French emphasis on precision, a timely dose to cure the poetic diction of its swollen pomposity. However, to his discredit, he begot also a whole litter of

poetasters, who mistook symbolist poetry for mere ambiguity. On the whole, the Moderns marked a return to English and American influences, though it must be said that they advertised themselves too much and had sold as much glittering fool's gold as the true metals of literature.

The *Modern* was published in Shanghai and so was another literary periodical, the *Literature Magazine*, edited by Fu Tung Hwa, to which Lu Hsun and Mao Tun had been contributors. At this time of the period, most of the literary activities took place in the south. Shanghai, the great port city, the storm centre of all the underground struggles, was attracting, with facilities of printing and easy accessibility to new things, young men from all parts of the country. For the radical elements, Shanghai's foreign concessions afforded comparative safety. The cosmopolitan life of Shanghai, in short, with all its paraphernalia of evils and opportunities, was to many of the young intellectuals what London had been to Shakespeare.

But, for this bourgeois Shanghai, or the political-minded south in general, the classical north had nothing but positive contempt. Peiping clung fast to the elegant, highbrow things in culture. In the field of scholarship, it had reasons to be even haughty. For all the best universities of the country were in or near the town, and if Lu Hsun and Mao Tun were down in the south, Dr. Hu Shih and a host of learned professors were lecturing in the shadow of the Forbidden City. Above all, to those lonesome souls who found Shanghai too hot, too commercialized for the fragile flower of literature, Peiping offered solitude.

But the north had a handful of good periodicals and plenty of good writers. The *Ta Kung Pao Literary Supplement*, for instance, though limited in space, had been the rendezvous of most of the best poets and novelists of the country. It had introduced such memorable works as the long narrative poem the *Precious Steed* and the critical essays of George Yeh and Chu Kwang Chien, whose book on Crocean aesthetics is the most systematic and scholarly treatise produced by the New Literature. There was also the brilliant though short-lived *Mercury*, backed up by the university wits, with a cast that could compare favourably with any in the country. Pien Tze Lin distinguished himself in poetry and Li Kwang-Tien and Ho Chi-Fang in essay writing, and Hsiao Chien, Lu Fen, and Fei Ming reaped good harvests in fiction. Hsiao Chun, the seasoned soldier from the now Japanese-occupied northeast, made his appearance with what Lu Hsun described as the best novel of the generation, *The Village in August*. Lastly, the New Drama, which I have so far neglected because of its comparative immaturity, could now pride itself on two young playwrights, Tsao Yu in tragedy and Li Chien Wu in high comedy.

The Chinese are, just like the English and the French, a theatre-going people. The old singing opera, still loved and patronized by many, falls outside our fold. In the years right before and immediately following the establishment of the Republic, there rose the Culture Drama, which was the first revolt against the old stage: a revolt but not a serious challenge, for when the public turned for a curious moment to the new effort, they found it sadly stripped of all theatrical glamour. The usual practice was to have someone frame the skeleton of a play, mostly patriotic, leaving the details and the dialogue to the wits and whims of the actors themselves who always did their parts in an offhand way and, like Chinese politicians, had a

passion for tediously long speeches. It had served its purpose as propaganda, but artistically it was a failure. Taught by the lesson, the real new playwrights contented themselves for a time with the translation and adaptation of Western plays, of which Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* was an outstanding success. Tentatively, however, they could not help risking some work of their own, knowing as they do that to push the New Culture home in every Chinese heart, they had yet to enlist the help of the drama. Such was Dr. Hu Shih's one-act play, *Lifelong Affair*, and such were a host of others, the main theme of which was invariable anti-Confucian, especially the Confucian conception of family and marriage. They did not have a large audience, but they were acted all over China. The twenties saw the dramatic world dominated by Tien Han and his Nan Kuo Dramatic Club, who, in spite of their sentimental tendencies, had done at least two valuable things for the New Drama: they won an audience and they studied seriously the art of acting. More Western dramatic works, from Shakespeare to John Synge, were translated, and dramatic artists began to go into the different 'effects' technically. Still, Tien Han and his followers were careless in the construction of their plays, and so, though the stage was set, great dramas had yet to be written.

The plays of Tsao Yu and Li Chien Wu could not perhaps answer the description 'great', but they are at least technically sound. On the other hand, an academic education such as they received has not betrayed them to the dry, stiff, lifeless drama of the Senecan scholars. As a matter of fact, they have always been vacillating between the classical and the modernistic. Li Chien Wu is smart and slick, and Tsao Yu has more than once copied New York and Hollywood. In his third play, the *Wilderness*, he is seen to be imitating, with all outward conformity, Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones.* And certainly it is also true that he has utilized ready-made devices of Ibsen and other Western dramatists. Though the bag of tricks that have won him immediate success and recognition will have to be thrown away for good, Tsao Yu is redeemed by his possession of the classical conception of what constitutes the tragic. Primitive passions plus a Freudian Oedipus complex make up the theme of his first and tremendously popular play, the *Thunder Storm*, which is, however, suppressed for that very smelly dose of modern science. His *Sunrise* is condemned by some, and praised by many, chiefly for the problematic third act, in which the playwright resorts to the Joycean technique of putting everything in, parading all the incidents in a brothel, which have scant connection with the main plot.

But I have anticipated. I should go back to the time when the New Literature was employed by the radical writers chiefly as a weapon for propaganda. The occupation of Northeast China by the Japanese in 1931 intensified the political consciousness of literature, and the fighting around Shanghai in 1932 further confirmed the writers in their opinion that the efforts of literature should all be directed to the emancipation of the nation. Yet for a time there was a short lull. Lin Yutang, the old biting wit of the Yu Sze group, published the first issue of *Lun Yu*, literally Confucius' *Analects*, in June 1932. It was a magazine devoted to humorous writings only, much in the same nature as the English *Punch* or the American *New Yorker*. Fed up with the narrow dogmatism of the Left critics, Lin Yutang declared that there was already too much loose talk of politics, and it was high time that somebody lead the hordes

hack to the human plane, to sanity again. The trouble with most Chinese writers was, according to him, that they took themselves too seriously to mind life well, and when you do not know life, what is the point of talking of the proletariat? Then, what was the cure? It lay, he further pointed out, in the adoption of Western journalistic technique to write of the familiar, everyday things in our life. These arguments caught for a while the ear of the Chinese public, which had grown tired of the endless quarrels among the Left writers themselves and welcomed Lin Yutang and his *Lun Yu* as something fresh. But the sense of humour rarely appeared in that magazine as an unalloyed purity, as it was often blended with clownish exhibitionism that disappointed. *Lun Yu* has proved itself to be after all a comic relief in a vast tragedy that was only curtained by the war.

By the middle of the thirties, the lull was broken by more Japanese aggressions, and the government was seriously preparing for the inevitable outcome. Lu Hsun and Mao Tun still wrote, but they just like everybody else had dropped the old Left argument and demanded a united front against the common enemy. After the Sian *coup d'etat* in 1936 in which Chiang Kai-Shek was detained by Chang Hsueh-Liang, the old clash of ideologies was as remote as if already a century old. The pendulum fell back again, but this time nationalism triumphed over all.

3.3 III

The first few months of war found the country in a flush. Literary activities came to a standstill, and literature was chiefly employed as reportage and one-act plays. Of the many pieces of reportage, few, however, could be accepted as good journalism. But the one-act plays were immensely popular because many of them, such as the famous *Throw Down Your Whip*, could be acted at the street corners. Dialogue was reduced to the simplest, war songs inserted, and the classical distinction between the actors and the audience discarded for more than once had the villagers found to their surprise that they played the chorus in the drama they had come to see. This brought home to every remote quarter the idea of war.

But the heavy demands of war have also caused, unconsciously but happily, a fundamental change in the New Literature that was at first concerned only with diction. For the *pai hua* of *Dr.* Hu Shih had now grown stale and dusty with use and, what was worse, it had acquired deliberate Western mannerisms. The modernization had been carried to such an artificial extreme that some of the new works read like translations. The impossibility of the whole situation had been sensed before, but it had to wait for the coming of the war to take definite measures to set it right. And when these were taken, what was more natural than a return to the native soil, which has furnished forever homespun words that are charged with the fire and vigour of simple life.

There was, therefore, a larger percentage of colloquialism in fiction. But consciousness, the first impatience with mere imitation of foreign sources, found its most colourful expression in the form of a recitation movement in poetry. War had made it necessary to stress the communal nature of poetry. If poetry is not to be

sung, it should at least be read aloud. But could all poetry stand this test, or ordeal, as Tai Hwang Shu would have said? Clearly a new technique is involved. You cannot read subtle, ambiguous poetry to move a public intent on being appealed emotionally. You have to employ the methods of speech, cumulative, reinforced by repetitions, with watchwords interspersed here and there. In many cases the poet found that for tricks he had to fall back upon the old *tan tze* and folk songs. The products were sometimes a little wild, but compensations were not lacking. For the poetic diction was purged of its literariness and more often was the poet fired by the burning passions on the face of his listeners to more heightened imagination. Read before large crowds, beside flaming campfires, with a lot of refraining and echoing, war poetry was essentially the people's poetry.

As the war dragged on, however, writers began to see the point of setting down to work on more serious, more lasting things. Thus we find long novels show up, mostly in the vein of exposing the social evils in the rear. Drama had a beautiful flowering in the big cities of Free China, and it was in many cases financed by the military authorities. Young essayists followed the path of the great Lu Hsun, who died on the eve of the war.

And now we find ourselves facing a prosperity.[1] The war is over. In spite of the still nebulous situation, a respite has set in, giving the country time to build and grow. The universities have got used to their surroundings and intellectual life is again on the stir. New ideas are forming, new tendencies in the shaping, and the new spirit is struggling for new expression. Material difficulties are well-nigh insurmountable, but somehow new printing centres are established in the interior and elsewhere. New works, printed on yellowish native paper, are again filling up the bookstalls to meet the demands of a reading public with more varied tastes. Hundreds of periodicals devoted themselves to serious literature and some to poetry exclusively. Chinese journalists, too, are trying to be up to date, and many magazines can be classed unblushingly with the American *Reader's Digest*. As usual, translation has played its part in this new burst of intellect. Besides the Russian works, to which Chinese writers have always taken a great fancy, a number of contemporary French, American and English writers, such as Antoine de Saint-Exupery, Andre Gide, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and a host of others, have also been rendered into Chinese. But it is in the field of fiction writing especially that the best fruits are being plucked.

3.4 IV

To sum up, in the 25 years of development, we find the New Literature first hesitating and experimenting and then acquiring a definite political colouring which proves at once its strength and weakness. Much of the New Literature is crude and formless, but the strides we have made in this quarter of a century are great. We have gone

[1] The manuscript for this pamphlet was prepared before the war ended. The editor has taken the liberty to change some of the words in this paragraph.

through romanticism, realism, impressionism, expressionism, naturalism, symbolism and now realism. In poetry we have made the greatest experiment though achieved the poorest result. In prose we have the great Lu Hsun, whose greatness is owned even by his enemies, and a dozen or so good fiction writers. In drama, we have the admirable works of Tsao Yu and Li Chien Wu. In short, we can quite without shame or discredit to ourselves produce a dozen works to show the world how far we have got, where we are and what is likely to become of us.

For whatever can be said against it, modern Chinese literature has at least one redeeming feature: its purity. Even meddling with politics, it has remained faithful to life. Of its numerous faults and failings, lack of high seriousness cannot be counted as one. Young Chinese writers, however humble and under whatever lead, are inspired by ideals and sunshine. It is a highly imaginative literature.

This leads us to a closing thought. What will become of this literature? We have seen that it began with imitation. People are talking of a return. But whither? No question is harder to answer. The achievements of Lu Hsun, however, may throw us a little light. We are a generation that have been brought up with a deep respect for this great man. We find in him traits, stubbornly Chinese, that were afforded him by the old literature. From these Lu Hsun cultivated a style that has such a strange fascination. Is here, then, not a little revelation? The present is changing, but the future, though unknown, will, I think, have occasion to turn back to the rooted past, not perhaps for advice, but to claim kinship. Herein will lie the meaning of development.

Table of Transliteration

Ai Ching	艾青
Book of First Attempt	尝试集
Border Town	边城
Chang Tze Ping	张资平
Chen Fang Wu	成仿吾
Chen Tu Shiu	陈独秀
Chow Tso Jen	周作人
Creationists	创造社
Chu Kwang Chien	朱光潜
Culture Drama	文明戏
Dilemma, The	动摇
Disillusionment	幻灭
Downward Fall	沈沦
Exotic Stories	域外小说集
Fei Ming	废名
Fu Tung Hwa	傅东华
Ho Chi-Fang	何其方
Hsiao Chien	萧乾

Hsiao Chun	萧军
Hsu Tze Mo	徐志摩
In the Dark	在黑暗中
Kuo Mo Jo	郭沫若
Lifelong Affair	终身大事
Li Chien Wu	李健吾
Li Kwang-Tien	李广田
Lin Shu	林纾
Lin Yutang	林语堂
Literature Magazine	文学
Literature Research Society	文学研究会
Lu Fen	芦焚
Lu Hsun	鲁迅
Lun Yu	论语
Mao Tun	矛盾
Metamorphosis	蜕变
Modern, the	现代杂志
Mo Sze Yin	穆时英
Mou Tan	穆旦
Nan Kuo Club, the	南国社
New Moon School, the	新月派
Pa Chin	巴金
Pai Hua	白话
Pien Tze Lin	卞之琳
Ping Hsin	冰心
Precious Steed	宝马
Pursuit	追求
Shen Yen-Ping	沈雁冰
Shen Tsung Wen	沈从文
Skirmishes	剪拂集
Spring Silkworm	春蚕
Stories Monthly	小说月报
Sunrise	日出
Sze Tze Chun	施蛰存
Ta Kung Pao Literary Supplement	大剌报文艺副刊
Tai Hwang Shu	戴望舒
Ting Lin	丁琳
Tien Han	田汉
True Biography of Ah Q	阿Q正传
Tsao Yu	曹禺
Tu Heng	杜衡
Turbulent Waters	激流
Twilight	子夜
Village in August	八月的乡村
Wen I To	闻一多

Wen-li	文言 (外国汉学家及传教士用之)
Wild Grass	野草
Yeh, George	叶嘉超
Yen Fu	严复
Yu Sze	语丝
Yu Ta Fu	郁达夫

Chapter 4
English Poetry and the Chinese Reader

Looking into Jin'ichi Konishi's *History of Japanese Literature* the other day, I came across this interesting observation:

> The sole Western poetry for which the modern Japanese possess understanding and sympathy is probably the Romantic, and for even that the Japanese have been slow to grow familiar with its concealed intellectual features. It is even truer that, for English Metaphysical poetry—no matter how much T. S. Eliot praised it—the Japanese have found enjoyment impossible. That Montaigne's *Essais* should be considered literature does not seem natural to the Japanese.[1]

At first blush, one would say: how true! There is an analogous situation in China. Upon reflection, however, one sees significant differences.

For one thing, the Chinese are quite fond of metaphysical poetry. These days almost any Eng. lit. graduate student in Beijing and Shanghai can be heard talking knowingly about John Donne's compass metaphor. The older generation of English scholars in China still treasure their battered copy of Grierson's anthology. Not long ago, in the course of compiling an anthology of English poetry of my own, I found two of my closest friends vying to put in their different translations of Andrew Marvell's two poems, "The Garden" and "To His Coy Mistress". Certainly, to not a few readers in China, there is nothing more alluring in English poetry than that peculiar blend of passion and intellect, that ability of thinking, in the words of T. S. Eliot, not with their head, but with their body, which characterizes the work of Donne and his friends in the early 17th century.

There is I think a reason behind it. The predilection for an intellectual kind of poetry is nothing new in China. Chinese classical poetry itself had gone through the whirligig of taste. After Tang poetry reached the high point of its development in the work of Li Bai and Du Fu, a break and a change occurred in the Song Dynasty, when

[1] Jin'ichi Konishi (小西甚一), *A History of Japanese Literature*, Vol. One: The Archaic and Ancient Ages, trans. Aileen Gatten & Nicholas Teele, ed. Earl Miner. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) 16–17.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_4

poets like Huang Shangu worked hard at conceits and startling images. They too yoked heterogeneous ideas, by violence, together. When the imitators of the Tangs became too mellifluous, too sweet, a bit of dry wit came in like a breath of fresh air.

Thus a nation's reactions to a foreign literature tell as much about that nation as about that literature.

In this light one can inquire into the impact of English Romanticism in China.

There is no question that the Chinese, academics and common readers alike, love English Romantic poetry. Wordsworth's lyrics; Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; Byron's "Isles of Greece"; Shelley's "Ozymandias", "Indian Serenade" and other love poems; and Keats's odes and sonnets have long been favourites.

They first approached the English Romantics with a political eye. Three Chinese versions of Byron's "Isles of Greece" came out in quick succession at the turn of the century. The translators were a half-Japanese monk, a German-trained educationist and Dr. Hu Shi, a disciple of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. Their varied backgrounds showed the wide appeal of the poem. These three versions were unequal in accuracy and poetic felicity but struck the eager readers of the day with almost equal power. Young intellectuals brooded when they came to lines like:

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though link'd among a fetter'd race,

To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;

For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
Must we but blush?—Our fathers bled.

Byron had meant, with these lines, to sting the Greeks under Turkish rule into action. He didn't know that nearly a century after, they would sting the Han intellectuals under Manchu rule with such devastating effect. He became part of the emotional force that soon swept the Manchu emperors off their feet and established a republic.

Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", translated somewhat later by the poet-historian Guo Moruo, stirred a new generation of Chinese intellectuals. The line most often quoted—and not by poets alone but by revolutionaries in prison, even at the moment of their execution—was the ending:

If Winter co+mes, can Spring be far behind?

Perhaps that was precisely the kind of effect Shelley meant to achieve, but did he have any idea that it would be so fully realized in distant China?

Insurrectionary fervour is of course part of the appeal of English Romanticism, but its other qualities are also appreciated. Wordsworthian worship of nature has struck a responsive chord in many Chinese hearts, and the younger Romantics' exaltation of love certainly played a part in calling forth a whole new school of Chinese vernacular poets singing of sexual attraction with a frankness rarely seen in classical Chinese poetry.

Two recent developments may be mentioned.

In the first place, understanding of Romantic poetry is deepening.

Two poets often called preromantic are receiving more attention than they did in the past, namely, Burns and Blake.

Burns has always been popular in China, with his tuneful songs and his deep-rooted peasant culture. The new emphasis is on his narrative, dramatic and satirical genius, as evidenced in works such as "The Twa Dogs", "Love and Liberty" (otherwise known as "The Jolly Beggars"), "Holy Willie's Prayer", "The Holy Fair" and his poetic epistles. He is probably, next to Shakespeare, the most translated Western poet in China. To this day new translations of his poems appear from time to time in the literary journals. In this connection, I may mention that an enlarged edition of my own translations of Burns's poems, including all the titles just mentioned, came out in 1985 in Beijing.

Blake was well known for his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, many of which were translated. But few had bothered to read his long poems such as *Vala*, *the Four Zoas*, nor was there much understanding of the really revolutionary nature of his whole work, literary as well as artistic—his attacks on the rationalism of Rousseau and Voltaire, his insights into the workings of the "dark, Satanic mills" and the supreme importance he attached to the human imagination. Thus upon rereading a familiar poem like "London", with its haunting opening lines:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
> And mark in every face I meet
> marks of weakness, marks of woe

one becomes aware of a Blake rather different from the religious mystic as presented in some histories of literature. This new Blake began to emerge among Chinese academic circles in the middle fifties, thanks partly to better editions of his work by Geoffrey Keynes and others and pioneering studies by David Erdman and Northrop Frye, but now his impact is felt even outside the university walls.

One can also mention the case of Keats to show a deepening of understanding. Keats has had many admirers in China, who used to look upon him as a supreme example of a poet wholly dedicated to beauty. There was even a time when Keats was dismissed as a decadent aesthete. This was eventually refuted by an intelligent rereading of his poems. How could anyone with a modicum of sense treat as decadent the poet who was so keenly aware of the depth of human suffering around him as to write:

> Here where men sit and hear each other groan;
> Where palsy shakes a few sad last grey hairs,
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
> Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
> And leaden-eyed despairs,
>
> Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes
> Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

the poet who moreover declared:

> None can usurp this height
> But those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery and will not let them rest.

Keats's explorations into the higher reaches of aesthetics are also belatedly drawing attention. Not long ago a literary journal in Beijing published a translation of a number of Keats's letters containing his critical views. Certainly the phrase "negative capability", besides being difficult to translate, has occasioned a good deal of comment and discussion.

But not all Chinese eyes are on the English Romantics. In fact, in recent times there has been a shift of interest to contemporary poetry. This is the second development I'd like to discuss.

Chinese translators and editors are now finding increasingly hard to meet the demands made by young readers for Western poetry with a contemporary ring. "Make it new!" may well be borrowed by them for a slogan. Although Pound himself has had little impact in China despite his Chinese associations or dissociations, Eliot and Auden have been translated and even imitated. Indeed, the whole European modernist movement in poetry, from Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Valéry to Rilke and Lorca, was once a trendy thing at some Chinese universities, giving rise to an indigenous school of poets writing in the modernist manner. Now, 40 years after, some Chinese readers are getting interested in European modernism again, so that in the past few years three different versions of *The Waste Land* were published, including a reprint of a translation made in 1937. Yeats is also being translated or retranslated, including such central poems as "Sailing to Byzantium"; Chinese critics see him as a poet who has learned from but also transcended modernism, and his connections with the Irish national liberation movement, whatever his reservations, have given him, in Chinese eyes, added lustre. If that is something extraneous, then there is his unmatched use of language to fascinate all and challenge the hardiest of translators.

Indeed, verse translation, in the teeth of all objection, is enjoying a boom in China. Its range is worldwide. So that even Gaelic poets like Sorley Maclean are rendered into Chinese, not to mention such another Celtic giant as the Scottish Hugh MacDiarmid. Its time span is from ancient Greece to the 1980s. So that Homer and Virgil are translated alongside Margaret Atwood and Ted Hughes.

In all this, American poetry has focused a good deal of attention. I refer to the work of American moderns, from Whitman onwards. Whitman has been influential in China: he was imitated by a young poet named Guo Moruo in the 1920s, and Guo started a whole new movement in vernacular poetry. Whitman has since become the idol of all those in China who wrote free verse, including many guerrilla fighters who took part in the war with Japan. But he has not been adequately translated. Although several versions of *The Leaves of Grass* were published, none caught his fire or his largeness. A new translation is being prepared by a woman scholar-poet, Professor Zhao Luorui, the erstwhile translator of *The Waste Land*. Of those who

came after Whitman, Carl Sandburg was once popular, having had his "Chicago" and other poems translated. Now, however, people clamour for the "latest" in American poetry, and the "latest" when transplanted sometimes turns out to be 20 or 30 years old. Thus William Carlos Williams's "A Red Wheelbarrow" was translated only two or three years ago, and several versions coexist, with different commentaries. So were a few of Wallace Stevens's poems such as "Sunday Morning". Robert Lowell's work is known and sometimes referred to in the critical essays, but one can't recall any noteworthy translations.

In the last year or two, owing to more visits by poets to and from China, things seem to be moving at a faster pace. For instance, my own institution, Beijing Foreign Studies University, was visited by four American poets in 1984. There was Galway Kinnell, who came to read poetry, his own and others', along with the novelist E. L. Doctorow. There was Kenneth Koch, who spent 4 weeks with us, lecturing on the work of the New York school, explaining poems such as Frank O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died". Finally, during the time of the Sino-American Writers Conference in September 1984, Allen Ginsburg and Gary Snyder came to speak to our students at a big meeting in which nine other American writers participated, and Ginsburg returned after touring the country, to lecture for 2 weeks. We arranged a special public session for him, at which he read passages from his long poem Kaddish, a work dedicated to the memory of his mother. It is doubtful if our students understood all he read, but certainly his deep booming voice and his earnestness and intensity left an indelible impression.

Other than visits, the literary journal put out by my university, *Foreign Literatures*, printed translations of poems by John Ashbury, Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, Robert Bly and James Wright.

I am the translator of the last two, having been in Minnesota in 1980 where I met Bly who told me about the death of Wright. One of Wright's poems I translated is entitled "As I Step Over a Puddle at the End of Winter, I Think of an Ancient Chinese Governor". It came as a revelation to me, with its haunting closing lines:

> Did you find the city of isolated men beyond mountains?
> Or have you been holding the end of a frayed rope
> For a thousand years?

The poem is addressed to Bai Juyi (Po Chu-I), one of the ninth-century poets who made Chinese classical poetry such a glory in world literature. The frayed rope refers to the rope used by the trackers in towing a boat upstream along the rocky banks of the Yangtze in western China, and here stands, I think, for the precarious state of poetic art. The poem opens with the old Chinese poet in exile being towed upstream to an unknown destination and ends with this question about the frayed rope, while in between the American poet tells about his own feeling of solitude as he watches another river, the Mississippi, flowing relentlessly by.

There is thus affinity between the two poets, in spite of the great differences in time and space.

In a large way, this is also true of the reception of English poets by Chinese readers. Initially, of course, there was the appeal of the exotic, and from time to time innovations in English poetry attract Chinese poets and critics, but what has drawn numerous common readers of China to English poetical works of various kinds and periods is, I venture to think, over and above everything this shared feeling of confronting the same human condition.

1985

Chapter 5
On Affinity Between Literatures

When one reads James Wright's poem, entitled "As I Step Over a Puddle at the End of Winter, I Think of an Ancient Chinese Governor", and comes to lines like:

> Did you find the city of isolated men beyond mountains?
> Or have you been holding the end of a frayed rope
> For a thousand years?

one finds unmistakable affinity between an American poet writing about his solitude on the bank of the Mississippi in the 1960s and a Chinese poet sitting uneasily in a boat being towed upstream on the Yangtze in the ninth century. When one marvels at Dai Wangshu's Chinese translation of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* or of Federico García Lorca's "Romance de la Guardia Civil española", one finds affinity too between translator and poet, though it varies in scope, depth or intensity from poem to poem.

Affinity works in all sorts of ways. It is not restricted to any one period but can cut across centuries. Revival of interest in ancient authors shows affinity at work between one generation and another. Charles Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare* revealed a Romantic interest in Jacobean drama which was to find a modernist sequel in T. S. Eliot's revaluation of Webster and Tourneur in the next century.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking kind of affinity is to be found where people least expect it: between literatures of widely divergent languages and traditions.

There has been such affinity between Chinese and European literature from 1900 onwards. On the face of it, nothing could be wider apart than these two, each with a distinct social and cultural background of its own.

Yet after the Chinese had suffered repeated military defeats at the hands of the Europeans in the second half of the nineteenth century, a cultural situation arose in China marked by a mounting interest in Western technology and institutions. From 1896 to 1908, Yan Fu took it upon himself to introduce to the mandarin scholars a whole new ideology by translating some of its basic books, ranging from *De l'esprit*

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_5

des lois to *The Wealth of the Nations* to *On Liberty.* There was still some doubt about whether the Europeans, devilishly clever as they appeared to be in building steamships and forging howitzers, had any polite literature. This was effectively dispelled by Lin Shu's translations of Western novels, ranging from Alexandre Dumas fils's *La Dame aux Camélias* to Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, which revealed the depth of their feeling as well as, in some cases, the refinement of their manners. Mrs. Harriet Stowe's "protest" novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which Lin also translated, made both the translator and his readers indignant over black slavery and apprehensive about yellow slavery, a fate that seemed to be hanging over the heads of the Chinese.

English Romantic poetry made its impact too, at first mainly by quotable lines of a political significance. Three Chinese versions of Byron's "Isles of Greece" appeared in quick succession in Shanghai at the turn of the century, and the translators were, respectively, a half-Japanese monk-poet, a German-trained educationist and Dr. Hu Shih, a disciple of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. These versions, of varying degrees of accuracy and poetic felicity, appealed to an intelligentsia who were getting daily more restive under the rule of the Manchu emperors. Thus they were extraordinarily stirred when they came to lines like:

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame
Though link'd among a fetter'd race
To feel at least a patriot's shame
Even as I sing, suffuse my face
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear

Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
Must we but blush? —Our fathers bled

Soon enough, they also bled, in insurrections which eventually overthrew the Manchu Dynasty[1] and established a republic.

Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", translated somewhat later by the poet-historian Guo Moruo, stirred a new generation of Chinese intellectuals. The line most often quoted—and not by poets alone but also by revolutionaries in prison and even on the eve of their execution—was the ending:

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Perhaps that was precisely the kind of effect Shelley meant to achieve, but did he have any idea that it would be so fully realized in distant China?

In all this, one sees affinity.

With the rise of the New Culture Movement of 1919, things took a more decisive turn. There occurred a gigantic language reform. All writings, except official notices, antiquarian essays, and polite verses for ceremonial occasions, were henceforth to be done in *baihua*, the plain speech, instead of *wenyan*, the literary medium which had remained virtually unchanged for over a thousand years. Many to this

[1] The Qing Dynasty—Editor's note.

day lament this rash change, particularly poets of the old school, but it certainly facilitated, among other things, translation of foreign works, literary and otherwise. *The Communist Manifesto* was translated from a Japanese version in 1920, and soon China was convulsed in changes that shook the world. For that slim book showed the Chinese intelligentsia and the nascent working class that there could be a jouster, more equitable society than the bourgeois democracy many of their elders had been hankering for. The immediate task, however, was to deal with problems arising out of a medievalism which was supposed to be moribund but actually still had plenty of kicks left. Here again translation of foreign literary works proved to be helpful. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* touched a chord in every feminist heart in China, which however only caused the sardonic Lu Xun to ask, "What happened to Nora after she left her husband?"

For Lu Xun found affinity elsewhere, namely, between the suffering masses of Eastern Europe and those of China. He started his literary career by writing an essay on the "Satanic" Byron and translating the short stories from Poland and Russia. A medical man by training, he believed in Darwinian evolution but in his later years moved on to Marxism, translating with stubborn passion the treatises on art and literature by Lunacharsky and other Soviet theoreticians. In between he wrote his own stories which, classically Chinese in their economy of words, were European in their approach, structure and atmosphere, down to their direct, abrupt way of presenting dialogue, a novelty in Chinese fiction. He practised the art of earthbound realism, etching sharply a few significant details but always managed to stop this side of dullness by his feeling for poetry. A giant bestriding both the classical Chinese and the surging modern worlds, he actively supported those new trends in art and literature that voiced the protest of the poor against the rich—the terrifying etchings of Käthe Kollwitz and the intense, vigorous woodcuts of the young left-wing artists of Shanghai. There were also bonds of sympathy between him and Bernard Shaw the iconoclast, as also between him and progressive American journalists—Agnes Smedley, Edgar Snow and Harold Isaacs.

Thus affinity between Chinese and Western literature in the twentieth century has had many manifestations, but never purely literary. Confronted with an acute problem of survival, China has been attracted by those elements in Western culture that answered to her needs and aspirations at a particular point of time. Many literary endeavours were impelled by a sense of crisis.

Has there not been repulsion also? Yes, of course. Different sections of Chinese writers were repulsed by different things in Western literature: some by its pandering to popular taste for sex and violence, others by its abstruse over-abstraction and still others by its exaggerated sense of its own importance or enlightenment. But even in repulsion there was attraction of opposites, while the mainstream in both literatures had a lot in common, being subject to the same pressures of modern life and aspiring to express the same hopes for a better world.

How did China's long classical tradition react in these encounters and confrontations? It resisted change, of course. However, it had within itself elements that responded to calls from the outside world. The reason why it had such resilience

was precisely that it could in some way or another accommodate modifications and reforms. Even when it failed to contain the onslaught of the new, it acted as a shock absorber and a sieve, for long experience had given it a rare critical sense. Thus when European modernism made its presence felt in the poetry of Dai Wangshu and Bian Zhilin in the thirties and of Feng Zhi and Mu Dan in the forties, the sense of values these poets had imbibed from their classical masters and the harsh realities of the country at the time combined to bring about a transformation which made their writings at once more polished and more earthbound than the European works they admired, so that that modernist phase was soon left behind and the poets went on to wider and greener pastures.

Yet the experience sharpened Chinese poetic sensibility. Dai Wangshu changed his own poetic style in the process of translating Baudelaire and Éluard. When Bian Zhilin later turned to translating Shakespeare's tragedies, he trained on them an intelligence refined by his earlier acquaintance with Mallarmé and Valéry. Perhaps the most significant case is that of Mu Dan. An ardent admirer of Eliot and Auden, in mid-career he found he couldn't go on writing modernist poetry and so took refuge in translation. After trying his hand at rendering Pushkin and Shelley and Keats and getting creditable results, he achieved his master work in his translation of Byron's *Don Juan*, all 16 cantos of it, in a Chinese verse just as rhythmic, colloquial and spirited as the original. It is odd that it should have taken a Chinese modernist to appreciate the real qualities of Byron, in spite of Eliot's strictures on his "schoolboy English". In any case, Zha Liangzheng (Mu Dan's real name) brings out to the full Byron's satirical power, conversational ease and unexcelled gift of telling a rattling good story.

The return to Western classics by Chinese translators after 1949, the year of the establishment of the People's Republic, has been on the whole salutary. On the eve of Liberation, the book markets of Shanghai and other cities had been inundated with translations of *Gone With the Wind*, *Forever Amber* and other American best-sellers. They too satisfied a need of the common reader. But the deeper recesses of the mind could not be reached by them, nor the hungers of the spirit assuaged. Nor, for that matter, were they models of artistic innovation. Hence, in falling back upon the classical masters of Western literature, sensitive poets, now turned translators, were able to instil a higher sense of values, which also counterbalanced the spread of such Soviet rediscoveries of obscure English novels of a romantic, insurrectionary fervour as Ethel Lilian Voynich's *Gadfly* (1897).

But this does not mean that windows were shut against what was new in the outside world. Only the balance was shifted. All along there had been a strong current in twentieth-century Chinese literature, represented by Lu Xun and Mao Dun, which stressed communion with Eastern European literatures. After 1949, increased attention was paid to contemporary Soviet works, but the sphere was also enlarged to include all that was of lasting value in world literature or what Lenin called "the whole cultural heritage of man". In actual practice, emphasis tended to be put on writers who either exposed the evils of the old social order or embraced utopian, socialist or communist ideals, lumped together under the name of "progressives" or "realists". In addition, respects were paid to the "cultural giants", chiefly writers

praised or discussed by Marx himself—Homer, Aeschylus, Ovid, Lucretius, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Burns, Goethe, Cobbett, Shelley, Heine, Dickens, Balzac, etc.—an impressive list which bears out the width of reading of a real "citizen of the world".

Indeed, the idea of "world literature" has never before been taken up with such seriousness and such tangible results in published translations. To mention only a few recent ones: a *Complete Works of Shakespeare* in 11 volumes; *Ramayana* in 7 volumes; Iliad's *Odyssey*; Aeneid's *Manyoshu*; La Fontaine's *Fables*; Lessing's *Laocoon*; Rousseau's *Confessions*; Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*; *Don Quixote*; *Don Juan*; *Ivanhoe* (a new version); selected poems of Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Pushkin and Emily Dickinson; anthologies of Sanskrit, Japanese, French, English, Scottish and American poetry; anthologies of English, American, Australian, Russian, French, German, Japanese, Burmese and Mexican short stories; selected plays of Brecht and O'Casey; a comprehensive anthology of *Modernist Writings* in 4 volumes; and García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in two Chinese versions. Mention may also be made of the publication of the two volumes on "Foreign Literatures" of the first large-scale modern encyclopaedia (still in progress) ever published in China, the proliferation of learned societies and journals devoted to the study and translation of foreign literatures and the spate of papers and articles that accompany such activities. Outside the printed page, there have been Chinese stage productions of Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure* and *Romeo and Juliet* (one of its several performances in Tibetan dialect), Molière's *L'Avare*, Brecht's *Galileo*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, not to mention TV showings of foreign films such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Dickens's *David Copperfield* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Hardy's *Tess* and *Mayor of Casterbridge.*

Thus affinity has become widespread, wider than at any time in the past. But how about the depth of understanding? In a sense, widening the field is a way of deepening one's understanding of it. Knowledge of English-language literature is now not confined to the literature of England, as it used to be. Quite apart from the keen interest in American writers, Irish writers like Yeats and Joyce, Scottish writers like Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley Maclean, Welsh writers like Dylan Thomas and Commonwealth writers like Patrick White, Margaret Atwood, Chinua Achebe, V. S. Naipaul, R. K. Narayan and Wole Soyinka have all been translated or read. For China's part, an ultraleftist view of literature and the arts is being replaced by a more rational one, still socialist-oriented but far less dogmatic, which opens out to the world's literature, not closes in to brood on its own theoretical niceties.

Hence there will be deeper as well as wider affinities between Chinese and other literatures.

Literary traffic is rarely one-way. Here, only a Chinese view of the scene is sketched. Another book waits to be written to tell the view from the other side.

What is next? Large questions remain. In an age marked by worldwide nuclear threat, how will literature survive? For the moment, how should literature cope with the tremendous technological advances? How will the rapid new means of

communicating with each other and the use of ever more sophisticated computers affect the world's creative writing?

Those who believe in one world naturally look forward to the kind of literature that traverses languages and cultures, as is advocated by Hugh MacDiarmid in his later years:

> Knowledge and, indeed, adoption *(Aneignung)*
> Of the rich Western tradition
> And all the wisdom of the East as well
> Is the indispensable condition for any progress;
> World-history and world-philosophy
> Are only now beginning to dawn;
> Whatever the tribulation may yet be in store for men
> Pessimism is false.
>
> –In Memoriam James Joyce[2]

Yet the core remains the earth, the solid stones:

> We must be humble. We are so easily baffled by appearances
> And do not realise that these stones are one with the stars.
> It makes no difference to them whether they are high or low,
> Mountain peak or ocean floor, palace, or pigsty.
> There are plenty of ruined buildings in the world but no ruined stones.
> No visitor comes from the stars
> But is the same as they are.
>
> –On a Raised Beach[3]

Perhaps one may add: not just stones for metaphysical contemplation or aesthetic enjoyment but stones with people living on them. After all, it is the people's sufferings that have made literature poignant, as their aspirations have made it noble. Vast areas of the world are still ravaged by disease, hunger, oppression, exploitation and age-old problems that afflict people with a new ferocity. It is heartening to find a major contemporary writer like García Márquez wanting to end all this, to break the cursed century-old solitude in his part of the world, by "building a utopia"—a word that seems to have fallen out of use in these pragmatic days. Thus along with MacDiarmid's "world history and world philosophy", national literatures will endure, with their folk realism and their utopian ideals. Indeed, it is by the interplay between them that the world is enriched and made vastly more lovable.

1984

[2] Hugh Macdiarmid, *Complete Poems*, eds. Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, London: Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, 1978, II, 884.

[3] *Ibid.*, I, 425.

Chapter 6
Across Literatures: The Translation Boom in China

Translation has played a vital role in China. One need only mention two past instances of tremendous impact, namely, the translation of Buddhist scriptures in ancient China and that of the basic books of Capitalism and Marxism in the early years of the twentieth century. Both changed China's history.

In the sphere of the twentieth-century literature alone, one might say that it was the translators who begot the new writers. Indeed, the whole movement championing vernacular literature around 1919 got its inspiration from the translations of foreign literary works. The English Romantics and Whitman helped to usher in Chinese vernacular poetry, Ibsen and Shaw gave the Chinese ideas about a new kind of drama, and Western and Eastern European writers supplied models for the new fiction.

It was not a one-way traffic, though. Two factors were constantly at work to counteract foreign influences, namely, the condition of China and the long tradition of its splendid classical literature.

An example ready to hand is the career of European modernism in China. For a short period from the thirties to the early forties, a small number of Chinese poets came under the influence of European modernists and wrote in the manner of Baudelaire, Rilke, Valery, Eliot and Auden, among others. They developed a new sensibility and turned out excellent work. Yet even in their modernist heyday, their poetry retained age-old Chinese qualities and in 10 years time nearly all of them wrote differently. It was partly because the war intervened, but mainly because their modernist sensibility responded to Chinese realities.

Since then the country has gone through many upheavals until a new era opened in 1979.

What is the present situation like?

Well, with the open policy in force, translation is once again thriving. In fact, there is a boom. Over a dozen magazines are devoted to literary translation exclusively, several having a circulation of over 30,000, one reaching the high figure of 140,000. These print short stories, novels, novellas, plays, poems, biographies,

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_6

essays, etc. from all sources and nearly all periods, though gradually narrowing down to the contemporary and near contemporary. Translations of whole books are also flooding the market, ranging from old classics like *Ramayana*, *Manyoshu* and *Aeneid* to latter-day bestsellers like Agatha Christie's thrillers. Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose*, too, is appearing in instalments in a university journal.

In this bewildering profusion, three trends strike one as particularly significant.

First, the scope is worldwide in aim, though in actual execution we are handicapped by our ignorance of the languages and literatures of vast areas of the world. For instance, we know almost next to nothing about Algerian literature. Still, unlike in some Western countries afflicted with Eurocentrism, translators in China are making an effort to implement the idea of world literature. Already the coverage is widened, so that Third-World writers like Wole Soyinka and García Márquez are now known to the Chinese reading public through the translations of their works. O*ne Hundred Years of Solitude*, for instance, is available in three Chinese versions.

Second, verse translation is on the upswing. Selected works of foreign poets and anthologies of American, English, French, German, Japanese, Scottish and other poetry are selling in surprisingly large editions. Not long ago a publishing house in Hunan province took the bold step of launching a whole series of verse translations comprising over 60 titles. A prominent feature of the series is that the translators are all poets themselves. I know that it is a debatable point whether poetry can be translated. Controversies aside, the fact remains that it is being done—and done on a large scale in China.

Third, literary theory is catching up—or, rather, the translators are catching up with literary theory. Several series of foreign theoretical works are in progress. The volumes published include special studies such as *On the Making of an Image*, selected criticism on single authors such as *Faulkner*, monographs such as Roger Garaudy's *D'un réalisme sans rivage*. There are also theoretical journals, which have published the writings of Bakhtin, Benjamin, Lukacs and others. The younger critics, however, pay more attention to recent Western theory, from hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism, feminism, reception theory, all the way to Derrida's deconstruction, though so far most of the esoteric, jargon-ridden treatises setting out these theories have repulsed the timid advances of translators.

Perhaps a more pertinent question is how far have the translations affected the creative writers?

It would be wrong to attribute all that is happening on the literary scene to the impact of translations alone. There is no doubt, however, that translations have had an influence in China far greater than in, say, English-speaking countries. At a recent meeting of writers in Beijing, I heard a well-known novelist say how he admired Márquez's magic realism. Others have tried out new ways of writing, such as the dream reverie and the stream of consciousness, picked up mainly from translated Western novels. There are also plays with a touch of Beckettish bleakness.

If these new ways are not so new after all, a more noteworthy development is the introduction of some new forms. Oral history is one. Two young writers of Beijing, a man and a woman, recently won wide acclaim with their *Beijing Profiles*, the first Chinese oral history modelled on Studs Terkel's *Working*, using the same

technique of interviewing people from all walks of life and then putting the recorded interviews together in the form of a book.

In all this, translation has played its role as a stimulant, catalyst and model.

Yet even after saying this, one has not exhausted the uses of translation in China. There is a large area of popular entertainment where translation plays a crucial role. I refer to the dubbing of foreign films and TV series. There the translators are put to the severest test possible. Not only must their versions follow the original closely and conform to the spoken idiom, but the words must somehow fit the lip movements of the characters. The results have been so far very encouraging. I have seen a Chinese-dubbed English film, *Pride and Prejudice*, and found to my delight that a good deal of Jane Austen's wit, irony and epigrammatic polish was skilfully brought across.

Because of the excellent dubbing, foreign films are among the most popular items on the Chinese TV, and they include screen adaptations of literary masterpieces like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Stendhal's *Le Rouge and le Noir*, Hardy's *Tess*, etc. Of course, the credit must also go to the Chinese actors and actresses who do the actual dubbing. They and the translators are the unsung heroes of a difficult but extremely important craft, which is being refined to a new art.

This brings me to a few concluding remarks. Translation involves the handling of words from two languages. Words are often treated lightly in a world sorely afflicted with hunger, injustice, war and other ills. Yet they are of the utmost importance, because they embody not only a man's ideas and emotions but also his world view, sensibility and humanity. This importance is brought to the fore again and again by the tireless efforts of the translators, a hard-pressed lot doing an almost thankless job. Yet they deserve our warmest gratitude. For, as I wrote elsewhere,

> translation benefits the very fabric of any national literature, indeed, any culture. It does something more than opening new windows, it helps rejuvenate a culture, in a way that touches the very inner being of it, by giving its language a shakeup and a sharpening so that it becomes sensitive and alive again. Any culture would be immeasurably impoverished if it were to be stripped of the translations, particularly those of the poetical works, from a different culture. Indeed, the whole world would become shabbier without the splendid translations of literary works from all nationalities.[1]

1987

[1] Wang Zuoliang, *Degrees of Affinity*: *Studies in Comparative Literature*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1985) 127–28.

Chapter 7
Two Early Translators

7.1 I

There had been a spate of translations of Western works, mostly thrillers and romances, running high in the book market of Shanghai in the 1880s, but the literati took little notice. Their interest was only aroused when two men of their own breed came on the scene.

Yan Fu (l853–1921) had gone to England to train as a naval cadet but soon found that building a navy was no solution to the problems confronting China. He returned to take up political journalism, founding in 1897 a periodical called *Guo Wen* in Tianjin, which published serially his own translation of Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* (1893). The famous rendering of the opening passage is worth quoting:

> 赫胥黎独处一室之中。在英伦之南。背山而面野。槛外诸境。历历如在几下。乃悬想二千年前。当罗马大将恺彻未到时。此间有何景物。计惟有天造草昧。人功未施。其借征人境者。不过几处荒坟。散见坡陀起伏间。而灌木丛林。蒙茸山麓。未经删治如今日者。则无疑也。……[1]

Huxley's original reads:

> It may be safely assumed that, 2,000 years ago, before Caesar set foot in southern Britain, the whole countryside visible from the windows of the room in which I write, was in what is called "the state of Nature". Except, it may be, by raising a few sepulchral mounds, such as those which still, here and there, break the flowing contours of the downs, man's hands had made no mark upon it; and the thin veil of vegetation which overspread the broad-backed heights and the shelving sides of the coombs was unaffected by his industry.[2]

[1] 赫胥黎著、严复译:《天演论》上, 导言一: 察变 (1971 年北京科学出版社重印本, 第 1 页)。

[2] T.H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, 1893–1943, London, 1947, p. 33.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_7

If we compare the two, we'll see that Yan Fu shakes the whole passage loose and rearranges it, following not the English sentence order but structuring it the Chinese way—notice the short sentences and the absence of syntactical subordination. His treatment of scientific terms is also noteworthy. While he avoids unnecessary jargon—thus Huxley's "state of nature" in this passage becomes 天造草昧—he is not afraid of coining new terms where they are called for, as may be seen in a few random examples culled from other passages:

nerve 涅伏	political nature 群性
ether 伊脱	Man's Place in Nature 化中人位论
logic 名学	pure reason 清净之理
Nature 性	

He was keenly aware of the difficulty of doing this. In fact, there is a whole section in his preface to the translation which deals with this specific problem:

> 新理踵出。名目纷繁。索之中文。渺不可得。即有牵合。终嫌参差。译者遇此。独有自具衡量。即义定名。……一名之立，旬月踟蹰。
>
> (New ideas come one after another, with a multiplicity of new names. No equivalents can be found for them in Chinese. Straining for resemblances, one gets only contrarieties. The translator is obliged to use his own discretion, doing his best to find a term suited to the sense…. A single term often took weeks and months of deliberation.)

But the result has been happy. For one thing, his translation of the key Darwinian phrase, "natural selection", as 物竞天择 has come to stay.

Stylistically, one notices in Yan's rendering a certain tendency towards dramatization. Huxley opens the chapter ponderously, impersonally:

> It may be safely assumed that…

while Yan's rendering, if translated back into English, would read:

> Huxley sits alone in a room, at a place south of London, with hills at its back and fields before it. From the window he commands a clear view, seeing everything as though they were on his desk. His thoughts carry him back to 2,000 years ago, when the Roman general Caesar had not yet arrived…

which is more lively, more like the opening of an historical account. While there are other reasons behind the changes made—the switch from the first person "I" in Huxley's original to the third person "Huxley" in the translation, for instance, is done to conform with the stylistic requirements of classical Chinese prose[3]—the livening up, the dramatization, is Yan's own. To cite another instance, Huxley's simple statement, "unceasing struggle for existence", becomes in Yan's rendering almost a battle account:

> 战事炽然。强者后亡。弱者先绝。年年岁岁。偏有留遗。
>
> (Fierce war raged. The weak became extinct. The strong perished later. This went on year after year, with few survivors.)

[3] Ancient historians invariably use the third person in reference to themselves, particularly at the head of a passage—e. g. 太史剔曰, 陈光曰, etc.

Why does Yan take the trouble to dramatize what purports to be a scientific-philosophical treatise? My guess is that, Sima Qian the historian being the model of all self-respecting Chinese prose writers, Yan wants to write like the master and heighten the historical sense—a perfectly legitimate thing to do in an important work on the evolution of mankind.

One aspect of Yan's work has received scant attention and that is his few sorties into the realm of English poetry. Here in this translation of *Evolution and Ethics*, one finds these famous lines from Pope's *Essay on Man*:

> All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good:
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right

Rendered into Chinese, thus:

> 元宰有秘机。斯人特未悟。
> 世事岂偶然。彼苍审措注。
> 乍疑乐律乖。庸知各得所。
> 虽有偏渗灾。终则其利溥。
> 寄语傲慢徒。慎勿轻毁诅。
>
> 一理今分明。造化原无过。[4]

A very creditable translation indeed! Unlike some later translators, Yan renders verse as verse and manages to communicate some of Pope's supreme assuredness and epigrammatic polish.

Having seen something of Yan's practice as a translator, we may now examine his translation theory. It is in this same preface that Yan presents his three-point theory:

> 译事三难信、达、雅。求其信已大难矣。顾信矣不达。虽译犹不译也。则达尚焉。……
>
> 易曰修辞立诚。子曰辞达而已。又曰言之无文。行之不远。三者乃文章正轨。亦即为译事楷模。故信达而外。求其尔雅。
>
> (Translation has to do three difficult things: to be faithful, expressive, and elegant. It is difficult enough to be faithful to the original, and yet if a translation is not expressive, it is tantamount to having no translation. Hence expressiveness should be required too….
>
> The *Book of Change* says that the first requisite of rhetoric is truthfulness. Confucius says that expressiveness is all that matters in language. He adds that if one's language lacks grace, it won't go far. These three qualities, then, are the criterion of good writing and, I believe, of good translation too. Hence besides faithfulness and expressiveness, I also aim at elegance.)

Here we have the most influential translation theory in modern China, which has been quoted and requoted by nearly every writer on translation. However, few have seen fit to quote what comes immediately after:

[4] 下篇, 论十二: 天难 (1971 年重印本, 第 121 页)。

> 此不仅期以行远已耳。实则精理微言。用汉以前字法句法。则为达易。用近世利俗文字。则求达难。往往抑义就词。毫厘千里。审择于斯二者之间。夫固有所不得已也。岂钓奇哉。
>
> (I strive for elegance not just to make my translations travel far, but to express the original writer's ideas better, for I find that subtle thoughts are better expressed in the vocabulary and syntax of pre-Han prose than those of the vulgar writings of today. Using the latter often leads to distortion of meaning, which, however slight, results in vast misunderstanding. Weighing the pros and cons, I opted for the former, as a matter of necessity, not trying to be different.)

Leaving aside the question whether pre-Han prose is really a better vehicle for the communication of "subtle thoughts", we see that Yan's point about elegance is really closely related to his first and most important point, namely, faithfulness to the original. Perhaps elegance does not mean, as has so often been taken to mean, beautification, for obviously it would be quite inappropriate to give elegance to a piece of writing which is in the original language inelegant, but signifies an effort to communicate something higher and subtler than the plain sense of words and phrases, a climate of mind, a heightened sense of the significance of the original. Yan's tendency towards dramatization, earlier commented on, is perhaps a move in that direction.

And perhaps the real point about pre-Han prose is not a linguistic or even a stylistic one, either. Yan took up translation with a purpose: to attract the attention of people who he thought really mattered, namely, the intelligentsia. Several millenniums of self-sufficiency had bred in these people a deep-seated xenophobia, so that even when repeated defeats in foreign wars made them look to the West for some quick, practical remedy for the country's ills, they did so with the greatest reluctance and not a little resentment. More far-sighted than these gentlemen, Yan knew that something more drastic, more fundamental had to be done—indeed, nothing short of a complete overhaul of Chinese society—and the task could only be approached by introducing a new ideology. The books he was translating—Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois*, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and *System of Logic*, Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, as well as Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*—were the great basic books of modern Western thought which shaped an efficient capitalist society. He knew what a bitter pill these books contained for minds still taking refuge in mediaeval dreams, and so he sugar-coated it with something they treasured, a polished antique style. Elegance, in other words, was Yan's salesmanship.

Within a few years, his translations won a large readership. His ideological onslaught proved successful, perhaps a trifle too successful. Even reform was to give way to revolution. The genii were out of the bottle, and there was no turning them back.

7.2 II

If Yan Fu provoked the mind of the Chinese intelligentsia, Lin Shu (1852–1924) touched their heart. Like Yan, Lin was a master of classical prose. Unlike Yan, however, Lin knew not a word of English, or any other foreign language. His is the case of a great translator working at two or three removes from the original works. In fact, he had to work with the help of an oral interpreter. The interpreter read and explained: the master took down what he heard on the spot. He kept pace with the running interpretation; indeed, he often finished before the interpreter had quite uttered his last word, and the miracle was what he put down in a hurry needed little revision, so ready was his pen and so flexible his style. They worked at a terrific pace, averaging 6,000 words for each 4-hour session.[5] The products of such collaboration could not be expected to be free of errors. Indeed, they abound, and not just verbal ones, for Lin treated some of the original works with scant respect—he invaded foreign literature like the proud mandarin-scholar that he was, and often slashed and added at will. But he tampered little with works that really impressed him. One such was Mrs. Harriet Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Lin was touched by the sufferings of the black people depicted in that book, but it also occurred to him that a similar or worse fate was hanging over the heads of the Chinese at that critical time around 1900. He wrote in the translator's preface:

> 黄人受虐或更甚于黑人。……就其原书所著录者，触黄种之将亡，因而愈生其悲怀耳。……而倾信彼族者又误信西人宽待其藩属，跃跃然欲趋而附之。则吾书之足以儆醒之者，宁可少哉。
>
> (The yellow race has been subject to worse treatment than even the black…. I noted what the book relates about the Negroes and when I reflected that the yellow race too are facing subjugation, my indignation increased.… Some Chinese think too well of the white race and, believing that Western powers treat their vassal states leniently, are actively campaigning for affiliating with them. To such people, this book I have translated ought to serve as a necessary warning.)

Thus Lin took up translation with a patriot's anxiety and made no bones about it.

This does not mean, however, that Lin was blind to the literary merits of the works he was translating, for he also praised *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its superior structure. He applied to it the same criterion that he would apply to any piece of narration in classical Chinese prose—namely, that it should have a proper opening; good "veins" of development, anticipations and echoes; skilful "dovetailing"; and so on—and found Mrs. Stowe not wanting. Indeed, he was not a little surprised that a Western work could acquit itself so well in that respect.

More than that, his heart was won over by another Western novel, Alexandre Dumas fils's *La Dame aux Camélias*. In a humorous sketch about himself, he refuted the charge that he was insensitive to love by referring to his translation of the Dumas work:

[5] As revealed in the preface to his version of Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*.

> 生平好著书, 所译巴黎茶花女遗事, 尤凄惋有情致。尝自读而笑曰: “吾能状物态至此, 宁谓木强之人, 果与情为仇也耶?”[6]
>
> (He was fond of writing books. His translation of *La Dame aux Camélias* was an especially sad and moving book. Reading it again the other day, he said to himself with a chuckle: “If I can describe sentiment like that, should I be called “cold”, an enemy to love?”)

La Dame aux Camélias was the first Western work he ever translated, and it was an immediate success. It not only established his fame as a superior translator but made Chinese intellectuals aware of Western sentiment and Western art of fiction. That a courtesan could be capable of true love was nothing new in Chinese literature. One has only to recall the story of *Peach Blossom Fan*, a seventeenth-century drama, to see that the theme had been explored with great success in China. But Marguerite's special appeal lay in her self-sacrifice and her ailing health—Chinese readers have always had a weakness for fragile beauties succumbing to consumption. The locale of the novel, that glittering metropolis, Paris, also fascinated those Chinese readers just then witnessing the rise of treaty-port cities like Shanghai, with their veneer of cosmopolitanism. Dumas's craftsmanship, especially his masterly handling of the plot, attracted the more discerning of the Chinese critics. Tired of traditional Chinese novels which, with some notable exceptions, invariably contrive to end happily, they were pleased to have a chance to shed tears over the heroine's tragic death.

For Lin Shu's part, he established firmly the superiority of classical literary prose as a medium for translating fiction. Some earlier translators, notably Zhou Guisheng (周桂笙) and Xu Nianci (徐念慈), had experimented on using the vernacular in translating detective stories and romances, but Lin's translations swept all their work aside not only by the superior literary qualities of the originals but also by the translator's Chinese prose. It was not exactly the kind of prose that Lin would have used in writing his own essays.[7] He had “modernized” it by loosening up the sentence structures and introducing a number of new words and expressions: colloquialisms like 小宝贝,爸爸; facetious names like 梁上君子, 土馒头, 夜度娘; new terms like 程度, 热度, 社会, 个人, 反动之力, 活泼之精神; even phonetic coinages like 马丹, 密司脱, 安琪儿, 苦力, 俱乐部, 列底 (尊闺门之称也). But despite these and other concessions, Lin's Chinese remained literary, elegant and supple. The suppleness may surprise those who, following the earlier champions of the *bai hua* or vernacular literature, tend to think all classical prose stiff and unnatural. Lin proved the contrary. Not only did his prose cope successfully with all the intricateness of a Victorian romance like Rider Haggard's *She*, being equally adept in describing violent action as in depicting love, but its purity and appropriateness often improved on the original. Read Lin's rendering:

> 乃以恶声斥洛巴革曰: “汝何为恶作剧? 尔非痴当不如是。” (《斐州烟水愁城录》 第五章)

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[6]《冷红生传》(郑振铎编:《晚清文选》(世界文库), 上海生活, 1937, 第 601 页)

[7]For a discussion of this, see 钱钟书:《林纾的翻译》, in《旧文四篇》, 上海古籍, 1979。

and compare it with Haggard's original:

> What meanest thou by such mad tricks? Surely thou art mad.

and one will be struck by the English author's laborious mixture of the archaic and the slangy in his dialogue, shown to particular disadvantage beside the translator's clean, efficient Chinese.[8] That is perhaps why, while many more recent and more accurate Chinese versions of nineteenth-century English novels make rather dull reading, Lin's earlier translations in classical prose remain eminently readable. Indeed, Lin's skilful use of *wen yan*, seen in hindsight, makes those of us reared in the vernacular tradition look at that matchless, almost timeless literary medium with a new sense of wonder.

Rider Haggard was the bestselling Victorian novelist whose appeal still fascinates some of the most perceptive critics today.[9] If Lin was unduly impressed by Haggard's romances, he and his collaborators showed taste and discernment in the range and quality of the other Western works they selected for translation. In less than 30 years (1896–1924), Lin accomplished the translation of over 180 works,[10] averaging 6 a year—surely a proud record for any translator even without Lin's handicaps! The works translated included Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize*, Tolstoy's *Caucasian Prisoner*, a lot of Dickens, Ibsen's *Ghosts* adapted as a novel, *Aesop's Fables*, *Tales from Shakespeare* by the Lambs, Washington Irving's *Sketch Book* as well as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Dumas fils's *La Dame aux Camélias.* All in all, not a bad first list of Western fiction for any non-Western reading public!

Lin's prefaces to his translations contain interesting revelations and some literary criticism. They show the translator perpetually preoccupied with China's destiny, believing at the same time that his translation of the work on hand was going to do some good to his fellow countrymen—by enlightening their minds or boosting their morale. Lin also took the occasion to refute some of the charges levelled at China. In discussing Shakespeare, for instance, he pointed out that this poet, "whose genius matches that of China's Du Fu"(莎氏之诗，直抗吾国之杜甫[11]), often resorted to the supernatural in his plays but was not on that account condemned as superstitious by his countrymen. Lin also made known his disapproval of extreme measures in his preface to a French work called *Two Patriotic Boys*, where he urged Chinese students to work with greater application and not clamour for revolution or plot assassinations.

All this underlines once again the sense of crisis that never left Lin Shu as he was taking down—with almost the speed of a modern shorthand expert—in elegant Chinese prose the running interpretation of his assistant. But the literary man was

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[8] The point is made by Professor Qian Zhongshu, *ibid.*

[9] e.g. V.S. Pritchett, in *The Tale-Bearers: Essays on English, American and Other Writers*, N.Y. Random House, 1980.

[10] The exact figure is 183. See 连燕堂:《林译小说有多少种》(《读书》, No. 6, 1982, p. 83)

[11]《吟边燕语》序。

never wholly submerged in the patriot. We have seen that he admired *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for its structure. In his preface to *Ivanhoe*, he pays a glowing tribute to the art of Scott the novelist. He enumerates seven virtues of Scott's work, namely:

The ability to fill up a book of over 120,000 words with the events of only 15 days
The ability to distinguish the characters by their speeches
The ability to depict the Catholics in all their wickedness
The ability to depict the Jews in all their wretchedness as a people without a country, which may serve as a warning to the yellow race as well
The ability to depict the contrasting heroic and villainous types among the Saxons
The ability to make the Jewish race shine in the moral character of Rebecca to further spite the Catholics
Finally, the ability to make the rebel leader eloquent even when he is openly agitating for seizure of power

In conclusion, Lin finds that Scott has "a talented pen that is nothing short of magical" (文心奇幻) and would rank him with Sima Qian and Ban Gu, supreme masters of Chinese historical writing. Coming from a scholar-stylist like Lin Shu, this is a very high praise indeed.

Even more perceptive is Lin's appreciation of Dickens, before whose brilliance the translator finds that even the best China can offer looks somewhat dim. In preface after preface, Lin discusses Dickens's unique strength:

> 余虽不审西文, 然日闻其口译, 亦能区别其文章之流派, 如辨家人之足音。其间有高厉者, 清虚者, 绵婉者, 雄伟者, 悲梗者, 淫冶者, 要皆归本于性情之正, 彰瘅之严, 此万世之劄理, 中外不能僭越。而独未若却而司迭更司文字之奇特。天下文章莫易于叙悲, 其次则叙战, 又次则宣述男女之情。等而上之, 若忠臣孝子, 义夫节妇, 决脰溅血, 生气凛然。苟以雄深雅健之笔施之, 亦尚有其人。从未有刻划市井卑污龌龊之事, 至于二三十万言之多, 不重复, 不支厉, 如张明镜于空际, 收纳五虫万怪, 物物皆涵, 涤清光而出, 见者如凭栏之观鱼鳖虾蟹焉, 则迭更司者, 盖以至清之灵府, 叙至浊之社会, 令我增无数阅历, 生无穷感喟矣。(《孝女耐儿传》序)
>
> (Although I do not understand any Western language, yet listening daily to the oral interpretation, I have come to appreciate the different types of Western writers, just as I can distinguish people in my family by their footsteps. Their styles range from the shrill and severe, the serene and subtle, the soft and sentimental, the grand and eloquent, to the melancholic and meretricious, but all aim at purifying human nature by extolling virtue and condemning vice, a goal shared throughout the ages by writers of all countries. No one, however, has Dickens's strange fascination for me. Now sorrow is the easiest thing to write about, next war, still next love. Going up the scale of difficulty there is the portrayal of loyal ministers and filial sons, of courageous men and chaste women, with their resolute, heroic deeds. These are not beyond the reach of writers with a ready, powerful pen. But Dickens alone is capable of depicting the meanest and most sordid things in society at great length, running often to 200,000 or 300,000 words, without ever repeating himself or unduly branching out, but showing all the strange creatures he had collected in their true light, as though he were holding a mirror in the air, to make the readers see these creatures as clearly as if they were watching over a balustrade the fish, turtles, shrimps and crabs in a pond. Dickens, then, is a writer who describes the most hideous things in society with the noblest intelligence, thereby enriching our experience and provoking endless thoughts.)

Then, once again he resorts to comparisons:

> 中国说部, 登峰造极者, 无若石头记, 叙人间富贵, 感人情盛衰, 用笔缜密, 著色繁丽, 制局精严, 观止矣。其间点染以清客, 间杂以村妪, 牵缀以小人, 收束以败子, 亦可谓善于体物。终竟雅多俗寡, 人意不专属于是。若迭更司者, 则扫荡名士美人之局, 专为下等社会写照, 奸狯骫酷, 至于人意所未尝置想之局, 幻为空中楼阁, 使观者或笑或怒, 一时颠倒, 至于不能自已。则文心之邃曲, 宁可及耶? (《孝女耐儿传》序)
>
> (Chinese fiction reaches its culmination in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. In so far as it narrates the changes of fortune and the vicissitudes of life, in a refined, meticulous style, with rich, varied colourings and a carefully worked-out overall plan, it is perfection itself. The narration is also interspersed with the comings and goings of hangers-on, country women, servants and spendthrifts, all very lifelike. Still, the novel deals more with the well-bred than with the vulgar, since it does not aim at a full representation of the latter. Dickens, however, sweeps aside lords and ladies, to concentrate on depicting the low society, taking in the wicked, the crafty, the rough and the cruel, putting them in situations never before thought of, fantasy worlds that make the readers laugh with pleasure or shout in anger, quite in spite of themselves. Where could one find an equal to a writer with such a deep, ingenious mind?)

Indeed, Lin thinks that Dickens has done something even more difficult than whatever Sima Qian did in *Historical Records*, namely, depicting everyday life, particularly that of the lower orders, in all its unspectacular commonness.

As an example of the special Dickens touch, Lin singles out Nell's death in *The Old Curiosity Shop*:

> 而此书……精神专注在耐儿之死。读者迹前此耐儿之奇孝, 谓死时必有一番死诀悲怆之言, 如余所译茶花女之日记。乃迭更司则不写耐儿, 专写耐儿之大父凄恋耐儿之状, 疑睡疑死, 由昏愦中露出至情, 则又茶花女日记外别成一种写法。盖写耐儿则嫌其近于高雅, 惟写其大父一穷促无聊之愚叟, 始不背其专意下等社会之宗旨。此足见迭更司之用心矣。(《孝女耐儿传》序)
>
> (This book focuses its attention on Nell's death. Since Nell is so devoted to her grandfather, readers would expect her to utter many sad words on her deathbed, perhaps something like what the Dame aux Camélias confides to her diary, in the story I earlier translated. Dickens, however, does not deal with Nell, but concentrates on describing how the grandfather clings to her, seeing her only as asleep, refusing to think her dead, thus revealing by his dotage his true love for her. That marks a way different from Dumas's of treating death in literature. Had Dickens written about Nell, he would have had to use genteel language. Writing instead of the poor fond grandfather, Dickens succeeds in keeping to his original plan of depicting the low society. That shows Dickens's originality.)

Here we see Lin comparing Dickens with Dumas, as earlier he had compared him with Cao Xueqin and Sima Qian. Perhaps he wasn't quite aware of the fact that he was undertaking some of the earliest exercises in comparative literature in China.

Lin reserves his best analysis for *David Copperfield*:

> 此书为迭更司生平第一著意之书, 分前后二编, 都二十余万言。思力至此, 臻绝顶矣! ……大抵文章开阖之法, 全讲骨力气势, 纵笔至于灏瀚, 则往往遗落其细事繁节, 无复检举。遂令观者得罅而攻。此固不为能文者之病。而精神终患弗周。迭更司他著, 每到山穷水尽, 辄发奇思, 如孤峰突起, 见者耸目。终不如此书伏脉至细, 一语必寓微旨, 一事必种远因, 手写是间, 而全局应有之人, 逐处涌现, 随地关合, 虽偶尔一见,观者几复忘怀, 而闲闲着笔间, 已近拾即是。读之令人斗然记忆, 循编逐节以索, 又一一有是人之行踪, 得是事之来源。 综言之, 如善奕之着子, 偶然一下, 不知后来咸得其用, 此所以成为国手也。(《块肉余生述》前编序)

(This is Dickens's own favourite among his novels. Divided into two books, totalling over 200,000 words, it marks Dickens's crowning achievement…. The art of writing attaches great importance to force and sweep, but as the pen races along, it often leaves behind some incidents and details unattended, so that a careful reader can always pick holes in the writing. Hardly a real fault, this does show the difficulty of keeping up the effort throughout. Dickens has the knack of throwing off surprises just when he seems to be at the end of his tether, so that a reader is startled, finding himself looking at a new peak coming out of nowhere. Admirable as that is, this novel does something even better, namely, the planting of numerous little details either in anticipation or in response, so that every incident has its cause and effect, every word its significance, the writer having the whole plan in mind even as he is busy with one particular episode. The characters appear, some fleetingly, and then disappear, seemingly forgotten, yet readily, though unobtrusively, within call. The reader is suddenly reminded of something and when he looks back, chapter by chapter, he will see that many characters have left traces behind and every incident is accounted for. In short, Dickens is like a first-rate chess player whose every casual move contributes to the final effect. No wonder he is such a master!)

Beside such mastery, such sustained effort, Lin finds two of China's supreme novels, *Water Margin* and *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, inadequate, the former for failing to follow up the brilliance of its early chapters, after which the characters are less individualized, and the latter for tackling a less difficult job, that of depicting love between men and women, to which "readers are naturally attracted". One is not sure how kindly the "Redologists" would take to such a view, but perhaps the real question here is why did a haughty mandarin-scholar like Lin Shu come under the spell of an English novelist who specialized in depicting "the low society", something which, we have every reason to think, Lin would abhor?

No doubt he was fascinated by Dickens's unique power of "turning the putrescent into the magical",[12] but I think he was even more impressed by Dickens's moral uprightness in exposing social abuses. Indeed, Lin was not a little surprised to find that England, the leading Western nation, had been afflicted with the same social ills that were then bedevilling China:

英伦在此百年之前，庶政之窳，直无异于中国，特水师强耳。迭更司极力抉摘下等社会之积弊，作为小说，俾政府知而改之。……天下之事，炫于外观者，往往不得实际。穷巷之间，荒伧所萃，漫无礼防，人皆鄙之。然而豪门朱邸，沉沉中喻礼犯分，有百倍于穷巷之荒伧者，乃百无一知。此则大肖英伦之强盛，几谓天下观听所在，无一不足为环球法则。非得迭更司描画其状态，人又乌知其中尚有贼窖耶？顾英之能强，能改革而从善也。吾华从而改之，亦正易易。所恨无迭更司其人，能举社会中积弊，著为小说，用告当事，或庶几也。

(One hundred years ago, English misrule was no better than Chinese today, except for the fact that England had a powerful navy. In his novels Dickens did his best to expose social abuses in the underworld to call the government's attention to them, so that reforms might be introduced…. Now as the world goes, people are often dazzled by appearances and fail to grasp realities. All condemn what goes on in the slums, where ruffians gather and live without law or decorum. Yet few see the lawlessness and depravity, a hundred times worse, that lurk behind the vermillion doors of proud mansions. It was the same with England. Strong and prosperous, she gave the impression that she was a model for the world in everything she did. Had Dickens not described it, who would ever know that there existed in England a thieves' den? However, English authorities listened to advice and carried out

[12] "迭更司乃能化腐为奇", Preface to his translation of *David Copperfield*.

> reforms. That is why England has become strong. It would not be difficult for China to follow her example. Much to our regret, however, we have no Dickens in our midst, no one who can write novels to make the authorities aware of the social abuses in our country.)

Here, once again, spoke Lin Shu the patriot. He was really explaining why he had been translating Dickens with such passion. To him as to Yan Fu, translation was no idle pursuit but something with a deadly serious purpose, an instrument of social and political reform.

Nor was his cry for a Chinese Dickens a voice in the wilderness. For, even as he was making these remarks, a number of Chinese novels, with such titles as *Bureaucrats Shown Up* and *Odd Things Witnessed Over Twenty Years*, had already been published or written. They contributed, as did Lin's translations of Dickens and others, to the general climate of opinion that was severely critical of the bureaucratic abuses and the corruption and ineptitude of the officials then scandalizing all decent people. Indeed, then and in the succeeding decade, with more exposés pouring from the press, Chinese fiction reached a new peak of development.

Yet even these were soon to be replaced. A much bigger change was approaching. A literature of an entirely new kind—new in outlook and new in the very medium used—was on the way. Just as Yan Fu's introduction of a capitalist ideology played a part in ushering in reform and revolution and civil war and a bigger revolution, so the translations of an old Chinese classical scholar prepared the ground for the radical social novels of the more turbulent times to come. Giants both Yan Fu and Lin Shu brought on some vast change which Yan perhaps dimly foresaw but which Lin had certainly not bargained for. In the end, they both turned against what they had helped to initiate. Yan Fu the reformer became a monarchist, and Lin Shu bitterly attacked the new learning centred in Beijing University. They lived to rue the day when they first took up translation, but then translation has always been in the subtlest sense of the word an act of betrayal.

1981

Chapter 8
Lu Xun

One must start from the point where Lu Xun is invariably launched by his critics, namely, that he is a satirist. He could not choose but be one. He wrote his *Ah Q* and his "miscellaneous essays" at a time when only satire could be effective. Satire is ever allied to surfeit; it thrusts open the inner corruption of a society at the very moment when the society has acquired, what with wigs and fine dress and wine and courtesans, a most civilized look. In the case of Lu Xun's China there was not even that surface glitter. A few lighthouses might be beaming decoratively on the eastern and southern coasts and a few railways might be stretching like phosphorescent ribbons into the dark plains of North China, but further inland, in the villages and small towns, taxes were being collected 60 years in advance, and family elders could still punish by death delinquent young females found guilty of illicit love. There, in spite of the easy revolution of 1911, Old China was still sitting pretty, though after the bad mauling it had received since the Opium War at the hands of English merchants and American missionaries, it was an Old China with its apparatus of torture intact but its humanism in fragments. The literary situation was hardly better. Hu Shih had made titanic efforts to make people write as they spoke, but the old *wenyan* Chinese was still government Chinese, business Chinese and newspaper Chinese. Some of the "new" intellectuals who were practising writing in the colloquial manner had put on airs of a different kind: they were precious and would not bother to look beyond the shallow textbooks and second-rate poets they had read at Western universities. There was some effort at achieving a new pattern of things, but for the moment the pattern adopted was only distinguished by its bizarre eclecticism.

It is before such a backdrop that Ah Q makes his bow. He is a figure of whom many Chinese are secretly ashamed, as they are ashamed of the narrow, twisting streets and the pungent smells of their towns. For Ah Q is the typical little man of a Chinese small town, with all the faults inherent in the Chinese character, but withal an honest, harmless, even lovable person. Lu Xun leads him through the mock-heroic of a put-up revolution and a speedy counter-revolution. It is not so much a time of falling towers as one of swift shiftings of fronts. Ah Q does not change fast

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_8

enough and consequently is caught on the wrong side of the fence at the arrival of the hangman. When he is shot, the soldiers pass on, and the small town, having witnessed what is taken to be a new order, sees the same round of courtesy calls among the same old faces of the local gentry.

They are the imperishable, the local gentry. But one is not allowed for a moment to suppose that they are the sort of urbane characters that occidental lovers of China have fondly taken the Chinese to be. There is no talk of art, of porcelain and landscape paintings in the world of Lu Xun. There is a flat provinciality. The gentry never miss an opportunity to flaunt their morality and their solid burgher virtues in all the ringing but vapid words only a Confucian is capable of mustering, and yet the moment they see a female beggar their first reaction is a gnawing regret. What wonders will not a good bath do to that outwardly dirty but none the less warm young body! Thus thinks Mr. Shih Ming, one of the imperishables who appear in the story *A Cake of Soap*, and presently he could even hear the noise made by her soapy hand as it rubs now her back, now her neck, now her bosom and now her thighs. In a later story, in *Old Tales Newly Collected*, Lu Xun makes a gentry-scholar, one of the "scientific" historians, who easily reminds us of the savants on Swift's Flying Island, walk under the outsize legs of a giant goddess, whose mythological origin he has discredited. Coarse, one would say, though the word calls to one's mind the strange fact that almost all great satirists care for coarse details. Lu Xun is under no obligation to be shabby-genteel. He must go down to the base and the unpleasant. But through his art the base and the unpleasant, as well as the dullness and ennui of a dusty Chinese town, suddenly take on "the huge proportions of immortality".

The trick, once again, is as old as satire itself. Lu Xun has been able to achieve all this because he is what all great satirists are, a storyteller and a stylist. He is economical with his means, executing in bold rapid strokes. His classicism in this matter is in sharp contrast to the verbosity of other Chinese writers: he has too much to say and no time to waste. For the subtle blending of fantasy and verisimilitude, of the bitter and the tender and of general situations and topical allusions, Lu Xun has been admired and imitated, but not equalled. But it is as a master of words that Lu Xun has fascinated even his bitterest enemies. Not, however, because he is a stylist in the esoteric, *avant-garde* sense. He has no love for newfangled terms, which the Western-educated academics are only too ready to counterfeit. Instead, he uses old words, even insists on using the old forms of common words—there is something definitely coquettish about his etymological pedantry—only he puts them in a totally colloquial, at times very Western, syntax. As a result, the old coinages from the classics not only shine with a rich antique glow but have a keen new edge that cuts deep into the marrow.

This sense of style has come to the rescue of even his most occasional writings and made them a delight to read. China has abounded in literary quarrels, and in his time Lu Xun was the storm centre of the particularly venomous ones. With his views that literature must be *engagée*, Lu Xun ran afoul of the university wits who were then talking languidly of art in their perch in Beijing and Shanghai. His radical political opinions got him into serious trouble with the officials. To deal effectively with his enemies, who were thus many and powerful, he has invented a new genre

of writing, of what his detractors call "miscellaneous" essays. These are short articles of a few dashing, biting lines, full of point, all teeth and claws, but also packed with innuendo of the most intriguing sort. They are the daggers for street-corner combats, the terrible commandoes out on a sudden raid. In Lu Xun's hands they were so deadly that paper after paper and periodical after periodical, for which Lu Xun had written, had to be closed down by government orders. But always Lu Xun managed to find a new window somewhere in the sprawling city of Shanghai, from which, under a different pen name, he continued to snipe and kill until after a few rounds it too was overwhelmed. Many of his fellow writers were gaoled and shot, and Lu Xun himself barely avoided arrest by changing his address once every few hours. His was therefore the bitter, running fight waged under a 100 pseudonyms across the desert of despair. There is something heroic about the polemic literature of that period, because it was largely the literature of the underground. Many to this day lament Lu Xun's tremendous atrophy of energy in the writing of these disputatious essays, energy which might have been turned to the writing of more permanent literature. But perhaps one may also venture to suggest that lamentable as was the occasion that called forth these essays, they are not exactly dated. They are not the casualties of a polemic war, any more than the writings of Defoe and Swift, or the tracts of the passionate 17th-century English religious writers are the casualties of a pamphleteering war. There is the same vigour, the same human interest and the same firm mastery of the medium at hand. With Lu Xun, there is also an undying faith in the future of man.

This faith has taken the strange form of the many translations he has made of Russian and other Slav works. It must be confessed that to at least one reader, a great part of these translations are unreadable. But translations are essentially Lu Xun's sorties into the regions of experimental writing, of which the first startling feature is his torture of the Chinese language. A good classical scholar, Lu Xun knows all the tricks of Chinese written characters. He is perhaps not a little fascinated by them. But he knows also that in this fascination lies the horror: more stubborn men than he have been softened beyond all recognition by the things that these square characters stand for. He strives, therefore, not merely for synonyms and adverbial phrases, which he coins right and left with an abandon alarming probably to Hu Shih himself, but he must have an exact similarity in structure. Consciously and deliberately he tries to make the Chinese he employs in the translations read like a foreign language. It is as if he had thought that by breaking down the Chinese syntax, he was also breaking down the walls built around the Chinese spirit. He does not chime in with the Western-educated professors' eulogy of the merits of Anglo-American democracy. Instead, his translations have endeared to the Chinese imagination the collective farms basking in the warm Black Sea sun. He has become the main link between China and the deep, troubled mind of Eastern Europe. But to get there, what strange country one has to travel across! For the truth is, only the great name of Lu Xun could make his readers plod through those heavily written pages, difficult, halting and dark with an alien, imposed grammar. He is least readable when he is most consciously carrying out his own theories of translation. But there were times when even he seems to have been weary of keeping up the tremendous

effort. In one of those relapses or releases, he turned out his most satisfying piece of translation, Gogol's *Dead Souls*. It is so good that one looks in vain for a like achievement among the translations of Western European and American works, in spite of the fact that most Chinese writers have acquired their English assiduously, while Lu Xun did not even understand Russian. He had to work through a Japanese version, but Gogol fits him with such a completeness that even at two removes Lu Xun's rendering has caught the soul of the original. Gogol, indeed, fits Lu Xun better than do the Soviet Neanderthals after the Flood. Both are what the true revolutionary would call prehistoric. Both are masters of the grey, torturing mood before the dawn. Both are unhappy, bitter and consumed by a tenderness toward the humble, inarticulate people in the small towns buried deep in the two vast, dark continents called China and Russia.

Here, however, Lu Xun begins to shed his disguise. For, with his visions of the future and his intolerable wrestle with the past, Lu Xun is only disguised as a satirist. He finds his own compassion for men so overpowering that in his *Wild Grass* he becomes lyrical, bursting out into a series of prose poems that have haunted many of his readers with their nostalgic, even fragile, beauty. It is perhaps not his best work, but it is symptomatic of the sentimentalism that has characterized China's new writing from the very outset. There is no self-pity in this sentimentalism, nothing tearful or mawkish, because it was born of a great humanitarian movement which, following in the wake of the Chinese Renaissance of 1919, demanded equal rights for women, advocated social justice and sought to narrow the gap between the well-fed, eloquent few in the cities and the dumb many in the countryside. However, easily one may equate it with the rise of bourgeois culture in the coastal cities and condemn it as such, the movement started as a movement of love. It is this preoccupation with one's love of fellow men—itself a way by the sons of the gentry to expiate the sins of their ancestors—that has made so many Chinese writers write with what to the cooler and perhaps happier world outside is undue warmth of feeling, that has deprived them of their native sense of humour and that, finally, has given a note of protest to the best that has been written in China in the past 30 years. With a sardonic grace Lu Xun has time and again tried to conceal this love, but his readers have not been deceived. The feeling of fellowship has been amply reciprocated. Lu Xun loved to tell a little anecdote about two young students he met one afternoon at a bookshop. They had mistaken him for the shop clerk and handed him the money for a book they had taken. It turned out to be a copy of his *Wild Grass*. The coins had been fished out from a shirt pocket next to the skin, and when they were put into Lu Xun's hand, they were still warm with the warmth of the young man's body. This warmth was branded on Lu Xun's conscience; when he wrote, he could not afford to be trivial or frivolous. He once confessed that he was a cow who had to turn the bitter grass he ate into milk. When milk gave out, he offered his heart's blood. He wrote himself out, but among the 10,000 men who, in 1936, walked in his funeral procession, amid the hush that had for once descended on the

heartless city of Shanghai, many had put warm coins on the counter to buy his books.

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Thus I wrote in 1949. Over 30 years have passed, but Lu Xun has defied the usual fate meted out by history to the heroes of yesterday: no eclipse, only added lustre.

And more surprises. Only the other day, turning over the volume of short stories he edited in 1935 for the *Comprehensive Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature 1917–27*, I came upon such a passage in his Introduction:

> The prevailing mood of the awakened young intellectuals of the time was one of enthusiasm mixed with bitterness. Even when they saw a ray of light, that only accentuated the surrounding darkness.… What nourishment they got from abroad, too, turned out to be the bitter fruit of the *fin de siècle*, administered by Oscar Wilde, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Andreev and the like. They were quite ready "to sink their boat," if only "to find a way out by risking all". Some of their works revealed the feeling that they were pleased with neither spring nor autumn. Indeed, black-haired, fair-complexioned youths were found singing songs of inexpressible grief, as if life's burden proved too much for them. This was a mood that neither the lyricism of Feng Zhi nor the pastoralism of Sha Zi could disguise. …
>
> However, the Sunken Bell Society remained China's toughest, sincerest, longest fighting group of writers. For a moment it looked as though they were…working themselves to death, like the maker of the Sunken Bell who even while drowning in water would make the bell ring with a huge sound by striking it with his very feet. This, however, they were destined not to do. They survived to see the world change and the times become different. They meant to sing again, only to find their listeners asleep, dead or scattered, leaving a wasteland before them. Buffeted by wind and dust, they laid up their lyre in loneliness and sorrow.

Unexpected lyricism? But then there was always the poet in Lu Xun, only he tried to suppress it, though not always successfully. Indeed, this whole Introduction surprises one with its many touches of tenderness and nostalgia and the sheer elegance of the writing. But that's not all. There is also plenty of shrewd criticism expressed wittily:

> Yang Zhensheng's pen became more lively… but in order to be "true to his subjectivity", he endeavoured to create idealized characters by artificial means.... He completed a novelette, called *Yu Jun*…. He had decided on "making Nature artistic," which he would do through "telling lies", for in his view "the fiction writer is one who tells lies". Following this rule and incorporating many people's suggestions, he created the character of Yu Jun. This much, however, is certain: Yu Jun was only a puppet and her birth also marked her demise. Since then we have not seen any more work from this writer.

Or this about Feng Wenbing, a writer noted for his delicacy:

> Feng Wenbing, later known as Fei Ming, also made a fleeting appearance in *Qian Cao*, without showing his strengths. It was only when the *Tales from a Bamboo Grove* appeared in 1925 that readers became aware that behind his unadorned simplicity there lurked what he himself termed "discernible sadness". However, perhaps because the writer was over fond of his rather exclusive sadness, he soon refrained from showing his true feelings, so much so that he appeared, in the eyes of plain-speaking readers, to be deliberately ladidaing, a lone soul in love with his own shadow.

No one could have put it more gracefully, or with greater economy, or with more telling effect. But what's even more striking is the penetration and justness of Lu Xun's views. He is scrupulously fair, giving the pertinent facts, often letting the author speak for himself, but at the same time he leaves us in no doubt about what he thinks of the matter under discussion. Time after time, he winds up with a memorable sentence or two, placing the writer or work neatly in a niche which later history has found no cause but to endorse.

Altogether, 47 writers are treated, over half of them in some detail, grouped according to the literary society or magazine with which they were associated. Thus we find, of magazines, *New Youth, New Tide, Modern Review* and the literary supplements of two Beijing dailies and, of literary societies, the "Musai", the "Sunken Bell", the "Wild Plain" and the "Society of Unknowns". If the magazines listed are still dimly remembered, the literary societies are not. Thanks to the vivid account Lu Xun gives of them in the Introduction—the passage earlier quoted on the Sunken Bell Society is a fair specimen—as well as the generous selections he makes of their works, many of the near-forgotten names have taken on a second lease of life.

Reading the Introduction today, one is also struck by the fact that writers were already debating in the 1920s some of the questions that are still with us today. For Lu Xun takes care to weave into his running account of writers and works another account, that of the major controversies of the time. These controversies eddied around four questions: literature for the sake of humanity, which means literature as a weapon of social reform; art for art's sake; native-land literature, or literature from the provinces or border areas; and satire in literature. Here again Lu Xun presents the relevant facts and the pros and cons but never without comments of his own, such as this *aperçu* on satire:

> Satirical literature can perish of its own effort at deliberate fun.

Coming as it does from a great satirist, this serves as a warning that satire should never degenerate into mere wisecracking.

Thus, combining fact and comment, narrative skill and critical acumen and a firm grasp of the fundamentals and lyrical flights of the imagination, Lu Xun examines and interprets a whole decade's fiction within the short space of 17 gracefully written pages (no more than 14,000 words).

It is an astounding feat. For Lu Xun demonstrates in one unforgettable essay just how literary history should be written, an object lesson that is still badly needed today. No doubt, Lu Xun has his thesis, his historical perspective, which starts from the view that literature is to serve the people. No doubt, he uses the realist mode as his only criterion. But this has not prevented him from treating the works of writers of other literary persuasions with understanding and respect or from treating literature as literature. His consistent critical position has only enhanced the unity of his treatment. But the balance and shapeliness of the essay are all his own. Where plenty of literary histories read like catalogues of names and titles, Lu Xun writes with a leisurely pace, highlighting this, pinpointing that, savouring the fine things as he goes along. Where others deal out dry generalities, he is pleasingly factual—his skilful use of quotations alone is an inspiration—but factual only to illustrate his

general point. And how well do his deftly drawn thumbnail sketches of individual writers fit into a masterly presentation of schools, movements and the general background! Finally, amid the almost universal lament over the undistinguished style of the literary historians of today, East and West, how our eyes catch fire at the sight of Lu Xun's prose, that unique blending of classical and modern!....

If a single essay has so much to offer, how much more the major works of Lu Xun.

1980

Chapter 9
Lu Xun and Western Literature

Literary history of a near contemporary period is notoriously difficult to write. It often reads like a catalogue of names and titles or the sort of annual summary one finds in the *New York Times Book Review*. The writers and works covered are not "distanced" enough to be seen in true perspective and yet not near enough so as not to require too much background knowledge. As literary fashions come and go, literary reputations have their ups and downs, and the particularly popular names of one generation often suffer a particularly bad eclipse in the generation immediately after.

However, so far as modern Chinese literature is concerned, one name has not eclipsed and that is Lu Xun. Indeed, the more one reads him, the more firmly becomes one's conviction that his is an achievement that has not been equalled, much less surpassed.

Not just as a short story writer, though in that genre his penetration and his economy of means remain to be studied and emulated. Not just as a writer of essays, which many have derided as "miscellaneous", though they contain the best literary criticism, the most pungent political satire and the most daring translation theory of his time. Not yet as an acute textual critic with several definitive editions of classical works to his credit, nor as a literary historian—indeed, many seem to have forgotten that he has ever been one, despite his *Outline History of Chinese Fiction* (1920), a seminal work displaying a classical scholarship beyond the reach of most of his contemporaries and nearly all latter-day writers on the subject.

He is a combination of all these and something more. Whoever has read him and not come under the strange fascination of his style, that unique blending of classical and modern? Nor should we forget the poet and the artist in the pamphleteer. He didn't think much of the poems he wrote in the classical mode, yet they rank among the best of the modern period. A motive force behind some of the most daring art

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A public lecture the author delivered at the Ohio State University and the University of Minnesota in early summer, 1980.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_9

movements of the 1930s, he encouraged and nurtured the new woodcuts and, almost simultaneously, published a large collection of the traditional prints of Beijing. His lyricism comes out in some of the least expected places—for instance, in that astounding introduction he wrote to a volume of short stories he edited in 1935 for the *Comprehensive Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature 1917–1927*:

> 但那时觉醒起来的知识青年的心情, 是大抵热烈, 然而悲凉的。即使寻到一点光明, "径一周三", 却更分明的看见了周围的无涯际的黑暗。摄取来的异域的营养又是 "世纪末" 的果汁: 王尔德 (Oscar Wilde), 尼采(Fr. Nietzsche), 波特莱尔 (Ch. Baudelaire), 安特莱夫 (L. Andreev) 们所安排的。"沉自己的船" 还要在绝处求生, 此外的许多作品, 就往往 "春非我春, 秋非我秋", 玄发朱颜, 却唱着饱经忧患的不欲明言的断肠之曲。虽是冯至的饰以诗情, 莎子的托辞小草, 还是不能掩饰的。
>
> …但在事实上, 沉钟社却确是中国的最坚韧, 最诚实, 掙扎得最久的团体。它好象真要如吉辛的话, 工作到死掉之一日; 如 "沉钟"的铸造者, 死也得在水底里用自己的脚敲出洪大的钟声。然而他们并不能做到, 他们是活着的, 时移世易, 百事俱非; 他们是要歌唱的, 而听者却有的睡眠, 有的槁死, 有的流散, 眼前只剩下一片茫茫白地, 于是也只好在风尘颃洞中, 悲哀孤寂地放下了他们的箜篌了。
>
> —《<中国新文学大系>小说二集序》(1935)
>
> (The prevailing mood of the awakened young intellectuals of the time was one of enthusiasm mixed with bitterness. Even when they saw a ray of light, that only accentuated the surrounding darkness—as the old saying goes, one in diameter yields three in circumference. What nourishment they got from abroad, too, turned out to be the bitter fruit of the *fin de siécle*, administered by Oscar Wilde, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Andreev and the like. They were quite ready "to sink their boat," if only "to find a way out by risking all". Some of their works revealed the feeling that they were pleased with neither spring nor autumn. Indeed, black-haired, fair-complexioned youths were found singing songs of inexpressible grief, as if life's burden proved too much for them. This was a mood that neither the lyricism of Feng Zhi nor the pastoralism of Sha Zi could disguise…
>
> However, the Sunken Bell Society remained China's toughest, sincerest, longest fighting group of writers. For a moment it looked as though they were, in the words of George Gissing, working themselves to death, like the maker of the Sunken Bell who even while drowning in water would make the bell ring with a huge sound by striking it with his very feet. This, however, they were destined not to do. They survived to see the world change and the times become different. They meant to sing again, only to find their listeners asleep, dead, or scattered, leaving a waste land before them. Buffeted by wind and dust, they laid up their lyre in loneliness and sorrow.)

Pithy and elegant in the best tradition of Chinese classical criticism—one is reminded of Cao Pi's essay *On Writing* and Zhong Rong's preface to his *Ranks of Poetry*—and yet fully alive to the changing moods and manners of the young, Lu Xun is able to evoke an atmosphere even as he makes his shrewd comments. How rarely does one come across this kind of writing in the works of critics and literary historians of today!

Lu Xun, then, is a giant of many accomplishments. Against this background one may perhaps speak about the part he played in the exchanges between Chinese and Western literature.

At first sight Lu Xun appeared to be the least likely sort of person to have much to do with Western literature. Indeed, the Western-educated professors of literature generally looked upon him as a country cousin, at best a stolid scholar of the old type. Others have accused him of indulging in petty literary squabbles, a trait they

ascribed to the fact that he had been born in the town of Shaoxing, in East Zhejiang, proverbially the home of captious, hair-splitting drafters of legal briefs.

His friends on the left didn't treat him any more kindly—certainly not at first. When he went to Shanghai to live by writing around 1930, the group of left-wing Romantics already entrenched there, who called themselves the Creationists, jeered at him for his alleged ignorance of Marxism. These people had mostly gone to study in Japan, where they had made a heterogeneous collection of Western authors, from Oscar Wilde, Poe, Baudelaire to Herzen and Tolstoy. They were aesthetes turned revolutionaries. They, too, dismissed Lu Xun as a provincial.

Sniped at from both right and left, Lu Xun felt not so much embittered as saddened. He had more important things in mind than mere contentions between one literary group and another. Yet when he surveyed the cultural scene, this was what he saw:

> We know too little and have too few materials to help us to learn. Liang Shiqiu has his Babbitt. Xu Zhimo has his Tagore. Hu Shih has his Dewey. Oh yes, Xu Zhimo has Katherine Mansfield too, for he wept at her grave. And the Creationists have revolutionary literature, the literature now in vogue.
>
> —Some Thoughts on Our New Literature (1929)

To Lu Xun, none of these new gods—Irving Babbitt, Rabindranath Tagore, John Dewey, the lot—would do for China. He found the hullabaloo of their worshippers offensive. He was particularly disgusted with the Western-educated academics, and for a crucial reason:

> There were the gentlemen-scholars who had studied in America, who took literature to be the prerogative of ladies and gentlemen. If not ladies and gentlemen, then the chief characters in literary works must be men of letters, scholars, artists, professors, socialites—and they must all speak English, just to show they are the elite. [One of these gentlemen-scholars…] wrote an article saying he could not understand why some people liked to write about the lower orders.
>
> —A Glance at Shanghai Literature (1931)

To write for the élite or for the lower orders: that was the real quarrel between Lu Xun and the gentlemen-scholars. On the other hand, he would give only of his best to the lower orders and not try to pass off a few intellectuals' emotional outpourings as genuine proletarian literature as he found the Creationists were doing at the time. Hence his conclusion:

> That is why, as I always say, if we want to increase our understanding we must read more foreign books, to break through the cordon around us…. After reading more foreign theoretical and literary works we'll be able to assess our new Chinese literature with a clearer head.
>
> —Some Thoughts on Our New Literature (1929)

It is significant that for all his earthbound qualities and his vast classical Chinese learning, he yet looked to "foreign books" for inspiration and a sense of direction.

This conviction did not come to him all of a sudden. Years back, in 1908, while yet a young student in Tokyo, he had written a long article in a little known magazine, under the title *The Power of Satanic Poetry*. The hero of the piece was Byron. Now Byron had been made known to Chinese readers through several translations

of his *Isles of Greece*,[1] an extract from *Don Juan*, Canto III. That song had moved Chinese readers deeply, but no one had yet given Byron's poetry an intelligent appraisal.

This Lu Xun did in his essay. Reading the essay today, one marvels at its scope. It treats of Byron's rise to eminence in the turbulent years following the French Revolution. It reviews Byron's activities and works. It highlights Byron's love of liberty and hatred of hypocrisy, in these words:

> English society then was full of hypocrites, who held up affectation and ceremoniousness as a moral code. Any liberal-minded person who questioned this was denounced as a blackguard. Byron, rebellious and frank by nature, would not keep silent but used Cain as his mouthpiece when he made him say, "Satan is a man who tells the truth". Thus he antagonized the public and incurred the opposition of all moralists.

The essay, however, doesn't stop with Byron's own work but goes on to deal with Byron's impact on Europe, particularly Eastern Europe. Country after country is examined to trace the spread of Byron's "Satanic" poetry. We are told how it inspired Pushkin and Lermontov in Russia, Mickiewicz in Poland and Petofi in Hungary. These were no ordinary names; indeed, they were to loom large in the Chinese consciousness as translations of their works began to pour out from the printing presses in Shanghai and Beijing in the fateful years to come.

Just before the essay ends, the author springs us a surprise. For in the summing-up he refutes the very name "Satanic":

> For the truth is that despite the name "Satanic", Byron and Shelley were men of this earth. There was no such thing as a "Satanic school", only kindred spirits, such as are always to be found in this world, who were awakened by the same earnest voice and united by the same sincere conviction.

Finally, Lu Xun winds up the whole essay by casting a look back at China:

> Now when we look back at China, where are those who fight for the human spirit? Where can we hear the voice of conviction that can lead us to the good, the beautiful and the strong? Where is the voice of love that can lift us out of the desolation of spirit?

A cry of pain from the very depth of a young patriot's heart. From the very beginning, for Lu Xun, literature is not just words, imagery, form and structures but something closely bound up with the destiny of a people.

In this light we can perhaps better understand his impatience with the academics and the aesthetes. We also see his consistency. The young man eating his heart out over the desolation of the human spirit matured into the writer voicing his disgust with the gentlemen-scholars who wanted to put literature out of the reach of the lower orders. Twenty years had passed, but he remained steadfast to his original conviction.

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[1] There were altogether four translations of *The Isles of Greece*, of which the first, by Liang Qichao, was incomplete while the fourth, by Hu Shih, did not appear until 1914. The versions by Su Manshu and Ma Junwu, however, were available to readers of Lu Xun's essay, and both had literary merits which made them popular, though each contained a number of inaccuracies.

He set the pattern, too, for later people, writers and translators in what he did with foreign works. After translating a number of Japanese works, he retranslated, largely through Japanese versions, East European short stories and, later on, Russian novels like Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Fadeyev's *Débâcle*. He looked for a theory of literature and towards that end read and translated the treatises on art by the Marxist critics Plekhanov and Lunacharsky. Gaining experience as a translator, he also formed a translation theory of his own, which, for once not repeating the parrot cry of Yan Fu's three principles, namely, fidelity, expressiveness and elegance, stressed accuracy at all cost, even to the extent of imposing an Indo-European syntax on the Chinese language. He didn't work all alone but gathered around himself a number of young translators. To help to get their work published, he founded in 1934 a literary magazine devoted exclusively to translation. This magazine, *Yi Wen* or *Literature in Translation*, played a vital role in acquainting Chinese readers with the writings of many countries, particularly those of left-wing and minority groups.

Here clearly was a bias towards politically orientated literature, above all that of Eastern Europe, and towards works that may be loosely described as realist. Both tendencies had been found among the more serious-minded Chinese translators long before Lu Xun, but he gave them a new emphasis. His prestige and example—his version of *Dead Souls* was hailed as an outstanding achievement—helped to bring about a new translation boom and a greater interest in world literature.

But why were Lu Xun and his friends so attracted by the heavy, brooding works of the Russians?

Lu Xun himself provided an answer. He wrote:

> Russian literature is our guide and friend, because in it we see the good soul of the oppressed, their anguish and their struggles. Russian works of the 1840s light us up with hope, while those of the 1860s sadden us. Not that we forget that in those years the Russian Empire was an aggressor to China; but the point is, we have learned from Russian literature an important fact, namely, that there are two sorts of people in the world, the oppressors and the oppressed.
>
> —Celebrating the Literary Friendship Between China and Russia (1932)

Now of course Russian writers also have their intrinsic excellences. There is something deeply moving about their ceaseless strivings, some spiritual quality that gives their works a rare profundity. And, artistically, who among us, however hypercritical, would dare to gainsay the towering genius of a Tolstoy, a Dostoevsky or a Gorky? Chinese intellectuals were sensitive to these qualities, yet they were more curious about the use to which literature had been put by the great Slav writers. They thought that the vast masses in Russia and other East European countries had been, and many still were, in a political situation analogous to their own—an absolutist regime at home and a ruthless foreign foe threatening or actually occupying their territory. What did their literature do to bolster and cheer them up? In other words, the Chinese were looking for a literature that answered to the sore needs of a nation faced with the problem of survival. They had looked for it in Western Europe and America, but in vain; they found it in Eastern Europe and Russia. The October Revolution gave the Russians the added lustre of an example, that of a real, tangible, at first sight altogether different society rising out of the ruins of a vast backward empire resembling China. With their own yearnings also for a better

society, great numbers of Chinese intellectuals devoured Russian works to find solace and hope. Hence the many translations.

But Lu Xun's mind was never shut against other literatures. His interest in Western literature did not stop with that youthful encounter with Byron. Indeed, even in that earliest of his essays, he had discussed, along with Byron, also Burns, Scott and Shelley. The section on Shelley was especially perceptive. Keats was also mentioned, though he took care to point out that Keats didn't really belong to the "Satanic" school.

Now it was the 1930s, a particularly difficult time for any upright writer in China. Living largely in the underground, dying slowly of tuberculosis, in the thick of the grim fight against the White Terror, Lu Xun yet found time to read and comment on two major Western writers.

There is first the preface he wrote to a Chinese translation of Mark Twain's *Eve's Diary*, published in Shanghai in October 1931. Lu Xun calls Twain's piece "a minor work", and his own preface is equally a slight thing, no more than 1,000 words in length. Yet it throws light on his knowledge of American writings. He divides US literary history into two periods, with the Civil War as the watershed. He mentions Poe, Hawthorne and Whitman as belonging to the first period, when writers "did not have to put up a false front". After the Civil War, however, "the United States became an industrial society which would put all individuals into one mould". Self-expression was discouraged and writers had to find ways of winning readers. Or "they exiled themselves to Europe, like Henry James, or told jokes, like Mark Twain".[2]

Lu Xun goes on to say:

> Twain became a humorist, then, by force of circumstances. Yet there is resentment and satire in his humour, which shows that he was discontented with life. Because of this little note of protest, the children of the new lands say amid laughter: Mark Twain belongs to us.

As to *Eve's Diary* itself, Lu Xun takes a judicious view:

> A minor work, it shows that innocence has its failings. The author packs satire into the narration, so that the portrait of the American girl of the time, which he takes to be the image of all women, is really dated, despite the smile on her face. Twain's superb skill, however, makes this difficult to detect and so the work remains lively.

Lu Xun lays no claim to an intimate knowledge of American literature, but he is nobody's fool.

When Bernard Shaw visited Shanghai in 1933, Lu Xun met him at a reception given by Madame Sun Yat-sen. Since Lu Xun spoke no English and Shaw no Chinese, they couldn't have had much conversation with each other. Rather Lu Xun used the occasion to observe with amusement how others, mostly foreign pressmen and Chinese gentlemen-scholars, disported themselves before the Irishman. He

[2] Some American critics share this view. Cf. '(Van Wyck Brooks) blamed the failure of American culture on the absence of a "collective spiritual life" and on the materialistic social pressures that transformed talented artists into vulgarians or cranks.'— Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 1961, OUP Paperback, 1977, p. 10.

wrote three articles on that occasion, in one of which he declared: “I am an admirer of Shaw”. But the most perceptive appraisal is to be found in a fourth article, the one written to commemorate the first anniversary of a magazine founded by his friend, Lin Yutang. Lu Xun began by saying that he disagreed with Lin on many things, including the founding of that magazine, one devoted exclusively, like *Punch*, to humorous writings, because China being what she was, the oppressed people could not afford that kind of luxury. However, he thought the magazine’s special number on Shaw a very good thing. Then he reflected on the different receptions accorded by the Chinese to Shaw and Ibsen:

> In 1919 Ibsen was introduced to Chinese readers and he was well received. This year Shaw was introduced, and he was thought to be outrageous. To this day many people can’t stomach him.

The cause lay, according to Lu Xun, in the Irish playwright’s total ruthlessness in exposing sham and hypocrisy. He wrote:

> 他们的看客, 不消说, 是绅士淑女们居多。绅士淑女们是顶爱面子的人种。易卜生虽然使他们登场, 虽然也揭发一点隐蔽, 但并不加上结论, 却从容的说道 “想一想吧, 这到底是些什么呢?” 绅士淑女们的尊严, 确也有一些动摇了, 但究竟还留着摇摇摆摆的退走, 回家去想的余裕, 也就保存了面子。至于回家之后, 想了也未, 想得怎样, 那就不成什么问题, 所以他被绍介进中国来, 四平八稳, 反对的比赞成的少。萧可不这样了, 他使他们登场, 撕掉了假面具, 阔衣装, 终于拉住耳朵, 指给大家道, “看哪, 这是蛆虫!” 连磋商的工夫, 掩饰的法子也不给人有一点。这时候, 能笑的就只有并无他所指摘的病痛的下等人了。在这一点上, 萧是和下等人相近的, 而也就和上等人相远。
>
> 这怎么办呢? 仍然有一定的古法在。就是: 大家沸沸扬杨的嚷起来, 说他有钱, 说他装假, 说他 “名流”, 说他 “狡猾”, 至少是和自己们差不多, 或者还要坏。
>
> —《<论语一年>—借此又谈萧伯纳》(1933)
>
> (People who go to Ibsen’s and Shaw’s plays are no doubt mostly ladies and gentlemen. Now ladies and gentlemen are the most respectable, face-loving species in the world. When Ibsen puts them on the stage, he exposes them somewhat, but doesn’t pass any judgement on them, only asks in a mild tone, “Now please think. Why all this?” Ladies and gentlemen find their composure somewhat shaken, but are nevertheless left with the recourse of withdrawing with some show of dignity to reflect on the question in the privacy of their homes. In that way, their face is saved. Whether they really think about the question at home and, if so, what answers they’ve found is then nobody’s business. That is why when Ibsen was introduced to China, he had a smooth passage, meeting more admirers than opponents. Not so Shaw. He lines up ladies and gentlemen in the limelight, tears off their masks, strips them of their fine clothes and then, grabbing each by the ear, announces triumphantly to the audience, “Look! A vermin!” He won’t allow them even time for manoeuvre or disguise. No wonder on such occasions only the lower orders can afford to laugh, for they happen to be free from the ugly diseases just shown up. For this reason Shaw endears himself to the lower orders and alienates all superior people.
>
> Now what can one do with a chap like that? Well, there is a way yet, an old way—that is, kick up a row, say that Shaw is a rich man, a fraud, a VIP, a sly fellow, not a bit better than the ladies and gentlemen themselves, indeed, much worse.
>
> —*Lun Yu’s* First Anniversary, and Further On Shaw (1933))

I think Shaw himself, had he been able to read Chinese, would have appreciated such incisive writing as this, so like Shaw’s own in language and tone, yet so different in background and outlook.

Lu Xun's connection with Western writers, however, was not confined to meeting them at parties and writing occasional articles about them. He was also closely associated with three Americans in their literary work, but this time in an entirely new undertaking, namely, the introduction of twentieth-century Chinese literature to the English-speaking world, which meant, in the context of the turbulent history of the time, the introduction of left-wing Chinese literature.

Of the trio, Agnes Smedley, the author of *Daughter of the Earth*, was perhaps the most deeply involved in the revolutionary movement in China. She was indefatigable in reporting both the savage repression of left-wing intellectuals in Shanghai and the successful battles being fought by the nascent Red Army in Central China. A close friend of Madame Sun Yat-sen, she joined in the latter's efforts to shield and rescue young writers from the White Terror. She knew Lu Xun well and through him contacted some of the younger men active on the literary front. As a result, she was able to put together a small volume of *Short Stories from China* (London, 1934), which contains six pieces, including the *Slave Mother* by Rou Shi (柔石), a young Communist executed by the Kuomintang authorities in 1931. In her last years, despite the McCarthyite witch-hunt, her own ill health and poverty, she completed her book *The Great Road*, a biography of General Zhu De, one of the truly heroic figures of twentieth-century China.

More widely known perhaps as a reporter of the China scene, the Kansas-born Edgar Snow not only wrote the influential book *Red Star Over China* but compiled an anthology of modern Chinese short stories called *Living China*, published in New York in 1936. He had taken up the project with one question in mind: "What is happening to the creative mind of modern China?" Looking for an answer, he met with almost insurmountable difficulties and nearly gave up the whole thing. However:

> It was meeting Lu Hsun and Lin Yutang that finally decided me to undertake the task myself. Lu Hsun as a personality so impressed me with his breadth of humanity, his warmth of sympathy, and his keen perceptivity of the life around him that I felt sure his writing would provide interpretations of interest. And Lin Yutang's wit and a facile way with words in English, his skilful and mature and penetrating satire and good-natured "old-roguism" (to borrow Lin's own phrase), were a promise that equally important talent must lie hidden in recent writing in the Chinese language, and be worth bringing into English.[3]

With the help of Lu Xun, Lin Yutang and others, Snow was able to produce the first comprehensive collection of contemporary Chinese stories in English, comprising seven by Lu Xun; two each by Mao Dun, Ding Ling and Tian Jun and one each by Ba Jin, Shen Congwen, Lin Yutang, Guo Moruo, Rou Shi, Xiao Qian, Sha Ting, etc., making up a total of 24. There were some surprises, such as the inclusion of Guo Moruo and Lin Yutang, neither of them were noted for short stories. But by and large, this was a representative anthology, unquestionably, as Snow himself writes in the Introduction, "a wholly fresh and authentic expression of a decisive new cultural stage, attained by a process of history in its march of centuries across

[3] *Living China*, New York, 1936, pp. 13–14.

the vast and wonderful country within whose borders dwells a fifth of the family of men".[4]

While Snow's *Living China* was in the making, another young American, also a journalist, Harold R. Isaacs, started to compile another anthology under the title *Straw Sandals*. This contains 25 titles, five stories by Lu Xun, three by Mao Dun, two each by Ding Ling and Shi Yi and one each by another 15 writers, but it also includes an abridged version of a three-act history play, *Zhuo Wen Jun*, by Guo Moruo and a poem by Yin Fu, another young writer executed in 1931. Again, Lu Xun was generous with help to the young American. He made suggestions about what to include, supplied background information on the authors included, wrote a foreword as well as the Chinese characters of the title in his elegant calligraphy but declined to accept any remuneration, not even the fee paid by the American magazine *Story* for the use of his work *Gust of Wind*. He and Mao Dun corresponded with Isaacs and in one of the letters Lu Xun wrote:

> We are happy to hear that you plan to translate more Chinese works. We feel there has been nothing in the West like your collection of Chinese short stories, *Straw Sandals*. Revolutionary youths of a literary bent will certainly thank you for the meaningful work you are doing. We, too, thank you for the effort you've made to have our rather feeble works translated. Revolutionary young writers keep emerging and they are making steady progress. We hope that when you start translating again, there will be more and better new works ready for you, so that you won't have to bother with oldsters like us but can concentrate on introducing the new men. That is our sincere wish and we trust it's yours too.
>
> —Letter dated August 22, 1934

Characteristic is Lu Xun's modesty about his own writings—calling them "feeble"—and the great hopes he places on the young, on those who "would walk into the literary garden wearing straw sandals", to use Lu Xun's own phrase from which the American editor has derived the title of his anthology.

But precisely because they wear straw sandals—and not "the shiny leather boots" of the intellectual aristocrats—the young writers have had to wage a long and bitter fight against repression and persecution. Lu Xun writes feelingly in the Foreword:

> After some ten years, as with the raising of their class consciousness progressive writers became revolutionary writers, this oppression became even more severe. Publications were banned. Books were burned. Writers were executed. In this darkness many young people paid with their lives for what they wrote.
>
> …Since we have just started new experiments, it is only natural that there is some immaturity. Still, these stories may be seen as young plants growing under a big rock. They do not exactly thrive but, twisting this way and that, they grow nevertheless.

This explains why Lu Xun was ever so ready to do what he could to help his fellow writers, particularly the younger ones, for he had taken it upon himself to protect the "young plants". But there were also others in this world who were indifferent or even hostile to young plants of this dangerous kind. No wonder it took Isaacs forty years to find a publisher for his anthology.[5]

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[4] ibid., p. 17.

[5] *Straw Sandals* was published by the M.I.T. Press in 1974.

The story of Lu Xun's connections with Smedley, Snow and Isaacs seems unrelated to our enquiry, yet in fact it is not. In the first place, as Lu Xun himself says, again in the Foreword to *Straw Sandals*, "the appearance of the writer of fiction [in China]… has come about partly as a response to the social demands of the time and partly to the influence of Western literature". The new fiction of China bears witness to the fact that the work of translators like Lu Xun has borne fruit in a field most important, namely, China's creative literature. In the second place, to Lu Xun's mind, all good literature, East and West, serves the same social purpose. Steeped as he is in classical Chinese literature, he is yet eager to absorb the new and significant in the art and literature of all lands, from Käthe Kollwitz's stark lithographs depicting the sufferings of unemployed Germans to the Black writings of America. The only criterion he uses is whether the story, poem, essay, play or drawing or woodcut represents an earnest effort to help man see his world a little more clearly and to support and cheer him on his difficult journey ahead.

In the end, we see that the heart-rending cry lamenting the desolation of the human spirit was never really muffled in Lu Xun. He cast about for an answer and found it in the revolutionary movement of his day. He was glad that he had moved on with the younger writers. He had no idea of what lay ahead; he died too early to have a glimpse of the shape of things to come. But he had known too much of that desolation, that despair, to ever want to retrace a single step. There was no going back for him and literature must serve the forward cause, whatever the consequences.

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Chapter 10
Chinese Modernists and Their Metamorphoses

Modernism is no stranger to China.

There has been modernism in Chinese fiction. In the 1930s, writers like Shi Zhecun tried out the stream-of-consciousness technique in short stories such as *The General's Head* and *Pageant of Good Women*. Freudian psychology was also resorted to. Some Chinese writers picked up European modernism through Japanese intermediaries and a rather hectic exoticism developed.

If one enlarges the definition of modernism to take in most innovations in literature, then there was also modernism in Chinese spoken drama of the 1930s. A striking example is Cao Yu's play *Sunrise* in which there is a whole act consisting of nothing but the bustle and stir of a Tianjin brothel. Another example is Xia Yan's play *Under the Eaves of Shanghai* which puts a whole Shanghai slum house on the stage, with action going on at several levels, windows lighting up and blacking out alternately. Both are effective plays, frequently revived even now.

But it was in poetry, perhaps, that the most determined efforts were made, in the 1930s and 1940s, to transplant European modernism.

The poets concerned were no fools, they knew what they were doing, for they went to the fountain head, Baudelaire. Poems were written with titles like *I Step Out From a Café*, the poet taking care to keep the word "café" in its French form. Another poet, named Li Jinfa, wrote lines like:

夕阳之火不能把时间之烦闷
化成灰烬
(No setting sun of a universe
Can consume time's ennui)

which are worthy of Baudelaire himself. But Li's Chinese is a mishmash of the archaic and the outlandish. It took a far more elegant poet, a man called Dai Wangshu, to imitate Baudelaire to better effect:

心头的春花已不更开,
幽黑的烦忧已到我欢乐的梦中来。
我的唇已枯, 我的眼已枯,

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_10

我呼吸着火焰, 我听见幽灵低诉,
去吧, 欺人的美梦, 欺人的幻像,
天上的花枝, 世人安能痴想。
—忧郁

(No flower blooms again in my heart.
Grey ennui invades my sweet dreams.

My lips parched, my eyes dry,
I breathe fumes and hear ghosts whisper.

Go! deceitful dreams, deceitful fantasies!—
How dare earthly beings reach for heavenly flowers!
—Ennui)

That last cry is quintessentially Baudelaire. So is the mention of dreams, flowers, ghosts and down to the inevitable word "ennui". What's striking about Dai is that he soon graduated from these to reach a stage where he found a truer, stronger self. His rhythms also loosened. His language, as polished as ever, nevertheless took on a hard-hitting militancy:

血染的土地, 焦裂的土地,
更坚强的生命将从而滋。
—元日祝福
(Blood stained earth, cracked earth,
Tougher life will come out of it.
—New Year Greetings 1939)

Chinese poets had no partiality for bloody scenes; war and suffering were what others meted out to them. They rose to the occasion and their poetry changed.

We see the same process in other Chinese modernists. There was Bian Zhilin who once wrote:

伸向黄昏的道路象一段灰心
(The road stretched into dusk like a twinge of despair)

recalling T. S. Eliot. He also wrote like W. H. Auden. But he too graduated to write poems like *Chiba* and *Fragment*. I quote the latter for being the shorter of the two:

你站在桥上看风景,
看风景人在楼上看你。
明月装饰了你的窗子,
你装饰了别人的梦。
—《断章》
(You watch the sight from a bridge,
As a sightseer watches you from a tower.
The moon adorns your window,
And you adorn another's dream.)

This has fascinated many. So classically Chinese in its polish, so modernist in its play with ideas of distance, proximity and the dialectical relationship between them, and, combined, so exquisitely controlled in its suggestiveness of scene and persons, of tenderness and longing.

He went even further to write the poems collected in *Letters To Soldiers*. These were about the guerrillas fighting the Japanese on the mountains and plains of North China, including one addressed to Mao Zedong himself. Again it was war and the conviction that a poet should be with the poor and the oppressed that brought about the metamorphosis.

There was also Feng Zhi, once hailed by Lu Xun as the best lyrical poet of his generation. He too found a European master, Maria Rainer Rilke. In a single year, in 1942, he wrote a sequence of about 30 sonnets, in the spirit and manner of *Duineser Elegies*. He described a man's hand dipping into the river to take out a bottleful of water, thus "giving form to the formless". He wanted his verse to become a weathervane turning round and round in the wind, so as "to catch the uncatchable". And the "uncatchable" turned out to be a mood like this:

我们听着狂风里的暴雨,
我们在灯下这样孤单,
我们在这小小的茅屋里,
就是和我们的用具的中间。

也有了千里万里的距离:
铜炉在向往深山的矿苗,
瓷壶在向往江边的陶泥,
它们都象风雨中的飞鸟。

各自东西。我们紧紧抱住,
好象自身也都不能自主。
狂风把一切都吹入高空,

暴雨把一切又淋入泥土,
只剩下这点微弱的灯红,
在证实我们生命的暂住。
(Listening to the rough wind and the pelting rain,
We feel so lonely beside the lamp.
In this tiny thatched hovel of ours,
Even between the utensils and ourselves.

There is a distance of ten thousand miles:
For the copper kettle is looking back to the ore in the mountains,
And the china pot to the clay on the river hank.
They are like the birds tossed by the storm.

Each to his own destiny. Tightly we cling to each other,
Not sure if we are our own masters.
The rough wind sends everything flying to the sky:

The heavy rain pelts them back again to the earth,
With only this dim glow of a lamp remaining
To confirm the transcience of our lives' stay.)

Chinese poetry had never become so reflective and so metaphysical. Yet Feng Zhi also went ahead to write other kinds of poetry. Again war intervened, only this time it was a civil war that started with the police killing the students Feng had been teaching.

From among the students, too, poets rose to write in the modernist manner. My last example shall be Mu Dan, who was my classmate at the university in Kunming.

He went all out to cultivate the style of Eliot and Auden, even his conceits were Westernized, so that he could write:

静静地, 我们拥抱在
用言语所能照明的世界里
(Quietly, we embrace
in a world lit up by words)

He could speak of spring in words at once physical and metaphysical:

呵, 光、影、声、色, 都已经赤裸,
痛苦着, 等待伸入新的组合

(Oh light, shadow, sound, colour—all are stripped naked,
Quivering with pain, waiting to enter new combinations.)

Yet he was also a war poet in the true sense of the term, taking part in the disastrous Burma retreat, surviving it only by a fluke. That war and the civil war which followed made him see that he was, in his own words, "lodged between two darknesses, one passing, the other coming." As a result, he stopped writing poetry altogether.

Thus modernism halted. Yet it was not a tale of failure. While it lasted, it produced splendid poetry, the kind that had never been seen before or since. It sharpened the poetic sensibility of two generations, with gains not only in creative work but also in verse translation. For all the poets mentioned above had a second lease of literary life as accomplished translators. Dai Wangshu translated Baudelaire and García Lorca in versions of unsurpassed excellence. Bian Zhilin translated Shakespeare and his version of *Hamlet* was a milestone. Feng Zhi translated Heine and Goethe, with the sonneteer's old cunning. And Mu Dan, before his death in 1977, achieved his masterwork in his translation of Byron's *Don Juan*, all 16 cantos of it, in a Chinese verse just as rhythmic, colloquial and spirited as the original.

At the same time, it was also clear that modernist poetry did not develop into a powerful movement in China. The mainstream of Chinese poetry ran elsewhere. The poet-scholar Wen Yiduo was alive to the difference. While he took quite a few poems of Mu Dan and his modernists into his *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, he gave his praise to the "drum-beat" poetry of the guerrillas fighting the Japanese in North China. Wen had started as a poet with an exotic aesthetic. Now he knew how fragile poetry could be in a country with such a troubled destiny and such an acute problem of survival. Poetry needed strength, and that strength, he thought, could come only from its close association with the common people. Perhaps even he underestimated the deadliness of the enemy. In 1946, an assassin's bullet felled him before he could say more about poetry's future in China.

That was the sort of harsh world which nearly put a stop to all poetry, modernist or otherwise. There was, however, another factor which unobtrusively but none the less effectively transformed European modernism, namely, the long, resilient tradition of Chinese classical poetry. All the poets mentioned above had been reared in this tradition, which taught them certain old virtues, such as good sense, a feeling for form and an emphasis on quality, so that even at their most European modernist mode, they didn't get swept off their feet by the merely new and trendy. After the

initial freshness wore off, they found further that even technically the Europeans had in many ways been forestalled by their own classical masters. Hadn't the poets of the late Tang, Li He and Li Shangyin in particular, developed a kind of poetry quite akin to French symbolism in atmosphere, manner and even imagery centuries before Baudelaire and Mallarmé were even heard of? The Song poets, too, had excelled in the kind of conceits and difficult rhythms that were later—much later—to distinguish Donne and other metaphysical forefathers of T. S. Eliot. They too had yoked heterogeneous ideas, by violence, together—only in a sophisticated Chinese way so that the violence didn't look too violent. In the end, European modernism was reduced, in the eyes of its Chinese admirers, to a few old things such as urban rhythms, industrial metaphors and some novel theories of psychology. These still fascinated, but its central point seems to have been missed.

For one has reason to wonder whether Dai Wangshu, for all his admiration for Baudelaire, understood Baudelaire's spiritual despair or, if he did, cared for it? Did Feng Zhi, with Confucian humanism in his bones, really understand Rilke's long quest of one single, timeless event in which life and death are inseparable? Did Mu Dan, who had actually gone through the ordeal of a retreat in the jungle, really appreciate the kind of mock-heroics of the English or Spanish Auden, not to say the later, American and Christian Auden?

In other words, even a literary tradition has got something bigger and deeper behind it. Call it philosophy. Call it the whole social-historical complex. Call it culture. The affinity or repulsion as occurring between two poetic traditions has to be ascribed, in the final analysis, to bigger-than-literary causes.

Meanwhile, an episode of literary history is over. Modernism in its old European sense is over in China, leaving us with many excellent poems and not a few unresolved questions.

1985

Chapter 11
Modernist Poetry in China

Modernism may have spent its force as a literary movement, but there are still repercussions. The on-going debate in China over "obscure poetry" and the stream-of-consciousness technique in fiction is a case in point. Listening to the arguments for or against, one sometimes gets the feeling that the Chinese seem never to have known modernism. Yet that is not the case. For quite a few Chinese writers, modernism was once a direct, intimate experience.

11.1 1

Take the case of the "new poetry". The literary revolution around 1919 was a tremendous event by any standard. For one thing, all of a sudden poets turned their backs on the classical tradition and started to write a colloquial free verse. The classical tradition, however, was not to be repudiated so easily. Except for some of Liu Fu's work, which used the vernacular with some degree of success, most of the "new" poems read like poor imitations of the *ci* poetry of the Song Dynasty. Hence, when a younger generation of poets came on the scene, they found that, unless they were content to write insipid prose poems or vernacular doggerel, they would have to find new models and perhaps a completely new aesthetic. Hitherto all the talk had been about using the spoken language to treat new themes demanded by a democratic new age; no one had bothered to look into aesthetic problems. Now people found Guo Moruo, leader of the Creationists in Shanghai, imitating Walt Whitman, Xu Zhimo and the Crescent group imitating the English Romantics, and Wen Yiduo, the painter-poet, trying, by imposing discipline as regards metre and rhyme, to give a formal beauty to the new poetry. But there were other aesthetics, other voices.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_11

Soon some of the younger Creationists were borrowing cadences and motifs from the French Symbolists:

我从café中出来
身上添了
中酒的疲倦……
—王独清:《我从Café中出来》
(I step out from a café
My body afflicted
With the fatigue of drink
—I Step Out From a Café)

Thus Wang Duqing, striking the pose of a *fin-de-siècle* Parisian decadent, spotlighted the novel typographical device of inserting the French word *café* into his Chinese lines. Also, Feng Naichao was heard singing "Life's Elegy", thus:

今霄轮到我唱生命的哀歌
外间哀哀哭泣的夜雨成河
怎得心里的泪泉如注地再涌
洗涤我哀愁浸蚀的心窝
—冯乃超:《生命的哀歌》
(Tonight it's my turn to sing life's elegy
Outside it's pouring floods of bitter tears
Oh that I could open my fountain of tears too
To wash my heart eroded by sorrows)

which is surely an echo, or re-echo, of Verlaine's lines:

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville;
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pènétre mon coeur?
—Ariette

The borrowing is obvious. All the same, to have discovered a poetry of modern sensibility, of new nuances and resonances, at a time when most other Chinese poets were copying a tired English Romanticism, was something of an achievement.

Two other poets also wrote in the Symbolist mode—with better results. Li Jinfa packed startling images into elliptical lines:

我们散步在死草上,
悲愤纠缠在膝下。
粉红之记忆
如道旁朽兽, 发出奇臭。
—李金发:《夜之歌》
(We stroll on dead grass,
Sorrow and bitterness entangling our legs.
Pink memories,
Like animals decaying by the roadside, emitting stench.)

These come from a poem entitled, appropriately, "Nocturne". Li was capable of turning out lines worthy of Baudelaire himself:

夕阳之火不能把时间之烦闷
化成灰烬
—《弃妇》

(No fire of a setting sun can burn
Time's ennui to dust.
— Forsaken Woman)

But it was Baudelaire who had learned his mother tongue the wrong way. While indubitably Li had a fine sense of form and his metaphors were arresting, his Chinese was a medley of archaisms and colloquialisms, strung together somehow with the antique connective"之". This was a weakness immediately pounced on by his detractors, who were offended by his exotic "decadence" anyway.

Li's confrère, Dai Wangshu, wrote more elegant Chinese, being steeped in the classical tradition. He started out with rather conventional stuff, then, having read French poetry, evolved a new music:

撑着油纸伞, 独自
徬徨在悠长, 悠长
又寂寥的雨巷,
我希望逢着
一个丁香一样地
结着愁怨的姑娘
—戴望舒:《雨巷》

(Holding a paper umbrella, alone,
Wandering in the long, long,
Deserted alley in the rain,
I hope I may meet
A girl lilac-like
With sorrow in her heart.
—The Alley in the Rain)

The resonant, melodic lines, with its long syllables, remind one of Verlaine's "Chanson d'automne":

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon coeur
D'une langueur
Monotone

But the situation and the atmosphere in Dai's poem are classical Chinese, calling a Chinese reader's mind back to the well-known lines of the Tang and Song dynasties:

丁香空结雨中愁
小楼一夜听春雨
深巷明朝卖杏花

There is thus a blending of Chinese classical and French-Symbolist qualities. Soon, however, the poet announced:

Poetry should not rely on music, but should do away with the musical element altogether.[1]

[1]《诗论零扎》,《戴望舒诗集》, 四川人民出版社, 1981, 第 161 页 (Dai Wangshu, *Poems*, Chengdu, 1981, p. 161).

And, sure enough, a new manner emerged, colloquial, prose-like, rhythmically loosened up:

我的记忆是忠实于我的,
忠实甚于我最好的友人。
—《我的记忆》
(My memory is faithful to me,
More faithful than my best friends …
—My Memory)

It is a speaking, rather than singing, voice that is addressing us. This loosening up yielded some very good poems: "Nostalgia for Heaven", "Autumn Dream", "Country Girl", "Autumn Fly", "Paradise Bird" etc. The poet seemed to have acquired a new ease, which enabled him to try out experiments, such as putting classical quotations into a very modern context:

士为知己者用,
故承恩的灯,
遂做了恋的同谋人。
—《灯》
(A scholar gives glad service to those who value him.
So the much-favoured lamp
Becomes a conspirator in love.
—Lamp)

or striving for a *haiku* effect:

木叶的红色,
木叶的黄色,
木叶的土灰色:
窗外的下午!
— 《秋蝇》
(Leaves in red,
Leaves in yellow,
Leaves in earth-grey:
Afternoon outside the window!
—Autumn Fly)

or adapting a French philosophe's maxim:

我思想, 故我是蝴蝶……
万年后小花的轻呼,
透过无梦无醒的云雾,
来振撼我斑斓的彩翼
—《我思想》
(I think, therefore I'm a butterfly…
Flowers' whispers across ten thousand years
Will pierce mists where one doesn't dream or wake up
To flutter my bright-hued wings.
—I Think)

Here, in the first line, Descartes (*Cogito ergo sum*) meets Zhuang Zhou, the third-century BC Chinese philosopher who is supposed to have in a dream seen himself transformed into a butterfly. Reading these poems, one finds it hard not to speculate a little on what would have happened to Chinese poetry if Dai had gone on experimenting like this?

Experimentation stopped, however. The causes were domestic strife—the poet's wife left him—as well as the general political situation: the White Terror in Shanghai, the Kuomintang suppression of progressive literature and the counter measures adopted by the Left-Wing Writers League, Japanese armed invasion and, finally, the full-scale Sino-Japanese war. Dai couldn't help but be drawn in. The magazine *Xian Dai,* or *Les Contemporains*, to which Dai Wangshu contributed, assumed an outwardly neutralist stance, but the poet himself underwent a slow but perceptible change. The poem "A Finger Cut Off" marked the beginning of this change:

关于他 "可笑可怜的恋爱" 我可不知道,
我知道的只是他在一个工人家里被捕去;
随后是酷刑吧, 随后是惨苦的牢狱吧,
随后是死刑吧, 那等待着我们大家的死刑吧。
—《断指》
(I know nothing of his "ridiculous, pitiful love affairs",
Only that he was arrested in a worker's place,
And there followed torture, and horrible prison,
And execution, a fate which awaits us all.)

If here the poet was just beginning to see that beyond the world of his imagination there existed another, harsh world of realities, soon he had a full taste of the latter when he wrote:

我用残损的手掌
摸索这广大的土地:
这一角已变成灰烬,
那一角只是血和泥……
— 《我用残损的手掌》(1942)
(I let my mangled palm
Move over the vast map of our land:
One corner I touch is in ashes,
Another just blood and mire…
—I Let My Mangled Palm, 1942)

For Dai had, following the outbreak of the hostilities in Shanghai, moved to Hong Kong and when the latter city fell to the Japanese in the initial stage of the Pacific war, he was persecuted by the occupation forces, hence the "mangled palm". But the poem does not end on a note of lamentation:

无形的手掌擦过无限的江山,
手指沾了血和灰, 手掌沾了阴暗,
只有那辽远的 一 角依然完整,
温暖, 明朗, 坚固而蓬勃生春。
在那上面, 我用残损的手掌轻抚,
象恋人的柔发, 婴孩手中乳。
我杷全部的力量运在手掌
贴在上面, 寄与爱和一切希望,
因为只有那里是太阳, 是春,
将驱逐阴暗, 带来苏生,
因为只有那里我们不象牲口一样活,
蝼蚁一样死……那里, 永恒的中国!

(My invisible palm moves over our infinite land,
Fingers smeared with blood and ashes, palm soiled by darkness.
One remote corner alone is intact,
Warm, bright, solid, thriving.
I caress that corner with my mangled palm,
It feels soft as a girl's hair to her lover, or a mother's breast to her baby.
I put all my strength into my palm
And place it over that corner, with all my love and hope,
Because only there is found sunshine and spring,
Which will dispel darkness and bring back life,
Because only there we do not live like beasts,
Or die like ants. There, the eternal China!)

This is a poem admired by many of his fellow poets. Ai Qing comments thus:

> In the poem "I Let My Mangled Palm" the poet relates how he moves his palm over a map of China. In highly concise language, he gives an overview of the vast areas under enemy occupation, his grief filling every line of the verse. Later on, however, his mood suddenly changes, when he expresses his deepest love for the communist-led liberated areas (I think by "that corner" he means Yanan).[2]

Bian Zhilin adds:

> This poem must be considered one of a dozen or so best poems written by Dai Wangshu throughout his poetic career, even if judged by artistic standards alone.[3]

Significantly, both Ai Qing and Bian Zhilin underwent a similar change, each in his own way, but eventually leading to the same destination.

Ai Qing is still actively writing poetry. Only a few months ago, his volume *Songs of Return* was awarded first prize for poetry by the All-China Writers Association. People are apt to forget, though, that he had gone to Paris to study art in the early thirties and, while there, started to write poetry under the influence of Emile Verhaeren and G. Apollinaire. Two lines of Apollinaire stuck in his memory and he used them as the epitaph of one of his own poems:

J'avais un mirliton que je n'aurais pas échangé
Contre un bâton de marechal de France

What a proud affirmation of the glory and integrity of poetic art! But Ai Qing's own poem has a different tale to tell:

我从你彩色的欧罗巴
带回了一支芦笛,
同着它
我會在大西洋边
象在自己家里般走着,
如今
你的诗集 "Alcool" 是在上海的巡捕房里,
我是 "犯了罪" 的,
在这里
芦笛也是禁物。

—艾青:《芦笛——纪念故诗人阿波里内尔》

[2] 艾青:《望舒的诗》,《戴望舒诗集》第 7 页 (Ai Qing: "On Dai Wangshu's Poetry", in Dai Wangshu, *Poems*, p. 7).

[3] 卞之琳:《序》, 同上书, 第 8 页 (Bian Zhilin: Preface to Dai Wangshu, *Poems*, p. 8).

(From your many-coloured Europe
I brought back a reed pipe.
It had kept me company
When I wandered on the shores of the Atlantic
As though I was walking about in my own home.
Now
Your volume *Alcool* is in the police office of the
Shanghai International Settlement,
And I am a "convicted *criminal*",
Here
Even a reed pipe is forbidden.
—Reed Pipe, in Memory of the Poet G. Apollinaire)

That was the sort of situation a poet found himself in a Shanghai ruled jointly by foreign bankers and Kuomintang officers. Any talk about the integrity of poetic art became just silly when there wasn't the least security for the poet's person. Ai Qing came to this realization much earlier than Dai Wangshu; his later poetic career also differed from Dai's, but both went through the same kind of change—from adoption and then renunciation of European symbolism to reaffirmation of Chinese realities, and in the process their reed pipes gave out different melodies.

Bian Zhilin, too, treasured his reed pipe. Avid for the new, he laid himself wide open to nearly all the modernist poetic voices from Western Europe: Baudelaire, Verlaine, Eliot, Yeats, Rilke, Valéry, Auden, Aragon and Brecht. This list and the order in which the names are placed are Bian's own.[4] These, he recalls, have been the influences he had been subjected to in various stages of his writing career. However, Bian is also steeped in classical Chinese poetry. His early work, he tells us himself, had been affected "by the end-of-the-world mutterings of the poetry of late Tang and Southern Song dynasties as much as by the *fin-de-siècle* moods of the West".[5] Later on, he absorbed largely from contemporary English poetry. A line like

伸向黄昏的道路象一段灰心
—卞之琳:《归》
(The road stretches into the dusk like a twinge of despair
—Return)

is obviously inspired by

Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question…
—T. S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Only the Chinese poet wrote with greater concision, the result of being brought up on classical Chinese poetry, with its concern for neatness, polish and formal beauty.

By the middle 1930s, Bian, a young man still in his twenties, reached the peak of his poetic art. He wrote a very modernist poem entitled "Distances Organized", with a last line that astounded his readers:

友人带来了雪意和五点钟。
(A friend brought the feel of snow and five o'clock.)

[4] See 卞之琳:《雕虫纪历》, 增订版, 香港三联书店, 1982, 第20 页 (Bian Zhilin, *Records of a Carving Insect*, Revised Ed,. Hong Kong, 1982, p. 20).

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 19.

So many readers complained about its incomprehensibility that Bian felt obliged to append notes, to wit, seven notes to a poem of no more than ten lines, probably a record in the ratio of notes to lines in any twentieth-century poem, East or West! But he could very well write a good poem without the aid of a single note, as in "Fragment":

你站在桥上看风景,
看风景人在楼上看你。
明月装饰了你的窗子,
你装饰了别人的梦。
—《断章》
(You watched the sight from a bridge,
As a sightseer watched you from a tower.
The moon adorns your window,
And you adorn another's dream.)

His best work of the period is indubitably "Chiba":

象候鸟衔来了异方的种子,
三桅船载来了一支尺八,
从夕阳里, 从海西头。
长安丸载来的海西客
夜半听楼下醉汉的尺八,
想一个孤馆寄居的番客
听了雁声, 动了乡愁,
得了慰籍于邻家的尺八,
次朝在长安市的繁华里
独访取一支凄凉的竹管……
(为什么霓虹灯的万花间
还飘着一缕凄凉的古香?)
归去也, 归去也,归去也——
象候鸟衔来了异方的种子,
三桅船载来了一支尺八,
尺八乃成了三岛的花草。
(为什么霓虹灯的万花间
还飘着一缕凄凉的古香?)
归去也, 归去也,归去也——
海西人想带回失去的悲哀吗?
(1935 年6 月 19 日)
(Like a migrant bird bringing seeds from afar,
A three-masted ship brought a *chiba*
From the evening sun, from the ocean's west shore.
Choan Maru brought a passenger from the ocean's west shore.
He sat up at midnight listening to a drunken man playing a *chiba* downstairs,
And imagined a foreign lodger in a lone hotel in Chang'an
Feeling homesick when he heard the wild geese cry,
And finding relief in the music of a *chiba* played next door,
So that the next morning he walked the streets of the thronging metropolis,
Looking solely for that sad-sounding bamboo instrument…
(Why is there a wisp of sadness, an ancient scent
Floating in a neon-lit, flower-decked hall?)
Homeward, homeward, homeward bound! —
Like a migrant bird bringing seeds from afar,
A three-masted ship brought a *chiba*

Which has since become a plant of the Three Isles.
(Why is there a wisp of sadness, an ancient scent
Floating in a neon-lit, flower-decked hall?)
Homeward, homeward, homeward bound! —
Does the stranger from the ocean's west shore want to
take home some forgotten sadness?)

Chiba is a 5- or 6- holed clarinet made of bamboo, now rarely seen in China, its place of origin, but still played a lot in Japan where it had been introduced in the seventh century.[6] The poet heard it played during his short stay in Japan in 1935, and the music made him homesick. But the homesickness, he confides, is not unmixed with "regret over China's sad decline in national power".[7] He had gone to Japan to see for himself the true face of Japanese militarism:

> The more the other side inflicted gunfire on us, the more I wanted to see what was going on in their rear. Thus I experienced at first hand how detestable and ludicrous were the police and secret agents of a militarist regime, and how wretched and withal how good were the common people under the fascist yoke.

This mood was shared by many other twentieth-century Chinese poets. However dedicated to the perfection of their art—and in this Bian's sensitivity and fastidiousness were unparalleled—they felt deeply about their country's plight, a feeling not often found in the modernist poetry of Western Europe and North America. Also, the poem testifies to another phenomenon in contemporary Chinese poetry, namely, the presence, as yet strong and all pervading, of the classical poetic tradition. The poet adopts a Western form, free verse, and a 3-or-4-pause line, rather in the manner of the English iambic pentameter, but the poem is structured around three refrains, chiefly the line totally archaic in diction:

归去也, 归去也, 归去也
(Homeward, homeward, homeward bound!)

which has refrains within a refrain: three cries, desolate but determined, conveying with its mediaeval resonance the special quality of the instrument as well as the emotional response of the poet on hearing it played.

Thus the poem reveals the change the poet was undergoing. When the anti-Japanese war eventually started, Bian went to where Dai Wangshu had longed, but failed, to go: Yanan. It was in early 1938. The whole nation was in an elated mood, because at last China was locked in full-scale war with the long-hated enemy. Bian toured the front and wrote a series of poems later collected in *Letters of Salutation*, a volume which has perhaps not received its due credit. Here is war poetry of an original kind. Each "letter" is a vignette of someone involved in the war effort: a sharpshooter, a new recruit, two kids on guard duty, a girl who had the quickness of mind and hand to puncture an intruder's bicycle tyre with a sewing needle, villagers evacuated into the hills, villagers tearing up and carrying off sections of a railway

[6] In Japan the instrument is called shakuhachi.

[7]《雕虫纪历》, 增订版, 第 6 页 (*Records*, p. 6).

used by the enemy, people building a military airfield, youths opening up new land, a commissar, a general and the chief strategist himself:

《论持久战》 的作者
手在你用处眞是无限。
如何摆星罗棋布的战局?
如何犬牙交错了拉锯?
包围反包围如何打眼?

下围棋的能手笔下生花,
不,植根在每一个人心中
三阶段: 后退, 相持, 反攻——
你是顺从了, 主宰了辩证法。

如今手也到了新阶段,
拿起锄头来捣翻棘刺,
号召了, 你自己也实行生产。

最难忘你那 “打出去” 的手势
常用以指挥感情的洪流
协入一种必然的大节奏。
(1938 年 11 月 20 日)

(The Author of *On Protracted War*
Hands have infinite uses for you.
How place the pieces on the checkerboard of a war?
How keep the enemy interlocked as with dog's teeth?
How counter encirclement with a prior move?
The *go*-master is also skilled in using a pen.
Implanted in everyone's mind your "three stages"—
Retreat, stalemate, counterattack.
You obey and so master dialectics.
Now your hands have also reached "the new stage",
When they lift a hoe to overturn brambles.
You urge others to produce as you do it yourself.

Most unforgettable your hands thrusting out for a "breakthrough",
A gesture you use in conducting the floodtide of emotion
Into the rhythm of an inevitable harmony.)

This is addressed to Mao Zedong—admiring, but without any feeling of awe, just one poet talking to another, and so wholly different from the thousands of hymns that would appear in the years to come. Bian also manages to put in the major happenings of the time: the mobile guerrilla war, the master strategy, the campaign for everyone to take a hand in producing more food, the titanic organization work for the eventual counter offensive—all within the small compass of a short poem and through one central image: hands, hands playing the chess of war, hands writing the strategic plans, hands working in the fields, hands gesticulating before a mass meeting. Yet the form of the poem is thoroughly Western—in fact, a neatly written sonnet, with not a single rhyme out of order in its fourteen polished lines!

At almost the same time, a young English poet was also writing a sonnet sequence to record his impressions of the fighting in China. This was W. H. Auden, and the sonnets appeared in the book *Journey to a War* on which he collaborated with Christopher Isherwood. A little later, Bian Zhilin translated several of these sonnets

into Chinese, apparently a labour of love, performed with neither condescension nor unctuousness, but with a new assurance acquired from a difficult task just completed: he had succeeded, in his *Letters of Salutation*, in filling a compact literary form of the West with the floodtide of emotion surging on the China front.

11.2 2

What ensued, however, was a long silence. Bian came out of the mountains of the northwest to arrive at Kunming in 1939, and for the next eleven years, he did not write a single poem. But he wasn't wholly lost to poetry. Teaching at the Southwest Associated University, he gave courses on poetry and translated Auden and other Western modernists; indeed, he arrived just in time to witness a new wave of Chinese modernism arising out of the campus of that wartime institution.

For the Southwest Associated University, or Lianda for short, was a university of refugees. It was made up of three of China's most prestigious universities from the north, namely, Peking and Tsing Hua in Beiping and Nankai in Tianjin. Driven out of their original sites by the advancing Japanese army in autumn, 1937, they had moved, by stages, to the country's southwestern corner, the province of Yunnan, where eventually they settled down in its capital city, Kunming. Conditions were appalling: cramped quarters, no proper equipment and, what hurt most, almost no books. But people, particularly the young, didn't mind the hardships too much in the first flush of a national war. There was a wartime camaraderie and a sharpened sense of intellectual quest. The faculty had many noted writers: Wen Yiduo, Zhu Ziqing, Shen Congwen, Feng Zhi, Li Guangtian etc. Qian Zhongshu lectured on European Renaissance literature and twentieth-century Western novel, and the Englishman William Empson gave a course on contemporary English poetry. From among the students emerged poets like Mu Dan, Du Yunxie, Zheng Min and a host of others.

Modernism did not exactly take over the university, but it became a powerful trend there, and this time, along with French symbolism and Pound-Eliot modernism, Rainer Maria Rilke also made his influence felt.

This last was seen in the work of Feng Zhi. Feng was no newcomer but had established his fame back in the 1920s, when Lu Xun, leading light of the new literature, praised him, perhaps on the strength of his long poem *Northbound Journey* (1929), as "China's most outstanding lyric poet".[8] Then he dropped out of sight, burying himself in Goethe studies at Heidelberg. When he surfaced in Kunming around 1940, he had acquired a new poetic voice. He began to write sonnets, completing 27 of them within the year 1941. Sonnet 27 would be a fair specimen:

从一片泛滥无形的水里
取水人取来椭圆的一瓶,
这点水就得到一个定形;

[8] 鲁迅: 《中国新文学大系》 小说二集序,《鲁迅全集》, 北京人民文学出版社, 1981, 第 6 卷, 第 243 页 (Lu Xun: *Complete Works*, VI, 243).

看, 在秋风里飘扬的风旗,
它把住些把不住的事体,
让远方的光、远方的黑夜
和些远方的草木的荣谢,
还有个奔向远方的心意,
都保留一些在这面旗上,
我们空空听过一夜风声,
空看了一天的草黄叶红,
向何处安排我们的思想?
但愿这些诗象一面风旗
把住一些把不住的事体。

—冯至:《十四行》之二十七

(When from an expanse of flowing water
A carrier takes a round bottleful,
He is giving the formless form.
Look, the vane fluttering in the autumn wind
Is catching what is uncatchable.
Let far lights and far nights
And plants growing and decaying in far places,
And a mind that soars into far space,
All leave something on the vane.
We listened to the wind all night,
And watched all day grass yellowing and leaves reddening,
Without finding a place to settle our thoughts.
Will these verses act like the vane
And catch what is uncatchable?)

Here one finds the poet not only musing but also exploring into the ways of artistic abstraction. Hence the metaphors, which are unusual for Chinese poetry: a round bottle to give form to the formless, a vane to catch what is uncatchable. There is, however, enough of the ordinary and tangible to reassure the reader: autumn wind, far lights, plants growing and decaying, while the poet's voice, low, unhurried, slightly sad, is wholly enticing. At the same time, one hears echoes of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien*:

… also
lauter Unsägliches…
Bringt doch der Wanderer auch vom Hange desBergrands
nicht eine Hand voll Erde ins Tal, die Allen unsägliche, sondern
ein erworbenes Wort, reines, den gelben und blaun Engian…

—Die Neunte Elegie

Both poets are intent on expressing the inexpressible—Feng's "uncatchables" and Rilke's "purely untellable things". Feng's water carrier plays much the same role as Rilke's wanderer, personae speaking for the poets themselves. Both look to man's creative writing—Feng's "these verses" and Rilke's "pure word"—for a way out. Above all, there is the same atmosphere of impassioned contemplation.

Feng has other moods, less Rilkean but equally modernist, as may be seen in Sonnet 21:

我们听着狂风里的暴雨,
我们在灯光下这样孤单,
我们在这小小的茅屋里
就是和我们的用具的中间

也有了千里万里的距离:
铜炉在向往深山的矿苗,
瓷壶在向往江边的陶泥,
它们都象风雨中的飞鸟

各自东西。我们紧紧抱住,
好象自身也都不能自主。
狂风把一切都吹入高空,

暴雨把一切又淋入泥土,
只剩下这点微弱的灯红
在证实我们生命的暂住。

(Listening to the rough wind and the pelting rain,
We feel so lonely beside the lamp.
In this tiny thatched hovel of ours,
Even between the utensils and ourselves

There is a distance of ten thousand miles:
For the copper kettle is looking back to the ore in the mountains,
And the china pot to the clay on the river bank.
They are like the birds tossed by the storm

Each to his own destiny. Tightly we cling to each other,
Not sure if we are our own masters.
The rough wind sends everything flying to the sky:

The heavy rain pelts them back again to the earth,
With only this dim glow of a lamp remaining
To confirm the transience of our lives' stay.)

Man's helplessness in a hostile universe: a theme pretty well worked over by various European poets. The original thing is perhaps the point about the utensils, the dialectical relationship between the raw material and the finished product and between nature and art, expressed in images that are quite Chinese: the copper kettle, the China pot, the ore in the mountains and the clay on the river bank. And if we scrutinize the sonnet a bit more closely, we'll find poems within the poem, made up of something left over from Du Fu's famous lamentation over the west wind breaking into his thatched cottage and echoes of a 1,000 classical Chinese 8-line poems dealing with "night thoughts". Of the latter, two specimens may be cited, both written around 1900, another crisis hour:

千声檐铁百淋铃, 雨横风狂暂一停。
百望鸡鸣天下白, 又惊鹅击海东青。
沉阴瞠瞠何多日, 残月晖晖尚几星。
斗空苍茫吾独立, 万家酣梦几人醒。
—黄遵宪: 《夜起》

(After a thousand sounds from the eaves bells buffeted by the rains,
The storm has subsided for the moment.
Time after time scanning the sky for the dawn,
Only to be shocked by the eagle striking in the east.
Dull and cloudy days seem never ending,
Only a few stars glimmer around the waning moon.
Under a boundless sky I stand alone, wondering
How many are awake as the multitudes sleep?
—Huang Zunxian: Rising At Night)

苦月霜枯微有阴, 灯寒欲雪夜钟深。
此时危坐管宁榻, 抱膝乃为梁父吟。
斗酒纵横天下事, 名山风雨百年心。
摊书兀兀了无睡, 起听五更孤角沉。
—谭嗣同:《夜成》

(Wan moon, shrivelled frost, a little cloud,
The lamp feels cold, with snow coming and the night hours deepening.
Bolt upright I sit on my recluse's couch.
Holding my knees, I sing a dirge of hopes abandoned.
A measure of wine induces reckless talk about affairs of the world.
Storm-swept, the famed mountain yet holds my everlasting longing.
Opening a book, sick with thoughts, all sleep gone,
I rise to hear a lone bugle announcing five o'clock.
—Tan Sitong: Composed at Night)

Feng Zhi may not have actually read these two poems, but the point is there is in his innermost ear the insistent whisper of hundreds of classical poems dealing with a similar situation, poems which moreover urge on him certain moods, reflections, even stock phrases, as well as certain requirements of form. Why did Feng, and Bian Zhilin for that matter, choose the sonnet as a favourite form? Was it not because there are certain similarities between the sonnet and the Chinese 8-line poem in both form and content structure? Even the medial-balanced couplets of the latter are not absent from Feng's Sonnet 21, to wit:

狂风把一切都吹入高空
暴雨把一切又淋入泥土
(The rough wind sends everything flying to the sky:
The heavy rain pelts them back again to the earth)

Willy-nilly, he was writing a sonnet in the manner and spirit of a Chinese *lushi*!

There are of course differences. While the two classical poets directed their night thoughts to national affairs, Feng Zhi was concerned with an individual's uneasy feeling in an alien universe. The former, politically conscious, wrote to reach the public's ear; the latter, inwardly drawn, wrote to express his private feelings. Yet it isn't private enough, when one remembers the case of Rilke. Feng speaks only of "a mind that soars into far space", while Rilke's elegies are a record of some tremendous spiritual adventure, a long, sustained quest of one single, timeless event in which life and death are just two aspects of the same process. Hence he has an intensity not found in Feng, who is much milder, as befitting a Chinese scholar reared in the humane Confucian tradition. In the final analysis, Rilke's influence on Feng was but skin-deep, while the Chinese classical poetic tradition had long been working, unobtrusively but subtly, in his bones.

Nor did his feeling of cosmic loneliness last. Even as he was writing the sonnets cited above, he was aware of the mutterings of a world of suffering and strife outside. Sonnet 14 seems to be concerned with art, revealing his impressions of the paintings of Van Gogh, yet he tells how his eye is caught, not only by the sunflowers and cypresses but also by the wretched prisoners "peeling potatoes in a prison yard", who are "lumps of ice never to be melted", not even by the fierce burning sun of a passionate genius like Van Gogh, a situation which draws a query from the poet:

这中间你画了吊桥,
画了轻盈的船: 你可要
把些不幸者迎接过来?
—《十四行》之十四
(In the middle you've painted a hanging bridge
And several lithesome boats. Did you want
To ferry over some of the unfortunate ones?)

A query light in tone, almost a whisper, but really a cry, much like E. M. Forster's: only connect!

And connect he did. When enemy air raids caused the populace of Kunming to take to the hills behind the university, Feng Zhi was elated by the "togetherness":

和暖的阳光内
我们来到郊外,
象不同的河水
融成一片大海。……
—《十四行》 之七
(Under the warm sun
We came outside the city,
Like many rivers flowing
Into one harmonious ocean…
—Sonnet 7)

The short, staccato lines—a new note—sound like the quick footsteps of people dodging the Japanese bombers. The nation was united in the face of foreign invasion. The poet was enthused, but he also raised the warning: let us not fall apart again the moment we're out of danger! Like Dai Wangshu, Ai Qing and Bian Zhilin before him, Feng Zhi had now completed his metamorphosis, from a poet of private concerns to one filled with anxiety about the nation's future. But the warning went unheeded. Almost immediately after victory over Japan, civil strife came to a head again. Then, in December 1945, government soldiers shot to death four students at the gate of the university's Teachers College. This was the sort of situation that drew the poet-scholar Wen Yiduo into the fight for democracy which soon cost him his life; it also caused Feng Zhi to stop writing his Rilkean sonnets altogether.

Among the students, there were also poets writing in the modernist mode. Du Yunxie resorted to Audenesque irony in writing about his misadventures as an army interpreter on the chaotic Burma Road. Zheng Min, a woman student of the philosophy department, another devotee of Rilke's, wrote quiet, sensitive metaphysical poetry admired by many. But the person who gave modernism a boost was Mu Dan, who majored in foreign languages. He excelled in expressing a mood of anguish and self-torture:

我知道
一个更紧的死亡追在后头。
因为我听见了洪水, 随着巨风,
从远而近, 在我们的心里拍打,
吞蚀着古旧的血液和骨肉。
……
在一瞬间
我看见了遍野的白骨
旋动
—穆旦:《从空虚到充实》

(I feel
A more binding death behind my ear,
As I hear the waters and the winds,
Beating from afar and in our hearts,
Devouring our ancient blood and bones.
……
In an instant
I see the white bones on the plain
Whirling
—From Void to Fullness)

Alongside this preoccupation with death, almost Jacobean in its intensity, there was also a fascinated absorption in violence:

勃朗宁, 毛瑟, 三号手提式,
或是爆进人肉去的左轮,
它们能给我绝望后的快乐,
对着漆黑的枪口, 你们会看见
从历史的扭转的弹道里
我是得到了二次的诞生
—《五月》
(Browning, Mauser and Model Three
Or the revolver which explodes into man's flesh,
All give me the sudden joy of a moment's despair.
Looking into the dark muzzle, you will see
From the twisted rifle-groove of history
I get another incarnation.
—May)

which at once plunges us into the twentieth century, an age of *Angst* and terrorism. And there is nothing *literary* about it; for Mu Dan's generation had experienced exile and war. The young poet himself had walked all the way from Hunan to Yunnan, a distance of over 1,000 km, which enabled him to see an interior China made up of villages and small towns. Then he took part in the fighting against the Japanese in Burma, surviving the disastrous retreat into India by a fluke. Hence the bitterness. Hence also the abandon.

His love poetry, too, was different from the usual sort:

你的眼睛看见这一场火灾,
却看不见我, 虽然我为你点燃,
唉, 那烧着的不过是成熟的年代,
你底, 我底。我们相隔如重山!
—《诗八首》 之一
(Your eyes have seen this disaster of fire
But not me, though I have been ignited by you.
Alas, what is burning is only our mature years,
Yours and mine. We are separated by mountains!
—Eight Poems, I)

静静地, 我们拥抱在
用言语所能照明的世界里,
而那未形成的黑暗是可怕的,
那可能的和不可能的使我们沉迷。
—《诗八首》之四

(Quietly, we embraced
In a world lit up by words,
Frightened by darkness yet unformed,
Fascinated by what's possible and impossible.
—Eight Poems, IV)

When one reads these lines with one's memory still fresh of the elegant, tentative love poems of the Chinese classical poets, or even of an earlier vernacular poet like Xu Zhimo, one senses the impact of European modernism.

Compared with his teachers like Feng Zhi and Bian Zhilin, Mu Dan seems to have had the least to do with the Chinese classical tradition. His diction, imagery and syntax are all westernized, e.g. "death's womb", "the jungle of ideas", "I hanged my erring youth", "I cry from the wilderness of my heart". "You gave us abundance and the pangs of abundance", "Water flowing down mountain rocks deposited you and me" etc.[9] When he made an occasional sortie into Chinese classical poetry, it was to appropriate moods and modes of an antique quaintness to set off the new and modern:

负心儿郎多情女
荷花池旁订誓盟
而今独自依栏想
落花飞絮满天空
而五月的黄昏是那样的朦胧,
在火炬的行列叫喊过去以后,
谁也不会看见的
被恭维的街道就把他们倾出,
在报上登过救济民生的谈话后,
愚蠢的人们就扑进泥沼里,
而谋害者, 凯歌着五月的自由,
紧握一切无形电力的总枢纽。
—《五月》

(The disdainful man and the sentimental girl
Pledged to love beside the lotus pond.
Leaning on a balustrade, lost in thought,
Leaning on a balustrade, lost in thought,
She saw a sky full of falling flowers.
But the May evenings are such a blur.
When the shouting torchlight processions have passed,
The flattered street, without anybody noticing,
Empties them all into the gutters.
After the papers reported speeches of poor relief,
The dupes immediately plunged into the puddle,
While the Murderer, singing gleefully of the freedom of May,
Held tight the main switch of all unseen electricity.
—May)

How like the early Auden are the last two lines—the personification, the industrial metaphors and the ironical political touch! Yet Auden, coming from a Western, and

[9] The Chinese originals are, respectively: 死的子宫, 观念的丛林, 我缢死了我错误的童年, 我从我心的旷野里呼喊, 你给我们丰富和丰富的痛苦, 水流山石间沉淀下你我。

so less old, tradition, did not hear so many ancient poetic voices as Mu Dan inevitably did—he was captivated by them even as he consciously rebelled against them. It is also questionable whether the English poet was as seriously concerned. For his part Mu Dan had an earnestness positively Shelleyan, which however didn't make him Romantic, only more complex.

Complexity is a mark of modernism, but in Mu Dan's case it was a complexity that came first of all from the condition of China. If Feng Zhi and Bian Zhilin had to pass through a period of artistic self-perfection before they succumbed, so to speak, to the pull of Chinese realities, the younger poet was keenly aware, throughout his poetic career, of the strife and contradictions in life. He had grown up with the Japanese threat and lived through the years of war and exile in constant anxiety. He was in the thick of the real, rough world from beginning to end. But this doesn't mean that he stood still; he too had developed. Emotionally he outgrew mere helpless anger to become aware of more fundamental questions, and self-torture soon gave way to self-examination, which combined to give his poetry greater depth. Stylistically he purified his poetic language, so that the early rude "abundance and the pangs of abundance" evolved into a stage where he could "light up a world with words", where, indeed, he became one of the most original users of modern Chinese, least afflicted with the age-old problem of clichés. This twofold development yielded a number of good poems, like "Fissure", "May", "Precursor", "Eight Poems" etc.

But he was destined not to write any more poetry. For all his brilliance, his work had been flawed by a certain lack of focus, reflecting a lack of a sense of direction. In 1946, when jubilance over victory in the foreign war was being rapidly replaced by worries about the renewal of the civil war, Mu Dan, who had been a dreamy idealist at the beginning of his poetic career, now found himself "lodged between two darknesses, one past, the other to come".[10] Just turned 30, he felt old, "consumed by the fires of destruction".[11] He had come to the end of his tether, emotionally as well as poetically. His fellow poets dispersed. His readers, never numerous in any case, soon turned to poetry of other modes.

Thus the second wave of modernism subsided, leaving only some eddies in Beiping and Shanghai. Meanwhile, the mainstream of the new poetry surged ahead. This was the poetry which Ai Qing, after renouncing French symbolism, had helped to nurture; until now it became a powerful, mass-based literature in the liberated areas and in cities where the internal conflict was particularly sharp, like Chongqing and Guilin. Its impact was felt even in the university in Kunming. One man in particular listened to the distant voices. He was the one-time singer of the Crescent group, the poet-scholar Wen Yiduo. He read and was impressed by the poems of Tian Jian, an activist in Yanan. Wen called Tian "the Drummer of Our Time" and commented on his work thus:

[10] Quoted from the poem《三十岁诞辰有感》("Reflections On My Thirtieth Birthday").

[11] *Ibid*.

> Here there is nothing hidden between the lines, no lingering effect, no half-rhyme, no stylistic tricks, only plain words, straightforward, sincere, brief but full of matter; indeed, only drum beats, monotonous perhaps but loud, powerful, forcing their way into your ears and your heart…
>
> It is a roll of drums, goading you to love, inciting you to hate, urging you to live with the maximum heat and strength on this earth of ours.[12]

Here, Wen not only praised the poetry of Tian Jian but also criticized, if only by implication, other kinds of poetry, certainly those that had resorted to "hiding between the lines", "lingering effects", "half-rhymes" and "stylistic tricks". Did the latter also include the works of the Kunming modernists? We only know that Wen selected a number of poems by Mu Dan, Du Yunxie and others for the *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry* he was then compiling.[13] He had stopped writing poetry himself but was still keenly interested in what the young poets around him were doing. Indeed, he was generous with help to anybody in or out of the university who approached him on questions of poetry. Yet his own views on poetry were never in doubt. He had all along advocated—and himself practised—writing poetry to express one's feelings about the larger issues confronting the nation. The erstwhile Chicago art student who had returned to China to shock the bourgeoisie by once painting his rooms all black never really went in for art for art's sake; all his famous poems, from the chants of a Chinese laundryman in America to "Dead Water" and "Cold Night", were the outpourings of a stout patriotic heart. Now, in the midst of intense activities for the democratic cause, he once more came out to commend, in speeches and writings, a vernacular poetry rooted in the soil of the vast territories of the northwest, where alone the Chinese people could, as he put it, "live with the maximum heat and strength". He spoke these words in reference to that combative, mass-based poetry, but, given the time and the place, could he not also have had in view the modernist productions of his younger colleagues at the university?

It would be unhistorical, however, to dismiss the modernist trend as consisting only of a technique of suggestiveness or stylistic tricks. Modernism meant more than that. It brought a sense of the new to China, which sharpened the poetic sensibility of two generations. Yet it did not develop into a powerful movement. It had come to China at a crisis hour, when the country, engulfed in war and revolution, wanted desperately to ward off foreign aggression and to find ways to feed its vast population. Chinese poets were seriously concerned with these problems. Many of them, then or later, joined in the effort to build a just society. Moreover, they had been reared in one of the most splendid and longest-living poetic traditions in world literature. Thus there never arose a situation where a superior, more enlightened poetry descended from Western Europe to succour an outworn native poetry, either ideologically or artistically. Even from the point of view of technique, European

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[12] 闻一多:《时代的鼓手》,《闻一多全集》 丁, 235 页与 238 页 (Wen Yiduo, *Works*, IV, pp. 235 and 238).Cf. D. H. Lawrence: "Before every thing I like sincerity, and a quickening spontaneous emotion. I do not worship music or the half-said thing". (Letter of 17 July 1908, in *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Harry T. Moore, Vol, I, New York, 1962, p. 21.)

[13] 2. This Anthology is included in Wen's *Works*, IV.

modernism had surprisingly little to teach the Chinese poets. Apart from urban rhythms, industrial metaphors and some novel theories of psychology, a cultivated Chinese found most of the Western modernist ways of writing *déjà-vu*. He thought his own classical masters had achieved similar effects by ways more economical a long time ago. This explains why it was relatively easy for Chinese poets to adopt the European modernist mode. This also explains why they could pick and choose, keeping what they found useful and rejecting the rest, and why in the end their Chinese qualities reasserted themselves. All the important poets discussed above—Dai Wangshu, Ai Qing, Bian Zhilin, Feng Zhi and Mu Dan—underwent this process of change and each wrote his more enduring work when his modernist sensibility responded, sympathetically and intimately, to Chinese realities.

1982

Chapter 12
A Chinese Poet

A just estimate of wartime Chinese poetry must await better days of Chinese politics. A large tract of land north of the Yellow River remains to be explored. One hears vaguely that Yan'an, where most poets of pre-war eminence are, has experimented on new forms. They are not academic, these forms, nor pretty-pretty ivory tower. They are, one hears, adaptations of folk songs, very often strung together with harvest dances. But here one must end one's hearsay and come back to the young Kunming group.

This group is not very well known. Most of them are printed in the ephemeral magazines; one or two have published their first volumes. But the thin copies of flimsy, yellowish native paper never get very far; there are still transport difficulties and postal restrictions. Their merit is, however, already recognized by friends, among whom can still be found circulating an occasional manuscript.

These poets have been in one way or another connected with the Southwest Associated University Lianda, where, despite the low roofs of the classrooms and dormitories and the haggard, almost beggarly, appearance of the scholars, there is still the old excitement for things of the mind. The library was even smaller in the early years of the war, but what few books it had, especially the precious new books from abroad, had been devoured with the hunger and its attendant lack of table manners of a Dr. Johnson. These still lie dog-eared, crumpled all over and often with the title pages gone. But the young poets of Lianda have not read their Eliot and Auden in vain. Perhaps the Western world will find its own ignorance of the cultural East shocking when the truth is told of how, with what gusto and what dreamy eyes, these two poets are being read in distant China. For the strange thing is that China, though lamentably out of touch with real political trends, is almost up to the minute in intellectual matters.

On an afternoon, over a cup of nothing better than plain Chinese tea, amid the clatter and chatter of farmhands and small tradesmen, the young Chinese scholars discuss eagerly the technical details. The heated arguments sometimes stretch well into the evening, when they take long walks round and round the university campus.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity,* China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_12

But life has not been easy for them. They lived on meagre government grants in their student days. After graduation, as junior members of the university faculty or middle school teachers or bank clerks or merely as loafers, they have had to wage a continual despairing fight against the rise of prices. Some of them got married and have since come under a back-breaking burden of debts and still more debts. They wash, they buy, they cook, they fetch the doctor to care for the sick in the family and they haggle, quarrel, and are disgraced at the market place and before the landlords. There has never developed among them an exclusive, aristocratic society. They are deep in the mud, but every now and then, when things ease a little bit, when the year runs its round to spring again, from among the grindings of daily routine, they steal time and mind out to write.

War, however, meant more than prices. Some of them got much nearer to it, dodging the air-raids in cities. Two joined the artillery. One fought with the American Volunteers Group. Several became Ministry of Information officials. Others helped build the Burma Road or cleared it of the enemy. But one man has gone through the bitterest experience of them all. That was the Burma Retreat in 1942. He fought hopeless, almost suicidal, rearguard actions. He was hotly pursued by the Japanese. His horse fell. His orderly died. He had been haunted for days on end by the staring eyes of dead comrades. His legs became swollen under the tropical monsoon. Fatigued as no one had ever thought a man could be so fatigued; banished from time and almost from space as well, the gloom and silence of the Assam jungles growing every day heavier and more intolerable; sick with a deadly dysentery; bitten by leeches and huge jungle mosquitoes and, above all, driven crazy by starvation, this young man of twenty-three had yet dragged his battered body to India. He has never been the same person. Afterwards, he almost died of overeating in recuperation, which took him a good 3 months. But the slender, consumptive-looking poet had a toughness unexpected of him. He survived and has lived to tell of it all.

But no! He never did tell. In fact, he treats it all casually, or else is too shy even for that. Only once, when hard pressed and up to his neck in friends' requests, did he say anything about it and even then it was simply his horror of the earth, the elemental rains and the strange, sickly exuberance of jungle growths among which he found the skulls of the men who marched before him, perhaps his friends.

His name is Mu Dan. He has published two volumes and a third is appearing. But it is not so much his poetry as his mother that is on his mind these days. For 8 years he has not seen her, and he is no longer a boy of 18.

This boy has not really grown up into a man. He is not sophisticated as most established Chinese poets are. He had a good education, but that has taught him only the necessary rudiments of technique. He is still 18 years old in his curiosity, in his being able to see things as elementals:

当我呼吸在山河的交铸里,
无数个晨曦, 黄昏, 彩色的光,
从昆仑, 喜马, 天山的傲视,
流下了干燥的, 卑湿的草原,
当黄河, 扬子, 珠江终于憩息……

(I breathe in the fusion of rivers and mountains,
When innumerable mornings, evenings and the lights of all colours,
Avalanche from the proud stare of the Kunlun, Tianshan and the Himalaya ranges,
Across the arid and misty prairies,
Until reposeful become the Yellow, Yangtze and Pearl rivers…)

If it be said that there is the grandiloquent in it, it should be pointed out that it was composed as early as 1939, when the country was still in the flush of the early upheavals of the war. What may be extraneous in others is an inner passion in this young, wild-eyed poet.

The pure lyric gift, for which our poet is noted, is hard to get, especially in China, where much of what is being written is a lifeless copy of the dubious masters of the West—dubious, because one of the commonplace ironies in comparative literature is that often the second-rate gains an influence in another tongue. Mu Dan has the best English poets at his fingertips, yet he rarely imitates and never writes with a voice not his own. His anguish is authentic:

我从我心的旷野里呼喊,
为了我窥见了美丽的真言。
而不幸, 徬徨的日子将不再有了,
当我缢死了我的错误的童年,
(那些深情的执拗和偏见)
(I cry from the vastnesses of my heart,
Because I have a glimpse of the beautiful word.
But misfortune fell when the days of doubt came to an end,
When I hanged my erring youth,
The passionate stubbornness and fast-held ideas!)

The dominant tone is one of pain:

在坚实的肉里那些深深的
血的沟渠灌溉了
翻白的花, 在青铜样的皮上,
是多大的奇迹, 从紫色的血泊中
它抖身, 它站立, 它崛起,
风在鞭挞它痛楚的喘息。
(On the solid flesh the deep gullies
Of blood, where on greenish copper
The blood nourished flowers of white!
Through what miracle, from the purple red,
It shook, stood and of a sudden rose,
The wind beating out the rhythms of its agony.)

Indeed, it is this feeling for suffering which distinguishes Mu Dan from other Chinese writers. One would expect modern Chinese literature to be poignant about life and death. Yet apart from flashes of the savagely biting wit of Lu Xun and a few solitary cases of bitter outburst, Western-educated Chinese writers are singularly apathetic. Deaths are a common sight in the streets of China, yet many Chinese intellectuals choose to ignore them. Not so Mu Dan. He is a fiery leftist, a veteran of many demonstrations and mass meetings. However, he distrusts verbal politics:

在犬牙的甬道中让我们反复
行进, 让我们相信你句句的絮乱
是一个真理。而我们是皈依的,

你给我们丰富，和丰富的痛苦。
(You make us walk the long corridor, zigzagging,
To and fro, and accept your riot of words
As truth. Still, we are converted, because
You fill out our life and stuff it with agony.)

He goes deeper into the sources, where the death is one of the heart:

然而这不值得挂念，我知道
一个更紧的死亡追在后头，
因为我听见了洪水，随着巨风，
从远而近，在我们的心里拍打，
吞蚀着古旧的血液和骨肉。
(But this does not matter. I feel
A more binding death behind my ear,
As I hear the waters and the winds,
Beating from afar and in our hearts,
Devouring our ancient blood and bones.)

Even when he is confronted with a contemporary situation, he is consumed by a dark passion:

勃郎宁，毛瑟，三号手提式，
或是爆进人肉去的左轮，
它们能给我绝望后的快乐，
对着漆黑的枪口，你们会看见
从历史的扭转的弹道里，
我是得到了二次的诞生。
(Browning, Mauser and the Model Three,
Or the revolver which explodes into man's flesh,
All give me the sudden joy of a moment's despair.
Looking into the dark muzzle, you will see
From the twisted rifle-groove of history
I get another incarnation.)

There is always something physical about him. Something that is there because the poet has "thought with his body". His senses are always sharpened, almost to kill:

在一瞬间
我看见了遍野的白骨
旋动
(In an instant
I see the white bones on the plain
Whirling)

Even with love he is best in sensuous images:

你的眼睛看见这一场火灾，
却看不见我，虽然我为你点燃，
唉，那燃烧着的不过是成熟的年代，
你的，我的。我们相隔如重山。

从这自然的蜕变的程序里，
我却爱了一个暂时的你。
即使我哭泣，变灰，变灰又新生，
姑娘，那只是上帝玩弄他自己。
(Your eyes have seen this disaster of fire
But not me, though I have been ignited by you.

Alas, what is burning is only our mature years,
Yours and mine. We are separated by mountains!

In this process of natural metamorphosis,
I have loved a transient you.
Though I sob, become ashes, become ashes and rejuvenate,
Madam, that is only God mocking himself.)

I don't know how others will take it, but to me, this blending of the physical with the metaphysical is one of the best love poems to have come from modern Chinese writers.

But the really paradoxical thing to be said about Mu Dan is that while he expresses best the tortured and torturing state of mind of young Chinese intellectuals, his best qualities are not Chinese at all. He is definite and says things with a bang where other Chinese poets are vague and mealy-mouthed. Amid the general thinness, his richness of texture and associations is a bit offending. That, perhaps, explains why he is little read and definitely not acclaimed. The achievement is, however, also one of language. For the problem facing a contemporary Chinese poet is essentially the choice of a medium. The old style is abolished, but its clichés have come through to weigh down the new writings. Mu Dan triumphs by a wilful ignorance of the old classics. Even his conceits are Western. He manipulates the unwieldy Chinese characters and exposes them to new rigours and new climates. There are all kinds of unexpected juxtapositions and combinations. He makes a daring use of the spoken idiom. In such poems as *May*, he deliberately contrasts the old and new styles to achieve the effect of "time is out of joint". The result is, there is a suddenness, a razor-edge sharpness:

负心儿郎多情女
荷花池旁订誓盟
而今独自依栏想
落花飞絮满天空

而五月的黄昏是那样的朦胧,
在火炬的行列叫喊过去以后,
谁也不会看见的
被恭维的街道就把他们倾出,
在报上登过救济民生的谈话后,
愚蠢的人们就扑进泥沼里,
而谋害者, 凯歌着五月的自由,
紧握一切无形电力的总枢纽。

(The disdainful lord and the sentimental girl
Pledged to Love beside the lotus pond.
Leaning on a balustrade, lost in thought,
She saw a sky full of falling flowers.

But the evenings of May are such a blur.
When the shouting torchlight processions have passed,
The flattered street, without anybody noticing,
Empties them all into the gutters.
After the papers reported speeches of poor relief,
The dupes immediately plunged into the puddle,
And the Murderer, singing of the freedom of May,
Held tight the main switch of all unseen electricity.)

Mu Dan has renounced a language to get a language. The style suits his sensibility perfectly.

But by far the greatest contribution Mu Dan has made to the new literature of China is in the way of creating a God. He has no theological battles to wage for any church or any of the accepted religions, but there is a hunger of his flesh and spirit that cries for relief and consolation from something outside man. He has noted with dissatisfaction the hollowness of many Chinese writers. They are not atheists, they simply believe in nothing. In this they are perfectly traditional. Religious poetry has not flourished in the climate of the extremely balanced mind of China. To this dearth of great spiritual upheavals can also be attributed the apathy I mentioned earlier. But Mu Dan, with his childlike curiosity, his sounding of the deeps of the soul, is at least alive to struggle and doubt:

虽然生活是疲惫的，我必须追求，
虽然观念的丛林缠绕我，
善恶的光亮在我的心里明灭。
(Though life is wearing, I must quest;
Though the jungles of ideas surround me,
There glimmers in my heart the light
Of Good and Evil.)

And a more straightforward resolution:

看见到处的繁华原来是地狱，
不能够挣脱，爱情将变作仇恨，
是在自己的废墟上，从卑贱的泥土，
他们匍匐着竖起了异教的神。
(Seeing that prosperity everywhere is only Hell
Where there is no escape and love becomes hate,
On their own ruins and from the humble soil
The prostrate erect the heathen God.)

And the problem of identity, expressed with such torturing, clogging rhythm in the poem *I*:

从子宫割裂，失去了温暖，
是残缺的部分渴望着救援，
永远是自己，锁在荒野里，

从静止的梦离开了群体，
痛感到时流，没有什么抓住，
不断的回忆带不回自己，

遇见部分时在一起哭喊，
是初恋的狂喜，想冲出樊篱，
伸出双手来抱住了自己

幻化的形象，是更深的绝望，
永远是自己，锁在荒野里，
仇恨着母亲给分出了梦境。
(Since the womb splitting, I have lost warmth,
An uncompleted part crying for help,
The forever I, locked in vastnesses.

In dreams of quiet I have left the body of Many,
Painfully conscious of the time-flow, gripping nothing,
Incessant recollection does not bring back me.

Meeting a part of me we cry together,
The mad joy of first love. Fleeing the prison,
I stretch both hands to hold.

My metamorphosed image, to find only deeper despair,
The forever I, locked in vastnesses,
Hating mother for separating me from the dreams.)

This is a strange poem and has baffled many. There is the element of sex. The mother-motif. The love of a girl, "a part of me", who looks like the mother. I am reminded of the dialogues of Plato which Mu Dan and I read together in 1936 on a university campus in Peking. Parenthetically, I wish also to call attention to the word "womb" which, though quite common in English poetry, has seldom been used in Chinese. But when a poet questions the secret of the womb, he is questioning the darkness of things. Sex and religion are related in blood.

For the time being, one must protest that the religion of Mu Dan is only a passive one. He knows suffering, but not beatitude. But that may be because he is only 26 this year. His mind is still groping. The fluidity is perhaps more satisfying for modern Chinese poetry than perfect piety. The God he eventually arrives at may not be a god at all, but Satan himself. The effort is laudable and the artistic process to climb such forbidding heights of the soul, almost totally new in China, will be worth watching.

1946

Chapter 13
The Poet as Translator

Verse translation is thriving in China today. A publishing house in Hunan has launched a whole series of foreign poetical works in Chinese translation[1] ranging from Sanskrit Vedas to Japanese *haiku* and is, from all reports, doing brisk business on them. The literary journals, too, are giving generous space to poetry from abroad. A rough check of some of the Beijing-based magazines published in the last 6 months or so finds the following names among the poets translated: Margaret Atwood, Baudelaire, Robert Bly, Burns, Giosuè Carducci, T. S. Eliot, Kenneth Koch, Robert Frost, Hugh MacDiarmid, Sorley Maclean, Mallarmé, Yunna Moritz, Edwin Muir, Bulat Okudzhava, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Valéry, Yuri Voronov, William Carlos Williams, etc.

Does a parallel situation exist in any Western country as regards Chinese or Asian poetry? One doesn't know. But in China, verse translation has always been a prominent feature of the new poetry, itself the child of the New Culture Movement of 1919. Many poets have tried their hand at translating. A number have turned out good translations. A few, like Bian Zhilin in connection with Shakespeare and Zha Liangzheng in connection with Byron have had a second lease of their poetic lives as accomplished translators.

What follows is a study of one of these poet-translators, Dai Wangshu.

The author is indebted to several friends for helping to track down and elucidate the Spanish and Russian originals of some of the passages cited. Particular thanks are due to Professor Liu Zongci, Mr. Jiang Zhifang and Mr. Zhou Qiang.

[1]《诗苑译林》, 湖南人民出版社 (Verse Translations Series, Changsha, Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1981)

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity,* China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_13

13.1 1

Dai was a major poet who had won many admirers in the 1930s with his symbolist poems. Recently, a volume of his collected verse translations[2] came out to remind us that he had all along been translating other people's poetry even as he was writing his own. Indeed, it is surprising to find this volume a good deal thicker than the rather slim collected edition of his own poems, being 340 and 165 pages, respectively. Particularly important work was done around 1940, when he translated Baudelaire and García Lorca.

The 24 items from the *Fleurs du Mal* which he translated included such well-known pieces as "l'Albatros", "Correspondences", "l'Homme et la Mer", "Harmonie du Soir", "l'Invitation au Voyage", "Chant d'Automne", etc. Baudelaire had never been translated adequately into Chinese; but Dai managed to capture his quintessence in passage after passage of a rare felicity:

A travers ma ruine allez donc sans remords,
Et dites-moi s'il est encor quelque torture
Pour ce vieux corps sans âme et mort parmi les morts!
—Le Mort Joyeux

请毫不懊悔地穿过我臭皮囊,
向我说, 对于这没灵魂的陈尸,
死在死者间, 还有甚酷刑难当!
—快乐的死者

Le Poète est semblable au prince de nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.
—L'Albatros

诗人恰似天云之间的王君,
它出入风波间又笑傲弓弩手;
一旦堕落在尘世, 笑骂尽由人,
它巨人般的翼翅妨碍它行走。
—信天翁

I1 me semble, bercé par ce choc monotone,
Qu'on cloue en grande hâte un cercueil quelque part.
Pour qui? —C'était hier 1'été; voici l'automne!
Ce bruit mystérieux sonne comme un départ.
—Chant d'Automne

为这单调的震撼所摇, 我好象
什么地方有人匆忙把棺材钉…
给谁?—昨天是夏; 今天秋已临降!
这神秘的声响好象催促登程。
—秋歌

He learned to deal with Baudelaire's abstractions and personifications, always a problem to translators:

[2]《戴望舒译诗集》, 湖南人民出版社, 1983 (*Poems Translated by Dai Wangshu*, Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1983)

—Et de long corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroice, despotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.
—Spleen (LXXVIII)

—而长列的棺材, 无鼓也无音乐,
慢慢地在我灵魂中游行; "希望"
屈服了, 哭着, 残酷专制的 "苦恼"
把它的黑旗插在我垂头之上。
—烦闷 (二)

He could be terse and sharp as the original:

Race d'Abel, dors, bois et mange;
Dieu te sourit complaisamment.

Race de Caïn, dans la fange
Rampe et meurs misérablement.
……

Race d'Abel, vois tes semailles
Et ton bétail venir à bien;

Race de Caïn, tes entrailles
Herlent la faim comme un vieux Chien.
……
—Abel et Cain

亚伯的种, 你吃, 喝, 睡;
上帝向你微笑亲切。

该隐的种, 在污泥水
爬着, 又可怜地绝灭。
……

亚伯的种, 你的播秧
和牲畜, 瞧, 都有丰收;

该隐的种, 你的五脏
在号饥, 象一只老狗
……
—亚伯与该隐

He could also be warm and erotic, with Baudelaire's own sublime hankerings:

Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne,
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;
—Parfum Exotique

秋天暖和的晚间, 当我闭了眼
呼吸着你灸热的胸膛的香味,
我就看见展开了幸福的海湄,
炫照着一片单调太阳的火焰;
—异国的芬芳

He conformed religiously to Baudelaire's verse forms, rhyme schemes, structural shifts and all the startling images:

Car je serai plongé dans cette volupté
D'évoquer le Printemps avec ma volonté,

De tirer un soleil de mon coeur, et de faire
De mes pensers brûlants une tiède atmosphère.
—Paysage

因为我将要沉. 湮于逸乐狂欢,
可以随心任意地召唤回春天。
可以从我心头取出一片太阳,
又送我温雾, 用我灸热的思想。
—风景

The superiority of Dai's rendering will be seen more clearly when compared with two other Chinese versions of the same passage:

1. 心田种火生红日,
思路涵春起暖烟。
窗外喧嚣关底事?
低头澄念写诗笺。[3]

Thus Wang Liaoyi's, which bears little resemblance to the original, quite apart from the translator's deliberate choice of the metre and diction of classical Chinese verse as the medium fit to present this precursor of European modernism in:

2. 这欢乐会使我沉醉、入迷,
随意啜饮着春风, 多么欢愉,
它将使我的心头升起来一个太阳,
用我燃烧的思想制造暖热的空气。[4]

Thus Chen Jingyong's, which is the newest version so far, being published only in the summer of 1984. The translator is a poetess of no mean stature and yet here she is wordy and woolly where the original is hard and clear. Neither Wang nor Chen translates the crucial image

De tirer un soleil de mon coeur

which is kept in Dai's

可以从我心头取出一片太阳

just as he keeps the original rhyme scheme—the only one to do so in the three versions compared.

Above all, Dai reproduced wholes as wholes. Indeed, there is hardly a single one of these 24 poems that doesn't come over as a unified whole, with its mood and atmosphere intact. One more example must suffice:

Chant d'Automne
II

J'aime de vos longs yeux la lumière verdâtre,

[3] 波德莱尔著, 王了一译:《恶之花》, 北京, 外国文学出版社, 1980, 第 173 页 (Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, translated by Wang Liaoyi, Beijing: Foreign Literature Publishing House, 1980, p. 173.)

[4] 夏·波德莱尔著,陈敬容译:《太阳(外四首)》,《世界文学》1984, 第 4 期, 第 280 页。(Charles Baudelaire, *Five Poems*, translated by Chen Jingyong, *World Literature* (Beijing), No. 4, 1984, P. 280)

Douce beauté, mais tout aujourd'hui m'est amer,
Et rien, ni votre amour, ni le boudoir, ni l'âtre,
Ne me vaut le soleil rayonnant sur la mer.

Et pourtant aimez-moi, tendre coeur! soyez mère,
Même pour un ingrat, même pour un méchant;
Amante ou soeur, soyez la douceur éphémère
D'un glorieux automne ou d'un soleil couchant.

Courte tâche! La tombe attend; elle est avide!
Ah, laissez-moi, mon front posé sur vos genoux,
Goûter, en regrettant l'été blanc et torride,
De l'arrière-saison le rayon jaune et doux.

秋歌
二

我爱你长睛碧辉, 温柔的美人,
可是我今朝觉得事事尽堪伤,
你的爱情和妆室, 和炉火温存,
看来都不及海上辉煌的太阳。
然而爱我, 温柔的心!做个慈母,
纵然是对刁儿, 纵然是对逆子;
恋人或妹妹, 请你做光耀的秋
或残阳的温柔, 由它短暂如此。
短工作! 坟墓在等; 它贪心无厌!
啊, 容我把我的头靠在你膝上,
怅惜着那酷热的白色的夏天,
去尝味那残秋的温柔的黄光。

Superb! As evocative, as full of autumn sunshine and as suggestive of approaching decay as the original.

What made Dai succeed where the others failed?

There were many reasons. Two may be mentioned here.

First, he took Baudelaire seriously and verse translation seriously. Second, he was aware that what mattered most in verse translation was how the translator solved the problem of poetic language.

These are his own words:

> I should like to make two points as regards the significance of translating Baudelaire.
>
> First, this is an experiment—to see how much of Baudelaire's qualities and his exquisite, pure forms can be kept when he is transformed into Chinese. Second—which follows from the first—to let the readers of our country see something actually written by a modern, rather special poet whom they have heard about so much but read so little.
>
> To let Baudelaire appear in his true light, the translator expended great, perhaps futile, efforts. The differences between the two language systems and between the two ways of thinking often made it extremely difficult to try to reproduce the original qualities and forms—more so in the case of Baudelaire than that of any other foreign poet. Still, an experiment, once launched, is not deterred by thoughts of failure. The translator has no regrets if he has done his best.[5]

He went on to deal with the technical details—how he rendered the alexandrine, décasyllabe and octosyllabe in 12-, 10-, and 8-character lines and kept all the rimes

[5]《戴望舒译诗集》, 第 153 页 (*Poems translated by Dai Wangshu*, p. 153)

suivies, rimes croisées and rimes embrassées—"a stupid thing to do, no doubt, even ridiculous", he admitted, insisting, however, that Baudelaire was worth all the trouble because he was "a modern classic".

By contrast, Wang Liaoyi, one of the two other translators just cited, sounded casual:

> 频年格物叹偏枯,
> 偶译佳诗只自娱。
> 不在文辞呆刻画,
> 要将神态活描摹。[6]
>
> (To relieve tedium of studious years,
> Rendering fine verse only to please self,
> Aiming not at stiff word-for-word translation,
> I strive to catch the live expression.)

But the "live expression" cannot be caught with the overfamiliar rhythm and worn-out phraseology of classical Chinese poetry chosen by Wang; indeed, Baudelaire himself had dismissed all attempts at classical revival as "pastiche inutile et dégoûtant" and stressed the special quality of his own poetry thus:

> Toute notre originalité vient de l'estampille
> que le temps imprime à nos sensations.[7]

This was a point grasped by Dai, who moreover saw, with a poet's rapport with another poet, that the special fascination of Baudelaire lay in a curious combination of two seemingly opposing qualities, classicism and modernism. He was a classicist in his delicacy, fastidiousness and sense of form; he was a modernist in his tireless search for new rhythms, new images, new confrontations and juxtapositions, indeed in a whole new way of writing that would give full expression to the new sensibility. Dai felt a special kinship with Baudelaire because he himself was that kind of poet, at once a classicist and a modernist. Translation was an affirmation and a continuation of what he had all along been doing in his own poetry. Hence the happy results.

13.2 2

Dai had other triumphs.

The Russian poet Sergei Yesenin, for instance, comes out surprisingly well in Dai's rendering:

> Если голоден ты—будешь сытым.
> Колъ несчастен—то весел н рад.
> Толъко лишъ не гляди открыто,
> Мой земной неизвестный брат.
> Как подумал я—так и сделал,
> Но увы! Всё одно и то ж!
> Видно, слишком привыкло тело
> Ошушать эту стужу и дрожь.

[6]《恶之花》(译者序), 第 2 页 (Preface to his version of *Les Fleurs du mal*, p. 2).

[7]Quoted in Enid Starkie's Introduction to Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Poems*, London: The Falcon Press, 1946, p. 12.

Ну, да что же? Ведь много прочих,
Не один я в миру живой!
А фонарь то мигет, то захохоче
Ъезгубой своей головой.

Только сердце под ветхоЗ одеждой
шепчет мне, посетившему твердь:
“друг мой, друг мой, прозревшие вежды
Закрывает одша лишьсмерть”.

如果你饥饿
如果你饥饿, 你会饱的,
不幸的人, 你会愉快而满意;
可是不要望着那张开的眼睛
我世上的陌生的弟兄啊。

我做了我所想过的事。
可是啊, 那总是一般无二,
我的躯体无疑是太习惯于
感到寒冷, 太习惯于战栗。

没有关系, 别的人多着呢…
我不是世上唯一的活人;
那生着没有嘴唇的老头的街灯,
一会儿眯眼睛, 一会儿笑。

唯有在我的旧衣衫下面的心
对升到苍穹上去的我低语:
“我的朋友, 那张开的眼睛,
只有死亡能合上它们!”

One is astounded on coming to such a stanza:

Догорит золотистым пламенем
Из телесного воска свеча,
И луны часы деревянные
Прохрипят мой двенадцатый час.
……
—Я последний поэт деревни

脂蜡的大蜡烛
将发着金焰烧尽,
而月的木钟,
将喘出了我的十二时。
—最后的弥撒

which should please all modernists!

There are also renderings of Pushkin, Blake and Ernest Dowson (*In Tem Pore Senectutis*) in varying degrees of accuracy but all readable. It is not clear where Dai learnt his Russian; probably he had consulted other translations. The languages he was most at home in were French and, perhaps to a less degree, Spanish. Certainly the bulk of his translations were from these two languages.

In addition to Baudelaire, Dai had translated a host of other French poets. Some famous names are only represented by single poems: Hugo (1 poem), Valéry (1) and

Apollinaire (1). But the Symbolists and post-Symbolists appear in impressive quantity: Remy de Gourmont (11), Paul Fort (6), Francis Jammes (7), Pierre Reverdy (5), Jules Supervielle (8) and Paul Éluard (14).

He made various experiments with poetic language. He translated the musical Verlaine with versions equally musical:

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme!
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,
Berce sa palme.
—Le Ciel Est, Par-Dessus le Toit…

瓦上长天
柔复青!
瓦上高树
摇娉婷。
—瓦上长天

O bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie
Oh! le chant de la pluie!
—Ariette

霏霏窗外雨;
滴滴淋街宇;
似为我忧心,
低吟凄楚声。
—泪珠飘落萦心曲

However, the diction and the phrases are a trifle too refined, and the metrical arrangement is too much like classical Chinese poetry so that they verge on preciosity. In fact, they are in Dai's own earliest poetic manner, which may be exemplified by the following:

来到此地泪盈盈,
我是飘泊的孤身,
我要与残月同沉。
—流浪人的夜歌

There is the same kind of diction and metrical arrangement; there is the same mood saved from sentimentality only by the poet's sincerity. (The last line, which may be rendered as "I want to sink with the wan moon", reminds one of what another poet wrote:

The wan moon sets behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, O:

which is from Burns's poem, "Open the Door to Me, O". There are of course great differences between the tightly controlled Chinese verse and a more open Scots folk song. Still, both are wonderful poetry and use the same image.)

When Dai came to Remy de Gourmont and other post-Symbolists, he had acquired a new manner, more colloquial and more relaxed, which comes out in his translations as well:

Tu auras l'odeur des pommes
Sur ta robe et sur tes mains,
Et tes cheveux seront pleins
Du parfum doux de l'automne
Les pommiers sont pleins de pommes
Allons au verger, Simone,
Allons au verger.

—Remy de Gourmont: Le Verger

你将有林檎的香味
在你的衫子上和你的手上,
而你的头发将充满了
秋天的温柔和芬芳。
林檎树上都已结满了林擒,
到果树园去吧, 西蒙纳,
到果树园去吧。

—果尔蒙: 果树园

Read this side by side with Dai's own lines:

给我吧, 姑娘, 那朵簪在发上的
小小的青色的花,
它是会使我想起你的温柔来的。
……
给我吧, 姑娘, 你的象花一样燃着的,
象红宝石一般晶耀着的嘴唇,
它会给我蜜的味, 酒的味。

—不, 它只有青色的橄榄的味,
和未熟的苹果的味,
而且是不给说谎的孩子的
……

—戴望舒:《路上的小语》

and one can see that there was a parallel development as regards style and poetic language in addition to affinity in mood.

How much affinity was there between Dai and Éluard, fourteen of whose poems he had translated? Well, they had both experienced a transformation—from being avant-garde in artistic sensibility to being avant-garde in the antifascist fight. Certainly at the time, both were confronted with a similar situation—war and enemy occupation. Whatever the reason, Éluard inspired Dai to reach a new height in translation. Take the very first poem in his collection:

Avis

La nuit qui précéda sa mort
Fut la plus courte de sa vie
L'idée qu'il existait encore
Lui brûlait le sang aux poignets
Le poids de son corps l'écœurait
Sa force le faisait gémir
C'est tout au fond de cette horreur
Qu'il a commencé à sourire
I1 n'avait pas UN camarade
Mais des millions et des millions

Pour le venger il le savait
Et le jour se leva pour lui.
—Au Rendez-Vous Allemand

公告

他的死亡之前的一夜
是他一生中最短的
他还生存着的这观念
使他的血在腕上灸热
他的躯体的重量使他作呕
他的力量使他呻吟
就在这嫌恶的深处
他开始微笑了
他没有“一个”同志
但却有几百万几百万
来替他复仇他知道
于是阳光为他升了起来

All preciosity, all sentimentality and all over-refinement are gone, but there is no undue looseness either. The tone is colloquial, but the structure is compact. Poetic language is used in its essence: bare, clear, resonant and with the sole image emerging at the very end to round up the poem and also to open triumphantly onto a fresh day:

Et le jour se leva pour lui

于是阳光为他升了起来

Naturally all that is in the original, but much would have been lost if the translator had not got the sensibility or the poetic language to reproduce it.

13.3 3

In translating García Lorca, Dai tackled a new problem—how to bring out his folk element. Lorca must have appealed to Dai in all sorts of ways—he had colour, music, verve, a very pleasing sense of form and the contemporary European sensibility both artistic and political, but these were all fused together by his love of the old ballads. His stanzas are usually short, as in the ballads. His diction is simple and striking, as in the ballads. His repetitious key phrases, his catching melodies and his dramatic effects all come from his roots in the Andalusian ballad tradition. But Dai seems never to have written that kind of poetry. He had been nurtured on a different poetic tradition, which had by his time become overliterary, cliché-ridden and burdened with a thousand years of allusiveness.

Linguistic problems were also formidable. Dai's friend Shi Zhecun has remarked on his inability to bring out the full musicality of some of Lorca's lines. Thus the line from the “Romance de la Guardia Civil española”

en la noche platinoche,
noche que noche nochera

is rendered by Dai as

在这白金的夜里,
黑夜遂被夜色染黑。

which strikes Shi as “very clumsy”.[8]

Yet all this did not prevent Dai from turning out beautiful versions such as:

Arbolé arbolé
seco y verdé.

树呀树,
枯又绿。
La niña del bello rostro
está cogiendo aceituna.
El viento, galán de torres
la prende por la cintura.

脸儿美丽的小姑娘
正在那里摘青果,
风, 高楼上的浪子,
来把她的腰肢抱住。

Pasaron cuatro jinetes,
sobre jacas andaluzas,
con trajes de azul y verde,
con largas capas de oscura.
“Vente a Córdoba, muchacha”
La niña no los escucha.

走过了四位骑士,
跨着安达路西亚的小马,
披着黑色的大氅,
穿着青绿色的短褂。
“到哥尔多巴来呀, 小姑娘。”
小姑娘不听他。

Pasaron tres torerillos
delgaditos de cintura,
con trajes color naranja
y espadas de plata antigua.
“Vente a Sevilla, muchacha”
La niña no los escucha.

走过了三个青年斗牛师,
腰肢细小够文雅,
佩着镶银的古剑,
穿着橙色的短褂。
“到塞维拉来呀, 小姑娘。”
小姑娘不理他。

Cuando la tarde se puso
morada, con luz difusa,
pasó un joven que llevaba
rosas y mirtos de luna.
“Vente a Granada, muchacha”
y la niña no lo escucha.

[8]《戴望舒译诗集》, 第 315 页 (*Poems translated by Dai Wangshu*, p. 315).

暮霭转成深紫色,
残阳渐暗渐西斜,
走过了一个少郎,
带来了月亮似的桃金娘和玫瑰花。
“到格拉那达来呀, 小姑娘。”
小姑娘不睬他。

La niña del bello rostro
sigue cogiendo aceituna,
con el brazo gris del viento
ceñido por la cintura

Arbolé arbolé
seco y verde.

脸儿美丽的小姑娘,
还在那里摘青果,
给风的灰色的胳膊,
把她的腰肢缠住。

树呀树,
枯又绿。
—树呀树

The beauty, of course, must first be ascribed to Lorca, whose use of the folk tradition and the ballad form is seen here at its quintessential best. At the same time, one marvels at the translator's ability in bringing the poem across, with its gaiety, its colour and verve, all intact. The refrain

树呀树,
枯又绿。

is simple and very terse, consisting of only three characters, three sounds, in each line: colloquial without being loquacious, familiar without being cheap, concrete, transparent and opening onto fresh pastures—just the kind of poetic language every sensitive poet has been looking for over and above all the diversities of style, period and nationality.

The story—for as in nearly all ballads, there is a story—is told with parallel structures and subtle variations, again a Lorca forte, here matched by the translator's artistry; notice the neatness of the rendering and the gradation in his use of verbs in the parallel lines:

小姑娘不听他。
小姑娘不理他。
小姑娘不睬他。
来把她的腰肢抱住。
把她的腰肢缠住。

There is thus a cumulative dramatic force fully in accord with the original.

How was Dai able to achieve all this?

Naturally his own poetic sensibility and experience accounted for much of the success. But curiously enough, one also finds his earlier poetic education and his steeping in classical Chinese poetry, playing a hand here. Phrases like “高楼上的浪

子”, “腰肢”, “佩着镶银的古剑”, “少郎” etc., savour of the atmosphere of some old Chinese songs, reminding one of snatches like:

青青河畔草, 郁郁园中柳,
盈盈楼上女, 皎皎当窗牖。……
—古诗十九首

何用识夫婿? 白马从骊驹。
青丝系马尾, 黄金络马头。
腰中鹿卢剑, 可值千万余。……
—陌上桑

Echoes of this kind add to the resonance of the Chinese version, evoking a richer, more romantic mood.

Such loveliness, however, never lasts, in China or in Spain. Lorca’s idyllic world was soon intruded by a force that combined old cruelty with new ruthlessness:

Sobre el rostro del aljibe
se mecía la gitana.
Verde came, pelo verde,
con ojos de fría plata.
那吉卜赛姑娘
在水池上摇曳着
绿的肌肉, 绿的头发,
还有银子般沁凉的眼睛。

Un carámbano de luna
la sostiene sobre el agua.
La noche se puso intima
como una pequeña plaza.
Guardias civiles borrachos
en la puerta golpeaban.
—Romance Sonámbulo

一片冰雪的月光
把她扶住在水上。
夜色亲密得
象一个小小的广场。
喝醉了的宪警
正在打门。
—梦游人谣

Notice the shift from the green flesh, the green hair, the eyes of cold silver and that icicle of a moon—all images of purity and beauty—to something urban and promiscuous: “The night became as intimate as a little square”. And then the end comes with a bang: “Drunken civil guards were knocking at the door!” The sequence is crucial, and the imagery all important. The translator reproduces all these. Indeed, he packs more dramatic force into the last line by making it extra short—only four characters as against the usual seven or eight.

His handling of the “Romance de la Guardia Civil española” is equally effective:

Los caballos negros son.
Las herraduras son negras.
Sobre las capas relucen

manchas de tinta y de cera.
Tienen, por eso no lloran,
de plomo las calaveras.
Con el alma de charol
vienen por la carretera.
Jorobados y nocturnos,
por donde animan ordenan
silencios de goma oscura
y miedos de fina arena.
Pasan, si quieren pasar,
y ocultan en la cabeza
una vaga astronomía
de pistolas inconcretas.

黑的是马。
马蹄铁也是黑的,
他们大氅上闪亮着
墨水和蜡的斑渍。
他们的脑袋是铅的
所以他们没有眼泪。
带着漆布似的灵魂
他们一路骑马前来。
驼着背, 黑夜似的,
到一处便带来了
黑橡胶似的寂静
和细沙似的恐怖。
他们随心所欲的走过,
头脑里藏着
一管无形手枪的
不测风云。

One notices in the poem a montage-like technique, as well as a different kind of poetic language, marked by a more conversational tone and a number of surrealist metaphors. The folk element is still there, in the descriptions of gipsy life—flags, festoons and so on—but the modernist sensibility informs all. It is a sensibility as much political as artistic, for the poet was concerned with combating fascism, then rearing its head in Western Europe. Dai, who also hated fascism, turned out a version that caught the spirit of the original and he did this by overcoming a special difficulty, namely, reproducing the startling images without recourse to a private language acceptable only to a few. Thus expressions like 漆布似的灵魂, 黑橡胶似的寂静, 细沙似的恐怖 are at once surrealistic and intelligible, while the phrase—管无形手枪的不测风云 combines the very real "pistol" with the elusive but wide-ranging "fateful astronomical changes": a good example of poetic telescoping with all the dramatic force of the original.

When he came to the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejias", another memorable poem of Lorca's, Dai did something more than reproducing the original effects: he presented to his Chinese readers a new poetic form and a new hero.

For although Chinese poetry was full of short poems that mourn the death of loved ones and friends, there had been no elegies of some length, nothing to compare with *Lycidas*, *Adonis*, *In Memoriam* or even "In Memory of W. B. Yeats". These latter had come from a European tradition. What added to the novelty of Lorca's elegy, in Chinese eyes, was that it was devoted to a bullfighter.

Once again the translator rose to the occasion. He reproduced Lorca's praise of the toreador with an equal combination of exultation and sorrow:

No hubo príncipe en Sevilla
que comparársele pueda,
ni espada como su espada
ni corazón tan de veras.
Como un río de leones
su maravillosa fuerza,
y como un torso de mármol
su dibujada prudeneia.

Aire de Roma andaluza
le doraba la cabeza
donde su risa era un nardo
de sal y de inteligeneia.
iQué gran torero en la plaza!
iQué buen serrano en la sierra!
iQué blando con las espigas!
iQué duro con las espuelas!
iQué tierno con el rocío!
iQué deslumbrante en la feria!
iQué tremendo con las últimas
banderillas de tiniebla!

塞维拉没有一位王爷
能比得上他,
也没有一柄剑比得上他的,
也没有他那样一颗热心。
他的惊人的膂力
象一条狮子的洪流,
他的细致如画的机敏
象一尊大理石的胴体雕像。

安达路西亚式的罗马的风
给他头上镀了金,
这个头颅的微笑,
是一枝智慧的玉簪花。
在场上他是个多伟大的斗牛师!
在山上他是个多卓越的爬山家!
他对麦穗多么温和!
对马距又多么刚强!
在露水里多么娇嫩!
在节日里又多么光辉!
对黑暗的最后一支短矛
又显得多么惊人!

There is but one false note, the rendering of *serrano* as 爬山家 (mountaineering expert), an example of Dai's occasional overreaching himself for effect.

He was all sensibility again in coping with the unusual third section, "Cuerpo Presente" ("The Laid Out Body"), Lorca's reflections on life and death, sober, probing and metaphysical:

con una forma clara que tuvo ruiseñores
y la vemos llenarse de agujeros sin fondo.

一个曾经和夜莺做伴的光明的肉体,
现在我们看它充满了无底的创伤。

All the astounding metaphors are kept:

Yo quiero ver aquí los hombres de voz dura.
Los que doman caballos y rominan los ríos:
los hombres que les suena el esqueleto y cantan
con una boca llena de sol y pedernales.

我要在这里看见声音刚强的人,
那些能够降服野马和大江的人,
那些躯干响朗的人, 和那些
用一张充满了太阳和燧石的嘴唱歌的人。

Some of these metaphors had never before been seen in Chinese poetry, yet Dai not only made them stand out, as rightly they should, but also phrased them in such a way that they did not sound unduly exotic in a Chinese text. They would impress, indeed astound, but not repel an ordinary Chinese reader.

This showed Dai's own accomplishment in poetic language. But other factors were also at work. The flexibility of the Chinese language was one. However, had it not gone through a literary revolution, a shift from the classical *wenyan* to the spoken idiom, the *baihua*, as a literary medium, it would not have become so accommodating to foreign metaphors, particularly of a complicated kind, like:

los hombres que les suena el esqueleto y cantan
con una boca blena de sol y pedernales.

那些躯干响朗的人, 和那些
用一张充满了太阳和燧石的嘴唱歌的人。

or, like the earlier example:

una vaga astronomía
de pistolas inconcretas.

一管无形手枪的
不测风云。

As it happened, persistent experiments made by Dai himself and earlier poets in new ways of writing, modelled mostly on European masters, had so familiarized Chinese lovers of poetry with strange collocations and startling images that they were ready for almost anything.

But how did Lorca appeal to Chinese readership in general? Did he make much of an impact? Hardly. In spite of the efforts made by Dai and other translators, Lorca remained an honoured name, but not much read outside a small circle of left-wing poets. One explanation lies in the circumstances of the day. Dai's translations of Lorca came out at a time when both Spain and China were busy with a war that had been inflicted on them by powerful foreign states allied with traitorous elements within. The problem of survival was so acute that no one was in a mood to pay much attention to artistic innovations.

What remains is the question: how did the translation of Lorca affect Dai's own work? We have seen that, in connection with other European poets translated, there was often a parallel development in the translator's own poetry. But one finds few verbal echoes of Lorca in Dai's work of this period or any time afterwards.

Still, no major literary effort would go for nothing. Perhaps the response was more subtle and the effect more pervasive than people at first thought. Certainly in the late 1930s, after translating Lorca and other antifascist poets of Spain, Dai began to write a less self-centred, more public-oriented poetry expressing his hatred of the Japanese aggressor. As lyrical as ever, he acquired a new power, even a hard-hitting militancy, in lines like:

元日祝福
新的年岁带给我们新的希望。
祝福! 我们的土地,
血染的土地, 焦裂的土地,
更坚强的生命将从而滋长。

新的年岁带给我们新的力量。
祝福! 我们的人民,
坚苦的人民, 英勇的人民,
苦难会带来自由解放。
一九三九年元旦。

(The new year brings us new hope.
Greetings! Our earth,
Blood-stained earth, cracked earth,
Tougher life will come out of it.

The new year brings us new strength.
Greetings! Our people,
Hardy people, heroic people,
From suffering will come your freedom and liberation.
—New Year Greetings, 1939)

This was certainly a far cry from the days when he wrote like Baudelaire:

心头的春花已不更开,
幽黑的烦忧已到我欢乐之梦中来。

我的唇已枯, 我的眼已枯,
我呼吸着火焰, 我听见幽灵低诉。

去吧, 欺人的美梦, 欺人的幻象,
天上的花枝, 世人安能痴想!…
—忧郁

(No flower blooms again in my heart.
Grey ennui invades my sweet dreams.

My lips parched, my eyes dry,
I breathe fumes and hear ghosts whisper.

Go! deceitful dreams, deceitful fantasies!
How dare earthly beings reach for heavenly flowers!
—Ennui)

While it would be going too far to say that Dai owed all this transformation to Lorca alone, would it be entirely fanciful to claim that the Spanish poet had a hand in turning his attention to new themes as well as in shaping his new poetic style?

13.4 4

Having come to the end of this lengthy study and in the light of not just Dai Wangshu's performance alone, one may perhaps risk a few general observations.

The first obvious thing to be said is it takes a poet to translate poetry.

Second, translation of poetry does good to both the original poet and the translator. The former wins readers in new territory. The latter opens himself up to new influences, even as he is subjected to new rigours.

It takes all a translator has got to turn out a good verse translation. He needs the right kind of sensibility and the right kind of poetic language. But translation is also a good school to cultivate the requisite sensibility and fashion the needed language, which in turn will affect the translator's own writing.

The case of Dai is also illuminating in that it shows under what conditions the best results are achieved in verse translation. Other than the translator's own poetic gift, the language he uses must be fluid enough to take on any change and virile enough to withstand any rough handling. The Chinese language was in a particularly open state when Dai started to translate; there had just occurred a literary revolution of the first magnitude. No revolution, however, could have wiped out at a stroke the classical heritage of a country like China, and that too helped matters. Early steeping in the classics kept alive in the translator some of the old virtues such as good sense, a feeling for form and an emphasis on quality, which prevented his translations from becoming too raw, too rough and too lacking in depth and resonance so as to repel readers who would otherwise be well disposed to what's new in art and literature. Thus tradition and innovation meet in a good translation.

In a deeper sense, translation benefits the very fabric of any national literature and indeed, any culture. It does something more than opening new windows; it helps rejuvenate a culture, in a way that touches the very inner being of it, by giving its language a shake-up and a sharpening so that it becomes sensitive and alive again. Any culture would be immeasurably impoverished if it were to be stripped of the translations, particularly those of the poetical works, from a different culture. Indeed, the whole world would become shabbier without the splendid translations of literary works from all nationalities.

Hence no translator of verse need lose heart. In the teeth of all the talk by all the sensible and knowledgeable people, from Goethe downwards, that poetry cannot be translated, Dai Wangshu showed, quietly and without fanfare, that it can be done. To this day people regret that he died just when, after his successes in translation, he seemed to be poised for a new poetic leap. Fate denied him this, but not before he had communicated the best of contemporary European poetry to a small but grateful Chinese readership. He had certainly written some of his best poetry in his translations; in fact, his translations are an extension of his own poetry. Just as Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese Tang poetry have become classics of twentieth-century English verse, so will Dai Wangshu's translations of Verlaine, Baudelaire, Éluard, Francis Jammes, Rafael Alberti, Pedro Salinas, Gerardo Diego and García Lorca rank among the glories of modern Chinese literature.

1984

Chapter 14
Some Observations on Verse Translation

These observations have been occasioned by a few books I have recently consulted. They are:

《戴望舒译诗集》, 湖南人民出版社, 1983。
(*Verse Translations by Dai Wangshu*. Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1983)
查良铮译, 《济慈诗选》, 人民文学出版社, 1958。
(John Keats, *Selected Poems*. Trans. Zha Liangzheng. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1958)
查良铮译, 《唐璜》, 人民文学出版社, 1980。
(George Gordon Byron, *Don Juan*. Trans. Zha Liangzheng. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1980)
Charles Tomlinson, ed. *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation*. Oxford: OUP, 1980.
Robert Bly, *The Eight Stages of Translation.* St. Paul: Ally Press and Boston: Rowan Tree Press, 1986.

It will be noticed that the names on the list, authors and translators alike, are all poets and the books themselves are all verse translations.

Bly's book contains an essay which is perhaps the most detailed discussion of the actual process of verse translation that has appeared anywhere so far. It will serve conveniently as a starting point of our discussion.

14.1 I

Working on a translation of a sonnet of Rainer Maria Rilke's, Bly found that he had to go through eight stages before a final version emerged. Rilke's original reads:

Frühling ist wiedergekommen. Die Erde
ist wie ein Kind, das Gedichte weiss;
viele, o viele…Für die Beschwerde
langen Lernens bekommt sie den Preis.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_14

Streng war ihr Lehrer. Wir mochten das Weisse
an dem Barte des alten Manns.
Nun, wie das Grüne, das Blaue heisse,
dürfen wir fragen: sie kanns, sie kanns!

Erde, die frei hat, du glückliche, spiele
nun mit den Kindern. Wir wollen dich fangen,
fröhliche Erde. Dem Frohsten gelingts.

O, was der Lehrer sie lehrte das Viele,
und was gedruckt steht in Wurzeln und langen
schwierigen Stämmen: sie singts, sie singts!

Bly's first and final versions are as follows:

First Version
Spring has returned again. The earth
is like a child that knows poems;
many, oh many. For the burdens
of her long study, she receives the prize.

Her teacher was hard. We liked the white
in the old man's beard.
Now, how the green [things] and the blue are called,
we dare to ask: she knows it, she knows it!

Earth, on vacation, you lucky one, play
with the children now. We'd like to catch you,
happy earth. Success goes to the happiest.

Oh what the teacher taught her, so many things,
and what is imprinted [or pressed] into roots and the long
difficult stems: She sings it, she sings it!

Final Version
Spring is here, has come! The earth
is like a child who has learned her poems—
so many poems!… Her study, long,
strenuous, earns it… the prize comes to her.

Her teacher was stern. We loved the white
showing in the beard of the old man.
What is blue and what is green have distinct names—
What are they? Earth knows all that by heart!

Earth, free now of school, lucky one, come,
play with the children. We want to tag you,
wholly glad earth. The most whole catches you.

Earth's teacher, how much he taught her!
So much! And what lies printed inside roots,
inside long, involved stalks: earth carries that and sings it!

Thus the journey from the literal to the literary. What were some of the problems he grappled with at each stage? They may be summarized as follows:

1. Sociocultural differences, e. g. in a poet's attitude towards growth. Rilke uses the adjective "schwierigen" to describe tree trunks and plant stems and to stress the difficulty of growth. This is contrary to the Whitmanesque or American notion that growth is spontaneous.

2. Questions of word order—e.g. what to do with the German delayed verb in the lines:

   Für die Beschwerde
   langen Lernens bekommt sie den Preis.

   The genius of the English language would require the verb to come immediately after the main noun.
3. Is it American English? Where the original is in the spoken style, is it spoken in American English? Bly points out that nineteenth-century translators in general rarely asked this question; "it was Whitman, Pound, and William Carlos Williams who sharpened everyone's sense for spoken English and spoken American. The marvelous translation that is now being done in the United States, work that has been going on for 30 years or more, is partly a gift of these three men and their faith that poetry can be composed in spoken rhythms" (p. 29).
4. Tone, or mood—the translator, in finding spoken phrases to replace written, must at the same time keep the tone of the original. Rilke's German has two levels at least: an upper and a lower. Even his lower, however, is a bit higher than lower-level American. Thus "viele, o viele" should not be translated as "many, oh many", which sounds bookish in American English, or as "a lot! a lot", because "the stopped sounds create a pugnacious mood" (p. 33) not found in the original. Eventually Bly settles for "So much!"
5. Sound—which is not the same thing as metre. In fact, Bly distinguishes between metre and "certain rhythms felt in the muscle systems", a kind of "body motion" (p. 38). Rilke often starts with a powerful beat on the opening syllable of a line: "Frühling ist wiedergekommen".

   This Bly takes to be a characteristic rhythm of pre-Christian or pagan poetry, unlike the later English iambic rhythm, "in which the first syllable is somewhat ingratiating, softer, more modest, and prepares the way for the heavier second stroke" (p. 37). So in his version Bly also keeps the heavy beat on the first syllable, thus: "Spring is here, has come!"
6. Native-speakers' help sought—"a very painful stage", says Bly, for not only are the translator's errors spotted but his fondest solutions often turn out to be wrong.
7. Other people's versions consulted—in the present case, there are available three other versions of the same Rilke sonnet: English ones by J. B. Leishman and Al Poulin and a French one by J. F. Angelloz. Bly likes Angelloz's best, Leishman's least, the latter for reproducing end rhymes and "adding images that destroy the poem's integrity" (p. 44).
8. Last touches.

All this may sound a bit technical. Actually at least three important things are involved: a poem's meaning, the state of poetic art and the state of the language used by the translator.

Certainly Bly's discussion makes one more aware than ever of the difficulty of understanding a poem in a foreign language. Sociocultural differences are formidable enough, but the matter is made much more complex when one realizes that meaning does not consist in the meaning of words only but also in syntactical structures, speech rhythms, levels of style and such mysterious things variously called by

various people as "sentence sound" (Robert Frost), "the mind's speech" (Charles Olson), a phrase's "desperate living tone or fragrance" (Bly himself), etc. A translator simply can't begin without a grasp of these and many other things related to meaning.

Poetic art is involved because no verse translator worth his salt will stop unless his version reads like poetry. "With Poesie to open Poesie"—thus George Chapman on his aim as a translator of Homer. But ideas on what is poetry vary with men and time. Bly's point about the "marvellous translation" being made possible in the United States only after Whitman, Pound and William Carlos Williams composed poetry in speech rhythms shows what may be gained when there is a genuine revolution in poetic art. On the negative side, we may quote another poet-translator, Donald Davie, on "the amateur, wretched sceptic that he is, [who] cannot be sure of having poetry at all unless he has these external features of it"—i.e. rhyme and metre (quoted Tomlinson, 1986, xii). To this day some translators in China equate poetry with these external features.

Language is of course ever-present, in translation as in other matters. The question is how a translator meets its demands and exploits its resources. This would require, first of all, an intimate understanding, on the part of the translator, of its genius, its idiosyncrasies and potentialities, its past and present and what it can do and what it chooses not to do. One can acquire this kind of intimate understanding only of one's mother tongue; hence, in verse translation at least, translating into a foreign language is out of the question.

Finally, Bly's eight stages are intermixed. As he himself says at the very outset, "The difficulties are all one difficulty, something immense, knotted, exasperating, fond of disguises, resistant, confusing, all of a piece" (p. 13). Likewise, the three factors we have been discussing are really one factor, namely, the poetic use of language.

14.2 II

How have Chinese translators faced up to the challenge—and the immense possibilities—of verse translation?

To begin with, one marvels at the progress made. Three men in particular made notable contributions—Dai Wangshu in the thirties and forties with his translations of Baudelaire and García Lorca, Bian Zhilin in the fifties and sixties with his translation of Shakespeare's tragedies and Zha Liangzheng in two periods, the fifties with his translations of Pushkin, Keats and T. S. Eliot and the seventies with his crowning work, a complete translation of Byron's *Don Juan*.

This is of course a greatly simplified account, but I think it suffices to show a kind of gradation in the use of *baihua* or spoken Chinese in verse translation.

All three men were poets—and modernist poets at that. They were all fascinated by what's new in art and literature, not afraid to administer the shock of the difficult and keen on using language in a daring, creative way.

In the mean time, the Chinese language itself was changing fast, faster perhaps than the English language in America in the same period, for there had just occurred

in China around 1919 a gigantic language reform. Almost overnight the polished classical literary language was abandoned and the street language of Peking used in its stead in all "new writings". The whole linguistic situation was fluid, bringing exciting opportunities but also a train of problems, particularly in verse writing. The earliest specimens of the new vernacular verse looked so flat, so insipid beside the splendid achievements of classical poetry.

Dai Wangshu's first verse translations revealed some of these problems. He translated Verlaine's "Ariette" thus:

霏霏窗外雨,
滴滴淋街宇,
似为我优心,
低吟凄楚声。

—泪珠飘落萦心曲

This shows how strong was still the pull of the classical poetic tradition despite the valiant efforts made by the men of 1919. For in both sentiment and language, this is conventional Chinese verse, hardly doing justice to the French Symbolist. But the remarkable thing is that Dai soon graduated from this to something rather different:

你将有林檎的香味
在你的衫子上和你的手上,
而你的头发将充满了
秋天的温柔和芬芳。
林檎树上都已结满了林檎,
到果树园去吧, 西蒙纳,
到果树园去吧。

—果尔蒙:果树园

That is his translation of Remy de Gourmont's "Le Verger". Still elegant, the language is colloquial, loose in structure, chatty in tone, a bit repetitive (as required by the original), but—a new feature—tense-conscious, as evidenced by the use of "将" and "了". There was a parallel development in Dai's own poetry—*vide*《我的记忆》:

我的记忆是忠实于我的,
忠实甚于我最好的友人。

The point is, a poet translating poetry both gives and takes, and this applies to his relationship with the language he uses as well, exploiting and enriching it at the same time. Anyway, by the time Dai came to translate Baudelaire, he had at his disposal a linguistic medium more or less adequate for the task, so that he could turn out versions like:

亚伯的种, 你的插秧
和牲畜,瞧, 都有丰收;
该隐的种, 你的五脏
在号饥, 象一只老狗

—亚伯与该隐

which is close to the original:

Race d'Abel, vois tes semailles
Et ton bétail venir à bien;

Race de Cain, tes entrailles
Herlent la faim comme un vieux chitin.

—Abel et Cain

Also, passages like:

秋天暖和的晚间, 当我闭了眼
呼吸着你炙热的胸膛的香味,
我就看见展开了幸福的海湄,
炫照着一片单调太阳的火焰;

—异国的芬芳

which gives not only the sense but also the aura of the original:

Quand, les deux yeux fermes, en un soir chaud
d'automne,
Je respire 1'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
Qu' éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;

—Parfum Exotique

This passage is warm and erotic, as the earlier one about Abel and Cain is terse and sharp. The Chinese language, along with Chinese verse, has here taken on new resonances and new fragrances, along with new terrors. It has become more dexterous, more versatile.

Yet there is something which even Dai is not quite equal to, namely, the tussle with European personifications. Now personifications have been part of European rhetoric for so long that probably Baudelaire didn't think he was doing anything extraordinary when he wrote the lines:

—Et de long corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme; L'Espoir,
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroice, despotique,
Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir.

—Spleen (LXXVIII)

which Dai renders, thus:

—而长列的棺材, 无鼓也无音乐,
慢慢地在我灵魂中游行; "希望"
屈服了, 哭着, 残酷专制的 "苦恼"
把它的黑旗插在我垂头之上。

—烦闷 (二)

Visually, this can get by, since the quotation marks serve more or less the same function as capitalization in French. But a poem in the vernacular style is supposed to be good also for reading aloud, and read aloud, the equivalents for "Espoir" and "Angoisse" sound jarring and incoherent in an otherwise excellent passage.

Nevertheless the quotation marks—themselves a new feature then, for modern punctuation came in only with the language reform of 1919—represented a solution of a sort. They have since been used by later translators in similar situations. Thus we find Bian Zhilin, another major poet, resorting to them in his elegant version of Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Church Yard":

“雄心” 别嘲讽他们实用的操劳,
家常的欢乐、默默无闻的运命;
“豪华” 也不用带着轻蔑的冷笑
来听讲穷人的又短又简的生平。
……
可是“知识”从不曾对他们展开
它世代积累而琳琅满目的书卷;
“贫寒” 压制了他们高贵的襟怀,
冻结了他们从灵府涌出的流泉。

The personified “Ambition”, “Grandeur”, “Knowledge” and “Penury” seem to have, in their Chinese guises, a remarkably smooth passage, even when the lines are read aloud. Is it because by Bian’s time the Chinese language had grown used to them? Yet the effect is less happy at other places in the same translation, e.g.:

骄傲人, 你也不要怪这些人不行,
“怀念” 没有给这些坟建立纪念堂,
……
要知道谁甘愿舍身喂哑口的 “遗忘”,
坦然撇下了忧喜交集的此生,
……

Why is it that “雄心”, “知识”, “豪华” and “贫寒” can pass muster but not “怀念” and “遗忘”? Perhaps because even in a language like Chinese where parts of speech can be freely interchanged, some expressions are less ready to be converted to nouns. Thus “怀念” and “遗忘” are both two verb formations with a strong driving force that will not be circumscribed by the quotation marks.

Still later, another poet-translator, Zha Liangzheng (*alias* Mu Dan), used the same device when he set to work on Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy”, the last stanza of which is studded with personifications:

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at her lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil’d Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Zha came up with a version which reads:

和她同住的有 “美” ——生而必死;
还有 “喜悦”, 永远在吻 “美” 的嘴唇
和他告别; 还有 “欢笑” 是邻居,
呵, 痛人的 “欢笑”, 只要蜜蜂来饮,
它就变成毒汁。隐蔽的 “忧郁”
原在 “快乐” 底殿堂中设有神坛,
虽然, 只有以健全而知味的口
咀嚼 “喜悦” 之酸果的人才能看见,
他的心灵一旦碰到她的威力,
会立即被俘获, 悬挂在云头。

—忧郁颂

Other things apart, the personifications do not cause any trouble, partly because "美", "喜悦", etc., are *bona fide* nouns and partly because they come one right after another, in a cluster, so that once your ear becomes attuned to one of them, it has little difficulty in getting reconciled to the rest. Keats's context and Zha's own facility combine to make the passage intelligible and readable.

Still, one feels that is not the sort of device Zha—or the Chinese language—would choose to use too often. Both certainly look much happier when, freed from the heavy-handed quotation marks, they take to lyrical flights like this:

当忧郁的情绪突然袭来,
象是啜泣的阴云, 降自天空,
象是阵雨使小花昂起头来,
把青山遮在四月的白雾中,
你呵, 该让你的悲哀滋养于
早晨的玫瑰, 锦簇团团的牡丹,
或者是海波上的一道彩虹;
或者,如若你的恋女生了气,
拉住她的柔手吧, 让她去胡言,
深深地啜饮她那美妙的眼睛。

which is a beautiful rendering of another stanza from the same ode by Keats:

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

Not contented with this, however, Zha looked around for new territories to advance into. The vernacular tradition, having had more than 30 years of experimentation behind it, was now firmly established. The *baihua* medium was getting more venturesome, ready to take on new tasks. Zha had already tackled some of them. Younger than Dai and Bian by a generation, he had written a newer, more complex verse, sometimes protesting bitterly but also metaphysically:

在犬牙的甬道中让我们反复
行进, 让我们相信你句句的紊乱
是一个真理。而我们是皈依的,
你给我们丰富, 和丰富的痛苦。

At other times lighting up physical love with luminous abstractions:

静静地, 我们拥抱在
用言语所能照明的世界里,
而那未形成的黑暗是可怕的,
那可能和不可能的使我们沉迷。

In his hands, the Chinese language was changed, even the conceits were Westernized. He had a way with words, using them with precision but also exposing them to new rigours. Born and bred in the north, his command of the dialect of Peking was

perfect, an advantage not enjoyed by translators from the south. Besides English and French, he knew Russian too, well enough to translate Pushkin from the original. In fact, his version of *Eugene Onegin* has been acclaimed by Chinese Slavists.

Sometime in the 1960s, having translated modernists like Eliot and Auden and romantics like Shelley, Keats and Pushkin, Zha turned his attention to Byron. It took him 10 years to finish translating *Don Juan*; when the book eventually came out in Beijing in 1980, he had been dead 3 years. His friends were sad but also jubilant, for in that complete translation of Byron's masterpiece they found enshrined all Zha's best qualities.

A few specimens will show how he copes with Byron in his various moods. This is Byron singing of idyllic love, the kind he had not been able to attain in his own life:

Haidée and Juan thought not of the dead.
The heaven and earth and air seem'd made for them:
They found no fault with time, save that he fled;
They saw not in themselves aught to condemn:
Each was the other's mirror, and but read
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem,
And knew such brightness was but the reflection
Of their exchanging glances of affection.
(IV. 13)

Zha responds with a passage matching in felicity:

海黛和唐璜没有想到死的事,
这天地, 这大气对他们太适合,
时光也无可挑剔, 只嫌它会飞,
他们看自己呢, 更是无可指责;
每人就是对方的镜子, 谁看谁
都是眼里亮晶晶地闪着欢乐;
他们知道, 这宝石一般的闪光
无非是他们眼底深情的反映。

When Byron waxes flippant in his milord table-talk manner like this:

"Where is the world," cries Young at eighty. "Where
The world in which a man was born?" Alas!
Where is the world of eight years past?'Twas there—
I look for it—'tis gone, a Globe of Glass!
Cracked, shivered, vanished, scarcely gazed on, ere
A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.
Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots, kings,
And dandies, all are gone on the wind's wings.
(XI. 76)

Zha is equally sardonic and conversational:

"哪儿是世界?" 杨格活到八十岁
慨叹说: "哪儿是那诞生我的世界?"
唉, 哪儿是八年前的世界?一转瞬
就不见了, 象玻璃球似地破裂!
闪一闪就消失, 没等你多看一眼,
那绚烂的大世界便悄悄地溶解;
国王、王后、要人、演说家、爱国志士
和花花公子, 都一起随风而飘逝。

It will be noticed that the translator, avoiding what the Chinese language would find it irksome to do, does not try to reproduce the succession of -ed sounds in line 5 and has subtly rearranged the order of the nouns in line 7 for better effect.

With the same discrimination, but with gusto too, he re-enacts Byron's action scenes. This is one:

Up Juan sprang to Haidée's bitter shriek,
And caught her falling, and from off the wall
Snatch'd down his sabre, in hot haste to wreak
Vengeance on him who was the cause of all:
Then Lambro, who till now forehore to speak,
Smiled scornfully, and said, "Within my call,
A thousand scimitars await the word.
Put up, young man, put up your silly sword."
(IV. 37)

Of which the translation is fully as dramatic:

听到惊叫声, 唐璜立刻跳起来,
一把托住海黛使她不致栽倒;
接着从墙上摘下剑, 怒冲冲地
就要惩罚这不速之客的侵扰;
兰勃洛直到现在都没有开口,
只冷冷一笑说: "只要我一声叫,
立刻就有千把刀子亮在这里,
小伙子, 不如把你那玩艺收起。"

Neither is he baffled by Byron's romantic landscapes and literary allusions in passages like this:

Sweet hour of twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flow'd o'er,
To where the last Caesarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!
(III. 105)

Zha evokes the same twilight mood, thus:

黄昏的美妙时光呵! 在拉瓦那
那为松林荫蔽的寂静的岸沿,
参天的古木常青, 它扎根之处
曾被亚德里亚海的波涛浸淹
直抵凯撒的古堡; 苍翠的森林!
屈莱顿的歌和薄加丘的十日谈
把你变为我梦魂萦绕的地方,
那里的黄昏多叫我依恋难忘!

In bringing off the names of places and writers without the aid of explanatory notes, the translator registers a triumph for *baihua* verse, for while Chinese classical verse is not averse to adorning itself with allusions literary and mythological, the new

verse thrives best in a naked state. Here again, context helps Zha out, but more crucial is perhaps his own skill in constructing a smooth-running paragraph.

Yet this version of *Don Juan* is more than a collection of smooth passages. The really astounding thing is how the entire book hangs together. For once we have a translation of a long work that is not only good in parts but superb as a whole—and the whole means all 16 cantos and 14 stanzas of it! A feat like this lifts the version out of the general run of translations; it becomes a masterwork with a life of its own.

14.3 III

Having seen Bly, Dai, Bian and Zha at work, we may now recapitulate a little. These are all poet-translators. They are concerned with translating verse as verse, and in the idiom of their own time and place. Two central questions have emerged: how you understand the work you are translating and how best to put it across with the poetic language at your disposal.

Larger questions loom behind them, and they concern the state of a language and the state of a culture. Translation, verse translation in particular, helps to rejuvenate a culture by shaking up its language.

At this point we may bring in Tomlinson's anthology. It is full of good things. Hebrew scriptures, Greek and Roman classics, Dante, Villon, Ronsard, La Fontaine, Goethe, Holderlin, Heine, Leopardi, latter-day sinners and saints like Baudelaire, Mallarmè, Valèry, Rilke, Machado, Blok, García Lorca, Mandelstam and Marina Tsvetayava—all are here, translated and retranslated into English by poet after poet, yielding a harvest of incredible richness. It is comforting to find nearly all the major poets in English throughout the ages—from Spenser to Ted Hughes—occupied at some time or other with verse translation.

Chinese poets came in with the twentieth century, mainly through the translations of Ezra Pound and Arthur Waley. They supply the other side of the picture we have been depicting—how classical Chinese poetry affected the Anglo-American sensibility, complementing what we said about how Western poetry affected the Chinese sensibility.

Tomlinson, a poet and a verse translator himself, whose renderings of Machado, Lucio Piccolo and Octavio Paz are included here, has in his perceptive Introduction some harsh words to say about "the academic milieu" who are forever distrustful of poet-translators. He disposes of their two "threats", namely, the one that "hints that the only true translation would be a kind of mirror image of the original, and therefore it is best not to try or best to leave it to the experts in the field of French, Russian or whatever" and "the preference for a rather staid but 'accurate' rendering into tame iambics of, say, Pushkin, so that nothing extraneous, as it were, should come between the reader and the original". Countering these, he proposes his own theory:

> One thing is certain—translation of poetry is essentially a compromise between the original texts and the present interests and capacities of a given writer. Dryden says that the writer must be a poet.

The word "compromise" sounds timid. Actually Tomlinson means by it a bold thrust into recreation. And the great poet-translators agree with him, as shown by his quotations. Thus Dryden, speaking of his own translations: "I have both added and omitted, and even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my authors, as no Dutch commentator will forgive me". Thus Sir John Denham, congratulating a fellow Royalist poet on his translation of an Italian work:

> That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
> Of tracing word by word, and line by line…
> A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
> To make Translations and Translators too:
> They but preserve the Ashes, thou the Flame,
> True to his sense, but truer to his fame.

Thus also, for a twentieth-century voice, Donald Davie: "Translation is something which takes more liberties (i.e., takes on more responsibilities) than the 'trot', but denies itself the liberties of the imitation and of other relations more tenuous still." Davie is quoted again on what distinguishes a poet-translator from an amateur: the professional poet as translator realizes that "in translating rhymed verse the rhyme is the first thing to go, and metre the second: whereas the amateur, wretched sceptic that he is, cannot be sure of having poetry at all unless he has these external features of it".

As an illustration of the inadequacy of "accurate" but tame translation, Tomlinson cites the example of H. A. Giles (known to sinologists as the author of *A History of Chinese Literature*, 1901), who translated a poem by the Tang poet Wang Wei thus:

> Dismounted, o'er wine
> we had our last say:
> Then I whisper, 'Dear friend,
> tell me whither away.'
> Alas, he replied,
> I am sick of life's ills
> And I long for repose
> on the slumbering hills
> But oh seek not to pierce
> where my footsteps may stray:
> The white cloud will soothe me
> for ever and ay.

with the comment:

> Half the trouble in this Wang Wei piece is the absurd tripping metre. In the last analysis the whole thing is a failure of ear, 'the ear', as Charles Olson says in his essay, *Projective verse*, 'which is so close to the mind that it is the mind's, that it has the mind's speech.' For the mind's speech, surely, is what the translator is always seeking to catch *in his own language*, however much he may sacrifice the original metre and stanza form. And only according to the degree of his success in this attempt will his words carry the conviction of 'a man speaking to men'.

For an example of the creative kind of translation, Tomlinson quotes, predictably, from Ezra Pound, not the famous "River Merchant's wife: a Letter", but his Canto LII, which incorporates from the Chinese *Book of Rites* passages like the following:

> Know then:
> Toward summer when the sun is in Hyades
> Sovran is Lord of the Fire
> to this month are birds
> with bitter smell and with the odour of burning
> To the hearth god, lungs of the victim
> The green frog lifts up his voice
> and the white latex is in flower
> In red car with jewels incarnadine
> to welcome the summer

Reading a passage like this, Tomlinson says he hears in the "magnificent processional rhythms something English and something irreducibly foreign and distant"—indeed, he hears "English being drawn into a dialogue with other cultures".

Admittedly, great moments like this are few and far between in the history of verse translation. But they have occurred, in China as well as in the West. In his full glory, the poet-translator brings over some exciting work from another culture and in doing so is also writing his own best work, thereby adding something to his culture. In this transmission and exchange, a richer, more colourful world emerges. Thus the final retort to Robert Frost is: poetry may get lost in translation, but a new poetry is gained—and, with it, a more splendid world.

1987

Chapter 15
On Translating Joyce, Burns and Others

What was the first book you translated and when was that?

The first book I translated was written by James Joyce. It was *Dubliners*, a collection of his short stories. I did that in the early forties, when I was a young instructor at the Southwest Associated University in Kunming, which was called "associated" because it was made up of three universities from the north, Beijing, Tsing Hua and Nankai. They had been driven out of their original sites by the Japanese, who were then occupying North China. I was a junior member of the English faculty. One day I got hold of this volume of short stories by Joyce. I was curious. I'd heard so much about his novel *Ulysses*. I wanted to know what his short stories were like. Well, they turned out to be excellent. One story in particular fascinated me. It was *The Dead* and it was a real masterpiece. I thought I'd like to translate it into Chinese and before I knew I'd translated all the stories in the volume.

Did you get your translation published?

Well, no. I sent the manuscript to a publisher in Guilin. Guilin is the resort city in Guangxi where you see all those strange-shaped hills. One day the Japanese sent their bombers over the city. Parts of the city went up in flames, my manuscript with them.

What a pity! … What other works did you translate after that?

I translated Burns in 1958. That was the year when we were getting ready to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of Burns's birth, which fell due in 1959. A publishing house in Beijing wanted to put out a new volume of Burns in Chinese and I was commissioned to do the translation. I'd never translated Burns before but as I liked his poetry I didn't mind having a try. I found the work challenging but also

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In January and April, 1981, the author was interviewed by Radio Beijing, which subsequently broadcast the recordings in its English programme "Culture in China". The present article is based on them.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_15

exhilarating. In the end, I got something like forty of his poems translated and they made a slim volume, which was published in 1959.

What were some of the poems included in that volume?

They included the usual lyrics, like "Scots Wha Hae", "A Man's a Man for A" That', "A Red Red Rose", "Auld Lang Syne", "Comin Thro' the Rye" and so on. But I also managed to put in a few other things, such as his epigrams. You know, sometimes Burns wrote a few lines for a special occasion. There is an interesting piece called "Lines Written on a Banknote", which I translated. But these were not the main thing. The main thing was I translated some of his longer works, such as "The Twa Dogs", "The Jolly Beggars", "Tam o' Shanter", and that wonderful satirical poem *Holy Willie's Prayer*. This last group of poems opened the eyes of the Chinese reading public to an aspect of Burns's genius hitherto not revealed—to the Chinese, I mean. His lyrical quality and his musical quality had always been appreciated in China. After the Liberation, the fact that he was a farm labourer, an actual tiller of the land, increased his appeal. But no one, I believe, had translated any of his narrative poems. Yet there is a special quality in them which you don't find easily in other people's works—a dramatic quality, a kind of verve and a playfulness, which is extremely delightful.

One can see how you enjoyed your work. Then you went on to translate other poets?

After Burns I translated several of Bacon's *Essays*. That was an interesting experience too. Here you have an epigrammatist writing a very terse prose. What sort of Chinese are you going to use to put him across? That was the problem. Well, I tried out a sort of *wenyan*, or classical prose, and my friends rather liked the result. However, that was the only time I resorted to *wenyan*. Otherwise I've stuck to the contemporary spoken language. And on the whole I haven't had much to do with prose works. The only other prose work I translated was parts of William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, which is another book I love. So delightfully English in a John Bull sort of way and also so tender-hearted. With these two exceptions, all my translations have been from the poets.

Who, for instance, other than Burns?

Shelley, among others. Some Wordsworth too and a bit of Blake, mainly in quotations to illustrate some point or other in the *History of English Poetry* I've been writing in Chinese for some time.

Any twentieth-century poets? You seem to be interested only in the Romantics.

I like the Romantics all right, but I've also translated some contemporary poets. Hugh MacDiarmid, for instance. He's Scottish and he's very good. I like the way he combines the Scots folk tradition with a modern European sensibility. He's also a Marxist who wrote the three Hymns to Lenin. I translated ten of his poems and had them published in the magazine *World Literature* in 1979.

How about contemporary American poetry? Have you translated any?

I've translated two American poets. There is first of all Robert Bly. I met Bly in Australia in 1980, when we were attending the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. One night he came into our hotel and started to recite a poem called *Seclusion*, accompanying himself on a strange-looking instrument which he called dulcimer. He's a big tall fellow, wearing a red waistcoat and a large red cravat, and very friendly, exuding warmth and enthusiasm wherever he went. I had read some of his poems before I went to Australia, so I was very pleased to meet him there. Then, after a few weeks, I met him again, this time in Minneapolis, for after Adelaide I went to the States to teach for a spell at the University of Minnesota. My wife and I spent a long evening in his house near a lake—Lake Harriet, if I remember right. Oh, how we talked! About poetry, of course. He told me he and some of his friends in Minnesota had learned from Latin American poets like Neruda and Vallejo and also from classical Chinese poets like Bai Juyi (Po Chu-i). In fact, *Seclusion*, which he recited in my hotel room in Adelaide, is a poem by Bai.

How interesting! … And who's the other American poet you translated?

The other one is James Wright, a good friend of Robert Bly, who unfortunately died of cancer in 1979. One of his poems I translated has a long title: *As I Step Over a Puddle at the End of Winter, I Think of an Ancient Chinese Governor*. The poem is about Bai Juyi. It begins almost playfully:

> Po Chu-i, balding old politician,
> What's the use?
> I think of you,
> Uneasily entering the gorges of the Yang-Tze,
> When you were being towed up the rapids
> Towards some political job or other
> In the city of Chungchou.

It ends reflectively, wistfully:

Did you find the city of isolated men beyond mountains?
Or have you been holding the end of a frayed rope
For a thousand years?

The frayed rope refers to the rope used by the trackers in towing a boat upstream. They do it against the pitiless might of the rushing current, and the rope gets frayed with time and usage so that it may snap at any moment. Thus both the boat and the old poet are in a precarious position. The "I" in the poem, the American poet asking the question, fares no better. For the poem is also about his feeling of loneliness as he stands looking at the Mississippi near Minneapolis. Indeed, it is this feeling of loneliness that links up the two poets across the vast differences of time and place. This I think is very good writing. Another poem of James Wright's, which I also translated, is the well-known anthology piece *A Blessing*, with its tremendous ending:

Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

I liked that very much. Certainly I did my best to keep these tremendous metaphors, the frayed rope and the blossom, in my translation.

What exactly do you mean by "keeping the metaphors"?

I mean, if there is a striking metaphor in the original poem, it should be translated literally, so that its impact and freshness will not be lost. But there is a bit of problem here. Sometimes a metaphor may be fresh in the original language but becomes quite hackneyed when it comes out in the target language, usually because the translator has used a familiar phrase which conveys more or less the same idea. In Burns's poem *A Red Red Rose*, you remember, there is a line where the man says that his love for his girl will still be there even after all the seas have gone dry and the rocks have melt with the sun. I suppose this metaphor about the seas and the rocks is something fresh in the original poem. Well, we happen to have in Chinese a familiar phrase which also says, "I will remain faithful to my love even after the sea has gone dry and the rocks have decayed". You might say that here we have a perfect equivalent. Yet the phrase has been used so often and so widely that it's become a cliché. So in my translation I deliberately avoided using it. I adopted a less idiomatic formulation but kept the metaphors intact.

However, the problem is a bit more complicated than that. What if an author one is translating uses a cliché himself? After all, clichés are part of life and no author can be original throughout. Also in the poem *A Red Red Rose*, there are two lines which go like this:

> And I will luve thee still, my dear,
> While the sands o' life shall run.

Now the phrase "sands of life" is suspect. I wouldn't exactly call it a cliché, but it isn't fresh—it wasn't when Burns used it, for people had used it before, Shakespeare in the sixteenth century and Pope in the eighteenth. It was Burns's momentary lapse into genteelism, a kind of concession to the prevailing literary taste of his time. When I came to translate it, I did not try to keep the metaphor but used an equally familiar, unfresh expression, something like "while there is still breath in me".

I see. Language certainly works in mysterious ways.

Anyway, this simple lyric "A Red Red Rose" gave me more trouble than other poems. Even after repeated revisions, I still felt my version wasn't adequate. As a translator, I always feel I must keep my Chinese clean and sharp-edged. Also, I think one should translate only writings that are akin to one's own in style. No one can be a master of all styles. Generally a translator is good for one kind of writing only. He should stick to that and not try to venture out too much.

But I should think the ideal translator is one who can adapt himself to whatever comes his way.

How many of us have this chameleon quality? Besides, in the course of adapting oneself, one also imposes one's own personality, which would produce a deadly

sameness to whatever one's hand has touched. Imagine Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats all reading alike! That would be the end of translation, or of literature, for that matter.

What other things do you think a translator should pay attention to?

I think it important for a translator to get the tone right. If the work is satirical, then his translation should also be satirical; if it succeeds merely in being facetious, then it must be considered a failure.

One last point: the importance of the whole. Too often too much attention is given to details and not enough to the work as a whole. Yet a poem or story has a unity of its own. And when a translator has grasped the atmosphere or impact of the whole poem, he sometimes finds he can take liberties with certain details that do not exactly contribute to the total effect. In that way he acquires a new freedom, a lifting of the spirit which will make him daring and innovative. He will begin to feel that translation is no hack work but something creative.

1982

Chapter 16
Sean O'Casey in China

That the Chinese should have been interested in Irish drama as far back as the 1920s sounds incredible, yet the fact remains that in 1926, a collection of six plays by J.M. Synge, including *Riders to the Sea* and *The Playboy of the Western World*, translated by the poet-historian Guo Moruo was published in Shanghai. Articles on Irish literature in general had appeared in the literary reviews in Shanghai and elsewhere even earlier. One notices, for instance, that Mao Dun, who was to become the best novelist of the ensuing decades wrote an essay entitled *A Counter-current in Contemporary Literature—New Writing in Ireland* in the *Eastern Miscellany* (Vol. XVII, No. 6, March 1920). Somewhat later, Lu Xun, the famous story writer and essayist, translated a Japanese article entitled *Irish Literature: A Survey* for the magazine *Rushing Stream* (Vol. II, No. 2, June 1929). A curious fact: all three founding fathers of China's new literature took a hand in directing Chinese attention to Irish new writing.

They were aware of the especial importance of Irish drama, the part played in the Irish Renaissance by the plays of Synge, Yeats and Lady Gregory. Lady Gregory, in particular, was well known for her one-acter, *The Rising of the Moon*. Not only did generations of Chinese students read it and perform it in English, but it was adapted for the Chinese stage. Indeed, the adaptation, entitled *San Jiang Hao*, was, with its patriotic theme and its simple but effective dramaturgy, one of the most popular plays in the early years of the anti-Japanese war (1937–1945).

In this context it comes as no surprise that Sean O'Casey's name was known in China soon after he had won acclaim in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. More than that, his play *Juno and the Paycock* was adapted for the Chinese stage by Zhang Min, a director of repute. Under its Chinese title, *Zui Sheng Meng Si* (*Intoxicated and Daydreaming*), it played to packed houses in Shanghai in 1936.

A period of relative neglect of O'Casey, along with that of most other Western authors, set in after 1949, the year of Liberation. But in the 1950s, things began to look up. Several factors contributed to O'Casey's appeal: his proletarian origins, his years of hard work as a common labourer and his commitment to communism all

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_16

spoke in his favour. The letter he wrote to the *Wen Yi Bao* (*The Literary Gazette*, No. 3, 1958) praising a Chinese play depicting the Chinese Red Army's heroism during the Long March, which O'Casey said he had followed with avid attention "so far as Western newspaper reporting could furnish him with any information", further endeared him to the Chinese. The cry then was for the progressive literature of the world, and O'Casey certainly rated as a progressive.

But his literary qualities also told. That O'Casey was a writer of unusual power became apparent when translations of his works began to come out. A Chinese version of his play *The Star Turns Red* was published in the Beijing magazine *World Literature* in 1959. The translators were myself (using the penname Zhu Yan) and Ying Ruocheng, an actor who had been a student of mine at Tsing Hua University.

A year earlier, in 1958, a Chinese translation of the first volume of O'Casey's *Autobiographies*, *I Knock at the Door*, had been published in Beijing. The translator was Zhong Songfan, about whom this writer has not been able to find out much. Another part of the *Autobiographies*, the chapter "Mrs. Casside Takes a Holiday" from the volume *Inishfallen*, *Fare Thee Well*, appeared in *World Literature* in 1962 in a Chinese translation by Zhao Lorui, a professor of Beijing University, who had achieved fame as far back as the 1930s with her brilliant translation of *The Waste Land*.

This is not a bad record, if one bears in mind that in those years only a handful of contemporary Western dramatists got published in China. Furthermore, O'Casey was read and discussed in the literature departments of the universities. But published criticism of O'Casey's work remained meagre. In fact, I think I am perhaps the only Chinese critic who has committed his views of O'Casey to writing.

I came to O'Casey after having done some work on Eliot, Yeats, Shaw and, earlier still, the Jacobean dramatists, notably, Webster. While, like everybody else, I found O'Casey's early Dublin tragicomedies fascinating, I was also attracted by his later work, particularly *The Star Turns Red* and *Red Roses For Me*. It was clear that from *Within the Gates* on, O'Casey, the restless spirit that he was, was looking for a new, fresh way of writing significant drama. He didn't want to repeat his early successes nor could he reconcile himself to the sort of fashionable, "realistic" drama then being turned out by men like Noel Coward. Inevitably, he landed on poetic drama. Yet he differs from T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry over what constitutes poetic drama. He wanted to see in it all the richness and all the glitter and colour of life, including man's noble fight for a better society. Also, he would write this kind of poetic drama in a resonant, sinewy prose, though he would not rule out—indeed he often resorted to—bursts of poetry at the critical moments. He did not always succeed in putting his idea to work, but when he did, as in *Red Roses For Me*, he did magnificently.

That, in substance, is what I said in a long essay, *The Achievement of Sean O'Casey*, published in the journal *Researches in Literature* (No. 1, 1958). This was followed by another article of mine in *World Literature* (No. 2, 1959), making the same points in less specialist language.

In yet another article on O'Casey, I reviewed his six-volume *Autobiographies* for *World Literature* (No. 3, 1962). I was glad of the opportunity, for I had read the

volumes with deep interest. O'Casey's own life was full of incident, and the people he had associated with—Shaw, Yeats, Lady Gregory and the men of Easter, 1916—were in their different ways heroic. The work also struck me as a new type of writing, fiction-like in its narrative technique but freer in movement, allowing easy transition from recollection to reflection and back again, in a prose that is remarkable for its mixture of parody, invective, lyricism and a kind of stream-of-consciousness reverie quite reminiscent of Joyce. *World Literature* carried my article alongside Zhao Lorui's translation, earlier mentioned, of "Mrs. Casside Takes a Holiday", certainly doing O'Casey proud by devoting so much space to him in a single issue.

After that, the Cultural Revolution intervened. For ten years all mention of O'Casey disappeared from Chinese publications.

In 1977 interest in Western drama was revived. Soon the Beijing stage was busy with productions of Western plays such as Brecht's *Galileo*, Molière's *L'Avare* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, the last performed by Tibetan graduates of the Shanghai Institute of Drama speaking their parts in Tibetan! However, no sign of any renewed interest in O'Casey. There has been neither new translation of his works nor any new critical study.

Will this state of affairs last? No one can say for certain, but personally I'd like to see some Chinese company make a bold try to perform one of his "poetic" plays, say, *Red Roses For Me*. Admittedly some things in O'Casey won't probably appeal to a contemporary Chinese audience—the events of the Dublin of the 1920s that make up the plot of many of his plays seem a bit remote—but his unique combination of realism and symbolism and of power and beauty has not dated. Indeed, his ceaseless search for a new poetic drama should, if made known more widely in China, inspire feelings of admiration and gratitude in his kindred spirits in Beijing and Shanghai who, realists to a man, yet want to lift drama out of the merely realistic. So perhaps the first thing to do is to coax the publishing houses to make more of O'Casey's works available in Chinese.

Sequel: Well, the coaxing seems to have taken immediate effect. Just issued is a new collection, *Selected Plays of O'Casey*, published by the People's Literature Press in March 1982. It comprises four plays, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *Red Roses for Me* and the *Bishop's Bonfire*. The translators are Huang Yushi and Lin Yijin.

1982

Chapter 17
Translation Standard in China: A Survey

What constitutes excellence in translation? The answer made by Yan Fu at the start of a great era of translation in modern China has had a lasting effect. Writing in 1898 in the preface of his own translation of Thomas Henry Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, Yan laid down this criterion:

> Translation has to do three difficult things: to be faithful, expressive and elegant. For a translation to be faithful to the original is difficult enough, and yet if it is not expressive, it is tantamount to having no translation. Hence expressiveness should also be required….
>
> *The Book of Changes* says that rhetoric should uphold truthfulness. Confucius says that expressiveness is all that matters in language. He adds that if one's language lacks grace, it will not travel far. These qualities, then, are the criterion of good writing and, I believe, of good translation too. Hence besides faithfulness and expressiveness, a translator should also aim at elegance.[1]

Thus the famous three-point standard for a good translation. What lent authority to the pronouncement was Yan's own success as a practitioner; for besides Huxley's work, he also rendered into elegant classical Chinese Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and *System of Logic*, Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, etc., all basic books of modern Western thought. There is a lot more in the preface—such as Yan's explanation why he did not go in for a word-for-word or even sentence-for-sentence translation but had resorted to paraphrase in many cases—but it is the three points that have come to exert a tremendous influence on almost all later translators and writers on translation in China.

This standard, agreed to by nearly everybody, has nevertheless occasioned endless controversies. Even the point about faithfulness to the original has been disputed. Faithful to what, it has been asked, to the letter or spirit of the original? In the early 1930s, the question was hotly debated between two schools of translators,

[1]《天演论》译例言; 罗编, 136。(Luo Xinzhang, ed. On *Translation*. Beijing: Commercial Press, 1984 (hereafter referred to as "Luo"), p. 138.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_17

those who went in for "smooth" rendering and those who practiced literal translation. The former found their spokesman in Zhao Jingshen (赵景深), who argued that since readers cared above all for something easy to read, he wouldn't mind a few departures from the original so long as he could produce a smooth version. Thus he would "rearrange Yan's three points in a new order, as follows: expressiveness, faithfulness, elegance".[2] The latter included the eminent writer Lu Xun and the communist ideologue Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白), who not only upheld faithfulness as the first principle but gave it a new interpretation. For they would equate faithfulness with literalness, and literalness included the reproduction in Chinese the sentence structure and word order of the original—and this for a good reason:

> A literal translation introduces not only new subject matter, but also new ways of expression. The Chinese language, whether written or spoken, is too imprecise… To remedy that, we will have to undergo a little ordeal, that is, to bring in bizarre ways of constructing sentences—ancient, outlandish, foreign ways, incorporating them into our language.[3]

Thus Lu Xun and his friend Qu Qiubai would go even further:

> Our demand is: absolute accuracy and absolute vernacular. By the latter I mean the language used must be intelligible to all when read aloud.[4]

He too believed in the necessity of introducing new linguistic elements, but with this proviso:

> To create new ways of expression, they must fulfil one condition, namely, they can all be spoken.[5]

This is asserted vis-à-vis the archaic prose used by Yan Fu as well as the sort of half-bookish, half-vernacular "lackey's lingo" spouted by Zhao Jingshen and others.

Qu also disposed of "elegance", another much disputed point. By elegance Yan Fu had meant the use of "the vocabulary and syntax of the era before the Han Dynasty" which he insisted "could express subtle thoughts better than latter-day journalese", though his real purpose was to attract the mandarin scholars, "those who read ancient classics". This became an untenable position after the language reform of 1919, when *baihua* or the spoken language replaced *wenyan* or classical Chinese in most publications. In any case, if the original is not written in a deliberately archaic style, then any attempt at giving it an antique glow in the translation amounts to a violation of Yan's first principle, namely, faithfulness. Hence Qu Qiubai's observation: "In espousing elegance, Yan wiped out faithfulness and expressiveness".[6] Still, the dispute went on unabated about what constitutes elegance and, indeed, whether elegance should be made a criterion at all. Obviously, a good deal depends on the nature of the original. If the original is not elegant in

[2]《读书月刊》1931 年第 3 期; 罗编, 267页注 [3]。(Luo, 287n. 3)
[3]《二心集》, 1932; 罗编, 276。(Luo, 276)
[4]《瞿秋白来信》; 罗编, 276。(Luo, 276)
[5]《再论翻译》; 罗编, 281。(Luo, 281)
[6]《瞿秋白来信》; 罗编, 267。(Luo, 267)

language, stylistic embellishments would be quite out of place. And in certain kinds of writing, such as philosophical works, a translator is often obliged to combat the very idea of elegance. Professor Chen Kang (陈康), after translating Plato's *Parmenides*, sums up his experience thus:

> Faithfulness is our unshakable fundamental principle. Our translation cannot but be literal. Being literal, it is often inelegant, even unidiomatic. Whenever it becomes impossible to take care of both meaning and language, our self-imposed rule is: keep the meaning even at the expense of the language, not the other way round. True, there is the adage: "If language lacks grace, it will not travel far," but we could add: "If language exceeds substance, the farther it travels the more humiliating it becomes."[7]

He, too, has a reason why inelegance is often unavoidable:

> The purpose of translating philosophical writings is to convey ideas unknown to one's native land. However, the words and expressions of a particular language are accustomed to express, as indeed they can only express, ideas already in that language. Hence if we adhere absolutely to the principle of faithfulness and yet want to express in words and expressions already familiar to us ideas that have never occurred in our land, we will be trying to do the impossible. In such cases, either you sacrifice ideas, or you sacrifice language.[8]

Substantially the same reason as advanced by Lu Xun, namely, new ideas require new expressions, however inelegant. At the same time, it should be pointed out that in all these one went so far as to champion inelegance as a virtue. It may be unavoidable, even inevitable, yet not really desirable. In actual practice, even when translating difficult treatises on literary theory by Soviet ideologues, Lu Xun tried to make his versions as readable as possible.

Elegance, then, must be considered in the context of faithfulness. Later discussions tended to see all three points as interrelated. In a way, that was Yan's original position; he had written: "All this effort is to achieve expressiveness and to be expressive is really to be faithful" ("凡此经营, 皆以为达; 为达, 即所以为信也"). After years of discussion and—even more important—of practice, there has emerged a clearer, more integrated view, summed up by Qian Zhongshu (钱钟书) thus:

> Faithfulness in translation should include expressiveness. Expressiveness gives full scope to faithfulness, and elegance is not just to adorn expressiveness. To convey the meaning of the original in the same style—that is faithfulness.[9]

This may be taken as a *modus vivendi*. In recent years, there have been signs of a growing weariness with the perpetual wrangle about the three points and discussions have moved on in two directions. First are the specific standards for different genres of writing. Modern stylistics has shed light on the special features—phonetic, lexical and syntactic—of such different kinds of writing as scientific papers, advertisements, public notices, news reports and such varied utterances as sermons, speeches, sports commentaries, telephone conversations, etc. Obviously each requires a different standard. Sociolinguistics has for its part added a new dimension

[7]《柏拉图<巴曼尼得斯篇>序》; 罗编, 445。(Luo, 445)

[8]陈康: 同上文; 罗编, 444。(Ibid.)

[9]《管锥编》, 1101; 罗编, 23。(Luo, 23)

to the discussion of "equivalents" in translation by emphasizing the social or cultural factor: different speech communities have different ways of addressing people, being polite or rude, crying their wares, showing their approval or displeasure, etc. In such cases, a literal translation would often be misleading, if not fatal, and the suggested solution is to find the usage pertaining to the particular "variety" in the target language.

Second is the total effect of a translation of a literary work. This question came to the fore when some signal successes had been registered in practice—notably the translation of the works of Shakespeare by Zhu Shenghao (朱生豪) and that of the novels of Balzac by Fu Lei (傅雷). Both are considered models of literary translation—accurate, readable and done in a Chinese that combines vigour with grace. Both translators speak in disfavour of the stiff, word-for-word translation and would strive for "resemblance in spirit" (神似). Specifically, this means, in Fu Lei's words:

> To strive for resemblance in spirit, not in appearance, the translator must write pure Chinese, not something stiff and awkward, but a language which can be read aloud harmoniously in a rhythm and tempo akin to the original.[10]

Here the concern is no longer with the three points, which are taken for granted, but reaches a higher plane where more stringent demands are made on the translator. Two prerequisites stand out: an intimate understanding of the original, all the nuances and overtones in it, and a supple use of the target language. Neither of which is easy to achieve. Fu Lei's striving for "resemblance in spirit" had only a limited success in his own translations—certainly his range of vocabulary and mastery of demotic language falls short of Balzac's rich, protean French—and for most others it has remained only an ideal.

Neither can "appearance" be ignored altogether. For verse translators, there are stanzaic forms and rhyme schemes to consider. Even the sonnet, Shakespearean or otherwise, has been reproduced with its intricate pattern intact. Here certainly the Chinese classical tradition of excellent short poems has helped. The most valiant effort has been made by poets who would not rest until they have translated Shakespeare's poetic dramas in suitable Chinese verse, for as good as Zhu Shenghao's versions, mentioned above, are, they are prose renderings. After decades of persistent work, the erstwhile modernist poet Bian Zhilin has been able to establish a Chinese verse line of five metrical units, punctuated by five pauses, as an equivalent to the English iambic pentameter and with this he started to translate *Hamlet* in 1954, followed by *Othello* (1956), *Lear* (1977) and *Macbeth* (1983) and finally published together as *Four Tragedies of Shakespeare* in 1988, a labour of over thirty years. And a crowning success, too, for here we see verse used as Shakespeare meant to use it—as a dramatic medium for dramatic effects. Another recent achievement is the translation by Zha Liangzheng of Byron's *Don Juan*, all sixteen cantos of it in stanzas of eight lines each, with a rhyme scheme close to the original *Ottava rima*. Again it is a poet's work, which not only keeps the form or

[10]《谈文学翻译书》; 罗编, 694。(Luo, 694)

"appearance" of Byron's verse but manages to catch its spirit too—the wit, the vivacity, the cynicism, the ardour in love and war and the whole spectrum of the young lord's moods and yearnings.

By now we can leave translation standard behind for we have come to the point where aesthetics takes over.

Chapter 18
Reflections on a Dictionary

When in 1971 a group of Chinese teachers of English, with perhaps more enthusiasm than wisdom, started to compile a new Chinese-English dictionary,[1] they had no idea what they were getting into. None of them was a trained lexicographer, nor were they particularly interested in Chinese-to-English translation. However, they took the plunge. After several false starts and various setbacks, and having survived a major earthquake and other momentous events in the meantime, they brought the work to completion in early 1978.

I joined the group rather late, in 1975, when the hard pioneering days were over and the main editorial principles thrashed out. I knew even less about lexicography than my colleagues and though I had occasionally dabbled in literary translation, I was in no way equipped for the sort of tough compilation job demanded by a bilingual dictionary. But I suppose I too have learned something in the course of the work—from inadequacies revealed if from nothing else. Besides, problems of lexicography and translation grow on one; indeed, over the years I've found them fascinating as well as maddening. Hence some reflections.

18.1 I

To be called new at all, a Chinese-English dictionary must reflect the present state of the Chinese language. Much has happened since the days when H. A. Giles and R. H. Mathews published their dictionaries; and Lin Yutang, though coming much later in time, chose to cut himself off from the mainstream of modern Chinese usage by ignoring the Chinese that is being spoken and written by the over 900 million people on the mainland. So we had to start from scratch. Lacking the resources to do any large-scale investigation of the state of the language on our own, we cast

[1] *A Chinese-English Dictionary*, Peking and Hong Kong; the Commercial Press, 1978, 1979.

Z. Wang, *Degrees of Affinity*, China Academic Library,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-45475-6_18

about for a good Chinese-Chinese dictionary. We found one in the 《现代汉语词典》, or *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese* (DCC), compiled by the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Social Sciences. First published in 1965, it is a comprehensive work of 53,000 entries. It is particularly strong on colloquial idioms. Its numerous illustrative examples are apt and well chosen. There are detailed explanations, particularly of function words, and numerous notes about usage, such as this one under 两:

> 注意'两'和'二'用法不全同, 读数目字只用 '二' 不用 '两', 如 '一、二、三、四、五; 二、四、六、八'。小数和分数只用 '二' 不用'两', 如 '零点二(0.2), 三分之二, 二分之一'。序数也只用 '二', 如 '第二, 二哥'。在一般量词前, 用 '两' 不用 '二'。在传统的度量衡单位前, '两' 和 '二' 一般都可用, 用 '二' 为多('二两' 不能说 '两两')。新的度量衡单位前, 一般用 '两', 如'两吨、两公里'。…

Over-elaborate? But what a boon to southerners and foreigners! If only some of the English dictionaries were as elaborate, as thoughtful of the needs of a learner, as that! Inevitably there are also shortcomings. One could do with more precise definitions of some archaic words, less "inbreeding" in the explanations of certain common phrases—both 悲哀 and 悲痛 are explained as 伤心, 悲惨 as 令人伤心, and 伤心惨目 as 非常悲惨. Perhaps one's biggest query is about the foundations upon which this lexicographical edifice is built—where and how did the editors collect their citations, their illustrative examples? Did they base their work on a systematic survey of contemporary usage or did they rely on printed material only? These questions apart, however, one must conclude that the *DCC* is far and away the best thing in the field. It is edited on modern linguistic lines—at places it even smacks of Bloomfieldian structuralism. But its abiding virtues come from its adherence to the great Chinese tradition of lexicography, which stretches back to 《尔雅》 in the third century B. C. and boasts such milestones as 《说文解字》 (许慎) of the first century and the great 《康熙字典》 of 1716. Thus, in adopting *DCC*'s ground plan and editorial principles, in appropriating many of its explanations and examples, we, too, have brought our work in line with the development of that long and glorious Chinese tradition. In the meantime, of course, we looked into other, English dictionaries—from the great *OED* and its progeny to the 1961 *Webster's Third International*, from the many American desk dictionaries to the inevitable *Advanced Learner's*. While we admired many of their features, it is the *DCC* alone that has provided us with a firm basis. Without this basis our work would have been ten times more arduous; with it, drawing on its strength and richness, we were able to move ahead.

However, ours is *not* an English version of the *DCC*, but a new and proper dictionary in its own right. For one thing, it has a different purpose, being primarily geared to the needs of young Chinese translators and only secondarily concerned with those of Chinese students of English and foreign students of Chinese. This has called for much spade work on our own part. We've had to modify *DCC*'s treatment of many words and rephrase many of its linguistic explanations. Nearly all those admirable notes on usage, of which we've just seen an example, have had to be, alas, cut, for they are thought to be unnecessary to a Chinese translator, though foreign

students of Chinese will probably bemoan their omission. On the other hand, we've taken in many newer illustrative examples, from sources that have emerged since the completion of *DCC* in 1965, which have helped to make our dictionary more contemporary in outlook as well as in language.

18.2 II

A sound Chinese basis is only half the story; there is the other half, the English part, to consider yet.

A bilingual dictionary stands or falls by the quality of the English equivalents it provides for its Chinese items. But real equivalents are hard to come by—harder still between two such fundamentally different languages as Chinese and English, each with its distinct culture and history.

A translator's first job is to grasp the meaning of the original. If he doesn't understand the original, he won't get an equivalent. When Lin Yutang translates 吃软不吃硬 as "bully the weak but yield to one who fights back," he not only writes clumsy English but shows a characteristic ignorance of the real meaning of that colloquial Chinese phrase, while our version "open to persuasion, but not to coercion" gets somewhat closer to the original in spirit, if not in style. Where the understanding of the Chinese is adequate, the question becomes whether the translator's grasp of English, the target language, is really firm or his knowledge of English conditions up-to-date. To translate 布衣蔬食 literally as "wear cotton clothes and eat vegetable food," for instance, may be misleading nowadays. Cotton clothes and vegetable food may be symbols of plain living in China, but are they also in Britain and America? Certainly a vegetarian diet, so far from being the poor men's monopoly, is nowadays every Western doctor's prescription for their overfed millionaire patients. Here again, our final version, "coarse clothes and simple fare," catches the real sense and, what with the slightly archaic, old-world flavour of the word "fare", matches the original in style as well.

Real equivalence, then, means equivalence not only in sense, but also in tone, sentiment, atmosphere, impact, style—and that's what makes a translator's work so difficult. The best one can do is often not good enough and what at first sight seems felicitous turns out on sober rereading to be flat or stiff. And sometimes one is completely baffled. To this day we don't know how best to render the simple form of address 师傅. Or such new phrases as 不见不散; 顺水人情; 话到嘴边留半句; 扁担没扎, 两头打塌; etc. Sometimes we lack the professional touch, as when we translated 这种子弹杀伤力强 as "this type of shell has a powerful capacity to kill and wound," where the proper thing to say is probably something like "this is a powerful anti-personnel shell"—a version we later adopted. We have had many more problems and, what's more, each new day brings a fresh crop of them. Indeed, a dictionary maker's path is strewn with brambles and thorns, and the dominant feeling is his own inadequacy.

Yet for all that we persisted. We have translated almost everything anew—the exceptions being the quotations from the revolutionary leaders and some scientific and technological terms, which are supplied by the various research institutes. We have resisted, with varying degrees of success, pressure from two directions—from those who wanted us to keep all approved translations, all ready-made versions, even though the English in some of them is demonstrably bad, and from those who, out of their love for "idiomatic English", wanted us to take most of our illustrative examples from *Webster's Third International* and the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. We have gone through three major revisions, each one a long and painful process, but we have come out of these ordeals not only with our sanity still intact, but with better Chinese examples and somewhat more adequate English translations. A comparison of the successive versions of some entries will show the distance we've travelled:

没词儿 can find no words in reply/be stuck for an answer
他是外乡人。He's not a native. /He's not from these parts.
弄得不好就会前功尽弃 If things are not properly handled, labour will be lost. /If we bungle now, all the work we've done will be wasted.

Often the change is small but significant:

害人虫 an evil person/an evil creature
照面儿 make one's appearance/put in an appearance
自投罗网 throw oneself into the trap/walk right into the trap
接过革命先辈手中的枪 take over the guns of the revolutionary pioneers/take up the guns of the revolutionary pioneers
她装老大娘真像。She dressed up as an old woman and really looked like one. /She dressed up as an old woman and really looked the part.

Sometimes the change is made from stylistic considerations:

金戈铁马 mounted warriors carrying shining weapons/mounted warriors bearing shining weapons
奇花异木 rare flowers and trees/exotic flowers and rare trees
见仁见智 different people have different views on the same question/ different people, different views; opinions differ

At other times the change is made for sociolinguistic reasons:

挑灯夜战 battle by lamplight/fight by torchlight
历史罪人 criminals indicted by history/guilty men of history
油漆未干 Mind the fresh paint. /Wet paint.

Slowly, a new critical sense has emerged. We've grown more discriminating. We know better what to reject:

他也说不上问题在哪里。He can't say where the shoe pinches. /He can't put finger on what's wrong.
我父亲在旧社会受尽了折磨。In the Old society my father's cup of misery was full. /In the old society my father suffered a lot
在我们这个地区种这种稻米是一个难题。How to grow this kind of rice in our area is a hard nut to crack. /How to grow this kind of rice in our area is quite a problem.

In each case the trouble lies in the translator's trying to press some of his favourite idioms into service. And the last example is also an example of mixed metaphor.

Idioms have their proper uses—but only in proper places. And when one is intent on getting ideas across, one generally forgets about idioms but only wants to say things in the clearest, most efficient way possible. Overused idioms degenerate into clichés. As my old tutor used to say, nothing marks out a foreigner's English more than his use of unnecessary idioms—and one may add—or the vogue words of yesterday.

Meanwhile, we also know better what to treasure:

空欢喜 rejoice too soon
一言为定! Done!
这里边有鬼。There's some dirty work going on here. 或 I smell a rat.
她这人很有主见。She knows her own mind.
她很会哄孩子。She has a way with children.
牙疼真折腾人。A toothache can get you down.
这幅画画得不怎么样。This isn't much of a painting.
他想拉拢我?没门儿! He wants to rope me in? Not a chance!
你先把火压一压, 别着急。Don't fly off the handle. Calm down.
你说吧, 这里没有外人。Speak up. You're among friends.
我拗不过他, 只好让他走了。I did my best but couldn't prevent him from going.
下点雨就不让我们去, 真是! Just because of a bit of rain we're not allowed to go. The idea!

Now we may be weak in legal English, business English, scientific English, the English of sociology, economics, philosophy, military affairs and what have you; but I am inclined to think that most of us are weakest in the English of common life. What seems the easiest is often the most difficult—a truth which has been proved again and again in the course of these revisions.

18.3 III

But our concern is never with English alone; searching for equivalents, we have had to think all the time of fitting the English to the Chinese. Here again we have had our lucky times as well as our off days: We have experimented with a new, slightly more down-to-earth way of translating some of our new phrases:

突破难关 break the back of a tough job
任务观点 get-it-over-and-done-with attitude; perfunctory attitude
打响了春耕第一炮。The spring ploughing got off to a good start.
要搞群言堂, 不搞一言堂。Let all have a say, not just one.
漫骂决不是战斗。To hurl abuse is no way to fight.
没有一点革命者的气味 not at all like a revolutionary.
革命工作不分分内分外。Revolutionary work is nobody's extra work.

We have tackled folksy idioms:

帮倒忙 be more of a hindrance than a help
口是心非 say yes and mean no
打马虎眼 act dumb
给他个台阶下吧。Give him an out.
白给我也不要。I wouldn't take it as a gift.

他肚子里还有点墨水。He's a bit of a scholar.
他老挨剋, 都皮了。He gets scolded so often that he no longer cares.

And we have explored the byways of rendering proverbs and sayings:

一个唱红脸, 一个唱白脸。One coaxes, the other coerces.
敬酒不吃吃罚酒 refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit
黄鼠狼给鸡拜年, 不安好心。The weasel goes to pay his respects to the hen—not with the best of intentions.
一瓶子不响, 半瓶子晃荡。The half-filled bottle sloshes, the full bottle remains still—the dabbler in knowledge chatters away, the wise man stays silent.
有眼不识泰山 have eyes but fail to see Mount Tai (often said when apologizing for not recognizing an eminent personage)
黄粱美梦 Golden Millet Dream (from the story of a poor scholar who dreamt that he had become a high official but awoke to find only the pot of millet still cooking on the fire); pipe dream

You will have noticed that in the last few examples there is something—a phrase or a note—tagged to the end. In one case—the weasel example—the tag is part of the saying itself. In fact, all its point, all its wit and humour, is in that little tag. It is the punch line. Where there is no tag in the original, we've tried to supply one. We've found this desirable because often, owing to the absence of context and background information in a dictionary entry, many of these proverbs and sayings don't make much sense in a literal English translation. Hence some kind of explanation, of pointing-out, becomes necessary. We've taken care, however, to make the tag follow on more or less naturally, to make it merge with the translation proper, thus:

如虎添翼 like a tiger that has grown wings—with might redoubled
门可罗雀 you can catch sparrows on the doorstep—where visitors are few and far between
盲人瞎马 a blind man on a blind horse—rushing headlong to disaster

Sometimes we add an English phrase or sentence of more or less similar meaning as a second version, thus:

绵里藏针 a needle hidden in silk floss—a ruthless character behind a gentle appearance; an iron hand in velvet glove
识途老马 an old horse which knows the way—a person of rich experience; a wise old bird
推波助澜 make a stormy sea stormier; add fuel to the flames
弱肉强食 the weak are the prey of the strong—the law of the jungle

In all these cases we are no longer just translating, we are explaining, annotating, commenting—in short, we are performing our other duties, the duties of a lexicographer.

18.4 IV

For the compiler of a bilingual dictionary is that strange animal, the translator-lexicographer. As a translator, too, he is confronted with certain special problems. While other translators work at passages, articles, books, he works at words, phrases, single sentences. This puts him at a disadvantage. He has almost no context to draw

on, and he has to make his point immediately clear, for a dictionary is for ready reference, not something to read and ponder at leisure. And unlike other translators who can often get round difficulties by relying on technique or context, he has to meet his problems head-on. Thus he has to translate, among other things, interjections, onomatopoeic effects and the varied and subtle usages of function words, because a dictionary has to have separate entries of these. He is expected first of all to bring out in English the literal meaning of a Chinese word or phrase; indeed, the impatient user of a bilingual dictionary won't feel too reassured unless he can find a one-for-one correspondence between the Chinese original and the English translation. But in many cases it is difficult to achieve this kind of correspondence; words of a more or less similar meaning may yet differ in their range of coverage or sphere of application. It may take two, three, indeed a whole string of English words to define or explain a single Chinese word, none of them wholly equivalent, but each covering one or other aspect of its meaning, good for one particular situation only. Thus under the entry 吃 one finds the equivalents *eat* and *take*. Now *take* is one of those all-purpose words whose range of application is immeasurably wider than *eat*, and yet when it is placed beside *eat* and illustrated with an example such as *take medicine*, the reader will have no doubt as to the sense in which the word is listed as an equivalent here. Thus the several equivalents or definitions at once limit and strengthen each other; indeed, they combine to create a context of their own. It is this kind of interior context that makes it possible for a translator-lexicographer to try to bring out not only the senses and usages, but the flavour and atmosphere of such an elusive word like 妙:

1) wonderful; excellent; fine: 这主意真 ~ 。That's an excellent idea. /~不可言 too wonderful for words; most intriguing/绝 ~ 的讽刺 a supreme irony
2) ingenious; clever; subtle: 深得其中之 ~ have got the trick of it; fully appreciate its subtlety/他回答得很 ~ 。He made a clever answer.

Note the two versions of 深得其中之妙, each covering one aspect of its meaning, one sphere of its use.

These are problems that a translator of articles, documents and books doesn't have to worry about—his business is to choose the best version for his particular context. A translator working for a bilingual dictionary, on the other hand, has to think about a lot of other things—other possibilities, other contexts, other situations as well as the traps and pitfalls that may lie before his prospective readers.

And just as he is a translator of a special kind, so too he is a lexicographer with a difference. Lacking the time and resources to do any systematic, large-scale collection of citations on his own, he has to rely on Chinese-Chinese dictionaries for nearly all definitions of words and most illustrative examples. What additional examples he can find are limited in number and he is never too sure whether they are really useful or significant. Yet within this narrow sphere of action he has a lot to do. For one thing, he has to use all his wits to organize and present his material in such a way as not only to meet the readers' immediate needs but also to anticipate some of their problems.

How much have we done in this respect? Not much, I'm afraid. In the terrible race against time which has been the chief mark of our work so far, we have never had a chance to do any sustained thinking on lexicographical matters. Through trial and error, however, we've found that some of the things we've been doing seem to be along the right lines.

For instance, we have been liberal in our use of labels and pointers. Under a relatively simple, concrete term like 票房, we specify:

1) <口> (车站等) booking office; (戏院等) box office
2) <旧> a club for amateur performers of Beijing opera
   ~价值 box-office value

We've also tried to show how a phrase of foreign origin has acquired an additional sense in Chinese:

捞稻草

1) try to take advantage of sth.: 休想在这件事上 ~ 。Don't imagine you can get anything out of it.
2) clutch at a straw

Incidentally, the *DCC* has no entry for this phrase, probably because it didn't gain much currency, certainly not in its modified Chinese sense, until after that dictionary was compiled.

Where an entry does exist in the *DCC*, we sometimes add a new current sense, as in

通天

1) exceedingly high or great: ~的本事 exceptional ability; superhuman skill
2) direct access to the highest authorities

The second sense is not registered in the *DCC*. Or we add a new example, as in

回敬 return a compliment; do or give sth. in return:
~一杯 drink a toast in return/~一拳 return a blow

The second example represents our effort to supplement the usual polite usage with a current ironical usage, thereby making the entry fuller, more balanced and so also, we hope, more useful to our readers.

For the benefit of our readers, too, we've introduced completely new entries not found in the *BCC* or any other Chinese dictionary:

眼里 within one's vision; in one's eyes: ~没有群众 not take the masses into account/看在~,记在心头 note with one's eyes and heed with one's heart; see and heed/~有活 see where there's work to be done; know where one can be of use/在他~, 我还是个孩子。In his eyes, I'm only a child/这点困难她根本不放在 ~ 。She didn't care at all about a difficulty like that.

There is something very pleasing about this colloquial, homely Chinese expression and its various uses—it brings a breath of fresh air into what might otherwise be a solemn, dull tone.

Another difference between a Chinese-English dictionary and a Chinese-Chinese may be seen in the choice and presentation of illustrative examples. In addition to a dictionary's usual requirements for examples—that they should be typical, apt, linguistically significant and so on—we have another consideration, namely, the range and variety of the English versions that the examples will yield.

Thus a simple term like 目的, for which the *DCC* provides an entry but no example, comes out in our dictionary with a full panoply of illustrative phrases and sentences:

> 目的 purpose; aim; goal; objective; end; ~明确 have a definite purpose/~与手段 ends and means/怀着不可告人的 ~ harbour evil intentions; have ulterior motives/我们党的最终 ~ 是实现共产主义。The ultimate aim of our Party is the realization of communism. /我们的 ~ 一定能达到。Our aim can certainly be attained.

Here we've tried to work in some of its most common usages and collocations and show how translation varies with situation and style.

In the presentation of equivalents and examples, too, we have worked out a rough order; generally they proceed from phrases to sentences, from the items that illustrate the basic concrete senses to those that show the extended and figurative uses, and—in translation—from the more literal versions to the freer, more idiomatic ones, thus:

> 一不做, 二不休 once it's begun, go through with it; not do things by halves
> 世故 worldly-wise: 这人相当 ~ 。This chap is rather a smooth character.
> 东拼西凑 scrape together; knock together: 那篇文章是 ~ 的。That article is scissors-and-paste work.
> 眉目 prospect of a solution; sign of a positive outcome: 你托我办的事已经有点 ~ 了。About that job you asked me to do, I'm beginning to get somewhere with it. /计划有了 ~ 。The plan is beginning to take shape.

In all these entries one finds the equivalents and examples support as well as modify each other to build up the sort of interior context I mentioned above. Indeed, the more we work at an entry, the more we tend to treat it as a unified whole. Once in a great while, we manage to produce a well-rounded entry like this:

> 灭[mie]
>
> 1) (of a light, fire, etc.) go out: 火 ~ 了。The fire has gone out. /灯突然 ~ 了。All of a sudden the lights went out.
> 2) extinguish; put out; turn off: ~火 put out a fire; extinguish a fire/节约用电, 人走灯 ~ 。Save electricity. Turn off the lights when you leave.
> 3) submerge; drown: ~顶 be drowned
> 4) destroy; exterminate; wipe out: ~蝇 kill flies/长无产阶级志气, ~资产阶级威风 enhance the morale of the proletariat and puncture the arrogance of the bourgeoisie

Here not only is the Chinese right, the equivalents useful and varied, the order of presentation neat, but there is a gradation and development in the content of the examples and the entry ends on a strong positive note. Admittedly this is a rare case—I wish we had more like it—but even so the much harassed dictionary maker can take some comfort. For this shows that he isn't fated to be Dr. Johnson's "harmless drudge"; indeed, when things really work out, he can go beyond the confines of lexicography and turn a science into an art.

18.5 V

Thus the tale of our long wrestle with words. Words Chinese and English. Plain words, common words, beautiful words, but also militant and hard-hitting words. Each has its proper use for a proper situation—appropriateness is the soul of good style. And a word is not just a sound or a form—it has got things behind and around it. Behind it is an idea or a feeling and around it a tone, a colour, a mental climate. Without these, language is but an empty shell; with these, it is a living creative thing. What finally makes the difference between good and bad language—and, for that matter, good and bad dictionary—is not a man's mastery of certain forms, but his sensibility, his imagination, his intellectual curiosity and daring, his concern for humanity, his world outlook.

Hence the compiler of a bilingual dictionary must concern himself with ideas as much as with language. He must look to the quality of his Chinese examples, the quality of their content as much as that of their language. He must take part in the great revolutionary movements and keep abreast of the latest developments in the world.

At the same time he must also perfect his skill as a lexicographer and improve his knowledge of English and things English. He must try to use English—living, present-day English—to better effect. He must read philosophy, poetry, history, art and literary criticism, scientific literature of all kinds—in a word, more widely and more deeply.

He must…the list seems endless. And yet I cannot refrain from mentioning one last "must" and that is, he must not let himself be snowed under with the mass of minutiae that are accumulating silently but inexorably in his dictionary maker's cubicle. Every now and then he must lift his eyes from the day-to-day routine of dictionary making to look at the far horizons.

In other words, he must keep his mind—and so also his language—fresh. And that will make him a better fellowman as well as a better lexicographer.

1978

Select Bibliography

Note: This is a very selective list, with emphasis on recent Chinese publications. English titles are confined to those consulted by the author. Chinese titles are arranged alphabetically according to *pinyin*. The list is in seven parts:

I. Bibliographies
II. Periodicals
III. Encyclopedias, dictionaries
IV. Anthologies
    a. Comprehensive
    b. Fiction
    c. Poetry
    d. Drama
    e. Essays
    f. Miscellaneous
V. General studies
VI. Recent translations
VII. Shakespeare studies

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世界文学	(World Literature) Bm Beijing 1953—
世界文艺	(World Literature and Art) Q Guangzhou 1981—
苏联文学	(Soviet Literature) Bm Beijing 1980—
外国诗	(Poetry Abroad) A Beijing 1983—
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外国文学季刊	(Foreign Literature Quarterly) Q Beijing 1981—
外国文学报道	(Foreign Literature Report) Bm Shanghai 1980—
外国文学欣赏	(Foreign Literature Appreciation) Q Changsha 1978—
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外国文艺	(Foreign Literature and Art) Bm Shanghai 1979—
外国戏剧	(Foreign Drama) Q Beijing 1980—
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朱光潜: 诗论 三联书店, 1984
(Zhu Guangqian: *On Poetry*)
Auerbach, E. (1953). *Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western literature*. 1946 (Eng. Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
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Prawer, S. S. (1976). *Karl Marx and world literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
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Weisstein, U. (1973). *Comparative literature and literary theory*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

VI. Recent Translations of Individual Works

Note: This list, confined to the years 1978–1984, is even less complete than the rest. Mainly it is based on the catalogues of three publishers, which are:

人民文学出版社 (abbrev. 人文)
People's Literature Publishing House, Beijing;
外国文学出版社 (外文)
Foreign Literature Publishing House, Beijing;
译文出版社 (译文)
Translations Publishing House, Shanghai.

While these are indubitably the major national publishers of translations of literary works, there are numerous provincial and municipal publishers which also put out translations from time to time. These latter are on the whole not represented. Further, some of the titles listed are new editions of old translations, with or without revisions. Looking over the entries again, however, the compiler is satisfied that most major translators and their recent productions are included. Enough has been given, perhaps, to show the range and diversity of the translations made in the period covered.

Akutakawa Ryunosuke: *Selected Fiction*, tr. Wen Jieruo et al
芥川龙之介著, 文洁若等译: 小说选 人文, 1981
Hans Anderson: *Selected Fairy Tales*, tr. Ye Junjian
叶君健译: 安徒生童话选 人文, 1978
José Maria Arguedas: *Los rios profundes*, tr. Zhang Renjian
阿格达斯著, 章仁鉴译:深沉的河流 人文, 1982
Ariyoshi Sawako: *Kokotsu no Hito*, tr. Xiu Feng and Wei Hui
有吉佐和子著, 秀丰、渭彗译:恍惚的人 人文, 1979
Aristotle: *Poetics*, tr. Luo Niansheng
亚里斯多德著, 罗念生译: 诗学 人文, 1982
Miguel Angel Asturias: *El senor Presidente*, tr. Huang Zhiliang and Liu Jingyan
阿斯图里亚斯著, 黄志良, 刘静言译: 总统先生 外文, 1980
Honoré de Balzac: *Complete Works*, vol. 1
巴尔札克全集, 第一卷 人文, 1984
Honoré de Balzac: *Eugene Grandet*; *Pere Goriot*, tr. Fu Lei
巴尔札克著, 傅當译: 欧祖妮·葛朗台高老头 人文, 1980
Honoré de Balzac: *Les Illusions perdues* tr. Fu Lei
巴尔札克著, 傅雷译:幻灭 人文, 1978
Charles Baudelaire: *LesFleurs du Mal*. tr. Wang Liaoyi
波德莱尔著, 王了一译: 恶之花 外文, 1980
Giro Alegria Bazan: *Los Perros hambrientos*, tr. He Xiao
西罗·阿莱格里亚著, 贺晓译: 饥饿的狗 外文, 1982
Pierre-Augustine Caron de Beaumarchais: *Two Plays* (*le Barbier de Seville, le Mariage de Figaro*), tr. Wu Dayuan
博马舍著, 吴达元译:戏剧二种 人文, 1981

Saul Bellow: *Humboldt's Gift*
贝娄著: 洪堡的礼物 江苏人民出版社
Keinrich Boll: *Ansichten Eines Clowns*, tr. Gao Niansheng and Zhang Liecai
伯尔著, 高年生、张烈材译: 小丑之见 译文, 1983
Jorge Luis Borge: *Short Stories*, tr. Wang Yangle
博尔赫斯著, 王央乐译: 博尔赫斯短篇小说集 译文, 1983
Robert Burns: *Selected Poems*, tr. Wang Zuoliang
王佐良译: 彭斯诗选 人文, 1985
George Gordon Byron: *70 Lyrical Poems*, tr. Yang Deyu
杨德豫译: 拜伦抒情诗七十首 湖南人民出版社, 1981
George Gorden Byron: *Don Juan*, 2 vols., tr. Zha Liangzheng.
拜伦著, 查良铮译: 唐璜上、下册 人文, 1980
Albert Camus: *la Peste*, tr. Gu Fangji and Xu Zhiren
加缪著, 顾方济、徐志仁译: 鼠疫 译文, 1980
Cervantes: *Don Quixote*, 2 vols., tr. Yang Jiang
塞万提斯著, 杨绛译: 堂吉诃德上、下册 人文/1978
Anton Chekhov: *Works*, vols. 2 and 3
契诃夫著, 汝龙译: 文集第二、三卷 译文, 1982, 1983
Carlo Collodi: *Pinnochio*, tr. Ren Yongyong
科洛迪著, 任溶: 木偶奇遇记 外文, 1980
Fenimore Cooper: *The Deerslayer*, tr. Bai Bing
库珀著, 白滨译: 打鹿将 外文, 1982
D. Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*, tr. Fang Yuan
笛福著, 方原译: 鲁滨逊漂流记 人文, 1982
Emily Dickenson: *Selected Poems*, tr. Jiang Feng
江枫译: 狄金森诗选 湖南人民出版社, 1984
Dostoevsky: *The Insulted and the Humiliated*, tr. Nan Jiang
陀思妥耶夫斯基著, 南江译: 被欺凌与被侮辱的 人文, 1980
Dostoevsky: *Brothers Karamazov*, tr. Geng Jizhi
陀思妥耶夫斯基著, 耿济之译: 卡拉玛佐夫兄弟 人文, 1981
Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment*, tr. Zhu Haiguan and Wang Xin
陀思妥耶夫斯基著, 朱海观、王信译: 罪与罚
Alexandre Dumas peré: *Count of Monte Cristo*, 4 vols., tr. Jiang Xuemo
大仲马著, 蒋学模译: 基度山伯爵 四册 人文, 1978
Alexandre Dumas fils: *La Dame aux camélias*, tr. Wang Zhensun
小仲马著, 王振孙译: 茶花女 外文, 1980
Aesop's Fables, tr. Luo Niansheng et al
罗念生等译: 伊索寓言 人文, 1981
Eckermann: *Gespräche mit Goethe*, tr. Zhu Guangqian
爱克曼辑录, 朱光潜译: 哥德谈话录 人文, 1978
Ralph Ellison: *The Invisible Man*, tr. Ren Shaoceng et al
拉·艾里森著, 任绍曾等译: 看不见的人 外文, 1984
Antoine de Saint-Exuperv: *Vol de nuit*, tr. Wang Wenyi et al
圣埃克絮佩里著, 汪文漪等译: 夜航 人文, 1981
Fadiev: *Debacle*, tr. Lei Ran

法捷耶夫著, 磊然译: 毁灭 人文, 1978
Gustav Flaubert: *Madame Bovary*, tr. Li Jianwu
福楼拜著, 李健吾译: 包法利夫人 人文, 1979
La Fontaine: *Fables*, tr. Yuan Fang
拉封丹著, 远方译: 寓言诗 人文, 1982
Fumanov: *Chapayev*, tr. Zheng Jisheng et al
富曼诺夫著,郑济生等译:恰巴耶夫 外文, 1981
Rémolo Gallegos: *Dona Barbara*, tr. Bai Ying and Wang Xiang
加列戈斯著, 白婴、王相译: 堂娜巴巴拉 人文, 1979
Gogol: *Selected Fiction and Plays*, tr. Man Tao
果戈里著, 满涛译:小说戏剧选 人文, 1979
M. Gorky: *Selected Works*, 4 vols.
高尔基著, 多人译: 文集四卷 人文, 1982
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M. Gorky: *On Literature*, tr. Meng Chang et al
高尔基著, 孟昌等译: 论文学 人文, 1978
M. Gorky: *Further on Literature*, tr. Bing Yi et al
高尔基著, 冰夷等译: 论文学续集 人文, 1979
Graham Greene: *The Heart of the Matter*, tr. Fu Weici
格雷厄姆·格林著, 傅维慈译.问题的核心 外文, 1980
Hafiz: *Selected Lyrics*, tr. Xing Bingshun
哈菲兹著, 邢秉顺译: 抒情诗选 外文, 1981
Heinrich Heine: *Deutschland, Ein Wintermarchen*, tr. Feng Zhi
海涅著, 冯至译: 德国, 一个冬天的童话 人文, 1978
Heinrich Heine: *Lyrische Gedichte*, tr. Feng Zhi et al
海涅著, 冯至等译: 抒情诗选集 江苏人民出版社, 1984
Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*, tr. Nan Jiang and Zhao Shouyin
海勒著, 南江、赵守垠译: 第二十二条军规 译文, 1979
A.E. Housman: *The Shropshire Lad*, tr. Zhou Xuliang
霍斯曼著, 周煦良译: 西罗普郡少年 湖南人民出版社, 1983
Victor Hugo: *Quartre-vingt-treize*, tr. Zheng Yonghui
雨果著, 郑永彗译: 九三年 人文, 1982
Victor Hugo: *Les Miserables*, 4 vols. tr. Li Dan
雨果著, 李丹译: 悲惨世界四卷 人文, 1958—80
Victor Hugo: *Notre Dame de Paris*, tr. Chen Jingrong
雨果著, 陈敬容译: 巴黎圣母院 人文, 1982
H. Ibsen: *Peer Gynt*, tr. Xiao Qian
易卜生著, 肖乾译: 培尔·京特 人文, 1984
Ibuse Masuji: *Selected Fiction*, tr. Ko Yiwen
井伏鳟二著, 柯毅文译: 小说选 外文, 1982
Inoue Yashushi: *Tenpe no Iraka*, tr. Luo Shiyi
井上靖著, 楼适夷译: 元平之薨 人文, 1980
Kafka: *Castle*, tr. Tang Yongkuan

卡夫卡著, 汤永宽译: 城堡 译文, 1980
Kato Taichi: *Shiroi Epiron to Shiroi Yagi*, tr. Gao Liefu
加藤多一著, 高烈夫译: 白围裙和白山羊 人文, 1979
Kawabata Yasunari: *Maihime*, tr. Tang Yuemei
川端康成著, 唐月梅译: 舞姬 外文, 1984
Gottfried Keller: *Der Griine Heinrich*, Vol. I, tr. Tian Dewang
凯勒著, 田德望译: 绿衣亨利上册 人文, 1980
O. Killens: Youngblood, 2 vols. tr. Zhang Yousong
基伦斯著, 张友松译: 杨布拉德一家 上、下册 外文, 1980
Henry Lawson: *Selected Short Stories*
劳森著, 多人译: 短篇小说集 人文, 1978
Lermontov: *Hero of Our Time*, tr. Zhai Songnian; another version, tr. Cao Ying
莱蒙托夫著, 翟松年译: 当代英雄 人文, 1978
莱蒙托夫著, 草婴译: 当代英雄 译文, 1982
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Laocoon*, tr. Zhu Guangqian
莱辛著, 朱光潜译: 拉奥孔 人文, 1979
Mario Vargas Llosa: *La Ciudad y los Perros*, tr. Zhao Shaotian
马里奥·巴尔斯斯, 略萨著, 赵绍天译: 城市与狗 外文, 1981
Jack London: *The Call of the Wild*, tr. Jiang Tianzuo
杰克·伦敦著, 蒋天佐译: 荒野的呼唤 外文, 1981
Jack London: *White Fang*, tr. Jiang Tianzuo
杰克·伦敦著, 蒋天佐译: 雪虎 外文, 1982
Jack London: *Selected Short Stories*, tr. Wan Zi and Yu Ning
杰克·伦敦著, 万紫、雨宁译: 短篇小说选 外文, 1981
Bernard Malamud: *The Assistant*, tr. Ye Feng
马拉默德著, 叶封译: 伙计 译文, 1980
Gabriel García Márquez: *Novelettes and Short Stories*, tr. Zhao Deming et al
加西亚·马尔克斯著, 赵德明等译: 中短篇小说集 译文, 1982
Gabriel García Márquez: *Cien anos de Soledad*, tr. Gao Changrong; another version, tr. Huang Jinyan et al
加西亚·马尔克斯著, 高长荣译: 百年孤独《长篇小说》总第三期, 北京十月出版 社, 1984
加西亚·马尔克斯著, 黄锦炎、沈国正、陈泉译: 百年孤独 译文, 1984
Somerset Maugham: *The Moon and Six Pence*, tr. Fu Weici
毛姆著, 傅惟慈译: 月亮和六便士 外文, 1932
Guy de Maupassant: *Selected Novelettes and Short Stories*, tr. Hao Yun and Zhao Shaohou
郝运, 赵少候译: 莫泊桑中短篇小说选 人文, 1981
Mayakovsky: *Selected Works*, 2 vols.
马雅可夫斯基著, 多人译: 选集上、下卷 人文, 1984
Minakami Tsutomu: *Selected Works*
水上勉著, 多人译: 选集 人文, 1982
Murasaki Shikibu: *The Tale of Genji*, 2 vols., tr. Feng Zikai
紫式部著, 丰子恺译: 源氏物语二卷 人文, 1980, 1982
Vladmir Nabokov: *Pnin*, tr. Mei Shaowu

纳博科夫著, 梅绍武译:普宁 译文, 1982
Joyce Carol Oates: *Wonderland*, tr. Song Zhaolin et al
乔伊斯·卡洛尔·欧茨著, 宋兆霖等译: 奇境 外文, 1980
Sean O'Casey: *Selected Plays*, tr. Huang Yushi and Lin Yijin
奥凯西著, 黄雨石、林疑今译: 戏剧选 人文, 1982
N. Ostrovsky: *How Steel Was Tempered*, tr. Mei Yi
尼·奥斯特洛夫斯基著, 梅益译: 钢铁是怎样炼成的 外文, 1932
Plato: *Dialogues*, tr. Zhu Guangqian
柏拉图著, 朱光潜译: 文艺对话集 人文, 1980
Edgar Allan Poe: *Selected Short Stories*, tr. Chen Liangting and Xu Ruchun
爱论·坡著, 陈良廷、徐汝春译: 短篇小说选 外文, 1982
Pushkin: *Selected Lyrical Poems*, tr. Liu Zhanqiu
普希金著, 刘湛秋译: 抒情诗选 湖南人民出版社, 1984
Alain Rohbe-Grillet: *Les Gommes*; tr. Lin Qing
罗布-格里耶著, 林青译: 橡皮 译文, 1981
Roman R.oland: *Jean Christophe*, 4 vols., tr. Fu Lei
罗曼·罗兰著, 傅雷译: 约翰, 克利斯朵夫四册 人文, 1930
Jean Jacques Rousseau: *Les Confessions*, 2 vols., tr. Li Xing and Fan Xiheng
卢梭著, 黎星译: 忏悔录 (第一部) 人文, 1980
卢梭著, 范希衡译: 忏悔录 (第二部) 人文, 1983
Juan Rulfo: *Novelettes and Short Stories*, tr. Ni Huadi et al
胡安·鲁尔讳著, 倪华迪等译: 中短篇小说集 外文, 1980
Sadi: *Rose Garden*, tr. Shui Jianfu
萨迪著, 水建馥译: 蔷薇园 人文, 1980
Le Sage: *Gil Blas*, tr. Yang Jiang
勒萨日著, 杨绛译: 吉尔·布拉斯
George Sand: *Horace*, tr. Luo Guoling
乔治·桑著, 罗国林译: 奥拉斯 湖南人民出版社, 1984
Walter Scott: *Ivanhoe*, tr. Liu Zunqi and Zhang Yi
司各特著, 刘尊棋、章益译: 艾凡赫 人文, 1978
Walter Scott: *Heart of Midlothian*, tr. Zhang Yi
司各特著, 章益译: 中洛辛郡的心脏 人文, 1981
Walter Scott: *Old Mortality*, tr. Wang Peide
司各特著, 王培德译: 修墓老人 人文, 1981
Walter Scott: *Kenilworth*, tr. Wang Peide
司各特著, 王培德译: 肯纳尔沃思堡 人文, 1982
William Shakespeare: *Complete Works*, 11 vols. tr. Zhu Shenghao et al
莎士比亚著, 朱生豪等译: 全集11卷 人文, 1978
Irwin Shaw: *Rich Man, Poor Man*, 2 vols., tr. Shi Xianrong et al
欧文·肖著, 施咸荣等译: 富人, 穷人 上、下册 外文, 1980
Percy Bysshe Shelley: *Selected Poems*, tr. Jiang Feng
江枫译: 雪莱诗选 湖南人民出版社, 1980
Shimazaki Toson: *Hakai*, tr. Ke Yiwen and Chen Dewen
岛山奇藤村著, 柯毅文、陈德文译: 破戒 人文, 1982
Shiroyama Saburo: *Selected Fiction*, tr. Wang Dunxu and Shi Renmeng

城山三郎著, 王敦旭, 施人梦译: 小说选 外文, 1980
Isaac Bashevis Singer: *Selected Short Stories*, tr. Wan Zi et al
辛格著, 万紫等译: 短篇小说集 外文, 1980
Isaac Bashevis Singer: *The Magician of Lublin*, tr. Lu Jin and Wu Lao
辛格著, 鹿金、吴劳译: 卢布林的魔术师 译文, 1979
Tobias Smollett: *Roderick Random*, tr. Yang Zhouhan
斯末莱特著, 杨周翰译: 蓝登传 译文, 1980
Sono Ayako: *Selected Fiction*, tr. Wen Jieruo and Wen Xuepu
曾野绫子著, 文洁若、文学朴译: 小说选 外文, 1982
John Steinbeck: *The Grapes of Wrath*, tr. Hu Zhongchi
斯坦培克著, 胡仲持译: 愤怒的葡萄 外文, 1982
John Steinbeck: *Winter of Discontent*, tr. Wu Junyi
斯坦培克著, 吴均燮译: 烦恼的冬天 人文, 1982
Strindberg: *Selected Plays*, tr. Shi Qin'e et al
斯特林堡著, 石琴娥等译: 戏剧选
J. Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*, tr. Zhang Jian
斯威夫特著, 张健译: 格列佛游记 人文, 1979
R. Tagore: *Selected Poems*, tr. Shi Zhen and Xie Bingxin
泰戈尔著, 石真、谢冰心等译: 诗选 人文, 1980
Henry David Thoreau: *Walden*, tr. Xu Chi
梭罗著, 徐迟译: 瓦尔登湖 译文, 1982
R. Tressell: *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, tr. Sun Zhu et al
特雷塞尔著, 孙铢等译: 穿破裤子的慈善家 译文
A Thousand and One Nights, Vols. 1–6, tr. Na Xun
纳训译: 一千零一夜 1—6 卷 人文, 1982–1984
Leo Tolstoy: *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols., tr. Zhou Yang and Xie Sutai; another version, tr. Cao Ying
列夫·托尔斯泰著, 周扬、谢素台译: 安娜·卡列尼娜 上、下册 人文, 1981
列夫·托尔斯泰著, 草婴译: 安娜, 卡列尼娜 上、下册 译文, 1982
Leo Tolstoy: *Resurrection*, tr. Ru Long: another version, tr. Cao Ying
列夫·托尔斯泰著, 汝龙译: 复活修订本 人文, 1979
列夫·托尔斯泰著, 草婴译: 复活 译文, 1983
Leo Tolstoy: *Caucasian Captive*, tr. Shi Yi et al
列夫·托尔斯泰著, 适夷等译: 高加索的俘虏
Ivan Sergeyevich Turgeniev: *Virgin Soil*, tr. Ba Jin
屠格涅夫著, 巴金译: 处女地 人文, 1979
Valmiki: *Ramayana*, 7 vols., tr. Ji Xianlin
蚁垤著, 季羡林译: 罗摩衍那 七卷 (八册) 人文, 1980–84
I. M. Vazov: *Selected Poems*, tr. Yang Yanjie
伐佐夫著, 杨燕杰译: 诗选 人文, 1982
Jules Verne: *Selected Works*, tr. various hands (7 titles published)
凡尔纳选集, 多人译 (已出7种) 中国青年出版社 1979–81
Virgil: *Aeneid*, tr. Yang Zhouhan
维琪尔著, 杨周翰译: 埃涅阿斯纪 人文, 1984
Voltaire: *Selected Fiction*, tr. Fu Lei

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