

Translating Wor(l)ds 4

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May Fourth and Translation

edited by
Kevin Henry



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

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Translating Wor(l)ds

A series edited by
Nicoletta Pesaro

4



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Translating Wor(l)ds

Collana di studi sulla traduzione e traduzioni delle lingue asiatiche e nordafricane

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Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

Palazzo Vendramin, Dorsoduro 3462 | 30123 Venezia, Italia

trans_w@unive.it

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4 May 1919: Translation in Motion

Kevin Henry

Université de Mons, Belgium

In January 1919, after four years of bloody conflict which had spread round the globe, the victors of the First World War gathered in Versailles to sign a document that would send the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires into oblivion, effectively drawing the borders of a new world. By joining forces with the Allies against Germany in 1917, the young Republic of China had hoped to reassert its sovereignty over those portions of its territory (Qingdao and Jiaozhou Bay, Yantai) that had been placed under German rule twenty years earlier. Unfortunately for China, the Treaty of Versailles attributed those territories to Japan, which, at the time, was also a member of the coalition against the central empires and which had demanded those territories as early as 1915 (Twenty-One Demands). Outraged by what they considered a betrayal – especially since the Chinese government was suspected of having offered the territories up in exchange for the promise of a loan from Japan – three thousand students gathered on 4 May 1919 in Peking before the Tiananmen to express their discontent and their anger towards the pro-Japanese officials. Very rapidly, in spite of the warlords’ attempts to intervene, the nationalist wave, accompanied by social movements, swept over Shanghai paralysing the entire Chinese economy. The movement succeeded in convincing the government to refuse to sign the Treaty of Versailles in June, a decision that, ultimately, had little effect on the Japanese presence in China. Despite this, the student demonstrations marked the emergence of a veritable political consciousness among

the Chinese population, who had seen their power usurped in 1912, after the Republican Revolution, by the autocratic interim president, Yuan Shikai 袁世凱. In particular, the movement served as a soap-box for a plurality of political doctrines, including the left. In fact, the Communist Party of China was founded in 1921 by intellectuals (Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 and Li Dazhao 李大釗) who had actively participated in the 4 May events.

This nascent political and nationalistic dimension aside, the May Fourth Movement, led principally by an emerging class of young academics and intellectuals, was part of the larger New Culture Movement, which flourished between 1915 and the end of the 1920s. Students, who had been exposed since the end of the nineteenth century to Japanese and Western influences, issued social and cultural demands which included their government's engaging with other nations; they embraced such values as democracy, equality and individual freedom. The Confucian way of life was considered incompatible with the modern era and was rejected in favour of rationalism and science. Classical Chinese, too, was seen as a straightjacket that prevented new ideas from bursting forth, and became unpopular. Instead, the leaders of the movement sought to promote the vernacular language, especially in literature, so that it could be made available to the largest possible audience, a mission which was carried out by such universally known figures as Lu Xun 魯迅, Mao Dun 茅盾, Lao She 老舍, Bing Xin 冰心 and Hu Shih 胡適.

Given the decisive role it played in the construction of the modern Chinese state – an importance that has been recognised officially on both sides of the Formosa Strait – as well as in the literary and intellectual domains, the May Fourth Movement warranted a large-scale international scientific event in its own right. What better time, then, than the year marking the hundredth anniversary of those student demonstrations to organise, not just a cultural commemoration, but an academic conference befitting its imprint on the Chinese psyche? Thus, on May 2-3-4, 2019, an international interdisciplinary conference dedicated to this landmark event of the Chinese nation was organised at the Université de Mons, Belgium (Written Communication Service in the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation – School of International Interpreters, and School of Human and Social Sciences), in collaboration with the East Asian Studies research centre of the Université libre de Bruxelles, represented by Vanessa Frangville and Coraline Jortay, whom we thank for their outstanding support.

The present volume of *Translating Wor(l)ds* is a compilation of five papers presented at this conference which attempt, through various approaches and from various angles, to answer the following question: how can the impact of the intense translation effort made in the early years of the Republic of China best be measured?

Indeed, already at the end of the Qing imperial dynasty, in the 1870s and 1880s, translation was slowly being revived after centuries of stagnation, as China was losing momentum against the colonial powers. The view of the Manchu rulers at that time was to gather Western science without radically reforming the traditional political system. To this end, the learning of foreign languages and the translation of European and Japanese books into Chinese were encouraged in order to unlock the secrets of Western success. Translation offices and schools with foreign advisers were set up in the new industrial facilities, and many words were adapted from Japanese to make Chinese a language capable of expressing all the abstract concepts brought by modernity. Following the Boxer revolt in 1900-1901, the Chinese Empire undertook a radical reform of its education system, which saw the creation of the first Western-style universities. China then began sending its youth to Europe and Japan to study science and new ways of thinking. However, at the time, translation, subservient to economics and politics, had only a purely utilitarian function.

At the beginning of the 20th century, as the country became a republic while sinking into political chaos, intellectual and literary activity was flourishing, peaking in the decade 1915-1925. In the New Culture movement, which flourished from the late 1910s to the mid-1920s in the wake of the events of May 4, translation took on a completely different dimension. As mentioned above, one of the most important aspects of this movement was indeed the conviction that the Chinese language and script needed to be modernised. Traditionally, the great Chinese works of philosophy, poetry and law were written in a complex, concise and archaic language, known as classical literary Chinese, while less noble literature, such as novels or practical books, was written in a language closer to the oral usage, although still affected, called vernacular Chinese. In 1919, renowned intellectuals and writers wanted to rehabilitate this popular literature by abandoning classical Chinese and using only modern written Chinese, based on the contemporary language. Attempts were even made to abolish the Chinese characters and adopt an alphabetical transcription, but this undertaking was unsuccessful. Newspapers, magazines and novels in the modern language flourished; among them, the magazines created by progressive writers played a leading role. *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (*La Jeunesse*) was the first to launch new literary ideas. The ideals of this magazine were the struggle against Confucianism, its ritualism and the old society, the promotion of science and technology, and the establishment of an artistic and linguistic revolution. It was not until 1920 that the Chinese government generalised the teaching of contemporary Chinese in schools; this year alone, more than four hundred newspapers appeared in the modern language. Step by step, the modern language became, in accordance with the wishes of intellectuals, the vehicle for new thinking.

Gradually, the writers grouped together in areopagi, in which two main currents can be distinguished: on the one hand, a romantic conception of *yishu zhishang* 藝術至上 (Art for Art's sake); on the other, a certain social realism, with literature as a mirror of society and as a tool for denouncing the vices of the regime. The 創造社 Creation Society, whose personalities included Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Yu Dafu 郁達夫, had the motto "*cong wenxue geming dao geming wenxue*" 從文學革命到革命文學 (from the literary revolution to the literature of the revolution). This academy was rather a group of writers who had joined the romantic movement. On the other hand, the *Wenxue yanjiu hui* 文學研究社 (Society for Literary Research), centred around the *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報 (Short Story Magazine) whose members included Mao Dun and Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶, had adopted the motto "*wenxue wei rensheng*" 文學為人生 (Literature for Life). Behind this statement lay three messages: the first was that literature should not just be a distraction, because it should make the reader aware of the lives of real people; the second was that the author should devote himself to describing life and its transformation; and the third was that the writer should invest himself in his work, making writing his profession for life. The third literary group of importance at that time was, finally, the poetry circle of the *xiandai pai* 現代派 (Modern School): through his magazine *Xiandai zazhi* 現代雜誌 (*Les Contemporains*), it revealed the talents of great writers, in particular Lu Xun, who denounced the evils of Chinese society through his works, and Yu Dafu, who focused more on the feeling of unease in a period of transition where values were radically changing, but later also great writers such as Ba Jin 巴金, Lao She, Mao Dun or Dai Wangshu 戴望舒. In this thirst for creativity and innovation, new literary styles emerged, mainly from French, Russian and Anglo-Saxon influences. Numerous foreign works (Zola, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Gorki, Swift...) were translated, allowing Chinese writers to draw their inspiration from Western currents. In the span of just over a decade, China hurriedly embraced all the currents and theories that Europe took over a century to produce: Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Dadaism, and Surrealism; all these influences left a deep imprint on national production. The new Chinese novels written at that time were no longer long epics, but short, incisive short stories, exacerbating social criticism. As for drama, the model of the Peking opera disappeared to make way for a Western-style theatre, under the influence of personalities such as Ibsen. As we can see, translation therefore played a decisive role in the 'renaissance' of Chinese language and literature.

All the contributions included in this book shed new light on certain aspects of this formidable 'wave' of translations and literary renewal that followed the May Fourth movement.

In his paper entitled “Ba Jin, ‘Offspring of May 4th’, Time Bomb and Utopian Impulse”, Prof. Yinde Zhang from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 focuses on the complex figure and personality of Ba Jin (1904-2005), who is best known for his radical masterpiece *Jia* 家 (The Family, 1933), which chronicles intergenerational conflict between old ways and progressive aspirations in an upper-class family in the early 1920s. In contrast to the revolutionary anarchism, nihilism and libertarianism to which the writer is too often reduced, Yinde Zhang undertakes to highlight the utopianism and cosmopolitanism of Ba Jin, through the analysis of some of his early works such as *Hai de meng* 海的夢 (The Dream of the Sea, 1932) and various essays. In this way, he shows how Ba Jin, through his activism of deconstruction and his emphasis on freedom in all its forms and the power of the imagination, fully embodied the May 4th legacy.

For her part, Prof. Joan Judge from York University in Canada, in her article “The Other Vernacular: Commoner Knowledge Culture Circa 1919”, examines the links and contradictions between two iconic projects of the New Culture Movement: the reconciliation with the ‘common people’ and the construction of a vernacular language. By doing so, Joan Judge attempts to deconstruct the unidirectional narrative that is too often given to the multifaceted May Fourth movement. Focusing on the figure of Hu Pu’an 胡樸安 and his publishing house Kwang Yih Book Co. Ltd. 廣益書局, the author recalls that May Fourth was not only the business of proponents of an all-out Westernisation, but also involved a whole ‘folklorist’ current leaning towards a certain ‘Confucian populism’, as shown by the book *Zhonghua quanguo fengsu zhi* 中華全國風俗志 (Record of Customs throughout China, 1922). This social project to safeguard the authentic heritage of the authentic popular China was also accompanied by an attraction for ‘common sayings’, considered as an integral part of the vernacular Chinese language in the making, as seen through the *Suyu dian* 俗語典 (Dictionary of the Origin of Common Sayings), compiled by the same Hu Pu’an.

In “A Space of Their Voices: (Un)apologies for Translation in the May Fourth Journal *New Tide*”, Michelle Jia Ye from the Chinese University of Hong Kong explores the place and role of translation in the student journal *Xin chao* 新潮 (New Tide), published at Peking University between 1919 and 1922. Focusing in particular on the paratext and peritext (marginalia) of translations, the author identifies two competing types of translations: on the one hand, ‘provisional’ Chinese versions of foreign works, humbly presented as such by young scholars; and, on the other, appropriations of foreign sources, hidden in critical essays legitimising the quest for rejuvenation of the actors of the New Culture Movement. In this way, Michelle Jia Ye illustrates how translation in itself reveals the complexity of the voices in the ‘frame space’ of a journal that contributed to the formation of the May Fourth paradigm.

Addressing the introduction of Western tragedy in China, Letizia Fusini from SOAS University of London, in her paper “Innovative or Rather Traditional? Confucianising Tragedy in May Fourth China”, discusses the plurality of meanings and the semantic evolution of the Chinese term *beiju* 悲劇 (tragedy), originally borrowed from Japanese, around May Fourth. Showing the extent to which this neologism is imbued with Confucian spirituality and traditional Chinese poetics (*bei* 悲 being one of the cardinal emotions identified by Chinese stylistics), the author investigates the extent to which tragedy, a ‘modern’ dramatic form absent from the Chinese tradition considered by the advocates of the New Culture as a powerful tool capable of expressing the social ills of the Chinese people, was in fact received and interpreted by the local audience through the prism of Chinese philosophy rather than through the introduction of Western theories.

Finally, in his contribution named “Agents of May Fourth: Jing Yinyu, Xu Zhongnian, and the Early Introduction of Modern Chinese Literature in France”, Paolo Magagnin from the Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia takes the reverse point of view, asking to what extent translation had enabled the political, cultural and literary upheavals of 4 May 1919 to resonate abroad, and particularly in France. The author dedicates his analysis in particular to Jing Yinyu 敬隱漁 (1901-1931?), translator of Lu Xun and author of an *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes* (An Anthology of Modern Chinese Novelists, 1929), and to Xu Zhongnian 徐仲年 (1904-1981), compiler of an *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise. Des origines à nos jours* (An Anthology of Chinese Literature, from its Origins to the Present Day, 1932). Examining the nature, objective and formal characteristics of these two projects, Magagnin seeks essentially to highlight the artistic and ideological stance of the two Chinese ‘agents of translation’ towards the new literary scene, while attempting to pinpoint the influence of this initiative on the foreign readership.

The various contributions in this anthology will undeniably contribute to the discussion on the critical but ambiguous role of translation in the troubled period of May Fourth in China, while opening, at the same time, fruitful new avenues of research.

Innovative or Rather Traditional? Confucianising Tragedy in May Fourth China

Letizia Fusini

SOAS, University of London

Abstract A key aspect of the May Fourth Movement was the critical discussion of Western tragedy. While the interest in tragedy was sparked by the assumption that China lacked an analogous genre, its interpretation and adaptation to the Chinese context suggests that a traditional ‘indigenous’ filter was applied to define its supposed ‘modernity’. Through cross-comparing Chinese conceptions of *beiju* 悲劇 in the May Fourth era and traditional Chinese views of *bei* 悲, this paper will seek to show that the Chinese reception of tragedy was informed by the rejuvenation of traditional ideas rather than the introduction of purely ‘Western’ theories.

Keywords Tragedy. Beiju, 悲劇. Melancholy. Sadness. May Fourth movement. Modernity.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Tragedy in Late and Post-imperial China: Debating the Significance of *beiju*. – 3 Poetry and Autumn Melancholia: The Historical Roots of Beiju. – 4 From the Theatre to Real Life: Confucianising Tragedy. – 5 Conclusive Remarks: Beiju or Rather Aiju?.

1 Introduction

China’s first encounter with the theatrical form of Western tragedy happened during the late Qing dynasty and more precisely in the early years of the twentieth century, albeit indirectly via the mediation of Japanese translations of European literary and philosophical works. The compound word that designates ‘tragedy’ in modern Chinese, namely *beiju*, is in fact a historical neologism as well as a loanword from the Japanese *higeki*. The reception of tragedy and its integration within China’s emerging “discourse of modernity”

(Denton 1995, 3) reached its height within the context of the New Culture Movement, which led to the creation of Western Style New Drama also known as *huaju*. The latter's origins are conventionally traced back to the founding of the *Spring Willow Society* (1907), a drama group composed entirely of Chinese expat students in Japan who started their activity by staging adaptations of popular Western novels and operas such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Lady of the Camelias*.¹ The unifying trait of these plays consists in their ending tragically, thereby breaking the tradition of 'roundism' (*tuanyuan zhuyi*) that typified the majority of classical Chinese dramas and was deeply ingrained in the Chinese theatrical imagination of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Devising plots that did not issue in a 'great reunion' (*da tuanyuan*) became the imperative of the new generation of Chinese playwrights as this was perceived, as we shall see, as the only possible gateway to civilisation, modernity and enlightenment in May Fourth China. Particularly, the appropriation of Western tragedy and tragic thought was a direct consequence of what Denton has defined "a tremendous psychological blow" (Denton 1995, 65), namely the realisation of China's military and cultural inferiority vis-à-vis the Western colonial powers and a Japan that had strengthened itself while creatively appropriating Western cultural values. Observing dramatic characters struggling with an ill-fated destiny and witnessing to dramatic plots revolving around the clash of good and evil forces was to have powerful pedagogic effects, teaching audiences how to grapple with setbacks, calamities and misfortune in a time of unprecedented historical crisis. However, the creation of fully-fledged Chinese tragic plays was preceded by scholarly discussions aimed at defining the effective value and purpose of introducing tragedy to the Chinese stages.

While some effort has already been done in reconstructing the main tenets of China's discourse on the effectiveness of tragedy and its role in the modernization process,² further work needs to be undertaken in order to discern the impact of traditional Chinese culture on the transculturation of (Western) tragedy by May Fourth intellectuals. This paper will therefore examine some key ideas on (modern) *beiju* expressed by writers of the like of Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Ouyang Yuqian and Xiong Foxi over a timespan of two decades (1918-1933) and compare them to traditional notions of *bei*. Ultimately, this paper will seek to prove that there is a fundamental mismatch between the original meaning of *bei* and its acquired meaning forged by Chinese writers during the New Culture Movement.

¹ As testified by Ouyang Yuqian in his memoir *Tan wenmingxi* (On Civilised Drama), tragedies outnumbered comedies in the repertoire of the Spring Willow Society.

² In particular, see chapter 2 of Wang 2004.

Kirk Denton amply highlights that May Fourth literary theory is generally characterised by a coexistence of radical and conservative forces. These, albeit apparently in reciprocal contrast, on a closer inspection clearly belong to a common root. Although tradition was attacked iconoclastically on many fronts, it was not at all destroyed but was – perhaps unwittingly – infused with a new life. As Denton puts it: “What the radicalness of promoting fiction cannot conceal is a profoundly traditional view of the social-moral function of literature” (Denton 1995, 67). As we shall see next, what he maintains with regard to Liang Qichao and his concurrently innovative and traditional view of fiction can be applied to *beiju* as well.

Below, I will argue that the newly-constructed, transcultured notion of *beiju* does not represent a complete break with the past as it is informed by traditional ideas embedded in Confucianism. Still, it certainly expresses a new and original take on an originally Western yet now globalised dramatic genre/intellectual category. The modern concept of *beiju* fits the definition of ‘a site of contending discourses’ (Denton 1995, 5), once again corroborating the idea that “traditional philosophical and literary values played a role in shaping the reception of those Western literary concepts” (33). I will endeavour to prove that the purpose of *beiju* as it emerges from the conceptualisation of May Fourth intellectuals is not the representation or aestheticisation of suffering and moral pain, but the arousal of a sense of compassion and indignation meant to facilitate the overcoming of melancholy, pessimism and passivity. Furthermore, and for the avoidance of any doubt, I shall anticipate that the present study is not meant to engage in-depth the long-standing question of whether or not China has ever produced plays that can be compared to tragedies in the Western sense of the term,³ nor is it concerned with analysing the dramatic output that emerged between the 1920s and the 1940s and which was clearly inspired by Western tragic models. The reason for excluding consideration of the latter is that the focus of this paper is on how May Fourth writers and critics interpreted and recreated the *perception* of a foreign literary genre by applying a culturally-embedded filter to inform their analysis. Nevertheless, to show the characteristics of such a filter, some passing reference will inevitably be made to relevant traditional works of Chinese drama.

³ Isabella Falaschi has already dealt with the issue of the existence of a Chinese tragedy in her 2002 French-language PhD dissertation entitled *Beiju: la question de la “tragédie Chinoise” dans le théâtre des Yuan (1279-1368)* (2002).

2 Tragedy in Late and Post-imperial China: Debating the Significance of *beiju*

The notions of tragedy and comedy are generally absent from ancient Chinese dramatic theory. The term *beiju* 悲劇, which represents the Chinese translation of the word ‘tragedy’, entered modern Chinese through the influence of the Japanese theatre reform movement of the Meiji era (1868-1912). ‘Tragedy’ stems from the Greek word *tragoidia*, whose literal meaning is ‘goat-song’ (*tragos*: goat and *oidia*: song), possibly a reminiscence of a certain kind of ritual symbolism harking back to the sacrificial killing of a goat offered to Dionysus – the patron-god of drama in ancient Greece. Here, the emphasis is on performance and betrays the theatrical origins of tragedy as an artistic genre. *Beiju*, instead, might better translate as ‘mourning play’ or ‘play of grief’ (*bei*: sadness and *ju*: play) and, in its original Japanese translation (*higeki* 悲劇) was probably coined as a calque of the German word *Trauerspiel*. The latter is a form of bourgeois drama which originated in the 17th century pre-Enlightenment culture and which, in the words of his most famous theorist Walter Benjamin, is separated from tragedy by ‘a gulf’ (1998, 135). Although a full discussion of the alleged differences between *Trauerspiel* and tragedy falls outside the scope of this essay, it is worth mentioning that, according to Benjamin, the contents and structure of the *Trauerspiel* were influenced by the Lutheran doctrine of human nature as irremediably corrupted by original sin. Therefore, unlike tragedy, which portrays the heroic deaths of mythological/legendary heroes acting out of *hybris*, *Trauerspiel* features characters who mourn their creaturely condition and whose demise is not caused by an act of wilful transgression but by their sinking into the ruthless cycle of history, whose undisputed ruler is Satan. In other words, while tragedy extols humanity, showing a tragic hero that is ultimately “superior to the gods” (Pensky 1993, 80), *Trauerspiel* broods over the ruinous effects of history in determining the destiny of a community. Since it does not seek to portray an optimistic picture of the trials of earthly life, there are no individual tragic heroes in *Trauerspiel* and no intention of ennobling the human role in history. As we shall see next, these characteristics clash with the dominant view of *beiju* during the May Fourth era.

One must bear in mind that tragedy for the Chinese was a doubly foreign concept and therefore *beiju* can be construed as a doubly ‘altered’ product of the Chinese imagination. The word first appeared in *The Poem of The Prisoner* (1892) by Kitamura Tokoku 北村 透谷 who was the leader of the Japanese Romantic movement. It is agreed that the first individuals to make use of this term in a Chinese context were scholars Jiang Guanyun 蒋观云 and Wang Guowei 王國維. In an article published in 1903 (see Jiang 1960), Jiang encouraged his compatriots to populate the nascent *huaqu* repertoire with trag-

edies. He advocated so, primarily because he believed that, if comedy prevailed over tragedy, this could have disastrous effects over the Chinese society.⁴ Furthermore, his invective was meant to defy the accusations of a Japanese journal who had condemned Chinese theatre for being ‘childish, stupid and ordinary’ due to an apparent lack of tragic works.

Wang Guowei’s interpretation of tragedy was influenced not only by the ideas of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche but also by those of the Japanese thinker Taoka Reiun 田岡 嶺雲, one of whose essays was entitled “The Pleasure of Tragedy” and who, unlike Jiang, did not endorse an utilitarian view of literature (Li 2011, 199). Wang discussed tragedy in two of his essays. In “Honglouloumeng pinglun” 红楼梦评论 (1904), he presented the Qing-dynasty eponymous novel as a ‘fully-fledged tragedy’ (彻头彻尾的悲剧) and ‘a tragedy within a tragedy’ (悲剧中之悲剧). He further argued that there had never been any tragedies in the classical theatre of China. Almost a decade later, in his history of the Song and Yuan theatre (*Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戏曲考, 1913), he indicated *The Orphan of Zhao* (*Zhao shi gu’er* 赵氏孤儿) and *Injustice to Dou’E* (*Dou’E yuan* 窦娥冤) as plays with some tragic characteristics. Wang Guowei’s merit lies in having rectified the claim that China’s classical theatre has never had any plays comparable to the great Western tragedies.

At this early stage of the debate, a thoroughly ‘Chinese’ view of tragedy seems to be still missing as little to no reference is made to existing Chinese dramatic concepts. Paradoxically, this situation will take a new turn with the May Fourth writers who will criticise the old theatre for his supposed un-tragicness, yet will ascribe to *beiju* a moral and didactic task deeply embedded in the tradition and totally affranchised from the original meaning of *bei*.

Below, I will summarise and comment on the views of Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Ouyang Yuqian and Xiong Foxi.

In a 1918 essay entitled “The Concept of Literary Revolution and Theatre Reform” (see Hu 1996), Hu Shi stresses the necessity for Chinese theatre to innovate itself through the adoption of Western concepts and motifs, and characterises tragedy as the next stage of an evolutionary process that should bring about the liberation of Chinese theatre from the shackles of conservatism and apathy. The adoption of tragedy, which is a genre that, according to Hu, the West has been continuously developing throughout the centuries, will instil a sense of historical consciousness in the mind of the Chinese. In this sense, Hu Shi highlights the benefits of re-assessing Chinese theatre against foreign forms of drama through the perspective of comparative literature

⁴ Jiang warns, rather dramatically, that an overabundance of comedies could cause ‘calamities’ (惨剧) and bring ‘demons’ (孽) into the society (51).

studies. He notes that the Chinese struggle to portray real life dramatically as they tend to end their works with what he defines a ‘great reunion’ (*da tuanyuan*), which normally consists in a literal coming back together of a separated couple (principle of *beihuan lihe*) and/or in the punishment of wrongdoers. Hu calls this tendency to ‘roundism’ ‘superstitious’, because it implies that problems and contradictions can be solved through the intervention of a higher will, namely Heaven. He further mentions that Heaven is neither benevolent nor malevolent (like Fate in Greek tragedy), that there is no such phenomenon as karmic retribution and that good and evil are not clearly distinct categories. In his view, the problem of evil and the reality of human suffering have a social origin, therefore he urges dramatists to represent social ills credibly, honestly and realistically, and to dispense with the device of the final ‘reunion’. In so doing, dramatists can act as social reformers because their works will be purified by any trace of fraudulence and will stimulate the audience to ponder concrete ways of stopping those injustices in real life and to combat the negatives of a patriarchal society. Moreover, Hu Shi thinks that tragedy is endowed with a ‘deep moral force’ because by representing situations of extreme suffering, and by fostering emotional engagement by the audience, it forces the latter to develop introspective skills, critical thinking skills and, most importantly, the virtue of compassion. As he puts, it is in times of hardship that “people become close to each other” (Hu 1996, 113) and put aside their natural selfishness.

In a 1925 essay entitled “On Looking with Closed Eyes” (see Lu 1973), Lu Xun laments the fact that the Chinese people lack the courage to face up the realities of human life and explains this apparent deficiency as a consequence of the old Confucian saying whereby one should not act in any way that transgresses the norms of ethical behaviour, including the act of seeing (非礼勿视). Although this has nothing to do with tragedy, it is possible to discern some veiled references to the beneficial powers of this form of drama. Later on, Lu Xun underlines the necessity to experience personally the distress generated from conflictual, contradictory situations that affect society. He strongly rejects the idea of sitting back and resign to Heaven’s will, and condemns as illogical the national predisposition to explain the difficulties of the present time as a temporary training period imposed by Heaven on the individual who is tasked with an important mission to accomplish and who is predestined to a happy conclusion. In this sense, he seems to condemn, albeit indirectly, the tragicomic structure that characterises innumerable plays of the classical repertoire, where obstacles and contradictions are only a transient phase of a dramatic process that advances towards the good. In this, he sees the will of writers who encourage the whole nation to close their eyes in an act of deception and self-deception. What Hu Shi had called with more indulgence ‘great reunion’, Lu Xun

views as dishonest ‘gratification’ (满) and fundamentally a ‘lie’ (骗), something that does not only obscure the true face of reality and its underlying mechanisms but that also that relieves humankind of its social and civic responsibilities. While casting doubts on the proverb 作善降祥, which encapsulates the karmic law of retribution, another leitmotif of classical theatre, he blames the tendency to retrospectively add a great reunion to works that were originally devoid thereof, including *Hongloumeng*, which ends, realistically, in tragedy.

Lu Xun clearly foresees a socio-political danger in the systematic, inconsiderate usage of traditional ideas and literary techniques that tend to embellish reality and cautions against the degeneration of the Chinese society, which is too anaesthetised by these deep-seated practices. He concludes that a radical renewal of the literary arts is the only condition to aid the renaissance of the Chinese nation and pleads for a literature that can proactively teach and effect earthly justice, rather than one that celebrates the national martyrs by simply singing their virtues. In *Zhongguo xiaoshuo de lishi bianqian* (1924), he further argues that *da tuanyuan* is a means of making up for the injustices of life and history. If history does not bring any reunion, then this will be effected in fiction. He mentions that the Chinese do not like troubles and depressions.

In a 1928 essay entitled “Theory and Practice of Drama Reform”, Ouyang Yuqian defines *beiju* as “an inevitable catastrophe” (Ouyan 1989, 213), the essence of real life and a type of drama that does not have a satisfactory, fulfilling end. In his opinion, modern *beiju* revolves around a conflict between the individual’s will and the social circumstances, thereby excluding the concept of blind fate. Interestingly, he ascribes to this form of drama a psychological function, which consists in arousing compassion and ultimately generating “peace and consolation” (214) in the world. He also emphasises tragedy’s educational role and powerful influence in directing the course of history towards a positive outcome. In Ouyang’s words, tragedy describes an individual’s drive to progress by seeking to attain freedom and happiness. The many hardships and obstacles that the protagonist encounters throughout the tragic plot all contribute to strengthening the audience’s spirit and building up hope for the future. The main mission of tragedy is to foster in the spectators the consciousness of living in a ‘transitional age’ and that one should not be contented with the “status quo” (218).

Finally, in a 1933 essay entitled “Tragedy” (see Xiong 1985), Xiong Foxi further develops the above-mentioned views, as he believes that the value of tragedy lies in generating a feeling of happiness through the experience of suffering. His notion of catharsis implies that, by watching characters who agonise on stage, the spectator can purify his own passions by developing high moral qualities such as compassion and a sense of justice. In defining tragedy as “an art form that

fosters human honesty and good conscience" (265), he ascribes significant ethical properties to it. He further argues that tragic dramas are particularly welcome in an age of crisis when an increasing number of people are drawn to commit suicide out of hopelessness. This is because, rather than death, he considers anguish the tragic element par excellence in a play, while 'tragic' is the struggle that a character undertakes to achieve a given objective, which, however, remains unattained.

It is evident how these May Fourth writers tried to define tragedy from the perspective of traditional Confucian values, especially benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*), which they contributed to revitalise. However, I argue that, rather than a dramatic genre, their reflections issued in the conceptualisation of a tragic spirit (*beiju jingshen*), which they hoped to infuse into the Chinese society of their time. Rather than fostering individualism and iconoclasm, they placed tragedy within a communitarian dimension in which individuals feel compelled to join each other to share the same adversities and work together to resist them. It seems to me that they did not explicitly connect tragedy with modernity, except for their varied references to the topicality of the tragic genre, its suitability to an age of historical decadence like the Chinese post-imperial era and its aesthetics of anti-reunionism, which was perceived as new and innovative. By finding beauty in grief rather than in harmony (*yi ai wei mei* vs. *zhong he wei mei*), they sought to revolutionise 'old' aesthetic principles that they interpreted as the main cause of cultural backwardness and moral apathy of which they accused their compatriots to be guilty. Nevertheless, they neglected the fact that, as will be shown next, Chinese culture does have its own traditional aesthetics of *bei*, which however does not exactly mirror the May Fourth angle on *beiju*. Below, I will present and discuss the ancient roots of the term *bei*, which is linked not to Confucianism but to Taoist ideas on humankind and nature, and I will concurrently seek to prove that an attitude of defiance and resistance to grief and suffering is not at all absent from traditional Chinese culture.

3 Poetry and Autumn Melancholia: The Historical Roots of *Beiju*

Below, I aim to carry out an in-depth etymological analysis of the term *beiju* from the perspective of traditional Chinese literary and dramatic theory, independently from Western tragedy.

From an etymological viewpoint, the word *beiju* has to do with the experience of melancholic pain, as suggested by the character *bei* 悲, which means ‘sad’, ‘sorrowful’, ‘pessimistic’. Other terms that appeared in pre-modern Chinese theatre criticism to designate this kind of drama are *yuanpu* 怨谱, which literally means ‘expressing resentment’; *aiqu* 哀曲, which could be variously rendered as ‘elegiac drama’, ‘melodrama’, ‘pathetic drama’ or ‘drama of grief’, and *kuxi* 苦戏 or ‘drama of hardships’ (Xie 2010, 377). All these terms, which date back to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing periods, emphasise the element of pain and suffering, thus suggesting that in traditional Chinese theatre particular attention was given to the portrayal of the pathetic emotion. Moreover, works such designated were also generally known as *can jue bei ji zhi shu* 惨绝悲极之书, namely, works imbued with a sense of extreme and absolute grief (Zhou 1991, 151). Zhu Quan’s 朱权 *The Supreme Harmony Chart of Correct Sounds* (*Taihe zhengyin pu* 太和正音谱), a work of dramatic criticism published in 1398, contains a list of Yuan (1271-1368) *zaju* 杂剧 plays, which are categorised according to common themes and motifs. Some of these plays are listed under the category of *beihuan lihe* 悲欢离合. This terminology indicates dramas characterised by an alternation of “sad and joyful scenes” and of “separations and reunions”, which somehow echo the notion of tragicomedy in Western dramatic culture (Falaschi 2002, 10).

According to Alexa A. Joubin (2003, 11), the birth of a Chinese poetics of the tragic should be ascribed to the poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (343-278 BC), whose poem *Encountering Sorrow* (*Li sao* 离骚) (late third century BC) is a remarkable example of “poetry of lament” (*beitan shi* 悲叹诗). Throughout this work, the author expresses his deep suffering for being unjustly dismissed from his position as a political counsellor of the king of Chu, whom he had always served with great loyalty and faithfulness. He was exiled twice and eventually committed suicide by drowning himself in the Milo River. The predominance of the elegiac component (*ai* 哀) is particularly evident in this poem, where the author’s prevalent emotional state seems to be that of *bei* 悲, as evidenced from (Joubin’s translation of) the following excerpt: “In sadness plunged and sunk in deepest gloom, alone I drove on to my dreary doom”.⁵ Joubin’s statement resonates with the

5 The original reads: “侘郁邑憯憯。吾独穷困乎此时也!” (Qu 2012, 66).

views of other contemporary scholars, such as Xie Boliang and Zhou Anhua, who maintain that the Chinese have approached and dealt with the theme of suffering and its corollary of emotions first in lyrical poetry (*shi* 诗), and only subsequently in the drama. Therefore, unlike tragedy, which has its origins in theatre and dramatic performance, *bei*(*ju*) would denote a kind of poetic emotion (*qing* 情) associated with a particular scenery (*jing* 景).

In classical Chinese literary theory, the fusion of *qing* and *jing* creates what goes under the name of *yijing* 意境. This term refers to a higher and sublime artistic/creative/poetic dimension and is usually translated as ‘creative mood’, but escapes an exact theorization owing to its ethereal and rather intuitive quality. More specifically, *yi* means ‘meaning’ or ‘sense’ and *jing* means ‘realm’ or ‘situation’. According to Libing Bai, the earliest occurrence of the term in Chinese poetry criticism is in the work of the Tang dynasty poet Wang Changling 王昌龄 (698-756), who describes it as the third stage of poetry writing after *jing* (nature) and *qing* (emotion), and which would consist in an intellectual synthesis of these in order to “attain the very essence of Truth” (Bai 2014, 416). The notion of *yijing* – not to be confused with the concept of *yixiang* 意象 (imagery), which rather indicates “individual physical objects or beings that, through the poet’s artistic conception, have acquired human sentiments and can be used as ‘objective correlatives’ to denote the poet’s feelings” (Tang 2014, 195) – is crucial to understand and demarcate the specificity of *bei-ju* in the context of world drama. In fact, although another term (*di-anxing* 典型, or model-scenes) is generally preferred to critique those literary genres which are more focused on the imitation or re-enactment of reality such as fiction and drama, dramatic theory and criticism in China cannot dispense with the concept of *yijing*, which is applicable to all genres showing a strong lyrical tendency. In effect, drama in China has traditionally been intertwined with poetry, dance and music, thereby placing considerable emphasis on the representation of emotions accompanying the narrated events. In this sense, the union of *bieqing* 别情 (farewell sadness) and *suiqing* 随情 (submitting to one’s emotions) is very close to the idea of *yijing*, which still remains the main aesthetic core of classical Chinese poetry and drama (Yang 1994, 206).

In order to extrapolate the original lyrical and poetic matrix of *beiju*, an investigation of the sphere of lyrical emotions connected to the word *bei* 悲 is in order. First, is it correct to translate it simply as ‘sad’ or ‘sadness’? Ye Zhengdao has undertaken a text-based semantic study of the emotion term *bei* along with other sadness-like basic emotion terms such as *ai* 哀 and *chou* 愁. She notes that there is no exact equivalent of *bei* in English, nor is *bei* only about sadness *per se* (2001, 397). *Bei* is usually listed among the five basic emotions in classical Chinese texts and features as a constitutive element of a

few compound words such as *beiliang* 悲涼 (sad and dreary; somber; dismal), *beitong* 悲痛 (painfully sad) and *beican* 悲慘 (tragic; tragical; pathetic) (367). Most importantly, *bei* features in the compound word *beiguan* 悲觀, which literally means “having a *bei*-like view/*Weltanschauung*” and is usually translated into English as “pessimistic”. By examining specific excerpts from a selection of key texts from pre-modern Chinese poetry and fiction, such as Wang Wei’s poem *Qiu ye du zuo* 秋夜獨坐 (Sitting alone on an Autumn Night, 8th century BCE), and Cao Xueqin’s *Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢 (The Dream of the Red Chamber, mid-18th century), Ye argues that *bei* does not simply equal “sadness” but a kind of “fatalistic hence tragic sadness” (363). In order to better understand what the source of *bei* might be, namely its ‘objective correlative’, we need to refer to the theory of the interplay of *qing* and *jing* in classical Chinese literature. In this context, *bei* designates a specific psychological disposition (*qing*), which is traditionally associated to a particular landscape imagery (*jing*), whose function is to evoke a particular feeling arising in the poet’s heart and mind through contemplation. The *yixiang* (poetic imagery) that triggers off the *bei*-like feeling can be found in the natural changes of the autumnal season.

In Wang Wei’s poem, the author contemplates the autumnal landscape and compares the falling of a fruit from a tree under the autumn rain to his whitening hair, lamenting the irreversibility of the ageing process for the human being. Jia Baoyu, the male protagonist of Cao Xueqin’s novel, is immortalised whilst brooding over the imminent wedding of Xiuyan, a girl in his entourage. He reckons that marriage is an event that everyone must go through during life, thereby ascribing a sense of preordained fatality to it. Moreover, staring at an apricot tree full of fruits, he sighs over the fact that in a few years’ time the bride will bear children and with the passage of time her hair will inexorably turn silver and she will lose her beauty, exactly as the tree is bound to lose its fruits in autumn.

For Ye, “what makes one *bei* is not just a bad happening at that moment, but an uncontrollable force pulling towards a subsequent ‘tragic’ happening determined by nature” (2001, 364). Hence, it can be argued that the source of *bei*-like feelings is not linked to a single, unexpected catastrophic event somehow akin to the Aristotelian concept of ‘misfortune’ – but lies in the consciousness that something disagreeable is bound to happen in the near future, and which cannot be avoided because it is inscribed in the cyclical course of nature. In the concept of *bei*, there is no malevolent god, no transcendence, no fatal flaw that makes the human being guilty of violating some pre-existing divine order, but there is rather a despondent acceptance of the natural order, of the cosmic and incessant flow of the *yin* and the *yang*. Therefore, it can be argued that, similarly to tragedy, *bei* too can be construed as a culture-bound emotion term, deeply root-

ed in traditional Chinese literature and culture, where the tendency to associate this kind of fatalistic sadness with the autumnal imagery represents a codified poetics called *beiqiu* 悲秋, a lexicalized term that could be roughly translated as ‘autumnal melancholia’, and which Xie Boliang designates as the ancestor of *beiju* (2010, 556), its original aesthetic matrix.

Originally dating back to the Warring States period (5th century-221 BC), the poetics of *beiqiu* was formally initiated, again, by Qu Yuan in his poem *Xiang Furen* 湘夫人 (The Lady of the Xiang) from the anthology *Chuci* 楚辭 (Lyrics of Chu) and by his disciple Song Yu 宋玉, who contributed to further popularise this trend in traditional lyrical poetry (Xie 2010, 556-7). In *Jiu Bian* 九辯 (Nine Changes or Arguments – also part of the *Chu ci*), Song depicts the image of the falling leaves being shaken off by the bleak and cold autumn hair, and uses it as a backdrop to express the depressive, melancholic mood stirred by the autumnal landscape where everything seems to be heading slowly and inexorably toward death. Other scenes that can be subsumed under the umbrella term of *beiqiu* are those focusing on the gloomy mood associated with a sorrowful separation, with the injustices suffered by a righteous scholar, with the melancholy of travelling alone. The corresponding objective-correlatives are the autumnal rain and wind, the falling leaves, the wild geese, the cooler weather and the waning plant life. The corresponding emotions are those of a lonesome and desolate mood, whereas the resulting *yijing* or poetic world, which is something more intuitive and should be co-created by the author and the reader, is one of relentless and irreversible decadence that affects man’s life and the natural world alike and which compels the poet to engage in deep reflection about the sorrows of the human condition. One such example can be found in a *ci* 辭 attributed to the Han emperor Wudi 武帝 (156-87 BC) entitled *Gu Qiu Feng* 古秋风 (Old Autumn Wind). Here, the author laments the ephemerality of the human life against the everlasting recurrence of the natural phenomena. Whilst observing that in the natural world “the past recedes, the present arrives and still they flourish and perish, these affairs” (*shui liao ta, gu wang jin lai yu wang xing* 誰料他,古往今來興亡事),⁶ he wonders how many years an individual can expect to live.

Premodern Chinese literature abounds in examples of *beiqiu* as a traditional aesthetic mode, particularly Tang poetry with the poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) as one of its masters. He coined the terms *qiuyi* 秋意, namely what hints at autumn (the slight chilly air), and *qiusi* 秋思, namely the lonesome and desolate mood that autumn evokes in the poet’s mind (Xie 2010, 559). As Ye Zhengdao observes, the liter-

⁶ The full text of this poem can be found at “John Thompson on the guqin silk string zither” (<http://www.silkqin.com/02qnpu/10tgyy/tg35gqf.htm#1525lyr>).

ary motif of *beiqiu* indicates that this close correspondence between emotions and seasons is distinctive of Chinese culture. This aspect is also codified in the earliest work of literary criticism in the history of Chinese literature, the *Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龙 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) by Liu Xie 刘勰 (465-521), as follows:

Springs and autumns follow on in succession, with the brooding gloom of dark Yin and the easeful brightness of Yang. And as the bright countenances of physical things are impelled in their cycles, so the affective capability of mind (*xin*) too is shaken... And when autumn's skies are high and the animating air takes on a chill clarity, our thoughts, sunken in the darkness of Yin, touch on far things. The year has its physical things, and these things have their countenance; by these things our emotions are shifted, and from emotions language comes. The fall of a solitary leaf finds its place in our understanding [and we know that autumn is coming].⁷

Lo Wai Luk contends that “*bei*” is the chief aspect of what he calls “the Chinese tragic spirit”, which also entails a corollary of related emotions stirred up within the realm of *beiju*, leading to four different “tragic dimensions”.⁸ Lo terms the Chinese tragic spirit as *beizhuang* 悲壮, which he translates as a “tragic-heroic mood” or a “combination of sad and heroic spirit” (1994, 70) and uses compound terms containing the character *bei* as a linguistic basis for his theory of the four tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama. These are: *bei'ai* 悲哀 (pathetic mourning), *beiyuan* 悲怨 (lamentation for the irrepleceable loss), *beifen* 悲愤 (protest with invincible will) and the aforementioned *beizhuang* 悲壮 (heroic action against the odds). Moreover, he acknowledges that “the semantic space these four compound words create, however, still remains a land of subjective feeling. There is no act, in the sense of Western dramaturgy, involved” (72). This statement suggests that the analysis of the etymological origins of *beiju* must proceed from the concept of creative mood, *yijing* in Chinese literary theory. For Lo, the *yijing* of *beiju* is a “tragic spirit with a very strong Chinese flavour: lyrical, aesthetic, and intermingles the emotion (*qing*) and the scene (*jing*)” (61). Lo extrapolates the essence of each of these four tragic dimensions by analysing a selection of Yuan *zaju* plays. With reference to the plays *Fengyulan* 冯玉兰 (The Misery of the young lady Feng) and *Huolangdan* 货郎旦

⁷ Liu Xie, cited in Ye 2001, 372.

⁸ It should be noted that Lo uses the term “dimension”, or “spirit”, almost as synonyms of ‘atmosphere’ and ‘mood’, but not as synonyms of ‘consciousness’ or ‘structure of feeling’ à la Raymond Williams. In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), the latter explains that he chose the word “feeling” in order to distinguish it from “more formal concepts of worldview and ideology” (132).

(Woman Singer of the Huolang Style), he defines the first dimension, or *bei'ai*, as “pathetic mourning”. The second kind of *bei*-like atmosphere, or *beiyuan*, is translated as “lamentation for the irreplaceable loss” and defined against the plays *Hangongqiu* 汉宫秋 (Autumn in the Han Palace) and *Shuangfumeng* 双赴梦 (Dream of two on a Journey).

As to the remaining two dimensions, *beifen* is translated as “protest with invincible will” and is elucidated against the plays *Dou'e yu-an* 窦娥冤 (The Injustice Done to Dou'e) and *Huoshao Jie Zitui* 火烧介子推 (Burning Jie Zitui Alive), whereas *beizhuang* is rendered as “heroic struggle against the odds” and extrapolated by the plays *Zhaoshi gu'er* 赵氏孤儿 (The Orphan of the Zhao Family) and *Zhang qianti sha qi* 张千替杀妻 (Zhang Kills His Sworn Brother's Wife). He then concludes by contrasting what he calls “the tragic mode” with the concept of *beiqiu*, a term that, as previously explained, encapsulates “the sentiment of autumnal grievance in Chinese literature” whereby “witnessing time's passage and nature's decay, the poet sighs for the finitude of life” (185). Furthermore, Lo concludes that only *beifen* and *beizhuang* are comparable to the tragic,⁹ whereas *bei'ai* and *beiyuan* rather tend toward the pathetic.

Examples of the *beifen* and *beizhuang* spirits can be found in a series of ancient Chinese myths, which narrate episodes of resistance against the natural powers such as “Nüwa Mending the Sky” (女娲补天), “Jingwei Filling Up the Sea” (精卫填海), “Houyi Shooting the Sun” (后羿射日), “Yu the Great Taming the Waters” (大禹治水), and “Kua Fu Chasing the Sun” (夸父追). In their attempts at confronting and opposing the natural course of phenomena, the characters portrayed in those myths show some kind of *hybris*, and as such they are indicated as epitomes of an active tragic spirit. With the passage of time and with the advent of the agricultural revolution, this aggressive spirit of resistance gradually subsided, being replaced by a psychology of submission, adaptability and passivity, more akin to the *bei'ai* and *beiyuan* mood.

It is evident that the notion of *beiju* as theorised by the May Fourth writers previously discussed does not fully align with the original meaning of *bei* as discerned by Ye in her study. There is in fact no fatalism and no feeling of impotence and/or inevitability involved in the May Fourth conceptualization of *beiju*, whereby change and revolutions are not effected spontaneously by a divine will (*tianming*) but are man-made. Ye has noted that the feeling of *bei* is embedded within the Taoist doctrines and the Yin-Yang cosmology and I would add that it reflects really well the theory of non-action (*wuwei*), which encourages its adepts to second the transformations of the natural order rather than aiding or opposing them, thus developing a com-

9 For more on this, see Wang 2011 and Wan 2004.

munion with the natural landscape and its cycles. This decidedly untragic view of life implies the non-existence of evil and of iniquitous events. It suggests that nature is to be trusted rather than feared or defied. In this sense, in the *bei* of *beiju* there is no sense of indignation towards the source of pain and suffering. This, instead, is present in another basic emotion, namely *ai* 哀, which Ye defines as a form of altruistic pain of Confucian descent, which includes the feeling of compassion, the desire to eliminate what causes disruption in other people's lives and is therefore more compatible with the tragic spirit of the May Fourth era.

As we shall see next, the May Fourth idea of *beiju* was in many ways a product of the revivification of Confucian teachings. Its purported civilising power harks back to a shared desire to restore social harmony in a critical historical moment that was not so dissimilar from other previous transitional periods in Chinese history, such as the Spring and Autumn period (771-476 BC) in which Confucius lived and preached.

4 From the Theatre to Real Life: Confucianising Tragedy

Contrary to the opinion of the May Fourth writers mentioned in this study, contemporary Chinese scholars generally agree on envisioning a given set of traditional Chinese plays as *beiju*. Among others, these include the already cited *Orphan*, *Dou'E* and *Autumn in the Palace of Han*. What these works have in common is the fact that they do not focus on an unconditional and vehement conflict but show a marked tendency to neutralise the effects of past evils and restore the original harmony. For example, Dou E, the female protagonist of the eponymous *zaju* play, is unjustly executed but a few years after her death, her ghost appears before her father, who decides to re-open her law case thereby managing to demonstrate her innocence. In *The Orphan of Zhao*, the protagonist eventually avenges his father's death by murdering the evil General Tu'an Gu. In *Autumn in the Palace of Han*, the ghost of the beautiful concubine Wang Zhaojun, who had drown herself to avoid marrying the barbarian Khan, visits the Han emperor in the shape of a lonely wild goose in the hope of obtaining justice for herself. The emperor, who is now aware of the evil Mao Yanshou's plotting, orders that he is punished in order to do justice to the spirit of the concubine Wang.

Wan Xiaogao connects this Chinese *Weltanschauung* of harmony and non-aggressive resistance (*duili er bu duikang* 对立而不对抗) to the complementary interdependence of the *yin* and *yang* principles as reflected in the *Zhou'yi* 周易 (the earliest version of the *Yi-jing* 易经, The Book of Changes). Albeit opposite forces, the *yin* and the *yang* do not fight against each other for predominance but mould

and transform each other into its opposite so that their mutual and pacific interchanges give birth to the natural phenomena (2004, 26). As Wan explains,

not only has this brought about the lack of an acute and irreducible conflict in the Chinese *beiju*, but has also deprived it of a soul-stirring, breath-taking passion, and of other dramatic devices such as suspense (*xuannian* 悬念), and a shocking recognition (*faxian/zhenjing* 发现/震惊). Traditional *beiju* lacks a tragic-heroic aesthetics whilst showing a preference for the pathetic, for a gentle aesthetic model (*rouxing mei* 柔性美) grounded on intimate sadness (*feice* 悱恻), tranquillity (*pingjing* 平静), moral suffering (*beiku* 悲苦) and grief (*aichou* 哀愁). (27)

For this reason, in *beiju* the harmony of feelings also entails a patent balance of sadness and joy, which is a direct consequence of the cyclical thinking patterns (*xunhuan sixiang* 循环思想) underlying ancient Chinese culture and philosophy. These patterns are not confined to the seasonal changes (*ziran chunxiaqiudong* 自然春夏秋冬) and the historical changes of rise, progress, decline and fall (*cheng'ai xingmang* 盛衰兴亡), but also involve the motions of the soul passing from joy to anger and from grief to happiness (*xinu'aile* 喜怒哀乐) (Zhou 1991, 221). This view of life as a combination of joys and sorrows has significant implications in the dramatic structure of *beiju*. The idea that “after deep misfortune comes bliss” (*pi ji tailai* 否极泰来) and that “when things reach an extreme they turn into their opposite” (*wu ji bi fan* 物极必反) entails that most traditional *beiju* dramas end with the purging of the malevolent force that have caused the injustices inflicted to the tragic protagonist(s). Hence, it can be argued that dramatic mechanism leading to a more or less ‘satisfactory ending’ turns the dramatic conflict into a temporary confrontation where there are no absolute winners or losers.¹⁰

This spirit of faith in the mutability of external circumstances is also a characteristic of the May Fourth interpretation of *beiju*. A fundamental difference, though, is that in the latter case the audience is staunchly compelled to effect those radical changes in real life, rather than finding a momentary satisfaction in the fictionality of the theatrical event. In light of this, the proposal to abolish the ‘old’ device of the great reunion should not be seen as a way of eradicating the alleged ‘secularism’ inherent to the traditional Chinese worldview,

¹⁰ Although, in *Song Yuan xiqu kao* 宋元戏曲考 Wang Guowei observes that not all the plays in the *zaju beiju* repertoire fit in the usual pattern whereby “separation is followed by reunion, hardships are followed by relief” (先离后合, 始困终亨, Wang 2001, 63), and that the *da tuanyuan* or happy ending still constitutes a major characteristics of *bei*-like plays.

which was indicated as a reason for the lack of ‘tragic’ dramas in pre-modern China. Rather, it can be considered a means of reinstating the pragmatism contained in the humanistic teachings of Confucius whereby social harmony can be achieved by fostering interpersonal relationships, by learning to serve other human beings and by perfecting oneself not in contemplative isolation or in waiting for the equivalent of a *deus-ex-machina* but “in the form of social and political action” (Yao 2000, 64).

Akin to Confucius, the May Fourth writers denounced the corruption, the contradictions and the degeneracy affecting the Chinese society of their time and saw in *beiju* a means of transforming resignation into strength, and selfishness into altruism and empathy. While the classical form of *beiju* offered a comfortable solution to the problem of evil, the new one, informed by the rebellious spirit of the May Fourth movement, was meant to break the dramatic cycle midway, freezing the dramatic conflict and leaving the spectators with a sense of inconclusiveness. This would empower them to make informed decisions aimed at overcoming hopelessness and grief.

What was advocated by the May Fourth writers with regard to *beiju*’s empowering effect is strikingly reminiscent of the empowering function attributed to melancholy (*you* 忧, not *bei*) in pre-modern Chinese literary thought. This, incidentally, is indicated as a *trait d’union* between ancient Chinese and Western culture, where “melancholy was discovered to be a creative stimulus” (Motsch 2001, 22). Monica Motsch mentions that metaphor of the silk-knot whereby in pre-modern Chinese poetry melancholy is likened to a “knot which cannot be untied” (28). She argues that melancholic verses were composed to heal the melancholic state of mind rather than simply to express it (30). Poetry writing and reading were said to be able to facilitate the disentangling of the emotional ‘knot’.

As shown by Chen Chung-Ying in his study of the creative power of melancholy in ancient Zhou philosophy, the concept of harmony (*he* 和) entails that a certain external event triggers an adequate feeling or emotional response in the individual’s heart-mind. When the event in question is negative, not only will this cause the individual to experience melancholy feelings but it will also inspire them to find within themselves the necessary strength to correct the wrong and overcome those adversities alongside the corresponding melancholic feelings. Through an analysis of poems excerpted from the *Shijing*, Cheng notes that a particular type of melancholy (*youhuan* 忧患, which arises from the worry of losing the Mandate of Heaven, therefore having political implications) facilitates the practice of self-cultivation and, most importantly, enhances the individual’s ‘alertness’ to the laws that regulate the bestowing and withdrawal of the mandate. This means that he will refine his ability to discern the signs of his own misconduct and act accordingly for his own and for the

social good. Cheng further observes that the possibility for change and transformation ascribed to the individual who possesses the consciousness of *youhuan* has links with the Confucian morality, which denies a fatalistic outlook on life (2001, 97).¹¹ He characterises Confucianism as a “dynamical and forward-looking system of ethics” (99) that provides sufficient intellectual tools for turning melancholy from passivity into action, based on the premise that social progress and the resolution of unavoidable conflicts stem from the collaboration between man and Heaven.

This takes us back to the May Fourth interpretation of *beiju* as the quintessence of the dynamic side of melancholy, sadness and grief. In this sense, despite its focus on misfortune, injustice and catastrophe, the experience of *beiju* is understood as an uplifting one because it is from conflict and oppositions that an individual’s moral strength is fortified and he can apply his virtue (*de* 德) “to do good to all people under heaven and [...] eliminate many causes for social injustices for other members of the society” (100).

5 Conclusive Remarks: *Beiju* or Rather *Aiju*?

As I sought to evidence in this study, although the term *beiju* was borrowed from the Japanese language and in the context of the theatre reform movement of the late-Qing and early Republican period, in China a poetics of *bei* had been present since antiquity. *Beiju* as a form of drama does not have a strictly theatrical origin, but stems from elegiac reflections about life and its cyclical phenomena, which match those occurring in the natural landscape. In pre-modern literature, those plays that have *bei*-like characteristics portray the full cycle of hardships and joys, thereby providing compensation and relief to the audience, fuelling belief in Heaven’s benevolence, and in the cosmic law of the *dao*, whereby every given situation is naturally bound to evolve into its opposite, yet also through human intervention. During the May Fourth era, *beiju* as synonymous with (Western) tragedy was reconceptualised as a form of drama whose function was to teach the audience how to handle conflicts and contradictions in real life, to alert them to the urgent need for social reform, and to give them compelling reasons to collaborate in building a better society in times of radical transformations.

Nevertheless, two fundamental observations must be made. Firstly, the May Fourth interpretation of tragedy-*beiju* appears to be heavily informed by Confucian considerations rather than purely West-

¹¹ Chung-Ying Cheng, “Morality of *Daode* and Overcoming of Melancholy in Classical Chinese Philosophy”, in *Symbols of Anguish*, 97.

ern (hence innovative) ideas. Albeit a seemingly radical claim, the condemnation of the great reunion by the May Fourth writers merely reinforces the idea that human beings are fully responsible for the promotion of equity and social justice. The feeling of sadness and melancholy engendered by watching an ill-fated play should induce the audience to pause and think about potential solutions for tackling similar real-life situations. The attitude of viewing melancholy not as an end in itself but as a stimulus to effect positive changes in a social context is inherently Confucian. Secondly, considering the traditional meaning of the concept of *bei*, which expresses resignation and acceptance of the negative, *beiju* does not seem to adequately mirror the concept of 'tragedy' as theorised during the May Fourth era. It could be argued that a much more fitting term would have been *aiju*, for *ai* designates that kind of grief that leads to indignation and triggers a willingness to change the negative for the benefit of others.

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The Other Vernacular: Commoner Knowledge Culture Circa 1919

Joan Judge

York University, Toronto

Abstract This essay complicates our understanding of the May Fourth Movement of the late 19teens by isolating a layer of culture that was integral to the era but largely forgotten in later scholarship. This cultural layer of discourse and practice intersected with two of the Movement’s most iconic projects – connecting with “the people” and establishing a vernacular language. This view from the cultural margins helps us excavate the less known byways and potentialities of what has come down to us as an epochal history. It further leads us to question the inevitability of established historical trajectories: from May Fourth populism to the mass politics of the PRC, from the vernacular movement to the linguistic form that stabilized to become *baihua*.

Keywords “The people”. Folklore. Vernacular language. Common sayings. Hu Pu’an.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Confucian Populism in A Post-Confucian Age. – 3 Common Sayings In The Vernacular Moment. – 4 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) wrote with characteristic clarity and bite in 1919 that nothing was straightforward in the May Fourth era. “All things have two, three, or multiple layers and every layer has its own self-contradictions” (*simianbafang jihu dou shi ersanzhong yizhi duozhong de shiwu, meizhong you gege zixiangmaodun* 四面八方幾乎都是二三重以至多重的事物，每重又各自相矛盾).¹ While he was referring to divisions within the immediate academic May

1 Lu Xun 鲁迅 “Suigan lu wushisi” 随感录五十四 (Selection of Random Thoughts, 54) (1919), *Lu Sun quanji* 鲁迅全集 1 (Renmin wenzue chubanshe 人民文学出版社, 1982), 44-345. Cited in Luo



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Fourth culture, Lu Xun's observation is even more apt when we examine the layers of complexity that both converged with and extended beyond it.

This paper attempts to isolate several layers which intersected with two of the New Culture movement's most iconic projects – connecting with 'the common people' and establishing a vernacular language. The premise of the paper is that a view from the margins allows us to better assess what went on at "the centre".² It also leads us to question the inevitability of established historical trajectories: from May Fourth populism to the particular brand of mass politics in the People's Republic of China, from the vernacular movement to the specific linguistic form that stabilised to become *baihua*. Deeply situated fragments from the margins can help us to excavate the less known byways and potentialities of what has come down to us as an epochal history.

The fragments from the margins that serve as the centrepiece of this paper include two texts compiled by an individual and published by a press, each of which – texts, compiler, and publisher – are all but invisible in the narrative history of the events of May Fourth 1919.

The press is one of the most prolific producers of cheap print in the long Republic, the Guangyi shuju 廣益書局 ("Kwang Yih Book Co. Ltd") which was in operation in the decades preceding and following May Fourth.³ Founded in 1903 largely as a supplier of civil service examination aids, the company shifted its focus to medical and daily-use texts from 1904, rapidly becoming one of the most prominent late Qing lithographic publishers. Guangyi agilely adapted to new technologies and shifting political, economic, and cultural regimes, profiting under the new Republican polity from 1912 and the New Culture movement later in the decade. While it continued to publish works in simple classical prose (*qian wenyān* 淺文言) through the early 1950s, its list included books in the new-style vernacular (*baihua* 白話 or *yuti* 語體) with new-style punctuation (*xinshi biaodian* 新式標點) by the mid-1920s.⁴

The vast majority of Guangyi's inventory was reprints which made it possible to save costs while servicing a reading public with an enduring appetite for both the classics and classic vernacular fiction. Guangyi also published a number of original works that were on the

Zhitian, "Wenxueshi shang baihua," 76. Translated in Luo 2015, 280. The other translations, unless otherwise indicated, are made by the Author.

² On this and other key points about approaches to May Fourth, see Chen 2011, 8 on the importance of the margins.

³ For a fuller treatment of the Guangyi shuju, see Judge 2019.

⁴ See, for example, (*Xinshi biaodian*) *Shunzhi yanyi* (新式標點) 順治演義 (Historical Novel on Shunzhi [with New-style Punctuation]); (*Xinshi biaodian*) *Kangxi yanyi* (新式標點) 康熙演義 (Historical Novel on Kangxi [with New-style Punctuation]). (*Guangyi shuju*) *Tushu mulu*, 52 [56], 53 [57].

margins of, and often conceived of as counterpoints to mainstream culture. The advertisement for a vernacular letter-writing manual asserted, for example, that “the recent flourishing of the vernacular [*yuti wenxue* 語體文學] had spurred the publication of a confusing array of countless works.” At the same time, there continued to be “a dearth of what common people [*putong shehui* 普通社會] really need: straightforward collections of vernacular letters. This publisher has now met that need”.⁵

Two of Guangyi’s signature original works were compiled by Hu Puan 胡樸安 (Yunyu 韞玉, 1878-1947), a prolific author whose writings on issues of critical interest in the May Fourth period – folklore and vernacular language – are virtually unknown to modern Chinese scholars.⁶ From a relatively poor family in Jingxian 涇縣, Anhui Province, Hu Puan was the older brother of one of Guangyi’s editors, the poet and theorist Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛 (Jichen 寄塵, 1886-1938). Despite their humble background, the Hu brothers were well enough educated to establish themselves at multiple poles in the fields of publishing, politics, teaching, and journalism when they moved to Shanghai in 1906. Hu Puan wrote for and by some accounts edited the conservative *Guocui xuebao* 國粹學報 (The National Essence Journal), but also joined the Revolutionary Alliance (*Tongmeng hui* 同盟會) and its literary affiliate the Southern Society (*Nanshe* 南社) in 1909. He edited seven newspapers over the course of his career including the revolutionary *Minli bao* 民立報 (The People’s Stand, 1910-13) but most of his 63 published works were in the fields of classical studies and philology. While continuing his scholarly and literary writing in the Nanjing decade, Hu also took on a local government post in Jiangsu.⁷

Neither the prefaces to Hu’s works, nor the sparse secondary references to his life mention the source that is most revealing of his thought and preoccupations at the time of May Fourth, a journal he edited and wrote for, the *Jiande chuxu hui huikan* 儉德儲蓄會會刊 (Thrift and Savings Society Journal), an offshoot of the society by the same name that he had founded in the early Republic, the *Jiande chuxu hui* 儉德儲蓄會 (Thrift and Savings Society).⁸ In one of his many

⁵ The text is the (*Gejie shiyong*) *Baishi chidu daguan* (各界實用)白話尺牘大觀 ([For use by all circles] Comprehensive collection of vernacular letters). (*Guangyi shuju*) *Tushu mulu*, 38 [rpt 42].

⁶ Hung (1985, 210) notes that Hu Puan’s work on folklore and dialects was unknown to modern Chinese scholars, probably because he wrote in classical prose style and dealt with subjects in a traditional way.

⁷ These details about Hu’s life are gleaned from the following sources which often overlap and contradict each other. Zhu 1923; Fu 2011, 138; Jin 2018, 4; Wang 2010, 134

⁸ It is unclear when the journal started. The earliest issue in the Shanghai Library periodicals database refers to it as the inaugural issue which is numbered issue 4 and dates to 1922. Issues are not precisely aligned with calendar years. Extant issues in-

essays in this journal, Hu declared his opposition to what he called Western “material enlightenment,” a position shared by a number of Chinese intellectuals who, like Hu, had been horrified by the carnage of “the European War.” Hu strategically cited Western scholars who supported this view, most notably Bertrand Russell whose *The Problem of China* (Zhongguo wenti 中國問題) was serially translated in the *Thrift and Savings Society Journal*. At the same time, however, Hu was adamant that the value of Chinese thought was not predicated on Western sanction and that it was incumbent on Chinese scholars to further develop the special characteristics of Chinese learning.

The most notable of these characteristics was attentiveness to the world of spirit from which all desires for Western-style power and wealth had to be removed (Hu P. 1923, 1). Rather than offering a positive definition of this spirituality, Hu defined it negatively as material abnegation. He equated twentieth-century spiritual cultivation with classical examples of simple living from the Confucian *Analects*, the Daoist *Zhuangzi* and the Mencius.

With coarse rice to eat and water to drink [*fanshu shi yinshui* 飯疏食飲水], and my bended arm for a pillow [*qugonggerzhen zhi* 曲肱而枕之]; -I have still joy in the midst of these things [*le qi zai zhong* 樂在其中].

With a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd dish of drink, and living in his mean narrow alley (*yidan shi yi piaoyin zai lou-gang* 一簞食一瓢飲在陋巷).

Dressed himself in tattered robes quilted with hemp, yet standing by the side of men dressed in furs, and not ashamed (*yibi yun-pao yu yi huhe zhe* 衣敝襦袍與衣狐貉者立而不恥).⁹

To be above the power of riches and honours to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend.¹⁰

Using Neo-Confucian tropes, Hu appealed to would-be *junzi* in his own day – scholars with lofty ambitions (*gaoshang qi zhi zhi shi* 高尚其志之士) – to resist the latest fashions (*mizhe* 靡者) and remain indifferent to military force and financial power. In so doing they

clude: 4(1) 1922, 4(2) May 1923, 4(3) August 1923, 4(4) November 1923, 4(5) January 1924, 5(1) June 1924, 5(2) November 1924, 5(3) February 1925, 1 1930.

⁹ Hu P. 1923b, 1. Confucian *Analects*: Book VII Chapter XV; Book VI Chapter IX; Book IX Chapter XXVI (Confucius 1971, 200).

¹⁰ Hu P. 1923b, 1. Mencius III: II: 3 (Mencius 1970, 265).

would unconsciously transform those who had been misled by the allure of wealth and power (Hu P. 2011, 2).

Valorizing simplicity and authenticity, Hu Puan was deeply committed to penetrating the life world of the common people. He considered exhaustive knowledge of regional folkways to be imperative to a new politics in the post-Confucian age. He believed the words of ancient texts lived in the mouths of women and children on the street and should serve as the foundation of an authentic Chinese vernacular language. He developed these ideas in the two books that we will examine here: *Zhonghua quanguo fengsu zhi* 中華全國風俗志 (Record of Customs Throughout China) and *Suyu dian* 俗語典 (Dictionary of the Origin of Common Sayings), both published by Guangyi shuju in 1922, in the immediate aftermath of the May Fourth movement.¹¹

2 Confucian Populism in A Post-Confucian Age

An unprecedented rise in the rhetorical prominence of ‘the people’ marked Chinese discourse from the late nineteenth-century. This was manifest in a myriad of publications and political slogans from Liang Qichao’s *Xinmin Congbao* 新民叢報 (New Citizen), founded in 1902, to revolutionary newspapers such as *Minli bao* to the very name of the Republic itself – the *Minguo* – founded in 1912.

How to engage, lead, follow, or guide ‘the people’ became one of the most intractable, multi-layered issues intellectuals grappled with in the May Fourth period. Liberal thinkers such as Hu Shi struggled with tensions between guiding or following, accommodating or moulding, uplifting or transforming the masses (Luo 2015, 298, 301, 305). Folklorists such as Gu Jiegang 顧頤剛 (1893-1980) collected folk songs and developed folklore studies but ultimately with an eye to advancing academic history rather than deepening connections with local culture (Li 2001, 40-1). Certain intellectuals, Lu Xun among them, had barely disguised disdain for *minjian* 民間 (culture), whereas socialists such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942) viewed it as China’s path to salvation.

Hu Puan’s objective in compiling his *Record of Customs Throughout China* intersected with this general early-twentieth century impulse to better understand the common people in order to create a more effective polity. “Chinese history is recorded in official books” which ignore matters related to the people (*minjian shi* 民間事), Hu Huaichen (1936, 1) wrote in his afterward to his brother’s collection. As a result there is a dearth of sources on the evolution of the nation

¹¹ The *Suyu dian* was registered with the Neiwu bu 內務部 on October 16, 1922. “Gongbu benbu,” 20.

(*minzu jinhua* 民族進化), the state of local customs and conditions (*fengtu liangyu* 風土良窳), and the nature of local social relations (*renqing houbo* 人情厚薄). Hu Puan's compilation had filled that lacuna.

Unlike a number of his May Fourth peers such as Gu Jiegang who went directly 'to the people' to collect information on local customs, Hu explained in his preface that he did not have the strength or the means to travel around the entire country. Instead he took a characteristically Confucian textual approach. He withdrew and read gazetteers all of which include material on customs. Together with a number of assistants – a Mr. Kan Diequn 關軼群 of Hefei, a Mr. Zheng Xiaoyan 鄭肖崖 of Jiangning, and his nephew Huisheng 惠生 (Daoji 道吉, 1894-1958) – he also copied traces of customs found in a range of other contemporary sources, including *biji* 筆記 (jottings), travel diaries, newspapers and magazines.

The completed compilation is in two volumes. The first volume includes the material Hu personally collected from gazetteers. Relatively concise, it is organised by province and then by towns and counties (*shixian* 市縣). The second volume includes the information culled from jottings, travel diaries, and the periodical press and focuses on current customs. More uneven in style than the first volume, it nonetheless follows the same the organisation with the addition of sections on Xinjiang 新疆, Xizang 西藏, and the Miao ethnicity 苗族. Each volume is 10 *juan* (Hu Y. 1923, 3). The result is a rich and highly accessible compilation that is rationally organised, and clearly written (Cui, Yao 2013, 111).

While Hu's text is aligned with the aim of engaging the common people that animated May Fourth activists, it diverges in terms of the means and the ultimate ends of this engagement. The complexity of Hu's historical and political stance is evident in his choice of the term *fengsu* rather than *minsu* 民俗 in the title of his work. *Fengsu* connoted civilising or acculturation (*jiaohua* 教化) in imperial Chinese discourse, and was redolent with notions of paternalism. *Minsu*, in contrast, signified the natural state of people before *jiaohua*. Ancient texts which were generally written from the perspective of government authorities preoccupied with *jiaohua* used the term *fengsu*.¹² In the May Fourth era, with the new emphasis on 'going to the people' together with the entry of the Western-inspired academic field of *Minsu xue* 民俗學 or Folklore Studies, *fengsu* was increasingly replaced by a newly-valorized *minsu* (Qu 1986, 151).

Hu's use of *fengsu* could thus be read as evidence of his alignment with earlier *jiaohua* projects and/or as his resistance to new May Fourth rhetoric. It seems, however, to signify neither. While *minsu*

¹² See Peng (2013, 117) on this shift in terminology. Peng does not extend his argument to Hu Puan's title.

was becoming increasingly prevalent in this period, the terms remained unstable. In May 1923 – a year after the publication of Hu’s work – Beida intellectuals in the Guoxue men 國學門 (National learning department) of the Beijing daxue yanjiu suo 北京大學研究所, debated whether to use *minsu* or *fengsu* in their investigation of folk songs (*geyao* 歌謠). They ultimately decided on *fengsu*, naming their organisation the Fengsu diaochahui 風俗調查會 (Society for the Investigation of Social Customs) (Peng 2013, 118; Wang X. 2010, 129). In this same period, the leading folklorist Gu Jiegang redefined *fengsu* as one component of *minsu*: while *fengsu* encompassed everyday customs related to clothing, food, housing marriage, funerals, and seasonal celebrations, *minsu* further encompassed religion, literature and art.¹³

Most importantly, Hu Puan’s *Record of Customs Throughout China* cannot be collapsed with earlier works on *fengsu*. It differs first and foremost from these late imperial works in its emphasis on the customs of commoners (particularly in the second volume) rather than the customs of the scholar-official elite responsible for *jiaohua* projects (Wang X. 2010, 134). His objective is to enable the “majority of people to seek happiness” (*duoshu ren mou xingfu* 多數人謀幸福) and to broadly disseminate knowledge of social customs. His notion of *fengsu* could best be defined as commoner traditions (*minjian chuancheng* 民間傳承) and folk customs (*minjian xisu* 民間習俗) (135).

At the same time, Hu set his work apart from contemporary folklorists who he criticised for not understanding the extent of variation in local customs. Those who boast of understanding the national situation generally only have partial knowledge, he wrote. A promotes one discourse that reflects the customs of A province but does not ask if it will be appropriate for B province. C promotes a discourse derived from the customs of C province, but does not question whether or not it would be appropriate for D – and on and on. Even if those undertaking this folklore work were extremely sincere in their desire to seek happiness for the majority of people, given their limited grasp of the national situation, they were, Hu declared, of no help (Hu Y. 1923, 3).

Hu obliquely suggests that a broad pan-national understanding of *fengsu* – of A, B, C, D, and more – could serve as the foundation of national consciousness. By explicating regional customs, some later commentators have argued, he was helping to create a national imaginary: making it possible for Chinese elites to concretely visualise the culture of everyday life throughout China’s land mass. His projected readers were not sages of the past tasked with changing customs but *guomin* 國民 (nationals) in training, tasked with better understanding their fellow compatriots (Wang X. 2010, 135).

¹³ Gu J. 顾颉刚 (1928). “Shengxiang wenhua yu minzhong wenhua” 圣贤文化与民众文化. *Minsu zhoukan* 民俗周刊 (Folklore Weekly), 5, 4. Cited in Wang X. 2010, 134.

The paratexts to the *Record of Customs* do explicitly address the theme of nationalism. In his preface to the compilation, Zhang Chizhang 張熾章 (Jiluan 季鸞, 1888-1942) who had served as a secretary for Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (1866-1925), directly stated that the investigation of local customs was a means of developing national consciousness.¹⁴ He was ashamed to admit that he agreed with foreigners who ridiculed China for lacking the qualities of a real nation and the Chinese people for lacking the qualities of citizens. This was because, Zhang argued, China lacked the two essential preconditions for nationalism – which he anachronistically draws from Sunzi’s *The Art of War*: knowing oneself and knowing the enemy (*zhibizhiji* 知彼知己), meaning, in the early-twentieth-century context, knowing one’s own country and knowing the world.¹⁵ Knowledge of the world was deepening in China, Zhang noted, with enhanced maritime communication and increasing numbers of Chinese studying abroad. Knowledge of one’s own country, was, however, weakening as elite disdain for the *min* deepened in China by the day. Zhang complained that “people today can generally chat about customs in London and Paris, or show off their knowledge of Greece and Rome. But ask them about the situation in each province of China and they would be at a loss (*mangran* 茫然). They know neither the size nor the history of China.” Their ignorance of their compatriots is so profound that it is as if they belonged to a separate race. Despite China’s large territory and vast population, it was nothing more than a “large desert inhabited by a nomadic people” (Zhang 2011).

In his postface to his brother’s work, Hu Huaichen similarly laments the lack of Chinese national self-knowledge by way of the foreign gaze. He explains that when he was teaching at a certain university, a foreign professor had asked students, who in turn asked Hu, which books he could use to learn about Chinese customs.¹⁶ Since, as Hu was embarrassed to respond, no such books existed, his only advice was to search through gazetteers, *biji*, and travel diaries all of which were scattered and not easy to collect (Hu H. 1936, 1). Hu Huaichen notes that he had himself wanted to fill this lacuna by compiling a book on sources of Chinese social history (Zhongguo shehui shiliao 中國社會史料) that would examine the little understood variance in Chinese customs over time and space. Because he was never able to find the time to undertake this project, however, he was

¹⁴ Zhang who was from Yulin 榆林, Shaanxi, would also serve as an editor of the *Dagong bao* (L’impartiale). For a brief introduction to his life, see Wang X. 2010, 135.

¹⁵ Zhang 2011 It is noteworthy that even in describing modern nationalism Zhang cites a classical Chinese source, Sunzi’s *Art of War*.

¹⁶ This was possibly Hujiang daxue 滬江大學, which was run by an American and where the principle Wei Fulan 魏馥蘭 allegedly asked Hu to convert to Christianity. See Jin 2018, 6.

extremely grateful for the book Hu Puan had compiled from several hundreds of thousands of *juan* (1).

While Zhang Chizhang and Hu Huaichen invoked foreign views of China to underline the importance of Hu Puan's compilation on customs, Hu Puan made no such concessions to Western thought himself. In the preface to *Record of Customs*, he suggests that the rhetorical *min* May Fourth activists were so adamant about engaging was merely a construct of Western theory rather than the embodiment of Chinese reality.

He accused those who blindly introduced precedents and ideas from Europe and Japan (*baifan dongxi chengfa* 稗販東西成法) of doing so for their own political gain (Hu Y. 1923, 3). They vigorously promoted (*shengwei* 盛為) a discourse of freedom in China, a country that Hu claimed had no real social restrictions (*ben wu yueshu* 本無約束). They espoused a discourse of equality in a country with no fixed social stratification (*jieji* 階級). They rallied behind a discourse of economic exploitation (*jingji zhipai* 經濟支配) in a country devoid of capitalists. And they embraced a discourse on the sanctity of labour (*laogong shensheng* 勞工神聖) in a country that honoured the labour of farmers (3). Because the majority of people had not suffered from the ills these theories set out to address, they would be indifferent to programmes designed to liberate them from these fictive ills. Rather than increase the happiness of the majority, these ideas would merely serve the interests of a minority - May Fourth activists - in their scramble for power and profit (*zhengquan duoli* 爭權奪利) (3).

Engagement with the people, Hu Puan asserted in his *Record of Customs*, had to be based on concrete local realities. Instead of struggling to cut (Chinese) feet to fit (Western) shoes (*xiaozushilü* 削足適履), China needed to find a prescription appropriate to its current situation (*yinbing shiyao* 因病施藥) (Hu Y. 1923, 2). Such a prescription had to be based on knowledge of local customs which were products of Chinese history and related to Chinese culture (Hu Y. 1923, 3). To know ancient and current *fengsu* was to know China (Zhang 2011).

Acquiring knowledge of ancient and current customs was, however, a challenging task. China was vast, Hu wrote, and its local practices varied - with different manners (*feng* 風) every 1,000 *li* and different social customs (*su* 俗) every 100 *li*. From the Han to the Qing dynasties (with a brief Buddhist interregnum and a few short periods of division), Confucian ideology had been the unifying force that held this local cacophony of customs together, "propagating public norms" and "cultivating people's minds" (*shoushi renxin zhi ju* 收拾人心之具). Confronted with new Western ideologies from the mid-19th century, however, Confucianism could no longer hold, its discourse of benevolence and righteousness (*renyi* 仁義) powerless in the face of the new Western discourse of power (*gongli* 功力). With the demise of Confucian principles and the rise of Western in-

fluence, Chinese learning and ideology was fragmented (*fenlie* 分裂) and national unity had become impossible to sustain (Hu Y. 1923, 2).

Hu's understanding of national unity was ultimately at odds with the May Fourth project of national salvation and even with invocations of the nation in Hu Huaichen and Zhang Chihang's paratexts to Puan's own writings. This is most apparent in essays Hu Puan published in the *Thrift and Savings Society Journal* - a venue where he felt relatively unrestrained in expressing his disdain for emerging socialist and communist discourses. For Hu the labouring masses - whose knowledge he described as "lowly and weak" were not a new political vanguard that only had to be galvanized (Hu P. 1923b, 2). He acknowledges that the calm and tranquil (*chenjing tianmu* 沈靜恬穆) situation that prevailed in the past (when laborers presumably accepted their lot) was a feeble foundation (*pinruo zhi genji* 貧弱之根基) from the perspective of nationalism. But his perspective was not foreign-influenced nationalism but rather the great unity (*datong zhuyi* 大同主義) (2).

3 Common Sayings In The Vernacular Moment

Hu Puan further sought historical unity in his approach to the vernacular language. The May Fourth vernacular movement lacked such unity and was, again, in Lu Xun's formulation, multilayered. This was essentially because *baihua* was not a discrete entity that could be surgically lifted out of the classical language. Rather than recover or discover it, promoters of the vernacular language used one or a combination of approaches to construct it, including Europeanization (*Ouhua* 歐化), classicization, and popularization (*puji* 普及) (Luo 2015, 293-315).

Proponents of Europeanization insisted that methods of expression had to change in accordance with new modes of thought and methods of analysis influenced by the West (314). If the Chinese race was to enter the scientific world, the linguist and philosopher Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865-1953) asserted, it was necessary to scientize - and thus Europeanize - the vernacular (306). May Fourth intellectuals further debated the degree to which the vernacular language should be open to the classical language. For some, including Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), the vernacular was not sufficiently profound or varied and thus needed the enrichment of the classical language (301-6). Other leading figures emphasised that the new vernacular had to make accommodations for the common people (*shunying minzhong* 順應民眾). Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) was committed to listening to those at the lowest level of society, and finding the vernacular in "hybridized worthless literature" ('不肖' 文學) (Hu S. 1998; Luo 2015, 301). Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (Binglin 炳麟, 1868-1936) warned that it

was necessary to reform the language in such a way that those with the most basic literacy could continue to enjoy popular fiction from the ancient past (Luo 2015, 306).

Zhang's warning was well-founded. The Europeanized vernacular used in new May Fourth literature was more akin to a new classical language (*xin wenyan* 新文言) (Li 2001, 40) that was more difficult for the general public (*yibanren* 一般人) to understand than simple classical Chinese (*qianjin de wenyan* 淺近的文言) (Luo 2015, 294). Inaccessible to common readers (*zhengzheng laobaixing* 真正老百姓), this new literature was only enjoyed by young intellectuals devoted to pursuing the new (*bianyuan zhishi qingnian* 边缘知识青年) (298).

The language that was accessible to common readers included *suyu* 俗語, which encompassed folk adages, common sayings, and colloquial speech: the vivid and colourful expressions widely used in spoken Chinese, as *chengyu* 成語 are used in the written language. The key features of *suyu* are commonality and orality: it is the language that circulates in the mouths of the ordinary people (*gua zai laobaixing koutou shang* 挂在老百姓口头上) (Shanghai shudian 1984, 1).

Suyu had existed as a vocabulary category from the Western Han dynasty,¹⁷ and *suyu* dictionaries had been published from at least the Southern Dynasties period (Zhu S. 1923, 139; Fu 2011, 139). The notion of *su* in the sense of popular or folk gained particular currency, however, from the 1900s when it was used in the titles of newspapers in the vernacular such as *Anhui subao* 安徽俗報 (Anhui vernacular journal) (Li 2001, 38). Over the course of the following decade, the status of *suyu* continued to rise, particularly among those who argued for the popularization of the vernacular language. In an essay entitled "A Preliminary Proposal on the Reform of Chinese Literature" (*Wenxue gailiang chuyi* 文學改良芻議) published in *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth) in January 1917, Hu Shi singled out the use of vernacular speech (*suyu*) and words (*suzi* 俗字) as one of the eight principles necessary to launch a literary revolution.¹⁸ In an essay "On the Literary Revolution" (*Wenxue geming lun* 文學革命論) in the next issue of the same journal, Chen Duxiu similarly urged intellectuals to use *suhua* 俗話 to create new literature (Li 2001, 39).

As this invocation of *suyu* by New Culture activists as early as 1917 suggests, Hu Puan's publication of the *Suyu dian* in 1922 was directly precipitated by the vernacular movement: an example of the intersection of various layers at play in the May Fourth era. In the context of the

¹⁷ Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BC) used the term *suyu* in *juan* 5, "Guide" 貴德 of his *Shuoyuan* 說苑. See Wang Q. 1990, 107.

¹⁸ Hu S. (1983). "Wenxue gailiang chuyi" 文學改良芻議 (A Preliminary Proposal on the Reform of Literature). *Hu Shi wencun* 胡適文存 (Collected Works of Hu Shi), 1. Taipei: Yuandong shuju, 1983, 16. Cited in Li 2001, 4.

current flourishing of the vernacular language (*yuti shengxing* 語體盛行), Hu states in his preface to the dictionary, the spoken language – he uses the term *yuti* rather than *baihua* – is being taken slightly more seriously. This has created the need for a dictionary of the sources of spoken language (*yudian* 語典) (Hu P. 1925). While Hu did not participate in the debates among proponents of the Europeanization, classicization, and popularization of the vernacular, his work served to bolster both the classicization and popularization approaches.

Hu had had a long-standing philological interest in the historical sources of *suyu*. His *Suyu dian* established elemental links between the vernacular and classical languages, by both highlighting the etymological legitimacy of the living vernacular and elucidating the deeper historical meaning of contemporary *baihua*. Many ancient phrases “lie hidden in the vernacular language”, Zhang Taiyan wrote in a statement with which Hu would have fully concurred. As a result, the vernacular language could not be mastered without knowledge of philology.¹⁹

Aspects of Hu Puan’s dictionary project were also congruent with the bottom up, or popularization approach to the vernacular. His point of departure in searching for the foundation of the spoken language was the *suyu* uttered by women and children in his own day. In his authorial preface, Hu Puan states that he had long been aware that *suyu* spoken on the streets had historical roots that could be traced in ancient *biji*. He was convinced that a dictionary of the origins of *suyu* would be of great benefit to the study of the spoken language (*yanyu* 言語) (Hu P. 1925).

While the *Suyu dian* may have been aligned with certain layers of the vernacular movement and its publication expedited by the events surrounding 1919, its compilation was in no way determined by May Fourth. Hu Puan’s long-standing interest in tracing the origins of *suyu* was motivated by his desire to recover historical and cultural unity, rather than create a new demotic language. His brother, Hu Huaichen, emphasised the theme of unity in his preface to the dictionary. Huaichen explained that written words and oral speech (*wenyan* 文言) had been united before the Eastern Han; the language on the streets (*jietan gangyu* 街談巷語) and the words of women and children (*furen ruzi* 婦人孺子) were all included in writing. When the oral and spoken languages separated, literature (*wenxue* 文學) developed two critical flaws: a lack of authenticity (*shizhen* 失真) as writing became increasingly ornate, and a lack of communicability (*buda* 不達) as textual language was gradually removed from practical use (Hu H. 1925). Well before the late 19teens Hu Puan had begun a collec-

19 Zhang Taiyan (1934). “the Relation Between the Vernacular Language and the Classical Language”. *Guoxue gailun*, 113-21. Cited in Chen 2011, 408.

tive enterprise of excavating the textual sources of common speech in an effort to realign the written and spoken languages. The project involved several members of his family – including Huaichen – each of whom was tasked with recording any current common sayings they encountered while reading *biji*. Hu Puan then tucked these sayings away in a box (1925).

The vernacular language movement provided Hu Puan with the impetus to take these items which had accumulated over the years out of the box. With the help of Huaichen as a fellow editor, and the assistance of his wife, Zhu Zhao 朱昭 (1890-1966); his daughter, the *guohua* painter Hu Yuan 渊 (born of his first wife, 1901-28); and his nephews Huisheng 惠生 (Daoji 道吉, 1894-1958) and Daohe 道和 (1903-1958), he was able to complete the dictionary in one year.²⁰

This was impressive speed given the scope and innovativeness of the dictionary. Including over 7,300 entries,²¹ it is organised along the lines of the *Kangxi Dictionary* (Kangxi zidian 康熙字典), but also, according to some, as functional as a modern specialised reference work.²² It is divided into twelve parts (*ji* 集) ordered by radicals and number of strokes, and further sub-divided into sections (*bu* 部) which are also ordered by stroke number.²³ The entries feature various forms of *suyu* including single characters and compounds (*ci* 詞, representing 70 to 80% of entries) and idioms (*shuyu* 熟語 20 to 30%) – among them four-character sayings (*chengyu* 成語), proverbs (*yanyu* 諺語), two-part double puns (*xiehouyu* 歇后語), commonly used phrases (*guanyong yu* 慣用語), and miscellaneous sayings (Cui, Yao 2013, 112). Each entry lists the source for the saying, whether a text, a person, or a poem.

Hu Puan and his family drew on some 3,000 works in compiling the text. In his preface to the dictionary, Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1885-1956) describes how Hu “exhausted as many early texts as he could in seeking the original source of an entry”. His method was, according to Yang, similar to that of “a tailor who sews patches of cloth into a rich tapestry, or a goldsmith who smelts broken bits of copper into a bell (*ji lingjian yi zhijin, rong sui jin er wei zhong* 集零縑以製錦, 鎔碎

20 In Hu’s preface he names one of his nephews as Huisheng while the reprint refers to Daoji. I am assuming they are the same person. Hu P. 1925; Shanghai shudian 1984, 3.

21 Hu Puan and his family continued to collect some 1,000 *suyu* after the dictionary was published. They had initially contemplated adding a supplement, but also realised that would be insufficient so their wish was that others would continue the work “*Suyu dian liyan*,” 2. The number of entries given in secondary sources varies from over 7,200 (Qu Yanbin, “Xiandai *suyu*,” 150) to 8,328 (Cui Lei, Yao Weijun, “Hu Pu’an de *wenxian*,” 112).

22 On the claim to being a modern reference work, see Shanghai shudian 1984, 2.

23 “*Suyu dian liyan*”, 1.

金而為鐘”。²⁴ The five most frequently cited sources in the dictionary are the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian, 455 entries), the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han Dynasty, 442), the *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin dynasty, 383), the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the latter Han dynasty, 332), and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Mister Zuo's Annals, 213). Hu and his family also culled information from a range of less orthodox sources including category books (*leishu* 類書), *biji*, fiction (*xiaoshuo* 小說), dictionaries or glossaries (*zishu* 字書), poetry talks (*shihua* 詩話), Buddhist scripture (*Fojing* 佛經), gazetteers (*difangzhi* 地方志), inscriptions (*beiwén* 碑文), and talk of the town (*minjian de jietangangyi* 民間的街談巷議) (Fu 2011, 140).

The *Suyu dian* was not only a feat of philology, however, but a guide to the nascent May Fourth vernacular. The paratexts to the dictionary repeatedly emphasise its practical purpose. The “Editorial Principles” (Liyan 例言) assert that the compilation exclusively features sayings that were currently used by “women and children”. These include sayings that were not *suyu* in the ancient past but have become *suyu* in the mouths of the masses (*zhongren zhi kou* 眾人之口). It does not include terms that were *suyu* in the past but no longer in use.²⁵ In his preface, Zhu Shizhe 朱師轍 (1878-1969) asserts that the compilation should serve as a bible (*miji* 秘笈) for those studying *baihua* in the early 1920s (1923). A 1925 advertisement similarly announces the dictionary’s usefulness in the current exuberant age of *baihua* (*baihua shengxing shidai* 白話盛行時代).²⁶

Hu Puan asserted in his authorial preface that this focus on practical everyday use distinguished his dictionary from both previous collections of *suyu* and contemporary dictionaries. While two relatively recent *suyu* dictionaries, Qian Daxin’s 錢大昕 *Hengyan lu* 恆言錄 (Record of Everyday Expression) and Di Hao’s 翟灝 (1736-88) *Tongsu bian* 通俗編 (A Lexicon of Vernacular Expressions), cited a profusion of early texts, the sayings they recorded were no longer in use in their own day. Of little practical utility, the texts could be more accurately classified as dictionaries of *wenyan* rather than *suyu* (Hu P. 1925). They were also difficult to search and far from the standards of a modern dictionary (*cidian*) (Fu 2011, 139; Cui, Yao 2013, 112).

The *Suyu dian* was also unique in its own day. “Many scholars today have compiled dictionaries (*cidian*)”, Hu Puan noted in his own preface, “but few have compiled dictionaries that trace the sources of common sayings (*yudian* 語典).” This is most likely because “it is

²⁴ Yang S. 楊樹達. “Suyu dian xu” (Preface to Common Sayings). Hu Puan 胡樸安, Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛, *Suyu dian* 俗語典 (Common sayings, Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1922, 1925. Rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983 (1984), 1-3.

²⁵ “Suyu dian liyan”, 1-2.

²⁶ (*Guangyi shuju*) *Tushu mulu*, 36, 2010 rpt, 40.

easy to find sources for *cidian* but hard to find sources for *yudian*" (Hu P. 1925). Yang Shuda's preface confirms that in the last ten years (essentially since the beginning of the Republic), numerous dictionaries (*zidian* 字典) and word lists (*cihui* 詞彙) have appeared in disorderly piles in book shops. None, however, are of this kind (Yang L. 2013, 1-3). An advertisement for the dictionary announces that the many new dictionaries and etymologies (*zidian* 字典, *ziyuan* 字源) on the market all approach language from the perspective of *wenyan*. None record useful *suyu*. Focused on the living language, the *Suyu dian* could be used to instruct members of various segments of society in the appropriate language to use in their social interactions (*yingchou de cizhang* 應酬的詞章). It was also helpful for those interested in reading a range of old- and new-style works such as treatises and editorials (*lunshuo* 論說), letters, textbooks, works of dramatic storytelling (*pinghua* 評話), and teaching materials (*jiangyi* 講義).²⁷

While advertisements and paratexts emphasise the relevance of the *Suyu dian* to the rise of the vernacular, the dictionary is neither materially nor conceptually a product of the *baihua* movement. It features *suyu*, but actual entries are written in simple classical prose rather than *baihua*. The compilation also followed long-standing literati conventions, a possible reason for its relative invisibility in the post-May Fourth era (Hung 1985, 210).

The first of these conventions is the inclusion of a series of prefaces by luminaries well versed in the field. In addition to Hu Puan's authorial preface, and a preface by Hu Huaichen, one other allographic preface appeared in the text and a fourth was published in Hu Puan's journal, the *Thrift and Savings Society Journal*. Yang Shuda, author of the third preface, was a linguist and professor at Teacher's College in Beijing.²⁸ Zhu Shizhe, author of the fourth preface, was a compiler of the *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (Draft history of the Qing dynasty) (Zhu 1923).

Both Yang and Zhu follow familiar prefatorial practice by situating the *Suyu dian* within a historical lineage of texts. This enables them to both emphasise historical continuity and highlight the superiority of Hu Puan's compilation. We learn from these various prefaces that precedents for the *Suyu dian* appeared as early as the Southern Dynasties. Liu Ji 劉霽 of the Liang dynasty's *Shi suyü* 釋俗語 (Explanation of Common Sayings) is recorded in the *Suishu* (Bibliographical Treatise in the History of the Sui Dynasty) although the text itself is no longer extant (Zhu 1923; Fu 2011, 139). Zhou Shouzhong 周守忠 (fl. 1208-20) of the Southern Song dynasty and Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-

²⁷ (*Guangyi shuju*) *Tushu mulu*, 36, 2010 rpt, 40.

²⁸ Yang Shuda 楊樹達. "Suyu dian xu" (Preface to Common Sayings). In Hu Puan 胡樸安, Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛, *Suyu dian* 俗語典 (Common sayings, Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1922, 1925. Rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983 (1984), 1-3.

1559) of the Ming, both compiled texts entitled *Gujin yan* 古今諺 (Ancient and modern proverbs) (Hu P. 1925). Qing scholars were even more attentive to *suyu* in the context of the evidential research (*kaozheng* 考正) movement although their texts all had shortcomings which the preface authors highlight. Liang Tongshu's 梁同書 (1723-1815) *Zhiyu buzheng* 直語補證 (Supplement on Common Speech), like a number of earlier works in this lineage, offered few citations and was not highly specialised (Zhu 1923). Du Wenlan's 杜文瀾 (1815-1881) *Gu yaoyan* 古謠諺 (Ancient Ballads and Proverbs) was a rich collection, but it only examined ancient proverbs, not current language (Zhu 1923). Qian Daxin's *Hengyan lu* and Di Hao's *Tongsu bian*, as noted above, were relatively comprehensive but not well-categorised (Zhu 1923).

Finally, the *Suyu dian* was, as we have noted, the product of family labour, not of a new-style editorial team. In contrast, the Shangwu yinshuguan's *Ciyuan* 詞源 published in 1915, for example, was the work of 50 compilers (Culp 2019, 46).

Hu Puan was also ideologically at a distant remove from the *baihua* movement. He expressed skepticism concerning the intellectual integrity and political aims of the movement in an essay published in the *Thrift and Savings Society Journal* in November 1923. Entitled "The Harm of Recent Scholarship" (Lun jinren zhixue zhi bi 論今人治學之弊), the essay focuses on the debate between what Hu calls *baihua* and *wenhua* 文話 - terms that stand in for new vernacular knowledge and established classical knowledge.

Hu is not particularly partisan in this debate. His essay is equally critical of proponents of *baihua* and *wenhua* who he uniformly chastises for weaponizing and politicizing literature in an effort to boost their individual reputations (Hu P. 1923a, 1). He is also impartial in his appraisal of the literary merits of the two language registers. Both *wenhua* and *baihua* have value, he writes, in terms of the two fundamental qualities of language: use (*yunyong* 運用) and elegance (*youmei* 優美) (1). He is, nonetheless, not sparing in his assessment of works written in *baihua*. He claims that they are shallow, straightforward (*qianlü* 淺率), and lacking in deep meaning. The numerous works translated into *baihua* - he is referring to works translated from *wenyan* rather than from foreign languages - do not convey (*ci moda* 辭莫達) the meaning of the original. He also insists that knowledge of *wenyan* is a necessary precondition for eloquence in *baihua*: the most readable works in *baihua*, he declares, are written by "those who have solid training" (*suyou gendi* 素有根底) in *wenhua* (1-2). He concedes that there are also many shallow and straightforward (*qianlü fanduo* 淺率繁多) works in *wenhua*. They are, however, relatively readable and if, successfully translated into *baihua*, would be accessible (1-2).

Hu further criticises scholars in both camps for lacking integrity (*zili zhi dao* 自立之道). By this he means that they lack a solid grounding in the knowledge they purport to possess and promote,

which forces them to make extraneous appeals to external authority in staking out their positions. If a *baihua* scholar does not understand mathematics, Hu claims, he discusses Russell. If he does not understand biology (*shengwu* 生物), he invokes Dewey. Similarly, if a scholar working in *wenhua* does not understand the classics and histories, he references Cui Dongbi 崔東璧 (Cui Shu 崔述 (1740-1816)). If he does not understand philology, he alludes to the father and son Wang of Gaoyou 高郵王 (Wang Niansun 王念孫, 1744-1832; Wang Yinzi 王引之, 1766-1834) (2).

Hu takes further swipes at tendencies in May Fourth activism and scholarship. One is at what he presents as a new mania for public lecturing among New Culture activists. He laments that people no longer read books behind closed doors. Instead they mount platforms and make speeches (*dengshan yanjiang* 登壇演講). They do not seek knowledge of specialised subjects from books they hold in their own hands (*zhijuan wenye* 執卷問業). Rather they follow the crowd and listen to lectures. And while those lecturing should have knowledge and those listening should have some kind of intellectual foundation, this is not the case. Lecturers are ignorant of the topics on which they expound so they pepper their speeches with strange new words to pique their listeners' imaginations. And the listeners not only lack any sort of intellectual foundation, they also have no true intention of listening (Hu P. 1923a, 2).

Those engaged in research in the aftermath of May Fourth – possibly references to the Doubting Antiquity School (*Yigu pai* 疑古派) and the critics of the Neo-Confucian tradition – also come up short in Hu Puan's estimation. They work too quickly and are too beholden to novel and curious ideas. They seem to follow one of two paths, they either seek out hidden and secluded (*yinpi* 隱僻) Chinese works to supplement the latest Chinese discourses, or they try to overthrow well-established theories with a sole piece of evidence.²⁹

4 Conclusion

Despite Hu Puan's unabashed criticisms of May Fourth ideology, both the *Suyu dian* and the *Record of Customs* have had an afterlife in post-Mao era: both have been repeatedly reprinted since the 1980s. According to the publisher of one of the reprint editions of the *Record of Customs*, the reason it was considered worth "dusting off" and republishing relates to Zhang Chizhang's statement in his preface

²⁹ Hu P. 1923a, 3. It is unclear precisely who Hu's targets are here. Possibly the Doubting Antiquity School (*yigu pai* 疑古派) and the Criticism of the Neo-Confucian tradition. I am grateful to Lianbin Dai for these suggestions.

to the original work, “to know past and present customs is to know China”.³⁰ The publisher of a reprint edition of the *Suyu dian* similarly linked Hu Puan’s philological approach to common sayings to the epistemological objectives of the root searching movement in the 1980s (Shanghai Shudian 1984, 2, 4).

The resurfacing of these works points to the incompleteness of not only Hu Puan’s particular projects – of historicizing all common sayings and capturing all local customs – but of the broader May Fourth projects with which they intersected. The nodes of convergence between the concerns of this seemingly inconsequential writer and those of leading May Fourth figures, highlights the period’s most intractable issues, issue to which the New Culture movement did not ultimately have sustainable answers. Full engagement with the *min* remains elusive in a country with vast income disparities and floating populations. Language reform has helped increase literacy while producing what many consider to be an historically and culturally impoverished language.

Lu Xun’s statement – that all things have two, three, or multiple self-contradictory layers – is instructive in considering the ways Hu Puan and his works deepen our understanding of the May Fourth moment. We could easily dismiss Hu as parochial – he had not travelled abroad and apparently did not know any foreign languages. But his parochialism illuminated the parochialism of his allegedly cosmopolitan intellectual counterparts who were well versed in the ways of Parisians and Londoners but ignorant of the breadth of local Chinese customs, and who wanted to turn a rich and resonant local vernacular into a foreign language. We could also dismiss Hu as atavistic in his commitment to a grand unity predicated on passive acceptance of social hierarchy. But his atavism was tied to a penetrating presentism that highlighted the absurdity of mechanically applying foreign-generated ideologies to radically different social, economic, and cultural realities. His philological passion was attuned to the way people actually spoke and paired with a commitment to valorizing what lived on.

Hu Puan was just one of many writers on the margins as the chaotic grid of May Fourth-era layers coalesced into the unidirectional narrative that has come down to us. Reconstituting their traces, some of which are resurfacing today, makes it possible for us to reassess and even de-centre the place of May Fourth in China’s long Republic.

30 “Chubanzhe”, 2011.

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Agents of May Fourth. Jing Yinyu, Xu Zhongnian, and the Early Introduction of Modern Chinese Literature in France

Paolo Magagnin

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Jing Yinyu (1901-1931?) and Xu Zhongnian (1904-1981) played a pivotal role in the dissemination of modern Chinese literature in France at the turn of the 1930s. Best known as Lu Xun's first translator into a Western language and a friend of Romain Rolland's, Jing compiled the *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes* in 1929. In his *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise. Des origines à nos jours*, published in 1932, Xu also devoted a section to recent literary developments. By analysing the nature of the two projects, the translated corpora, and their paratexts, I will describe the features of Jing's and Xu's dissemination of May Fourth literature in France and scrutinise their artistic and ideological stance *vis-à-vis* the new literary scene. Ultimately, I will attempt to pinpoint in what terms the two scholars-cum-translators' agency contributed to foreign readers' awareness of the cultural, social and political experience of the May Fourth Movement.

Keywords Jing Yinyu. Xu Zhongnian. May Fourth Movement. Institut Franco-chinois de Lyon. Modern Chinese literature. Agents of translation.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Jing Yinyu's *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes*. – 3 Xu Zhongnian's *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise. Des origines à nos jours*. – 4 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

Amid the turmoil that characterised the rocky transition from the imperial to the republican system, culminating in the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement (*Wusi yundong* 五四運動) in 1919, the Chinese cultural world experienced an unprecedented burgeoning. Many young, often foreign-educat-

ed intellectuals championed a radical revolution that embraced all aspects of art and life: this revolution notably included the use of a new literary vernacular and new forms, the popularization of imported knowledge through a feverish translation activity, and the denunciation of traditional ethics and social mores, perceived as backward and oppressive. The debates surrounding these claims and innovations, and the artistic possibilities they disclosed, provided Chinese literature with a new set of expressive and thematic resources that allowed it to enter into its modern phase.¹

Notwithstanding the epochal shifts that were taking place on the Chinese social, political, and cultural scene in the aftermath of May Fourth, with intellectual exchanges still at an early stage despite the influential role played by missionaries (Pino, Rabut 2005), the new literature of China received little attention within European learned circles at the turn of the 1930s. It is against such a background that the innovative contributions made by Jing Yinyu 敬隱漁 (1901-1931?) and Xu Zhongnian 徐仲年 (1904-1981), or Xu Songnian 徐頌年, acquire special significance.² Jing (1929) edited a collection of short stories entitled *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes. Établie et traduite avec une introduction par J. B. Kin Yn Yu*, prefaced and translated by himself. A more ambitious project saw the light three years later: Xu (1932) also devoted a section of his *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise. Des origines à nos jours* to the recent developments in Chinese literature, supplemented by a selection of texts in his own French translation.

I will start by describing the nature, scope, and features of Jing's and Xu's projects, with an eye on the principles of text selection and the rendition strategies adopted by their compilers.³ By examining the corpora and paratexts, I will attempt to scrutinize the two intellectuals' artistic and ideological stance *vis-à-vis* the new literary

1 The debate on the need for a new periodization of Chinese literature, as well as on the legitimacy of such labels as 'May Fourth literature', 'modern literature' or even 'modernity', is well beyond the scope of this article (for a discussion see Hockx 1999). Here I use the expressions 'modern literature', 'new literature' or 'May Fourth literature' for convenience.

2 The publications authored by the two intellectuals bear the names "J.B. [or J.-B.] [Jean-Baptiste] Kyn [or Kin] Yn Yu" or simply "Kyn [or Kin] Yn Yu" for Jing Yinyu, and "Sung-nien Hsu" for Xu Zhongnian/Xu Songnian respectively. Here I will use the *pinyin* transcription of these names for transparency.

3 The focus of this article is more on the introduction of modern Chinese literature in France from a historical angle, as well as from the point of view of the two intellectuals' ideological projects, than on their specific translation strategies. The features of Jing's translations from Chinese have already been the object of several studies (Find-eisen 2010; Rabut 2010; Magagnin 2013; Zhang 2016), while Xu's translations have yet to be closely investigated in this respect. A more in-depth scrutiny of Xu's translation strategies and a detailed comparison of the translations carried out by the two intellectuals, from the perspective of translation criticism, remain topics for future research.

scene, in an attempt to pinpoint in what terms their agency contributed to foreign readers' awareness of the cultural, social and political experience of China in their time, and of the experience of May Fourth in particular.

2 Jing Yinyu's *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes*

2.1 The Author

Jing Yinyu, born in Suining (Sichuan) in 1901, was a moderately prolific writer and translator: as a member of the Creation Society (*Chuangzaoshe* 創造社) in Shanghai, he became acquainted with the prominent writers Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Lu Xun 魯迅, among others. His first contributions to the Creation Society journals date from 1923, and his collection of short fiction *Mary* (*Mali* 瑪麗) was published in the "Association of Literary Studies Series" (*Wenxue yanjiuhui congshu* 文學研究會叢書) in 1925. One of the stories featured therein, "Grace and Charm" (*Niaonuo* 孌娜), even made it into the *Compendium of Chinese New Literature* (*Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 中國新文學大系). Later the same year he left for France, where he enrolled in the Institut Franco-chinois de Lyon (IFCL): suffering from mental derangement linked to the syphilis he had contracted in Lyon, he abruptly returned to China in 1930 and most likely committed suicide by drowning himself in Hangzhou the following year.⁴

When scholars within and outside China focus on this somewhat mysterious figure, they generally do so for two intimately connected reasons. The first is Jing's association with Romain Rolland, which began in 1924 and became closer during his French years, leading to the popularization of Rolland's work in China (Loi 1982; Findeisen 2001; Zhang 2017). Indeed, Jing undertook a Chinese translation of *Jean-Christophe*, published in instalments in the prestigious *Short Story Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報) in the first quarter of 1926, but discontinued after the first three chapters. He also contributed some French-language essays to *Europe*, the literary journal founded by Rolland. The second reason of interest is the fact that Jing was the first to make Lu Xun's fiction available to a Western audience (Liu 1992; Wang 2009; Gao 2014; Liang 2016). His French rendition of "The True Story of A Q" (*A Q zhengzhuàn* 阿Q正傳) was published with a foreword in *Europe* shortly after his arrival in France (Lu 1926). Jing also acted as an intermediary between Lu Xun and

⁴ The year, place, and circumstances of Jing's death being still largely shrouded in mystery, I here follow Findeisen 2010.

Rolland by translating their correspondence and mutual manifestations of praise (Foster 2001) – a testament to his life-long endeavour to consolidate cross-cultural relations. Only recently have some studies (Findeisen 2010; Rabut 2010; Magagnin 2013; Zhang 2016, 258-72) been devoted to his agency that focus specifically on his *Anthologie*, a milestone in his translating career that, oddly enough, had never before been the object of in-depth analysis.

2.2 The Project and the Corpus

The Parisian publisher Rieder issued Jing Yinyu's *Anthologie* in the late March of 1929 within the series "Les prosateurs étrangers modernes". Jing was probably encouraged to undertake the project by Rolland himself, who had highly praised Lu Xun's "The True Story of A Q" a few years earlier; besides, Rieder was also the publisher of *Europe*. The book seems to have enjoyed some success in intellectual circles that even crossed national and language barriers: it was promptly retranslated into English for a British (Jing, Mills 1930) and an American edition (Jing, Mills 1931), and later into Spanish by an Argentinian publisher (Jing 1944).

The *Anthologie* included a publisher's "Note" (Jing 1929, 7), an "Introduction" by Jing himself (9-12), and a total of nine pieces of short fiction in his French translation (13-190), as listed below:⁵

Table 1 Works of modern literature included in Jing Yinyu's *Anthologie des conteurs chinois modernes. Établie et traduite avec une introduction par J. B. Kin Yn Yu*

Author	Translated French title	Original Chinese title
Chen Weimo 陳煒謨 (Tcheng Wi Mo)	"Mademoiselle Lysing"	<i>Xieshezhuayi yu lixiangzhuayi</i> 寫實主義與理想主義 (Realism and Idealism)
Luo Huasheng 落華生 (Lo Houa Sen)	"Après le crépuscule"	<i>Huanghun hou</i> 黃昏後 (After Dusk)
Jing Yinyu (J.-B. Kin Yn Yu)	"Un divorce"	Written directly in French
Lu Xun (Lou Sioun)	"Con y Ki"	<i>Kong yiji</i> 孔乙己 (Kong Yi Ji)
Lu Xun (Lou Sioun)	"La vie de Ah Qui"	<i>A Q zhengzhuàn</i> 阿Q正傳 (The True Story of A Q)
Lu Xun (Lou Sioun)	"Le pays natal"	<i>Guxiang</i> 故鄉 (Hometown)

⁵ The authors' names are indicated in their *pinyin* transcription, followed by the form used by Jing in the *Anthologie* in brackets. The French titles of the texts listed in the table are also Jing's.

Bing Xin 冰心 (Mademoiselle Ping Sing)	“Ennui”	<i>Fanmen</i> 煩悶 (Gloom)
Mao Dun 矛盾 (Mao Teng)	“Les illusions”	<i>Huanmie</i> 幻滅 (Disillusion)
Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (Yo Ta Fou)	“Un désenchanté”	<i>Yinhui</i> <i>de si</i> 銀灰色的死 (The Silver-Gray Death)

Two of the nine stories had already been published in *Europe*, namely, the aforementioned “La vie de Ah Qui” (Lu 1926) and, only two weeks before the book came out, “Mademoiselle Lysing” (Chen 1929). Jing’s *Anthologie* includes a few soon-to-be classics of modern Chinese literature: besides displaying all the stylistic and thematic peculiarities of the latter, the corpus selected by Jing gives voice to the grievances, ideals, and social and political claims of the intellectuals who were linked, to variable extents, to the May Fourth Movement. The celebrated stories by Lu Xun portray the debasement of the intellectual, the degeneration of the national character, and the tensions and unease felt by the young generations in the transition from a rural, traditional culture to a ‘modernity’ that comes with a feeling of tragic disorientation. The stories by Chen Weimo, Yu Dafu and Jing Yinyu himself, much in the spirit of the Creation Society, bring to the fore characters fighting against a cruel society that seems to reject them, look in vain for pure love, and resist the constraints of traditional morals, especially traditional marriage practices: in Yu’s case they slip into decadence and debauchery, whereas Jing’s protagonist finds a new meaning in his life by joining the revolutionary army. Melancholy dominates Luo Huasheng’s (pen name of Xu Dishan 許地山) story of family grief and newfound hope, while Bing Xin and Mao Dun, by using the tools of Realism, describe the slow descent into depression and disillusion induced by an oppressive society that crushes young people’s ambitions and expectations.

Jing’s – somewhat pretentious – choice to include his own work, written directly in French (Zhang 2016, 265), deserves some final considerations. It is highly possible, as Rabut (2010, 198) suggests, that he felt entitled to present himself as not simply a translator of the great Chinese writers of his time included in his collection, but as their peer. On a less kind note, one could even insinuate that, by doing so, Jing was hoping to obtain, in French-speaking learned circles, the kind of literary recognition that he was being denied in his own country.

2.3 The Translation

No mention is made by Jing of a specific strategy adopted in the translation of the stories contained in his *Anthologie*. However, an interesting statement that points to the supposed untranslatability of Chinese

logic is found in the “Introduction”: “sudden, concise, with no links to one another, [the Chinese’s] intuitive truths have to be promptly grasped. They are also difficult to put into words. Even more so, how could they be subjected to translation?”⁶ (Jing 1929, 9-10). The “Note” that opens the book offers more interesting details. By the publisher’s account, in three cases – namely, the stories by Bing Xin, Mao Dun, and Yu Dafu – they agreed to resort to adaptations, “a bastard genre that we are no more ready to accept today than we once were” (7), instead of complete translations, and they confess to having been persuaded to break this editorial golden rule by Jing’s cogent arguments. Since “the field of new and genuine Chinese literature is still too sparse for us to be spoilt for choice”, they thought it best to “include texts that, if adapted with the appropriate technique, would retain part of their authentic and original flavor”, instead of “works that, if translated literally, would only result in a poor outcome” (7). Did such a statement reflect an earnest concern with the acceptability of works whose setting, style, and narrative were perceived as potentially challenging for the intended reader? Or was this simply a pretext for Jing to justify his far-reaching rewriting and recreation, in a further attempt to establish himself as a respected interpreter of the Chinese literature of his time? This is hard to determine with any reasonable level of certainty.

Be that as it may, the noteworthy part of Jing’s agency as a translator lies precisely in his adaptations – not only the three overt ones, signalled by the annotation “after...” (*d’après*), but also those carried out covertly. His translations of Lu Xun’s stories are generally close to their originals and prove “fairly solid renderings that have not necessarily been superseded by later translations” (Findeisen 2010, 146). The renditions of Luo Huasheng’s and Bing Xin’s works show some localised alterations and substantial omissions, possibly designed to make the plot clearer and sounder, as is also the case with Chen Weimo’s text (Zhang 2016, 263). Other stories undergo a more in-depth process of transcreation. Mao Dun’s “Les illusions” is a heavily abridged version of the original novella *Huanmie*, characterised by extensive rewriting and a high degree of structural rearrangement, as shown by Findeisen (2010). This strategy may have been carried out by Jing in order to redress the imbalances and weaknesses of the original plot at the level of character representation (e.g. by presenting the female protagonist as a stronger woman than she was in the original). This makes the work a *transposition* that may even have improved the original (156). Similar considerations apply to “Un désenchanté”, with its radical rewriting of some portions of the original plot. For example, the protagonist’s musings on the happy life by

6 All translations from French were made by the Author.

the side of his late beloved wife are drastically rewritten into an outburst of rage, full of bitterness and resentment, at a still living but estranged spouse. Details from other stories by Yu Dafu are interspersed in the narrative, and the main character's debauchery and whoring and drinking habits are expanded, or even added altogether, in order to stress his moral degradation (Rabut 2010; Magagnin 2013). These far-reaching changes may have been made to emphasise the deep transformations occurring in social and gender relationships, and generally to exacerbate the binary opposition between old and new – another trait of May Fourth literature in general, and of the writings of the Creation Society in particular. In other passages, Christian and Buddhist notions are inserted, thus adding or strongly emphasising a sense of spirituality that is absent, or at most only implicit, in the original (Rabut 2010, 196; Magagnin 2013, 139-40).

Jing possessed undeniable linguistic skills and writing talent in his second language, which he enriched with his own erudition and a strong lyrical sensibility, despite often slipping into overly exotic and somewhat baffling phrasing. He also inserted details that could only be construed by highly educated Chinese readers, and abstained from clarifying cultural references that remained largely unintelligible to his French-speaking audience. However, this may have been compensated by the latter's willingness to accept the unfamiliar in the reading process (Rabut 2010, 196-8; Magagnin 2013, 140).

2.4 The Paratext

In his "Introduction", dating from January 1929, Jing claims to have established an anthology of short stories upon request of some "European friends, curious about the evolution of Chinese thought" (Jing 1929, 9). At the head of these "European friends", of course, was his mentor Rolland. A promotional leaflet accompanying the *Anthologie* contains the following statement: "if this book were not considered primarily a testimony, it would probably defeat its essential purpose" (Les Éditions Rieder, s.d.). Curiously enough for an accomplished writer and translator who even included his own work in the collection, the literary value of these stories does not seem to be as important to him as their documentary value and sociological relevance. Jing qualifies the stories he selected as "generally works by students" (1929, 9) who are "mostly too young" and "have not yet probed the meanders of the Dao" (11). Even if "they are not writers, not in the European sense of the word", they still "prove praiseworthy in that they try to expand their horizons" (11) by following the teachings of European writers, and are therefore capable of revealing "a new phase of China" to French readers (10). In addition to this, the text is interspersed with classical quotations (notably from the

Laozi 老子 and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子), and contains a barrage of pseudo-Daoist statements that may resonate with the expectations of an European audience that, until that point, had only had access – if at all – to a strongly exoticised image of China. The latter is described as “so mysterious yet so simple” (9) and the Chinese are referred to as “black-eyed sage[s]” (10), “quiet, silent, yet profound”, possessing a “primitive” logic (9).

Lu Xun deserves a special mention: “he is an enemy of the Dao”, Jing states, “but may understand it better than most of those who are only superficially Daoists or Confucianists” (12). Elsewhere, Lu Xun is also celebrated as “one of [China’s] most renowned authors” (Lu 1926, 56) thanks to the skilful combination of psychological analysis and symbolism that can be observed in “La vie de Ah Qui”, a masterpiece of satirical realism that denounces all the evils of the old society. Jing suggests, however, that behind Lu Xun’s passionate hatred for “the old Chinese spirit (in its negative aspects)” (1929, 12) one could actually see a heartfelt desire to revive traditional wisdom. Indeed, Jing’s praise seems to go to the classics, because of their unique ability to encapsulate the spirit of a nation in few, elegant words (11). Even so, a passing annotation on the merits and expressive potential of the new vernacular, or “plain language” (*baihua* 白話), is made when Hu Shi 胡適 is credited with having replaced the ancient literary language with a simpler and more accessible one, the same language used by “students” (10-11). Apparently, however, Jing saw the new intellectuals as still too immature to bring significant social and cultural change, and believed that a solution to the current unrest could only be sought within the nation itself. The closing lines tellingly state that “after having tried in vain the remedies of Europe, which are not suitable for its illness, China, by a huge detour, will plunge again into the depths of the Dao” (12). Perhaps, these lines reveal how Jing was less of an iconoclast and an advocate of revolutionary literature than his association with the Creation Society – and of his picks for the *Anthologie* – might at first lead us to believe.

3 **Xu Zhongnian's *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise.* Des origines à nos jours**

3.1 The Author

Born in Dongting (Jiangsu) in 1904, in 1921 Xu Zhongnian was among the young Chinese who left for France in the framework of a work-study (*qingong jianxue* 勤工儉學) programme sponsored by the government. Upon his arrival he enrolled in the IFCL, where he inevitably met Jing Yinyu. While in France, he also got in contact with Rolland and visited him several times. In 1926 Xu enrolled at the Université de Lyon and obtained his doctoral degree *ès lettres* in January 1930, with a dissertation entitled *Li Thai-po, son temps, sa vie et son œuvre* (published in book form in Beijing in 1934 under a slightly different title, and in Lyon in 1935). After returning to China in October 1930, he was appointed professor of French language and literature at several prestigious universities, and held prominent positions in organisations devoted to the promotion of Sino-French friendship and cooperation. Despite being a Nationalist Party sympathizer, he did not leave for Taiwan after the end of the civil war and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In 1956 he obtained a position as professor of French at the Shanghai Foreign Language Institute. Denounced as a rightist in 1958, he was also persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, before being fully rehabilitated in 1979 and resuming his scholarly and teaching work. He died in Shanghai in 1981.

A prolific scholar and translator of French literature, in addition to his substantial scholarly output, Xu was responsible for the Chinese renditions - some of them still popular today - of several classics, including Dumas' *Les Trois mousquetaires* and Dumas fils' *La Dame aux camélias*. Conversely, he also greatly contributed to the popularization of Chinese literature, mainly from the premodern era: he did so by penning some three hundred articles in literary journals and publishing several volumes of translations in France and especially in China for the French-language publisher Imprimerie de la Politique de Pékin. Celebrated as a pioneer of Sino-French cultural relations (Yang 2013), Xu is mostly an object of scholarly research because of his merits in establishing a cultural bridge through his French translation of Chinese classics (Che 2016; Ma 2016). However, his role as a translator of modern literature has been largely neglected or is only mentioned with reference to his interest in Lu Xun (Liang 2016), while an in-depth scrutiny of his *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise* has yet to be conducted.

3.2 The Project and the Corpus

Xu's *Anthologie*, published in Paris in 1932, two years after its editor had returned to China from his studies in France, is an ambitious attempt to collect the milestones of Chinese literature, thought and historiography from their origins to the present day. The novelty, exhaustiveness and scholarly significance of this endeavour were praised by some European sinologists (Giles 1934), but the book seems to have enjoyed less success compared to Jing's. Surprisingly enough, or perhaps out of modesty, Xu makes no mention of his own work when lamenting the lack of a comprehensive and scientific history of Chinese literature, nearly two decades after its publication (Xu 1950). However, the *Anthologie* still had some cross-national impact within Europe: some of Xu's French renditions of Tang poems later became source texts for an Italian collection of Chinese premodern poetry, edited by Giorgia Valensin (1943) and prefaced by none other than Eugenio Montale, while three modern poems were given a Swedish retranslation by the poet Gunnar Ekelöf (1943).

The *Anthologie* features quite a long "Introduction" (Xu 1932, 5-90), which was written in Shanghai and carries the date of September 9, 1931. It is followed by the anthology proper (91-432), which includes Xu's French translations of representative works and excerpts, divided into five sections (poetry, fiction, drama, philosophy, and historiography) and listed chronologically. Of relevance to our investigation is the selection of modern literature, which excludes drama, philosophy, and historiography altogether and only comprises the fourteen poems (218-225) and four short stories (305-345) listed below:⁷

Table 2 Works of modern literature included in Xu Zhongnian's *Anthologie de la littérature chinoise. Des origines à nos jours*

Author	Translated French title	Original Chinese title
Poetry		
Hu Shi (Hou Che)	"En gravissant la montagne"	<i>Shang shan</i> 上山 (Climbing a mountain)
Guo Moruo (Kouo Mo-jo)	"Aurore"	<i>Chenxing</i> 晨興 (Daybreak)
Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (Siu Tche-mo)	"C'est un monde lâche"	<i>Zhe shi yige qienuo de shijie</i> 這是一個怯懦的世界 (This is a gutless world)

⁷ As in Table 1, authors' names are indicated in *pinyin* and followed by the form used by Xu (in his own, often inaccurate, phonetic transcription) in brackets. The French titles listed are also those used by Xu. However, Mu Ding's attribution remains uncertain, and I have been unable to identify the Chinese title of the poem by Wang Yi'an.

Xu Zhimo (Siu Tche-mo)	“Allez-vous-en”	<i>Qu ba</i> 去吧 (Go away)
Xu Zhimo (Siu Tche-mo)	“Poison”	<i>Duyao</i> 毒藥 (Poison)
Bing Xin (Ping-sin)	“Pluie nocturne”	<i>Yu de ye</i> 雨的夜 (Rainy night)
Bing Xin (Ping-sin)	“Mère”	<i>Muqin</i> 母親 (Mother)
Kang Baiqing 康白情 (K'ang Po-ts'ing)	“Doute”	<i>Yiwen</i> 疑問 (Doubt)
Zong Baihua 宗白華 (Tsong Po-houa)	“Hiver”	<i>Dong</i> 冬 (Winter)
Liu Dabai 劉大白 (Lieou Ta-po)	“Feuilles mortes, X”	<i>Luoye zhi qun</i> 落葉之群 (A bunch of dead leaves) (10th stanza)
Xu Dange 徐丹歌 (Siu Tan-ko)	“Je suis un démon”	Written directly in French?
Mu Ding 牧丁? (Me-cheng)	“Deux étoiles brillantes”	<i>Xing</i> 星 (Stars)
Feng Zhi 馮至 (Fong Tche)	“Le reste du vin”	<i>Canyu de jiu</i> 殘餘的酒 (The liquor left)
Wang Yi'an 王怡庵 (Wang Yé-ngan)	“Baiser”	N/A
Fiction		
Lu Xun (Lou Sin)	“K'ong Yi-ki”	<i>Kong yiji</i> (Kong Yi Ji)
Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (Tchou Tseu-ts'ing)	“L'histoire des rires”	<i>Xiao de lishi</i> 笑的歷史 (The history of laughter)
Yu Dafu (Yu Ta-fou)	“Sang et larmes”	<i>Xuelei</i> 血淚 (Blood and tears)
Guai An 夬庵 (Yang-ngan)	“Une fillette d'une vertu inflexible”	<i>Yige zhenlie de nühaizi</i> 一個貞烈的女孩子 (A virtuous and strong girl)

Some of the poems featured clearly embody the style and spirit of the new *baihua* literature, as is particularly evident in Hu Shi's and Xu Zhimo's texts. Hu Shi's poem is permeated by the sense of the sublime and makes extensive use of several stylistic devices favoured by the new generation of writers, especially anaphora and exclamation. These general traits also characterise Xu Zhimo's three poems; moreover, “Poison” makes widespread use of disturbing symbolist imagery, which adds to the gloomy tenor of the verses. Surprisingly, however, most of the other poems are significantly more lyrical and peaceful, as typified by Zong Baihua's “Hiver”. Indeed, despite their general use of free verse, some reveal a manifest influence of the Chinese tradition in which Xu was particularly well-versed, as witnessed by his life-long activity as a scholar and translator of classics. Even Guo Moruo's “Aurore”, with its conventional tropes and orderly stanzaic scheme, is an odd choice for an author who had earned his reputation thanks to his bombastic and vigorous style. Paradoxical-

ly enough, “Je suis un démon”, which Xu may have written directly in French under his pseudonym Xu Dange, reads like a blatant imitation of Guo’s “The Heavenly Hound” (*Tiangou* 天狗), with its pounding rhythm, the persistent “I” opening each stanza, and its radically iconoclastic message. Xu Zhongnian could not resist the temptation to carve out a little space for himself, either: but the fact that he did so under a pen name, perfectly opaque to his French readers, may sweep away the suspicion that he was driven by similar reasons as Jing Yinyu.

The works of short fiction picked by Xu are largely in line with the typical themes of May Fourth literature. Like Lu Xun’s “K’ong Yi-ki” (which had also been included in Jing’s collection), Yu Dafu’s “Sang et larmes” portrays – with harshness and sarcasm – the humiliation of modern intellectuals through its protagonist, a poorly paid writer unable to follow a profitable ‘-ism.’ In Zhu Ziqing’s “L’histoire des rires”, told from a female perspective, the youthful enthusiasm of a young bride is slowly eroded by the oppression of the traditional family, which emphasises the contrast between the constraints imposed by old customs and the desire to express one’s feelings. A comparable theme and tone are found in the rather obscure “Une fillette d’une vertu inflexible” by Guai An, whose protagonist is starved to death by her family after the loss of her fiancé, only to be celebrated by the local notables as a girl of exemplary chastity.

3.3 The Translation

Toward the end of the first part of the “Introduction”, Xu briefly explains the criteria that have inspired his work as a translator:

The best method of translation is obviously *tight translation* [*traduction serrée*]. By this term I mean *any translation rigorously faithful to the idea expressed in the original text*. The ‘word-for-word’ translation method is not foolproof. First, we cannot always find an expression, a turn of phrase, a French word that corresponds *exactly* to the Chinese characters. Even if this could be achieved, would a literary work thus translated give an even approximate idea of the original text? So, I have translated word-for-word whenever I could; but where it has been impossible for me to use this method, I have sought and employed the phrases, the expressions or the French words which come closest to the Chinese text. (Xu 1932, 6-7; emphasis in the original)

Vocabulary-wise, the notion of ‘tight translation’ seems to echo Lu Xun’s own ‘hard translation’ (*yingyi* 硬譯), namely, a non-idiomatic strategy aiming to reproduce – to the fullest possible extent – not

only the content, but also the formal traits of the original. However, the labels Xu uses here are somewhat ambiguous. What he means by “word-for-word translation” in the first occurrence is indeed similar to hard translation. However, in the second occurrence, this strategy is contrasted with one that comes closer to the original text: in this sense, the description now seems to point to Berman’s concept of ‘literal translation’, in the sense of a translation which “does not reproduce the facticity [i.e. the formal appearance] of the original, but the logic that underlies such a facticity” (Berman 1999, 141). The two statements appear somewhat contradictory – unless, of course, Xu understands ‘text’ as ‘the idea expressed in the original text’.

All labels aside, a scrutiny of the translations shows how Xu generally refrains from adopting a domesticating strategy in favour of an essentially philological approach. Still, his translator’s style is vivid and sophisticated, just like his own French writing; he does not surrender to unidiomatic phrasing, and avoids all unnecessary exoticism. At the same time, he provides the readers with all the tools that are indispensable for an in-depth, contextualised reading of the text, as exemplified by the frequent use of footnotes.

3.4 The Paratext

The “Introduction” of the *Anthologie* opens with the editor’s reasons for taking up the project. Xu declares to have collected “all the pieces that someone aspiring to [understand] Chinese literature should know” (1932, 5), devoting substantial space to poetry, fiction, and drama, following the principles of accuracy and impartiality (6). His purpose, he continues, is to provide a supplement to the existing anthologies of Chinese literature, which he deems wanting and unsatisfactory, especially when it comes to fiction and drama, which are wrongly considered to be lesser genres. His notes on the translation method adopted, found at the end of the preamble, have already been discussed (§ 3.3). The editor then goes on to present chronologically the history of Chinese civilisation and its cultural achievements. For each epoch, a profile of major intellectuals, schools, and genres is provided, along with a brief outline of significant works.

Let us now focus on the section discussing the 20th century, which occurs at the end of the “Introduction” (80-90). The debate on *baihua* and the new literary language is described in detail, and the merits of the “new school” of intellectuals who advocate innovation are recognised, against the resistance shown by such conservatives as “the stubborn Lin Shu” and “the smiling Yan Fu” (83). The new expressive possibilities disclosed by the new language are specially celebrated by Xu: despite the political and social pressure,

the new intellectual scene seems to benefit greatly from the newly achieved linguistic freedom (84).

According to Xu, “philosophy is dying” (82), with a few notable exceptions; “history has not produced any great masters, either” but, “philosophy and history aside, the evolution of poetry, fiction, novel and drama has brought about the emergence of a literature that is still young, yet aware of itself and its destiny” (83). Drama has witnessed some developments but appears generally monotonous and unconvincing: for instance, when Guo Moruo superposes new ideas onto old forms in his historical plays, “it is exactly as if a top hat were placed on Confucius’s head, which often causes laughter” (86). This verdict may well explain why translations of philosophical, historical, and theatrical works are excluded altogether from the anthology.

From Xu’s point of view, the literary forms that show the highest vitality within the new cultural landscape are poetry and fiction. In some cases, young poets appear to be still caught between classical tropes and forms and a modern sensibility, as is the case with Hu Shi (84); some are influenced by European poetry, like Guo Moruo and even more so Xu Zhimo, the latter being acclaimed as “the best representative of this school”, whereas others find their inspiration in the conciseness of Japanese poetry and in Tagore’s works (85).

Xu is unequivocal in praising the young, bold fiction emerging in his time: he has words of praise for Yu Dafu, Zhang Ziping, and Mao Dun, but appreciates Lu Xun in particular. The latter’s artistic production, while still meagre at the time, is declared to be of outstanding quality, and “some of [his] short stories [...] are real masterpieces” (86). This admiration is also witnessed by a French-language article published shortly before the *Anthologie*, in which Xu presents Lu Xun’s first short fiction collection *Outcry* (*Nahan* 呐喊) as a milestone in the new literature of China (Xu 1931). Some years later, when Xu became a regular contributor for the column “La littérature chinoise d’aujourd’hui” in the French-language *Journal de Shanghai*, he chose to inaugurate this collaboration with a French translation of Lu Xun’s story “Soap” (*Feizao* 肥皂) (Lu 1934). Guo Moruo is also the object of some interesting remarks. Although Guo is esteemed for some of his prose, “he writes too much”, especially now that he is producing an enormous amount of communist propaganda, which leads Xu to make the following statement: “I am not interested in politics in the least, but when the pen trots quickly, it cannot dig deep” (1932, 85).

Nevertheless, politics, in its broadest sense, is far from absent from Xu’s argument. In the final part of his “Introduction”, the editor reflects on the importance of freeing literature from the traditional burden of moral preoccupations, a process with which contemporary writers are still coming to terms: “few authors dare to express frankly what they think: the slow Confucian poison has not yet finished to work its ravages” (88). Now that they have thrown off the

yoke of a tradition based on sheer imitation, Xu continues, the new writers are “both too personal and not personal enough”, giving in to narcissism and a tendency to excessive introspection. At the same time, many of his fellow countrymen seem to resist a “modernity” that they feel would bring an excess of “material civilization” (89). Despite all these obstructions and contradictions, unsurprisingly common in times of transition, Xu gives voice to a twofold hope: on the one hand, “that this modern civilization, often rejected in its healthy contributions and often enthusiastically welcomed in its dangerous aspects, will be established and spread peace and well-being among us”; on the other hand, “that the new generations, which now possess a new tool (*baihua*), will work unrelentingly, methodically, with patience and *conscience*, and follow the example of a great number of their elders” (90). The ability to *evolve*, Xu concludes, is the key to survival; without it, “Chinese civilization will only live on in the souls of a few artists and people of learning” (90).

4 Conclusions

Jing Yinyu and Xu Zhongnian are two intellectuals who, at the turn of the 1930s, undertook the pioneering enterprise of making the most recent literary developments in China known to a foreign audience – in their case, a French-speaking one. They did so by establishing a small canon of modern literary works, providing their own translations, and resorting to paratextual devices to comment – more or less extensively – on the young generation of writers and their output. In this sense, Jing and Xu played a pivotal role in the introduction of modern Chinese literature and culture in France – and beyond – in the first half of the 20th century. To accurately assess the scope of their influence on international readers and on the learned community of their time is no easy feat. However, if nothing else, the fact that some of their renditions of modern Chinese fiction and poetry became source material for retranslations into other languages over the two following decades is a testament to the significance of their contribution, which came at a time when international awareness of the new cultural landscape of China was still very scant. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that they were among the first – and arguably the most authoritative – intellectuals to give the world a glimpse of a changing China, by introducing a selection of the literature fostered by the May Fourth Movement.

Unsurprisingly, Jing and Xu present certain similarities in terms of the nature and traits of their agency: this is almost inevitable, considering that they belonged to the same generation, had a largely similar educational background and pursued similar studies, shared the same artistic interests and a few friendships, and even attended the same establishment – the IFCL, a hotbed of prominent foreign-edu-

cated Chinese intellectuals since the early 1920s.

Firstly, the two share an explicit admiration for Lu Xun, who enjoys a special place in their translations and – particularly in Jing’s case – in their career as a whole: it is mostly thanks to them that the author of “The True Story of A Q” first came to be known and read outside China as the putative father of modern Chinese literature.

Secondly, Jing and Xu made an effort to bring to the fore all the tropes and stylistic features of May Fourth literature: a literary reflection of the debates between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ and of the radical social and cultural transformations that were taking place in China at the time.

Thirdly, by engaging in their respective projects, Jing and Xu unquestionably pursued self-legitimation in the eyes of their intended audience, by presenting themselves as authoritative spokespersons of the new literary scene, as well as privileged interpreters of the complex social, political, and cultural situation of China. At the same time, it could be suggested that they also strove to obtain recognition from their French-educated Chinese peers, starting from their fellow students at the IFCL. Their linguistic and artistic background naturally supported this attempt; their excellent proficiency in the French language, as well as their ties with such a celebrated representative of French-speaking cultural circles as Romain Rolland, certainly helped provide them with the cultural capital they needed for their enterprise.

Despite these similarities, their paths show some major differences. These are immediately obvious in the nature of their work and in the selection of a canon. Jing’s *Anthologie* is a literary collection that only focuses on modern fiction, presented as a document of the evolution of Chinese thought. In Xu’s project, which is much more ambitious in scope and critical depth (and which certainly had scholarly value in the eyes of its author), the translations of new literary works only cover poetry and fiction and represent but a part of the whole project. Moreover, Jing explicitly aspired to be recognised as standing on the same level as the writers that he included in his collection, whereas Xu was much less explicit in this respect.

Substantial disparities can also be observed at the level of translation strategies. Jing did not refrain from heavily manipulating the Chinese originals, either in order to make them more suitable to the supposed taste of his readers or because of a “creator’s complex” (Rabut 2010, 98) that was often expressed to the detriment of intelligibility. Contrary to Jing, Xu adopted a more philological approach, bringing the foreign reader closer to the Chinese text instead than the other way around, by means of a vast array of paratextual devices.

Differences in the use of exoticizing discourse also deserve to be pointed out. In both his “Introduction” and his translations, Jing frequently resorted to unannotated exotic expressions and no-

tions – perhaps another attempt at self-canonization that relied on the conventional, well-established image of China familiar to his European readership. Conversely, exoticism is virtually absent from Xu's *Anthologie*, in line with the academic preoccupations of its compiler.

Finally, the diverging ideological stances of the two intellectuals with regard to the situation in China is noteworthy. Jing Yinyu explicitly praised classical knowledge and even championed a 'return to the Dao' to bring an end to decades of national turmoil, even if this claim seems to clash with his artistic persona, that of a modern and progressive intellectual. This contradiction, however, may be only apparent, as most May Fourth intellectuals experienced a life-long tension between traditional values and radical viewpoints. That said, one might be surprised to see how Xu, a scholar of premodern literature who never denied his partiality for the classics (and might even superficially seem conservative), not only sung the praises of the new literature and condemned the 'Confucian poison' that prevented it from expressing its full potential, but even went as far as to advocate progress and evolution as the only path leading to peace and national salvation.

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A Space for Their Voices. (Un)apologies for Translation in the May Fourth Journal *New Tide*

Michelle Jia Ye

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract The study argues that translation in the frame space of the student journal *New Tide* (新潮 1919-22), was a mode of writing that legitimated the new-versus-old polarity in the May Fourth discourse. The analysis focuses on two sets of translation marginalia. One set presents the translators' habitual apologies for the imperfection of their works. In contrast, the other set of materials shows unapologetic appropriations of foreign sources, which reveal the use of translation for the dual purposes of criticising the students' concurrent traditional-minded Chinese intellectuals, and of validating – hence canonizing – the tenets of May Fourth.

Keywords Translation. Frame Space. Marginalia. *New Tide*. May Fourth.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Frame Space in *New Tide*. – 3 Translation in *New Tide*. – 4 Apologetic Marginalia. – 5 Unapologetic Appropriation. – 6 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

The object of my study is *New Tide* (*Xin Chao* 新潮, or *The Renaissance*),¹ a student journal based in Peking University published in the period 1919-22. The journal is widely accepted as a typical May Fourth periodical² and a derivative of the ideas of Hu Shi 胡適, Li Dazhao 李大釗 and Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀.³ This view has given rise to the modernist bias that the journal was mainly in service of the advocacy of the Western literature and scholarship that foregrounded May Fourth tenets. Translation in the journal, though ranging widely in forms and themes, have been conveniently understood as a transparent channel for importing progressive thoughts to the May Fourth-era China.⁴ My paper does not aim to subvert the general approval of the journal, but is prepared to contravene the simplistic assumption about how translation worked in the journal, with a description of its discourse as a unique frame space that on the one hand maintained translation as an provisional text type, and on the other hand allowed translators to exploit that liminality for the purpose of pursuing a modernist agenda.

The paper mainly deals with what are termed “paratexts” (Genette 1997) and “extratextual materials” (Toury 1995, 65). These include the journal’s editorial statements, guidelines for translation, translation criticism as well as a translator’s explanatory notes in the form of preface, afterword, endnotes and in-text gloss. I present as main evidence the paratextual and extratextual elements of translation that are apologetic in tone, and contrast them with unapologetic appropriation in actual translations. In other words, my interest is not in an isolated analysis of individual translated texts, but in the framing of translation and the dynamic working of the journal’s “translational practice” (Lefevere 1998, 13).

This study is an output of the research project “Translation in *New Tide* Journal (1919-1922) and the Canonization of May Fourth in the early Republican Periodical Press” funded by Early Career Scheme (#24606617), Research Grants Council, Hong Kong.

1 *The Renaissance* was the original English title printed on the cover of each issue of the journal, although its core values were not entirely modelled upon those of the European Renaissance. The literal translation *New Tide* is used more widely in the current English-language scholarship. I shall use the latter throughout this paper.

2 The term ‘May Fourth’ originates from the students’ protest on 4 May 1919 against the Chinese government’s weak response to the transfer of territorial concessions in Shandong from Germany to Japan under the Treaty of Versailles. It has come to refer to a series of political, intellectual, cultural and linguistic transformations in China in the decades surrounding 1919. For a brief note on the time frame, see Doleželová-Velingerová, Král’s 2001, 1; Chow et al. 2008, 1-2, 17.

3 This view dates back to the first narrative account of *New Tide* in Chow Tse-tsung’s defining work on the May Fourth Movement. For Hu, Li and Chen’s ‘inspirational influence’, see Chow 1960, 55.

4 See Cai 2009, 44 and Huang 2014, 7-9 for the typical expression of this view.

My analysis shall also bring to surface the agency of the student translators, for the dual purposes of justifying the selection of their texts as a representative sample, and of escaping the established view of the students as mere followers of their professors at Peking University. With full awareness of the heterogeneous nature of the journal and the natural diversity among its contributors, I do not attempt to come to a definitive conclusion on all translations and translators in *New Tide*. Rather, I attempt to offer initial but specific observation on *one* aspect of the subject matter. That is, the complex mechanism of translation in connection to its immediate publication venue and context. The paper's overall emphasis on how translation was circumscribed by the frame space in the journal shall set itself apart from existing studies on *New Tide*, and shall contribute to the recent empirical and theoretical exploration of the interconnection between translation and narrative space in the field of translation studies.

2 Frame Space in *New Tide*

The sociological notion of “frame space” of Erving Goffman (1981) was formally incorporated into translation studies by Mona Baker (2006). The term encapsulates the sum total of the norms governing what is deemed to be acceptable to a participant in a verbal interaction (Baker 2006, 109-10). Proceeding from this concept, the frame space of a periodical can be contoured in terms of its normative characteristics through an associative reading of its founding background, editorial intent and the make-up of contributors.

As seen in the editors' statements and reminiscences, *New Tide* was intended to be read primarily as an academic student journal. In the inaugural statement, the editor-in-chief Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950) declared that the main purposes of the journal were for the Peking University students to communicate the University's spirit to the public and to participate in the making of “new scholarship” (*xin xueshu* 新學術) and “real scholars” (*zhen xuezhe* 真學者) in China (Fu 1919a, 1). *New Tide's* self-positioning as an academic publication was consistently reflected in the wide adoption of style of academic writing - most visibly, the formatted use of references - in the majority of the published essays in the journal.

The journal's concentration on *academic* discussion can be verified by its textual sources. A compilation of all currently identifiable textual sources translated, quoted and mentioned in the journal articles offers us a small corpus for surface inquiries.⁵ The top-ten frequent

⁵ See *text map.xlsx* in the paper's dataset. To have a glimpse of all identified textual sources, go to spreadsheet 'node', column 'nature', and find the titles labelled as

words that appeared in the titles of non-Chinese sources are ‘social’, ‘psychology’, ‘war’, ‘history’, ‘principles’, ‘philosophy’, ‘essays’, ‘American’, ‘new’, ‘theory’ and ‘introduction’. The top-ten in the titles of Chinese sources are *lun* 論 (critique), *Zhongguo* 中國 (China), *zhuan* 傳 (biography), *xue* 學 (learning), *shi* 史 (history), *shu* 書 (book), *xin* 新 (new), *zhexue* 哲學 (philosophy), *pian* 篇 (chapter), *wenxue* 文學 (literature), *jing* 經 (classics) and *lu* 錄 (records). The keyword lists should certainly not be taken as an accurate abstract of the totality of the journal’s content, but they do offer us a glimpse into the bibliography of the contributors. One may have the informed impression that the works most frequently discussed by the contributors were Chinese classics and English-language scholarship in modern humanities and social sciences. It is safe to assume that the journal’s interest in academics was not only explicitly declared, but also consistently pursued.

According to Fu’s recollection (1919d, 200), the idea of starting a *student* academic journal originated from the on-and-off conversations starting in the autumn of 1916 between Fu Sinian, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980) and Xu Yanzhi 徐彥之 (1897-1940), when they were dormitory roommates at Peking University. By autumn 1917, the idea had attracted nearly twenty peers. This group gave the initial shape to what was officially known as *New Tide* Society in 1919 (*Xin Chao She* 新潮社, hereafter ‘the Society’) [fig. 1].

As Xu recalled (1919, 398), the Society started with 21 members in December 1918 and expanded to a team of 38 in a year. The journal was exclusively managed by this cluster of students. The Society’s charter (Xu 1919, 399-400) stated as a rule that all members were responsible for submitting materials to sustain the periodic publication. Besides offering an opinion platform, the journal also functioned as a screening mechanism of the Society. A new member would have to publish at least three articles in the journal before being formally accepted into the Society. If a student was from other institutions than Peking University, he or she also needed to be nominated by two existing members to be considered, on top of the three articles.

The editors’ accounts should be verified by a statistical survey. The journal presented a total of 75 contributors, among which 38 published more than once.⁶ In this group of multiply-published contribu-

‘source’. Sources are further categorised into ‘person’, ‘text’ or ‘journal’ under the column ‘source type’. The statistics of frequent words presented in this paragraph are based on the data of ‘text’ and ‘journal’ sources in this spreadsheet. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.7428434.v1>.

⁶ The statistics come from *published items.xlsx* in the paper’s dataset. All contributors to *New Tide* are recorded in the column ‘author’. The 75 contributors do not include advertisers, i.e. authors of advertisements. *New Tide*’s advertising connections can be found in the graph *advertising network.gephi* and in the visual output *New Tide advertising network visualization.pdf*.

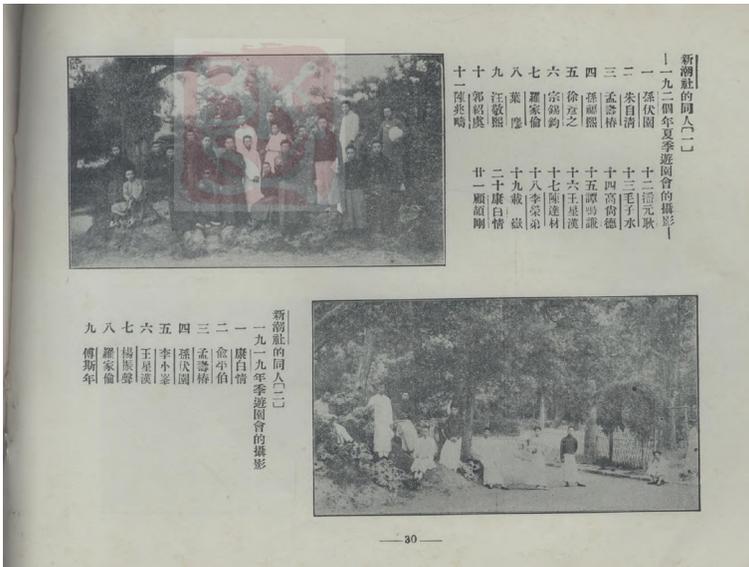


Figure 1 *Xin Chao She de tongren* 新潮社的同人” (Members of New Tide Society). *Beida shenghuo* 北大生活 (Life in Peking University). December 1921, no. 34. Source of figure: www.cnbksy.cn

tors, 25 were members of the Society. Together with the six one-time member-authors, the Society owned over 80% of the published titles.

Thus, in the Society’s charter and the actual composition of contributors, one could sense a keen insistence on soliciting like-minded contributors so as to keep the journal alive and on track. Eventually, the journal ran for twelve issues at gradually expanding intervals (Appendix 1) amid post-WWI global tensions and the cultural transformations inside China, while student contributors were also preoccupied with figuring out their own paths in education and employment (Fu 1919d, 203; Xu 1919, 399). To maintain the editorial autonomy, the journal solely relied on subsidies and donations within the university. From the very beginning, the Society refused collaboration with Qunyi Shushe 群益書社, the closest publishing partners of the university and the publisher of *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian* 新青年) (Fu 1919d, 200). The stable personnel and independent operation in the three years of publication despite external difficulties evinced the persistent, self-imposed exclusiveness of the editorial team.

The observations above give us a sure footing for seeing the journal as the frame space particularly reserved for Peking University students’ own academic discussion. However, the exclusiveness in editorial matters did not ensure a full coherence in the actual content.

In fact, what was embraced in the journal was diversity, likely a natural extension of Cai Yuanpei's 蔡元培 (1868-1940) policy of "freedom of thought" (*sixiang ziyou* 思想自由) and "tolerance and inclusiveness" (*jianrong bingbao* 兼容並包) at Peking University (Cai 1919, 718). The potential downside of this allowance was also expected. Fu laid out the following in the inaugural statement:

本誌主張，以為羣衆不宜消滅個性；故同人意旨儘不必一致；但挾同一之希望，遵差近之徑途，小節出入，所不能免者。若讀者以『自相矛盾』見責，則同人不特不諱言之，且將引為榮幸。(Fu 1919a, 3)

Our magazine believes the public should not eliminate individuality. So, the contentions of our members need not be unified. Though we share the same aspiration and follow similar paths, minor differences are inevitable. If readers accuse us for being "self-contradictory", we will not be afraid to admit it, and will even see it as an honour.

同人等皆是不經閱歷之學生，氣盛性直，但知『稱心為好』；既不願顧此慮彼，尤恨世人多顧慮者，讀者想能體會茲意，鑒其狂簡也。(Fu 1919a, 4)

All of us are students, inexperienced, vigorous and straightforward. But we know "what speaks to our hearts is goodness". So we won't burden ourselves with one worry or another, and will regret to see people worry too much. Our readers will hopefully understand us, and forgive our wild over-simplicity.⁷

The editorial principles implied that the contributors did not have to agree with each other; they did not even have to be consistent and rigorous as individuals in terms of expression of opinions; as students, they were entitled to be a little loose.

The departmentalisation of content in the journal also allowed much room for contributors to express their views with various degrees of idiosyncrasy. The main body of the journal was composed of critical essays and transcriptions of university lectures, which demonstrated the highest degree of scholarly consciousness. This was often followed by a much shorter literary section featuring short stories, drama and poetry, in which the contributors demonstrated the same level of seriousness and detachment from personal judgment. The remaining half of the journal was dedicated to critique sections targeting Chinese classical scholarship and current affairs. Recurring columns included "Old Books, New Comments" (*gushu xinpingshu* 故書新評), "Recommendation of Books and Periodicals" (*shubao jieshu* 書報介紹).

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated all translations are by the Author.

shao 書報介紹), “Critique on Books and Periodicals”(shubao pinglun 書報評論) and “Commentary”(pinglun 評論). Critique sections were followed by “Correspondence”(tongxin 通信), which published exchanges – mostly debates – between the Society and outsiders. Then, there were “Appendixes”(fulu 附錄) and “Statements”(qishi 啓事), where readers find publicly available documents, such as meeting minutes of the Society, admission guidelines of Peking University and news of other on-campus student unions. An issue was usually concluded with advertisements of university-affiliated publications in Peking.

I observe that in critique and correspondence sections, contributors were spared the obligation to publish in real, full name. Instead, they unanimously wrote under style names, pseudonyms and even the umbrella signature “the journal”(kanfang 刊方) or “the journalist”(jizhe 記者). This unspoken norm allowed them to voice very personal opinions. Luo Jialun 羅家倫 (1897-1969, also published as Zhi Xi 志希), the journal’s editor and the key writer for critique sections, set the tone for such freedom in the opening statement of “Commentary” in the inaugural issue:

我們這班學生，見了不忍，故且把天天所學的，提出來同大家討論。我們的苦心，是要求諸位見諒。諸位難道不知道真理是愈研究而愈明，學問是愈討論而愈精的嗎？以後若是名流學者同社會上一切人物，都肯見教，來批評我的批評，那是記者等不勝歡迎的。現在就放肆了！（Luo 1919b, 105）

Students like us cannot put up with the current situation. Hence, we would like to raise and talk over what we’ve been learning every day. We have good intentions, so we need to ask for your forgiveness in advance. Don’t you know that the more truth is debated, the clearer it becomes? Don’t you know that the more knowledge is discussed, the better it becomes? From now on, if celebrity scholars and others from all walks of life are willing to give us some advice and criticise our criticisms, we as journalists will gladly welcome. Now, it is time to get unbridled!

In what followed in this section of the inaugural issue, Luo (1919c; 1919d) sharply denounced his contemporary fiction writers and pressmen in two interconnected commentaries. In the fourth issue, Luo (1919e) continued the critical reflection on the current cultural field in another critique on the concurrent magazines in Shanghai. It is hard to tell how the critique columns were received at the time of publication, but the general “unbridled-ness” had certainly become an unneglectable character of the journal. Looking back on the first volume, Fu Sinian (1919d, 202) concluded that the previous publications were a little “fearless”(yongmeng 勇猛) and a little “arbitrary”(wuduan 武斷); the speech was “extremely free and inconsistent”(ji ziyou er ji bu yizhi 極自由而極不一致); the contributors “spoke as they

wish and stopped as they like" (*yao shuo bian shuo, yao zhi bian zhi* 要說便說, 要止便止), thus prone to making "unmindful" (*suibian* 隨便) judgements. This character remained visible to May Fourth scholars today. Chen Pingyuan, for example, observed that *New Tide* was "unable to make calm and rational judgments" and tended to "speak too passionately" (2011, 133-4).

Fu's reservation about unexamined criticism stood in sharp contrast to Luo's bold approach to critiques. This is a glaring difference among the editors themselves, and also an exhibit of the potential conflict between the two normative characteristics of the frame space of the journal that we previously noted – first the requirement of *academic* discussion, specifically the elements of argumentative rigour, critical thinking and responsible referencing, and second the tolerance for the general temperament of the *student* contributors, which encompasses passion, diversity, lack of experience, limitation of knowledge and occasional recklessness.

Having described the frame space of *New Tide* in broad strokes, I shall put forward the observation that these two key characteristics, though seemingly incompatible, were balanced and contained in the discursive translations in the journal. The presence and working of translation in the journal shall be discussed in the following sections centralising the paratextual and extratextual marginalia of translation. The discussion shall find its theoretical starting point first in the notion of translation, and second in Baker's (2006) work on narrative space and translation.

3 Translation in *New Tide*

A brief overview of translation in *New Tide* is necessary at this point. The collection of data in this study is guided by the notion of translation as a posteriori, self-defining notion, which refers to "all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture (Toury 1995, 31-2). Following this conceptualisation, the paper takes into consideration "weakly-marked" or "unmarked" translation (Pym 1998, 58-61), whose nature or source of linguistic transfer is not explicitly acknowledged in the immediate context. In other words, the data of this study are materials that were displayed as renditions of preexisting non-Chinese sources, regardless of the length of the linguistic units and the verifiability of the actual sources. Main types of translation in *New Tide* are:

- full-text translation in Chinese of the totality or a segment of a source text;
- in-text citation in Chinese of a source text;
- synopsis and summary in Chinese of a source text.

In more descriptive terms, translation in the journal could be as short as a terminology quoted with its source word in parenthesis, a brief direct quotation in the middle of an argument, a summary of a book in the recommendation columns, and as long as a full-length article that presented a rendition of a non-Chinese work.

The persistent and discursive presence of translation should also be understood in connection to the Peking University students' linguistic competence. According to the Guide to Peking University Entrance Examination (*Beijing daxue zhaokao jianzhang* 北京大學招考簡章 1920) appended to the third number of the second volume of *New Tide*, applicants must sit for two rounds of written tests on Chinese, Mathematics and one chosen foreign language from among English, French, German and Russian. In the first-round foreign language papers, applicants were tested on grammar (*wenfa* 文法) and translation (*fanyi* 繙譯). In the second round, applicants to language and literature programmes were further tested on their abilities to "translate between Chinese and [a chosen] foreign language" (*yi guoyu yu waiguoyu huyi* 以國語與外國語互譯) (Beijing daxue zhaokao jianzhang 1920, 614). Thus, it is safe to assume that translation was a required skill and a naturally acquired mode of practice among the university students upon admission.

Likely resulting from the acquired, normalised ability in "translating" (*fanyi* 繙譯) and "translating-between" (*huyi* 互譯), translation of various forms dispersed into the discourse in *New Tide*. Translation was often displayed in juxtaposition or with references to their sources. The language materials were opened up for a readership on campus who were trained to view translation in a comparative, speculative manner. This situation is generally in line with Baker's (2006) description of the frame space of translation in general under the conceptual framework of Goffman (1981):

translators and interpreters act within a frame space that encourage others to scrutinise every aspect of their linguistic and – in the case of interpreters – non-linguistic behavior. Their frame space also circumscribes the limits of their discursive agency, although as with any type of constraint it is almost always possible to evade or challenge these limits. (Baker 2006, 110)

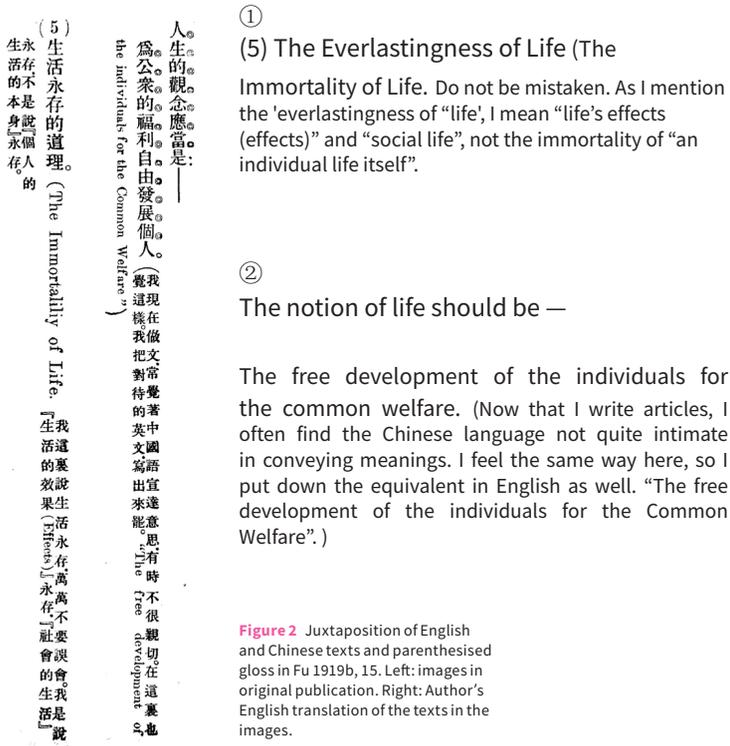
In her analysis, Baker offered a range of communicative scenarios and a wealth of materials to illustrate narrative strategies adopted by translators and interpreters in different cultures to "obviate the need to intervene significantly" (2006, 110) in the source and target texts themselves. The chief commonality among her examples was the translator's intention to appropriate the source text for specific – largely political and religious – purposes, and the accompanying effect of distracting and detaching the recipients from the sources.

Taking the cue from Baker's account, I shall attempt to show that the general working of translation in the frame space *New Tide* was somewhat different. It took effect in the way translators dutifully pointed the historical recipients back to the source text(s) by means of gloss and referencing, and frankly admitted that their translations were insufficient but tentatively working versions. In other words, the frame space of translation in focus not just implicitly encourages, but explicitly invites the scrutiny of translation and the involvement with the source. Such a display of translation materials was often accompanied by apologies from student translators for the risks of miscommunication. It was the student translators' reiterated emphasis on the translational inadequacies that had normalised the presence of translation in *New Tide* as an unfinished, provisional text type.

4 Apologetic Marginalia

Fu Sinian's first critical essay (1919b) in *New Tide* offered short but revealing examples. The essay dealt with the purpose and place of the individual in the society by comparing modern approaches in life philosophy to Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. Fu cited a range of materials from ancient Chinese classics to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Western philosophy. These included *Dao De Jing* 道德經, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Liezi* 列子, *Jin Shu* 晉書, Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210-63) *Dazhuan-glun* 達莊論 and *Daren xiansheng zhuan* 大人先生傳, William James' (1842-1910) *Pragmatism* (1907), Rudolf Eucken's (1846-1926) *Knowledge and Life* (1913), Bertrand Russell's (1872-1970) *Scientific Method in Philosophy* (1914), as well as unidentifiable citations of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). The bricolage of multilingual sources seemed to have compelled the author to confront the risk of miscommunication to his readers, in which translation of key terms in the cited works was an unavoidable duty.

In most cases, Fu's solution was to juxtapose corresponding English and Chinese materials and supplement with a Chinese gloss in parenthesis and/or in smaller fonts to further elaborate on what he meant by his choice of words. For instance, near the end of the essay, Fu listed five dimensions of the question of the meaning of life: the biological, psychological, sociological nature of human beings, the future welfare of human beings, and finally, "the everlastingness of life" (*shenghuo yongcun de daoli* 生活永存的道理). The fifth question (① in Figure 2), was apparently a challenge. Fu not only provided the English expression "The Immortality of Life" right after the Chinese term, but also clarified in the small-print gloss that by "life" he did not mean biological lifespan but social life, and that the social could be felt by its "*xiaoguo* 效果", which was also attached with the parenthesised English term "Effects" as a supplement. In the final words of



①

②

the essay (② in Figure 2), Fu revealed more explicitly the uneasiness about putting his notion of life into words in Chinese. In the parenthesised gloss, he found it necessary to add “the equivalent in English” (*duidai de yingwen* 對待的英文), for the reason that the Chinese language has recently fallen short of what he had in mind.

It should be noted that in Fu's in-text gloss, the relationship of source text and target text was not straightforward. Judging from the order of presentation, Fu appeared to be translating his Chinese expressions into English for a better conveyance of meaning. The other way round was also possible, in which Fu might have adopted an idea in some English-language sources, used them in his Chinese writing, and attached the source back to his Chinese rendition in order to make up for what he found insufficient in his mother tongue.

There is no certainty regarding the process, unless the origin of quoted English phrases could be identified. But in either case, it can be observed that translation was used as a method to display possibilities of expression, and a means to put interpretation on hold. The jux-

taposition of script systems – the vertical Chinese script and horizontal English print – and the use of font sizes to migrate between the main narrative and marginal notes also had the effect of allotting different interpretations to separate textual spaces, allowing each to stand alone for one possibility and leaving the finite understanding in suspense.

Fu's subtle frustration at the lack of clarity in expression cannot be separated from the normative characteristics of the frame space in *New Tide* that I have discussed in Section 2. Academic humility, as a necessary quality in scholarly writing and a common mentality among university student, prevailed in Fu's narrative in this essay. At the beginning, he heeded that his knowledge was "too shallow and meager to undertake such a study" (*zheyang yanjiu, zuozhe qianlou hai ban bu dao* 這樣研究, 作者淺陋還辦不到) (Fu 1919b, 6), and his analysis should only be taken as an convenient outline, not an proper generalisation (Fu 1919b, 8). Towards the end, Fu apologised again for the brevity of his essay. He acknowledged the large amount of readings required by the overwhelming question of life, and advised his fellow schoolmates to "keep on studying" (*haiyao yanjiu qu* 還要研究去) (Fu 1919b, 17). Viewed in this light, the mixed presentation of sources and the suspension of conveyance of meaning in his translations could be seen as both a result of and the solution to the academic and moral demands prescribed by the unique frame space in the journal.

Other key contributors to the journal also managed their sources in a similar manner and showed apologetic sentiments in their translations. In his essay "The Essence of Thought" (*Sixiang de zhenyi* 思想的真意), He Siyuan (1919, 636) acknowledged at the concluding paragraphs [fig. 3] that he "took materials (*qucai* 取材)" from William James' *Pragmatism* and W.T. Marvin's (1872-1944) *Present Philosophical Tendencies*.⁸ He humbly admitted that the aim was to "list the general ideas" (*ju qi dayi* 舉其大意) of the philosophers, and that the ideal approach should be to read the English originals.

Similar to Fu, He Siyuan was not entirely sure about translation either. In his case, we can be certain that the final paragraph of the cited page presented a few cases of English to Chinese terminological translation. For "formalism" (*fashi zhuyi* 法式主義, literally meaning "the French-ism"), "individualism" (*geren zhuyi* 個人主義) and "socialism" (*shehui zhuyi* 社會主義), He adopts the same strategy of pairing up the original and his rendition. But for "pragmatism", the key theory introduced in the essay, he offered a platter of choices:

⁸ Unfortunately, the historical readers might not be able to access W.T. Marvin's *Present Philosophical Tendencies*, because the work was actually written by Ralph Barton Perry (1876-1957) in 1912.

支配全體世界思想的原理，Schiller叫他做 Humanism。James 叫他做 Pragmatism。Humanism 可譯為『人的』主義，或為廣義的人道主義。Pragmatism 可譯為實際主義，或為實用主義，或為『知行合一』主義。這問題大得很，很有研究的價值，我這篇短文那能盡其萬一，不過隨便談談罷了。(He 1919, 636)

The principle governing the worlds' ideas is what Schiller called **Humanism**. James called it **Pragmatism**. **Humanism** may be translated as the ism of "the mankind" (*ren de zhuyi*), or humanitarianism in the general sense (*guangyi de rendao zhuyi*). **Pragmatism** can be translated as the ism of actuality (*shiji zhuyi*), or the ism of practicality (*shiyong zhuyi*), or the -ism of "unity of knowledge and practice" (*zhixing heyi*). This question is big, and of great research value. My short essay can hardly deal with a ten-thousandth of the matter. My aim here is to give an unmindful account.⁹

是個中間的媒介物，是個過渡的橋梁。一面採取舊有思想，一面適應新事實，表示一種極小的變換和極大的繼續。真理變而不變，他實在是永遠不變的個「變化」。凡是變化都有他的目的，「變化」變化就是目的變化了。

以上所說不是「自我作古」，這文取材於哲姆士的實際主義 Wm. James: Pragmatism. 和馬芬的現代思潮趨勢 W. F. Marvin: Present philosophical Tendencies 的地方最多。能直接看西文書的，還希望大家仔細研究。這文不過舉其大義罷了。

實際主義乃是歐美最近五十年的思潮，哲學大家 Charles Pierce 開其端，Wm. James 竟其緒。今日思想各方面差不多沒有不受他的影響的，沒有不多少容納這種學說的。在科學方面，有 Bertrand Mach, Oswald Reingart, Karl Pearson 等諸大家的倡和。在美術文學方面，則推翻法式主義 Formalism。在政治方面，打破個人主義 Individualism，漸趨社會主義 Socialism。在教育方面，打破舊文典式的課程，漸趨實利的學問。在道德方面，也捨去固定的律令，漸趨於實在問題的解決。在宗教方面，也漸漸的不講抽象的神理，專注個人的靜修。這支配全體世界思想的原理，Schiller 叫他做 Humanism. James 叫他做 Pragmatism. Humanism 可譯為『人的』主義，或為廣義的人道主義。Pragmatism 可譯為實際主義，或為實用主義，或為『知行合一』主義。這問題大的，很有研究的價值，我這篇短文那能盡其萬一，不過隨便談談罷了。

Figure 3
Apologetic conclusion
in He 1919, 636

⁹ English terms in the original text appear in bold.

The juxtaposition of bilingual terms and optional renditions here quietly revealed the tentativeness He implied in his translations. Like Fu, he attributed the uncertainty to the complexity of the academic subject. He also subtly reminded readers of the limited scope of the “short essay”. Under these premises, the various Chinese versions of the keywords in bold did not indicate the author’s failure to make linguistic decisions; instead, they opened up different aspects of the theoretical terms to evince the “research value” for further study and the academic rigour of the student contributor. The uncertain translations in this apology thus exhibited and reflected positively the normative characteristics of the frame space of *New Tide*.

One would have the impression from Fu and He’s examples that the student contributors often consulted and translated a range of academic sources when they wrote, in the manner of a responsible modern scholar. The wealth of materials they incorporated in writing was another thing they constantly apologised for. Jiang Shaoyuan 江紹原 (1898-1983), then a current student of Philosophy at Peking University, once submitted to *New Tide* his paper written for the course *Religion and Philosophy* in the autumn term in 1919. The paper (Jiang 1920a) got published, and Jiang wrote a sequel to it (Jiang 1920b) after three months. The serialised paper contained partial translations of George Adam Smith’s (1856-1942) *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (1897), the section “Palestine” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition) and other unspecified sources taken from German, British and American scholarships on the origin and initial stages of Christianity (Jiang 1920a, 404). Like his peers, Jiang reminded readers that the 7,000 to 8,000-word paper could only offer “a sketch” (*genggai* 梗概) of the early Jewish history, and many accounts were bound to be “neither elaborate nor exhaustive” (*bu xiang bu jin* 不詳不盡) (Jiang 1920a, 433). In the 1921 reprint of the second volume of *New Tide*, Jiang added a short afterword to the second instalment, again in smaller type than the main text, saying that the paper was completed in a haste during his medical travel between Peking and Hangzhou. Jiang (1920b, 675) described the paper as more or less a patchwork of sources; inconsistency and redundancy were expected.

In other journal sections than essays, apologetic translation marginalia as such were also common phenomena. The student contributors showed a common awareness of the inevitable loss in translation, and adopted a shared strategy to turn the limitation into a proof of good scholarship. Sun Fuyuan 孫伏園 (1894-1966), the most-published translator in the drama section, noted in the afterword (Sun 1921, 136-7) to his translation of Peretz Hirschbein’s “In der Finster” (1907) that the playwright’s dialogue was characterised by a sort of bitterness and viciousness that often became neutralised when delivered in written Chinese. Sun stressed nonetheless that Hirschbein’s play were magnificently structured, so a Chinese translation was necessary.

The most mammoth translation task undertaken by a student contributor would be the book recommendation in the critique section done by Wang Jingxi 汪敬熙 (1893-1968) for the fourth issue, second volume in 1920. In this assignment, Wang was requested to do a critical preview of the special issue “Instinct and the Unconscious” (November 1919) of *British Journal of Psychology*, which featured the works of W.H.R. Rivers (1864-1922), Charles. S. Myers (1873-1946), Carl G. Jung (1875-1961), Graham Wallas (1858-1932), James Drever (1873-1950) and W. McGonagall (1825-1902). In the review, Wang offered a Chinese abstract of each of the journal articles, and introduced the content section by section for some of the articles.

It is not to our surprise that in the preface and afterword, Wang revealed deep insecurity about this recommendation. He described the writing experience as “immensely regretful” (*da da de houhui* 大大的後悔) (Wang 1920, 818), the preview as “utterly incomplete and unorganised” (*ji de bu wanquan de erqie lingluan de* 極的不完全的而且凌亂的) (Wang 1920, 827). He admitted that he never managed to finish reading James Drever’s *Instinct in Man*, so there was no way he could introduce Drever’s new article without fundamental errors. About Carl G. Jung, he had little knowledge, and might have thoroughly misunderstood Jung’s paper. Wang also apologised for the potential insignificance of this preview: “the focus of the debate [in the special issue] is not yet a topic in China. My introduction will not have any influence. This is another thing I feel regretful about” (*Zhege bianlun de wenti zai woguo hai bu cheng wenti. Jieshao zhe lai sihao bu sheng yingxiang. Zhe ye shi wo ji houhui de yi duan* 這個辯論的問題在我國還不成問題。介紹這來絲毫不生影響。這也是我極後悔的一端) (827). This last line in the preface hinted at a realistic aspect of the students’ uncertainty and hesitation about translation. That is, the scholarship they were introducing through translation was rather new to the Chinese academia, and there were few Chinese-language sources they could rely on to develop a readily comprehensible academic discourse.

It is important to note that contributors outside the Society also acquired the normal practice of offering apology and asking readers to return to the source. One evidence was from Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990), who was not a Society member but published five articles in the journal. In his paper discussing Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Feng (1922) synopsised *L’Énergie spirituelle* (1919), based on H. Wildon Carr’s English translation *Mind-Energy. Lectures and Essays* (1920). To conclude the seven-page summary of a 262-pages book, Feng (1922, 79) encouraged the readers to “study the original” (*yanjiu yuanshu* 研究原書), and attached a full bibliography of his cited works to the beginning of the article.

One should be reminded at this point that the translating contributors discussed in this section – Fu Sinian, He Siyuan, Feng Youlan, Sun Fuyuan, Wang Jingxi – were all frequent and multiply-published

authors in *New Tide*. All of them, except Feng, were the founding members of the New Tide Society (see Appendix 2 for composition and individual publication numbers). The translations and translation marginalia presented here, though a small and selective cluster of texts, should qualify as a representative sample for us to observe the play-out of the frame space of the journal through translation.

However, I hesitate to say this is all about translation in *New Tide*. In fact, Fu Sinian's inaugural statement already signalled that nothing in the journal was or was expected to be done in a consistent, uniform manner. Indeed, in the same publications with these apologetic remarks, there were also some surprising translations that showed deliberate deviance from the sources but no apologetic sentiments from the translators. These were mainly found in the translations of Luo Jialun, whose 'un-bridled' critique style seemed problematic to Fu (see the end of Section 2). Two instances of Luo's translations deserve our critical attention.

5 Unapologetic Appropriation

I shall first put forward the crude observation that Luo's controversial critique in *New Tide* often involved the weaving of partial translations into his argumentation. I have discussed this phenomenon in a previous paper in Chinese (Ye 2018) with the example of Luo's appropriation of selected paragraphs from Paul Samuel Reinsch's (1869-1923) *Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East* (1911) to launch a verbal attack on certain Shanghai-based Chinese middlebrow fiction writers and translators in his first article in "Commentary" column (Luo 1919c). In this article, Luo started by offering his own views, then cited the American politician's monograph on China as supporting evidence. The citations, versed in Chinese, were obviously rendered from the English original. Put between quotation marks and provided with exact information on the source, the citations appeared to be an unproblematic integral part to Luo's argumentation. According to Luo's endnote (1919c, 117), the quotation was based on eight continuous pages - page 157 to 165 - in Reinsch's book.

A close reading in comparison to the declared source reveals a different story. The quotations, containing less than 200 Chinese characters in total, were in fact translated from two small and separate segments of the cited pages, one from page 158 and the other from page 165 to 164. The Chinese translation was full of shifts fuelled by explicit value judgment. In Luo's narrative (1919c, 110), Reinsch's neutral observations about the general literary field in China were bent towards a depreciation of a particular group of traditional-minded literati exemplified by Yan Fu (1854-1921) and Lin Shu (1852-1924). What Reinsch recorded of late-Qing translations of literature of Eu-

ropean Romanticist literature were rephrased as renditions of the works of “absurdism” (*huangdan zhuyi* 荒誕主義). Moreover, Luo drastically altered Reinsch’s vision of a gradual emergence of modern literature in China on the basis of established literary traditions. In Luo’s version (1919c, 110), Reinsch predicted that China’s “new literature” (*xin wenxue* 新文學) would only take place on the premise of the complete erasure of “old literature” (*jiu wenxue* 舊文學). The new-old polarity was a deliberate insertion in the form of an in-text citation and in the disguise of a transparent translation.

Luo’s appropriation of the source in service of the denouncement of his traditional-minded contemporaries was a stark sign of a student’s ‘unbridled-ness’ and his open challenge to ‘celebrity scholars’ called out in his prologue to the column. In the meantime, the presentation of Reinsch’s opinion as evidence, the seemingly dutiful referencing and the flow of argumentation was clearly answering the standard requirement of *New Tide* for sound scholarship. In other words, Luo adopted the academic writing format and rhetorical style precisely to validate his personal opinion that was slipped into his translation. Read in connection to the apologetic marginalia, it even appeared that Luo’s partial translation was an exploitation of the conceptualisation of translation as a tentative text type and of the student contributors as humble, credible translators that had been built up in the discourse of the journal. In simple terms, what was apologised for in the translation cases of Fu Sinian and others was appropriated by Luo as a means to make translation work for his critique.

Luo’s partial translation of Reinsch’s book was not an isolated instance. A more glaring example was printed right on the journal’s cover. To many scholars today, the original English journal title *The Renaissance* already presents a translation problem. Regarding the lexical correspondence of “The Renaissance” to “New tide”, the most cited evidence was Fu Sinian’s reminiscing notes on the first volume. Fu recalled (1919d, 199) that when the founding members were brainstorming for the journal title, Xu Yanzhi and Luo Jialun came up with the English and Chinese titles individually, and the two names “happened to be the translation of each other” (*qiahao keyi huyi* 恰好可以互譯). This sounds almost suspiciously convenient. In the remaining of Fu’s memoir, no more was said about why the terms were perceived as mutually translatable. The unexplained acceptance was quite different from the self-inflicting guilt on the innocent-looking translations elsewhere in the journal.

In retrospect, the equivalence was possibly inspired by Hu Shi, who adopted the idea of “The Renaissance in China” from Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881-1973) and Huang Yuanyong’s 黃煥庸 (1885-1915) dialogue in the reformist journal *Jiayin* 甲寅 in 1915 and wrote a treatise under the same title in 1926 (Hu 1926). My interest is not in Hu Shi’s impact on *New Tide*, but the way the terms were justified as

(六) Renaissance 是歐洲十五世紀一個時代。其時正當黑暗時代之後。教權盛行。人民沒有思想自由的餘地。Constantinople 失陷時候。有一班希臘學者從 Byzantine 逃到意大利小城裏來講希臘自由思想的學問。後來歷史家於是多半叫那個時代做 The Revival of Learning 的時代。中國人就從 The Revival of Learning 的字面上將他譯作文藝復興時代。是不很妥當的。當 Renaissance 時代的人物所講的學問思想。並不是同從前希臘的學問思想一個樣子。不過他們用希臘的學問思想做門徑從最新的方面走罷了！Renaissance 一個字的語根。是叫「新產」New Birth。我把本誌的名稱譯作新潮。也是從這個字的語根上看的；也是從這個時代的真精神上着想。

凡所謂「潮」都是阻擋不住的。都是要向四方衝決的！Renaissance (六)是「黑暗時代」過後的一個大潮。起於意大利幾個小城。終究是漫全歐。釀成西方今日的新文化。Reformation (七)是十六世紀的一個大潮。起於德國一個叫 Wittenberg 的大學。卒能把教皇戰勝。開歐洲思想自由的新紀元。一七八九年法蘭西的革命是十八世紀一個大潮。其結果能將民主的精神布滿各國。一八四八年各國的革命是接續一七八九年而來的一個十九世紀的大潮。起於法國。其結果使德奧意各國羣起革命。把暴君惡相的壓制政策永久推翻。一九一七年俄國革命就是二十世紀的世界新潮了！以前幾次的大潮。中國同西洋沒有交通所以沒有受着傳染；但是交通不久。就有辛亥的革命。也是十九世紀大潮的餘

Figure 4 Mention of “Renaissance” and its endnote in Luo 1919a, 21 (left) and 24 (right)

translation of each other in the journal. Turning our eyes to translation in the textual marginalia, we see another relevant piece of material in an endnote in Luo Jialun's first critical essay in the inaugural issue, titled "New Tides of the World Today" (Luo 1919a). In the main text, Luo envisioned the journal as the portal for Chinese readers to feel worldly "currents" (*chao* 潮). The essay began briefly with political currents, moving from global colonial expansion, to constitutional monarchy and democratic movements in the West, Meiji Restoration in Japan, then to Russian revolution in 1917. The essay then gave a weightier discussion on intellectual currents, starting with the European Renaissance [Fig. 4].

When writing about "Renaissance", a word so central to *New Tide* and to the historical subject matter at hand, Luo did not opt for a juxtaposition of bilingual terms like his peers. Instead, he left the term untranslated, and referred readers to a note (on the left in Figure 4). The Chinese character *liu* 六 (six) in parenthesis led to the marginal text space at the end of the essay, where Luo offered his elaboration on the term (on the right in figure 4).

The endnote revealed the reason why "Renaissance" was left untranslated in the main text. Luo was unhappy with the existing Chinese translation: *wenyi fuxing* 文藝復興. He believed that *wenyi fuxing* was a literal rendition of the English expression "the Revival of Learning", which was itself a misrepresentation of the Renaissance. He argued the Renaissance learning was not simply to resurrect antiquity, but to "adopt Greek scholarship and thoughts as approaches to the newest situation" (*yong Xila de xuewen sixiang zuo menjing, cong zui xin de fangmian zou* 用希臘的學問思想作門徑，從最新的方面走). Following this interpretation, Luo put forward his Chinese and English translations of "Renaissance": *xinchan* 新產 (new produce) and "New Birth". The replacement of the prefix "re-" in "Renaissance" with the lexical unit "new" (*xin* 新) was not for no reason, as Luo continued to say the journal title *Xin Chao* 新潮 (New Tide) was true to "the root of the word" (*yugen* 語根) of "Renaissance", and loyal to "the real spirits of this era" (*zhege shidai de zhen jingshen* 這個時代的真精神). It remained ambiguous if "this era" meant the age of the Renaissance, or the eve of May Fourth. But it is certain that in this easily neglected endnote, and through his criticism on existing translations and his proposal of new ones, Luo forged a lexical and emotional correspondence between the European Renaissance and *Xin Chao* 新潮, and suggested strongly that some "new tide" in the present China was as pressing and necessary as the intellectual current that once freed Europe from the Dark Ages.

It is now useful to recall that the insertion of 'new' was also exercised in my first example of Luo's translation, where he turned Reinsch's forecast of a gradual emergence of modern Chinese literature from its classical tradition into an either-or 'new versus old' situation.

Luo's publications in the inaugural issue thus presented to us an interesting translational word chain: "renaissance" was equated to "new birth" (*xinchan* 新產) in the marginal note of his essay, and "new" (*xin* 新) equals "modern" in the appropriated translation in his critique. This chain of association may not comply with our understanding of the terms today, and my emphasis is not on the accuracy of Luo's translation. Neither am I about to focalise Luo's own advocacy in the capacity of a *New Tide* editor and a student leader in the May Fourth era, however compelling this line of inquiry may seem. My central contention has been in the mechanism in which the normative characteristics in the frame space of *New Tide* gave rise to the conceptualisation of translation as a tentative, indeterminate, and source-searching textual practice, and in which these expectations and presumptions about translation created a discursive textual space in the journal to accommodate the many voices of the student contributors – sharp and mild, reserved and progressive, critically argumentative and passionately opinionated. In my analysis of the translation marginalia, the working of the many types of translation in the frame space and compartmentalised context in *New Tide* should have begun to reveal its mammoth complexities and intricate dynamics.

6 Conclusion

In this study, I approached the complex working of translation in the frame space of *New Tide* with a close reading of a selection of paratextual and extratextual marginalia that contained and surrounded translation. I reconstructed two normative characteristics of the frame space of the journal: the requirement of academic writing and the tolerance for students' opinions. I described in particular the hovering apologetic tone in translation, and associated the habitual apology with the contributors' collective awareness of the academic rigour and humility required by the journal and by the student contributors' self-identity as a group of inexperienced, diverse-minded and passionate young scholars at Peking University. Having demonstrated how meticulous and tentative the students could be about their translations, I then showed the contrasting examples of partial translations and translation criticism that signalled unapologetic appropriation of foreign sources in service of the critique of the concurrent Chinese intellectuals and the legitimisation of the May Fourth's typical new-versus-old polarisation of the Chinese intellectual landscape circa 1919.

New Tide has long been accepted as a leading journal amid the intensifying competition for authoritativeness among intellectual groups following May Fourth, 1919. It will be redundant for me to conclude that translation in *New Tide* is as resolutely revolutionary

as it is assumed to be in common views. This study hopes to offer a different view of the journal with a focus on its academic nature and discursive translational practice. That is, the political edge should be understood in connection to the prevailing tentativeness and hesitation resulting from the translation of a vast body of in-coming academic sources, which has just begun to show its contour.

Appendix 1. Issue Dates of New Tide

Vol. 1, no. 1, 1 January 1919	Vol. 2, no. 1, 1 October 1919	Vol. 3, no. 1, 1 October 1921
Vol. 1, no. 2, 1 February 1919	Vol. 2, no. 2, 1 December 1919	Vol. 3, no. 2, 1 March 1922
Vol. 1, no. 3, 1 March 1919	Vol. 2, no. 3, 1 February 1920	
Vol. 1, no. 4, 1 April 1919	Vol. 2, no. 4, 1 May 1920	
Vol. 1, no. 5, 1 May 1919	Vol. 2, no. 5, 1 September 1920	

Appendix 2. List of New Tide Society Members and Publications in *New Tide*

Sources: Fu 1919d; Xu 1919.

Chinese	Pinyin	Role in Society	Number of Publication	Contained translation
羅家倫	Luo Jialun	Founding member; editor	44	✓
傅斯年	Fu Sinian	Founding member; editor-in-chief	42	✓
俞平伯	Yu Pingbo	Founding member; executive member	25	✓
康白情	Kang Baiqing	Founding member; executive member	22	✓
葉紹鈞	Ye Shaojun	Member registered in 1:3	12	
顧頌剛	Gu Jiangang	Founding member	11	
汪敬熙	Wang Jingxi	Founding member	11	✓
吳康	Wu Kang	Founding member	10	✓
何思源	He Siyuan	Member registered in 1:5	9	✓
江紹原	Jiang Shaoyuan	Member registered in 1:5	8	✓
潘家洵	Pan Jiaxun	Founding member	7	✓
周作人	Zhou Zuoren	Member and Managerial editor since 2(5)	6	✓
徐彥之	Xu Yanzhi	Founding member; executive-in-chief	6	✓

陳嘉靄	Chen Jia'ai	Founding member	5	✓
楊振聲	Yang Zhensheng	Founding member; Secretary	5	✓
譚鳴謙	Tan Mingqian	Founding member	5	✓
孫伏園	Sun Fuyuan	Member registered in 2:2	4	✓
張崧年	Zhang Songnian	Founding member	3	
陳達材	Chen Dacai	Member registered in 1:3	3	✓
劉秉麟	Liu Binglin	Member registered in 1:3	3	✓
高元	Gao Yuan	Founding member	2	✓
毛準	Mao Zhun	Founding member	2	
郭希汾	Guo Xifen	Member registered in 2:2	2	✓
王鍾祺	Wang Zhongqi	Member registered in 2:2	1	
陳兆疇	Chen Zhaochou	Founding member	1	
孟壽椿	Meng Shouchun	Member registered in 2:2	1	
葉麀	Ye Lin	Member registered in 1:3	1	
李榮第	Li Rongdi	Member registered in 2:2	1	
趙承易	Zhao Chengyi	Member registered in 2:2	1	
王星漢	Wang Xinghan	Member registered in 2:2	0	
高尚德	Gao Shangde	Member registered in 2:2	0	
成平	Cheng Ping	Founding member	0	
戴嶽	Dai Yu	Founding member	0	
劉光頤	Liu Guangyi	Member registered in 1:5	0	
劉敵	Liu Di	Founding member	0	
潘元耿	Pan Yuangeng	Founding member	0	
黃建中	Huang Jianzhong	Founding member	0	
宗錫鈞	Zong Xijun	Member registered in 2:2	0	

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Ba Jin, “Offspring of May 4th”, Time Bomb and Utopian Impulse

Zhang Yinde

Université Sorbonne, Paris 3

Abstract Ba Jin 巴金 (1904-2005) is well-known for his adherence to anarchist ideas in his youth, which actually hides a profound utopianism characterized by a social revolution without purpose and end. By a detailed examination of *A Dream on the Sea*, a novel published in the beginning of 1930's, this paper aims to rehabilitate such an utopian spirit as it formulates criticism of reality, oppressive and inegalitarian, by adopting an otherness which warns against both revanchist statism and voluntary servitude. The author's loyalty to the legacy of May 4th will be highlighted as his work embodies an ever renewed desire for the freedom of thinking and imagining, if not of acting.

Keywords Ba Jin. Anarchism. Utopianism. Cosmopolitanism. May 4th Movement.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Elsewhere and Cosmopolitan Vision. – 3 Time to Come (à venir) and anti-Statism. – 4 Dream of Freedom and World Possibility.

1 Introduction

Ba Jin 巴金 (1904-2005) declared himself a worthy heir to the May Fourth Movement (Ba [1979] 1991, 66). This assertion should be understood in a double sense, which is both historical and ethical. It first reminds us of the origin of his intellectual and literary commitment. In the winter of 1920 at the age of fifteen, he read Pëtr Alekseevič Kropotkin's *Appeal to the Young* (*Gao qingnian* 告青年), translated by Zhenmin 真民, aka Li Shizeng 李石曾 (1881-1973). The booklet persuaded Li Yaotang 李堯棠, the future Ba Jin, to take up his pen. This late declaration also resonates like his loyalty to different



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schools of thought he was inspired by at this time. Among multiple ideas that influenced his trajectory, anarchism is probably the most important and sustainable, despite the vicissitudes of his life, as well as the constraints he experienced after 1949 in modifying or reinterpreting his young productions.

Nobody forgets Ba Jin's early anarchist choice, which played a decisive role in his creative career. However the utopian dimension intrinsic to this anarchism is often ignored, even though it constitutes one of its fundamental features, and therefore of his work. Arif Dirlik, author of tremendous studies on anarchist thought and movements in modern China, recently recalled this intrinsic utopian characteristic of anarchism, claiming in an explicit way that "anarchism is an utopianism because of the critical look it takes at power and society", alongside its well-known vision about an egalitarian society without classes, state, or oppression (Dirlik 2006, 1-2). Ba Jin's numerous essays and fiction prove very convincing about such utopianism, which is somewhat overshadowed by the too radical and famous *Destruction* (*Miewang* 滅亡, 1928-9) and *Family* (*Jia* 家, 1933).

In Ba Jin's studies, there is a critical literature that integrates the utopian perspective. Peng Hsiao-yen was one of the first researchers who focused on the issue. She evokes "anarchist utopianism", as a metaphoric term, to describe author's fight, in *Torrents Trilogy*, against patriarchal authority, class discrimination, and the miserable conditions of women's life (Peng 1992). Angel Pino, perhaps one of the best specialists of our writer, explores Ba Jin's anarchism and utopian approach throughout well documented and various studies (Pino 2013a; Pino, Rabut 2007).

But until now the utopianism topic receives too few attention from scholars specialised in the Republican era. A consensus seems established about this period, which is supposed to be dominated by realism, a necessary choice for writers facing national crisis. David Wang considers the phenomenon as being at odds with the late Qing period, when utopian novels flourished (Wang 2014, 290). Ma Bing made a serious study of four specific novels, Shen Congwen's 沈從文 (1902-88) *Voyage of Alice in China* (*Ailisi Zhongguo youji* 阿麗思中國遊記, 1928), Lao She's 老舍 (1899-1966) *Cat Country* (*Maocheng ji* 貓城記, 1932), Zhang Tianyi's 張天翼 (1906-85) *Diary on a Ghost Land* (*Guitu riji* 鬼土日記, 1937), and Zhang Henshui's 張恨水 (1895-1967) *Eighty-one Dreams* (*Ba shi yi meng* 八十一夢, 1939). Nevertheless he regards them as "social satire" or "cultural criticism" (Ma 2005, 325-6), rather than utopian or dystopian fiction. Not surprisingly, other works having obvious utopian feature, such as *A Dream on the Sea* (*Hai de meng* 海的夢) of Ba Jin (1932), are absent from the list, while this novella and Lao She's *Cat Country*, were both published in *Les Contemporains*, the famous magazine created by Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905-2003) (Ba Jin on vol. 1, nos. 1-3; Lao She on vol. 1, nos 4-6 and vol. 2, nos. 1-6).

It is important to renew our reflections on Ba Jin in terms of utopian spirit, for it would allow us to fill a gap in literary history, by dressing key issues about the May Fourth Movement. Theoretical debates implying Ba Jin, by name or not, are worthy of attention. Qin Hui 秦暉 (1953-), a paramount historian, cites Ba Jin to support his criticism of the "imperial system" and his commentaries on limitations of the May Fourth Movement's liberalism. In his view, Ba Jin did contribute to break down the tyranny of the "small community", i.e. the family, still without having attacked the "great community" which was determined by state structure. On the contrary, Xu Jilin 許紀霖 (1957-), historian of modern intellectual life, argues that, given the cosmopolite dimension of May Fourth, it is not appropriate to confuse such open patriotism with nationalism or even statism. Such remarks raise the question of whether Ba Jin was just an individual anarchist whose fight was supposedly limited to protesting against patriarchal authority or, instead, that precisely due to his anarchist convictions, he was a cosmopolite whose patriotism had nothing to do with any nationalist and statist ideology.

The present article attempts to bring answers to these questions by drawing on an analysis of *A Dream on the Sea*, while referring to a series of Ba Jin's other fictions, essays or translations. It tries to demonstrate that Ba Jin's utopian spirit is profoundly marked by a cosmopolite and anti-statist posture, and by an unconditional quest for freedom. In this perspective, a triple investigation will be accomplished. First, it will focus on the spatial aspect of this novella, namely on its deterritorialised topography which represents an international horizon. Secondly, its temporal particularity will be emphasised, as it proves anti-teleological, so against nationalist messianism and in favour of worldly peace. Finally, the spatiotemporal characteristic reveals the way the text opens up a free space, an universe of the possible, against any kind of instituted authority and voluntary servitude.

2 Elsewhere and Cosmopolitan Vision

It is essential to examine the cosmopolitan vision of Ba Jin by textual approaches. Nevertheless, preliminary precisions seem necessary to recontextualise the author's intellectual and literary debut, since it would allow us to requestion some clichés about his anarchist beginning.

Undoubtedly, Ba Jin's interest in European anarchist thought and activism leave indelible marks on his youth. Two works held his attention when he was fifteen, as partially mentioned above: *Appeal to the Young of Kropotkin*, and *On the Eve. A Drama in Three Acts*, of Leopold Kampf (1881-1978). In Chengdu, his hometown, at the same time,

he not only read plenty of books and magazines brought from Beijing and Shanghai, but began to write immediately and to make contact with local libertarian groups. "How to Build a Genuinely Free Egalitarian Society", was published in one of these groups' reviews *Fortnight* (*Banyue* 半月, 1921). He intensified such publications when he went to France in 1927. *Anarchism and Matters Practical* (*Wuzheng-fu zhuyi yu shiji wenti* 無政府主義與實際問題, 1927) was written in collaboration with Shu Hui-lin and Jun Yi (Woo Yong-hao). He celebrates "the immense greatness of anarchist martyrs" in *Pioneers of Revolution* (*Geming de xianqu* 革命的先驅 1928). He corresponded with some of the great notables in the anti-authoritarian camp, for example, Emma Goldman (1869-1940), Alexander Berkman (1870-1936) and Max Nettlau (1865-1944). It was while in France that in 1928 he finished *Destruction*, his very first novel, published the next year in the most prestigious literary review of the day, *The Short Story Magazine* (*Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報). It was the first time he used the *nom de plume* of Ba Jin (the first character of which was chosen as a tribute to a comrade of his who had committed suicide in Paris; the second being the Chinese transcription of the last syllable of Kropotkin's name), while the editor ignored his identity (Ji 1929, 759). Three bulky works followed: *On The Scaffold* (*Duantoutai shang* 斷頭台上, 1929), a gallery of portraits of 20th-century Russian terrorists, together with studies of the anarchist Chicago martyrs or on the life of Sofia Perovskaya (1853-81), on the history of Russian nihilism and the deeds of the French belle époque anarchists, texts devoted to the Tokyo martyrs or the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, as well as a letter on "Anarchism and Terrorism"; *Ten Russian Heroines* (*Elusosi shi nüjie* 俄羅斯十女傑, 1930), another gallery of portraits that included Vera Zasulich (1851-1919) or Vera Figner (1852-1942); and *From Capitalism to Anarchism* (*Cong zibenzhuyi dao annaqizhuyi* 從資本主義到安那其主義, 1930) (Pino 2013b).

These first essays, novellas or translations are commonly perceived as proof of Ba Jin's specific interest in terrorism, nihilism, and revolutionary martyrology. They actually conceal the great wealth of his aspiration and his ideal of an egalitarian society and world. For example, *Vengeance* (*Fuchou* 復仇, 1931) (Ba [1931] 1991a), his first collection of 14 novellas, expresses concerns about the fate of humble people and oppressed nations, beyond terrorism, acts of destruction, or revolutionary violence. *Exile* (*Wangming* 亡命, 1931) (Ba [1931] 1991b) recounts the dramatic story of a student who was expelled from fascist Italy. Despite his refugee status, at the time of the Duce's visit to France the French government enjoins him to leave the territory, making him stateless. It should be noted that the narrator is a French student, with whom the author identifies. Such narratorial identification with a foreigner was rare enough to be underlined, since it significantly reflects a tangible cosmopolitan sensitivity and approach instead of any simple exoticism.

In fact, such cosmopolitanism is inscribed in a general May Fourth mentality, if referring to Xu Jilin (2009). Inspired by Zhang Hao 張灝 (1937-) and bringing nuances to the notion of "patriotism" applied to the May Fourth Movement, the historian first intends to make a distinction between "Member state of the world or state as member of the World" (*shijie de guojia* 世界的國家), and "cosmopolitan state" (*shijiezhuyi de guojia* 世界主義的國家): the former is characteristic of the Late Qing, influenced by social Darwinism and the law of the jungle, sometimes turning into a "Doctrine of Gold and Iron" (*jintiezhuyi* 金鐵主義), a kind of jingoism in Yang Du's 楊度 (1875-1931) way; the latter is instead proper to May Fourth, learning from the Great War lesson, aspiring to restore humanist and universal values, and therefore, transcending interests of any specific state. This cosmopolitan vision was largely shared by anarchists like Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865-1953), Li Shizeng, Liu Shipai 劉師培 (1884-1919), as well as by intellectuals from various backgrounds such as Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950). Xu Jilin's arguments could be summarised in three points. First there was a strong rejection of the organic state for the benefit of recognition of the autonomous "I". Fu Sinian, for example, preconises a new subjective identity divided into two parts, a "great I" or human being (*dawo* 大我) and a "small I" (*xiaowo* 小我) or individual person. Man is directly linked to humanity without any state mediation or control (Fu 1919). This theory is obviously at the origin of Zhou Zuoren's famous proposal for "humane literature" (*ren de wenxue* 人的文學) (Zhou [1920] 1995, 73). Secondly, "patriotism" was redefined, as it should transcend the narrow interests of any single country. In this regard, national salvation should take into account the "universal principles" (*gongli* 公理), i.e. justice, equality and liberty, asserting right against might (*qiangquan* 強權). The third and last key point lies in the "cosmopolitist utopia" (*shijiezhuyi wutuobang* 世界主義烏托邦); it emanates from the idea of Great Unity (*datong* 大同), which, contrary to the law of the jungle, preaches ethic, humanist and universal values, a spirit of mutual aid, a dream of a unified world.

Ba Jin's 1932 novella *A Dream on the Sea* (Ba [1932] 1988) may be a perfect illustration of such a cosmopolitan ideal, since the narrative of patriotic resistance to a foreign invasion is backed by a utopian framework, as already evidenced by the plot. Aboard a ship, the narrator, a young Jewish man, called Schwartzbard (*Xiwacibade* 席瓦次巴德), meets a young Jewish lady, named Lina (*Lina* 里娜) who agrees to tell him the adventures she experienced. It happened on an island lost in the Pacific, christened Liboluo 利伯洛, where she initially lived as a foreign aristocrat. Nevertheless, she decided to abandon her privileges by engaging in resistance fights alongside local habitants, since the Island was invaded by a foreign army from

a neighbouring country, High Nation (*Gaoguo* 高國). She lost her two lovers and comrades in the battles, before having been put in jail herself and exiled after the revolts failed. Lina's oral narrative is extended by her diary, which the narrator has discovered. In the end, realising that she has vanished, the narrator wondered if the story was true, if the island did exist, and if he had not just had a dream.

The utopian aspects could not have been more explicit, because of the presence of Liboluo Island, a place from nowhere. However a subtle connection and tension is perceptible between the imaginary place and the historic anchorage. Such a spatial configuration of utopia signalises the cosmopolitan concerns which surpass the narrow patriot will.

The paratextual device provides clues about such cosmopolitan aspirations, which go beyond historical references, as evidenced by divergences between the "Foreword" (*xu* 序) and the "Epilogue" (*jiewei* 結尾). In the "Foreword", the author specifies the circumstances in which he composed this narrative, by mentioning the Japanese troupes putting the northern districts of Shanghai to fire and sword in the beginning of 1932. Therefore, the story stages the Chinese people's resistance against the Japanese invasion, while Lina embodies the quest of a "free nation" (*ziyou guojia* 自由國家, Ba [1932] 1988, 3-4). The subsequent auto-commentary Ba Jin wrote in 1979 (Ba [1979] 1993) confirms this preface for its contextual information. However the epilogue makes contradictory mentions by highlighting the fictional feature of the intrigue. It questions the island's existence while evoking the disappearance of the protagonist:

從此我就再沒有遇見她。我得不到一點關於她的消息。而且連一點線索也找不到。在太平洋上並沒有一個叫做利伯洛的島國。那個高國也是沒有的，雖然那裏有一個國家的名稱和高國有關係，那個國家也是以侵略出名的，但是我沒有去過那裏，而且我知道那個國家是島國，和她的故事裏所說的不同。

From now, I could not see her anymore. I did not hear from her, even without any trail that might permit me to enter in contact with her again. There is no island-state called Liboluo in the Pacific, neither High Nation, even though there is a country whose name is close to it, with an aggressor's reputation. Nevertheless I have not been there. I know that this country is a island-state, but it is different from Lina's narrative. (Ba [1932] 1988, 91)¹

To transpose what happened on the mainland on a non-existent island pertains to a classic utopian process. Ba Jin attempts to recount

¹ Unless otherwise indicated all translations are by the Author.

the nation's tragedy while surpassing it by means of an imaginary deterritorialised topography. It is a step towards cosmopolitan spatialisation, supported for instance by the narrator's status and ethos.

Chapter 2 illustrates the collusion between spatial enlargements and narratorial cosmopolitan posture, for it is fully dedicated to Samuel (Sholem) Schwarzbard's (1886-1938) trial and his family destiny (Johnson 2012). There is no fascination for the sensational act of assassination by the Russian-born anarchist, but appropriation and identification of an universal suffering history. The narrator recalls his Schwarzbard's origin, explicitly as a foreigner. Such an approach, similar to *Exile*, reveals the significant auto-alterisation process, which proves the author's will to transcend the single national concern and to achieve an authentic cosmopolitan sense of caring.

Ba Jin retraces Schwarzbard's lineage not from an individual but from a collective perspective, as the chapter is entitled "Great Tragedy of a Nation" (*Yi ge minzu de da beiju* 一個民族的大悲劇). The descriptions are focused on Symon Petliura's (1879-1926) alleged pogrom crimes, committed at the service of the White Army. The use of numerous witnesses and communist media, for instance, *L'Humanité*, cited in footnotes, aims to reiterate the Ukrainian Jewish misfortune (Ba [1932] 1988, 15-18). The collective issue possibly hints at Chinese people's tragedy through the superposition and mirror effect. However, it is intended less to bring the foreign example back to narcissistic complaints than to suggest the similarities between different national disasters. This analogical approach in fact enables Ba Jin to stress universal suffering, threatening the whole of humanity, beyond a single country's crisis. He even makes this trial (Torres [1927] 2010; Czerny 2001; Hunczak 1987) an international paradigm of people's pain and revolt. That is why the narrative tends to reduce the 'assassin' image of Sholem Schwarzbard by highlighting, instead, the heroic actions performed by other members of his family. They are all committed to struggles inside the vast Russian empire, sometimes for other nations' interests: one was a poet fighting for the independence of Poland, another has been hanged because of her commitment to the Russian revolutionary Party, yet another died trying to save a child from a fire in St. Petersburg.

This cosmopolitan writing strategy is confirmed paradoxically also through negative criticism released about both *A Dream on the Sea* and *Vengeance* (Ba [1931] 1991a, 5-15). Given chapter 2 of the former is a rewriting of the latter, the reviewer criticises Ba Jin not for his propensity for terrorism, but for his negligence to the fate of his compatriots in favour of "humankind sadness" (*renlei de beitung* 人類共有的悲哀):

巴金先生要寫人類的痛苦，卻放過了自己（自己國人）切身所感到的痛苦，而祇搬演了和國人痛癢不相關的故事，其動人的力量自然要蒙著一種阻礙。

Mr. Ba Jin seeks to write about humankind suffering, without taking care of his own compatriots' feeling. He merely transposes stories that leave them indifferent, limiting emotive strength of his work. (*Shuping Fuchou* 1932, 728)

Hu Feng 胡風 (1902-85), more directly, reproaches *A Dream on the Sea* for mixing anarchism and humanism, while totally dismissing realism (Gu 1932). To these comments Ba Jin brings a clear response, which reformulates his open mind:

人類所追求的都是同樣的東西 — 青春, 生命, 活動, 愛情, 不僅為他們自己而且也為別人... 失去了這一切以後所發生的悲哀乃是人類共有的悲哀。

What human being looks for is based on common subjects such as youth, life, freedom, love. It may be a personal quest, or a search for others [...]. Tragedies provoked by their loss are common to all humanity, and could not be specific to Chinese people. (Ba 1932, 863-4)

Similar examples abound, in essays as well as in narratives, when, again in *Exile*, Professor Bronski talks about "the future of humanity" (*renlei de weilai* 人類的未來). Ba Jin's approach, in fact, is little different from the cosmopolitan mentalities that characterise the May Fourth intelligentsia, if one refers to the special issue of *Short Story Magazine* (vol. 12, October 1921), dedicated to "Oppressed Nations" (*bei sunhai minzu* 被損害民族) literatures, including Polish, Czech, Finnish, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and New Jewish or Yiddish one.

3 Time to Come (à venir) and anti-Statism

In addition to this spatial configuration built on deterritorialised cartography and cosmopolitan narrative, specific social conception and temporal structure come to reinforce Ba Jin's utopianism, which is linked to an anti-Statist and anti-teleological posture.

It would be worthwhile to recall Qin Hui's reflections on Ba Jin, in order to get a better understanding of the writer's position and approach, if only in an opposite way. In an article published two years ago (Qin 2018), Qin Hui acknowledges Ba Jin's merit in terms of fighting for freedom, while pointing out what he calls "problems" (*wenti* 問題) with Ba Jin. He argues that Ba Jin combatted the despotism of the "small community" (*xiao gongtongti* 小共同體) that was the family clan, without paying enough attention to the necessity of fighting against constraints imposed by the "greater community" (*da gongtongti* 大共同體), namely state structure and ideology. Qin Hui, in referring to the novel *Family*, questions Juehui's destiny after leaving

the family straitjacket, as he risks remaining a prisoner of an unchanged institutional background, dominated by a mandarin-layered structure and "country gentlemen" (*xiangshen* 鄉紳).

Qin Hui's reflections are inscribed in a broader study on May Fourth and the New Culture. He begins rejecting Li Zehou's 李澤厚 (1930-) viewpoint about the New Culture Movement, which Li summarises in the following formula: "National salvation outweighs enlightenment" (*jiuwang yadao qimeng* 救亡压倒启蒙, Li 1999, 842), in other words, national crisis and the collective cause end up submerging the values of individual freedom advocated by the protagonists of Enlightenment. Qin Hui, instead, underscores the deeply contradictory elements in the relations between the individual and the state for this period. He mainly argues that May Fourth criticises only Confucianism (*piru* 批儒), not legalism (*pifa* 批法), neglecting the durability of the Qin system (*qinzhì* 秦制) or imperial system (*dizhi* 帝制). According to Qin Hui, such a weakness stems from the Japanese prism that influenced the Western liberalism introduced in China. Liberalism in the Meiji version urges individuals to emancipate themselves from patriarchal or *daimyos'* control. However, the freed individuals must swear their loyalty to the emperor and the state, generating the complicity of "pseudo-individualism and militarism" (*wei geren zhuyi he junguo zhuyi* 偽個人主義和軍國主義). This Japanese liberalism has a profound impact on the Chinese intelligentsia, so that the Enlightenment embodied by Lu Xun and Ba Jin in their fight against the family pressure and against ritualism, under the influence of Japanese liberalism, were not overwhelmed or crushed by the missions of national salvation, on the contrary, they complement and stimulate each other:

出現“啟蒙呼喚個性，個性背叛家庭，背家投入救國，國家吞噬個性”的悖反現象，而這又與一戰後西方社會主義經俄國中轉的變異版本一拍即合。

Provoking a paradoxical phenomenon: "The Enlightenment appeals for the individual, the individual rebels against the family and engages in the salvation of the state, which devours the individual". And all this coincides with Soviet-style socialism in the post-war period. (Qin 2015, 80)

Despite its strong criticism of the imperial system, Qin Hui's viewpoint seems to be worthy of further discussion as Ba Jin's utopian anarchist position may constitute even a counter-example, at multiple levels, whether militant, ideological or creative.

Ba Jin maintained a distance from any governmental commitment, unlike some former anarchist activists who became officials or politicians. In parallel he remained still attached to his initial ideals by choosing the pen, without adhering to the League of the Left-Wing

Writers (*Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng* 中國左翼作家聯盟), most likely in order to preserve his independence. In any case, his narrative discourses and metadiscourses demonstrate his permanent opposition against instituted authority, starting with state power and nationalist ideology.

At a textual and intertextual level, Ba Jin's anti-state posture is not subjected to any doubt. *A Dream on the Sea* stages a double struggle against both foreign invaders and domestic 'aristocrats', because the sufferings people endure are attributable to the former as well as to the latter, who reveal themselves as their collaborators. In this respect, the island is divided into two distinct districts, the wealthy one occupied by splendid palaces and houses, and the shantytowns where misery piles up. Border crossing, as does Lina, a noble lady going to frequent the untouchable slaves, is seen as a sign of transgression that justifies prison.

In fact Lina calls to mind Maria Spiridonova (1884-1941), a Russian revolutionary, victim both of the tsarist tyranny and of soviet repression, as anti-imperialist resistance in Ba Jin's novella constitutes a narrative displacement suggesting a double struggle against capitalism and dictatorship. Ba Jin constantly links up anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-dictatorial battles. This permanent tentative is correlated to continuous intellectual debates on these issues, as demonstrated by the opposition between Chen Duxiu and Ou Shengbai 區聲白 (1892-1945), since the very beginning of the 1920's, about the legitimacy of Marxism being leninised (Ou 1921, 573, 576). In one of his earliest essays, "Patriotism and the Way towards Happiness for Chinese People", Ba Jin makes a plea for the abolition of the state, private property and religion (Ba 1921). This early-formulated opinion is found enhanced under Alexander Berkman's influence. In 1930, in *From Capitalism to Anarchism*, which is an adaptation of the French philosopher's treatise *What is Communist Anarchism?*, Ba Jin denounces capitalism and dictatorship by paralleling the Great War and the Russian Revolution, militarism and Leninism (Feigan 1930). It is not surprising that he also calls Maria Spiridonova "spiritual mother" (*jingshen shang de muqin* 精神上的母親), after Emma Goldman, in the biography he dedicated to the former, among ten Russian heroines (Ba [1929] 1993). It is neither unexpected that, later, during the Sino-Japanese war, in an article written in 1938, *Guojiazhuyizhe* 國家主義者 (Statists), Ba Jin decries both defeatists and warmongers by considering them as equally dangerous and harmful. He specially warns against "extreme statists" (*jiduan guojia zhuyizhe* 極端國家主義者), those who urge the conquering of Tokyo, the extermination of the Japanese People, and the recovery of Korea. Rather, the patriotism that Ba Jin advocates results in the obligation of defending national territory, while requiring solidarity between Chinese fighters and Japanese workers (Ba [1938] 1990).

This anti-statist position is basked up by an efficient temporal frame, which is anti-teleological. It is reflected in his interest in social revolution, as suggested by his viewpoint on Kronstadt, a major unsuccessful uprising against the Bolsheviks in March 1921. For Zhou Limin citing Bajin's essays written in 1925-1926,

暴動“顯示民眾的巨大覺醒和力量”[...] 暴動的失敗緣於“專政的罪惡”，暴動的意義是“為無產階級揭示了社會革命的新道路”。

This rebellion “reveals a tremendous awakening among the people and its extraordinary force” [...] its failure is attributed to “criminal dictatorship”, while “indicating to the proletariat a new way for social revolution”. (Zhou 2017, 132)

Such a revolution that acts against the narrow vision of nation involves a continuous process, moving away from historic determination, evolutionist linearity and teleological scheme. In this connection, *A Dream on the Sea*, in terms of temporality, is marked by a form of messianism, which has nothing to do with any projection on the future, but with action on the present, that is yet to come (à venir).

The subtitle of the novella “Tale for Children written for a Young Girl” (*Gei yige nühai de tonghua* 給一個女孩的童話) is not a trivial generic game, but rather a temporal signal Ba Jin explains by the censorship to be circumvented (Ba [1979] 1993, 606). It may be also an allusion to *Terre libre* (The Free Land), also a utopian story published in a series for children by Jean Grave (1854-1939), a French anarchist writer Ba Jin knew (Grave [1908] 2015). But this generic specification should be perceived above all as a way Ba Jin seeks to pull himself away from historic determination, and to propose a temporality emancipated from the concerns of the single nation's destiny. In this respect, Ba Jin turns away from late Qing utopian fictions, dominated by the “future perfect mood” (*jianglai wancheng shi* 將來完成時), in the words of David Wang (1998, 309), namely by the projection of China on a realised splendid future, as illustrated by Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873-1929) *The Future of New China* (*Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記, 1902), Lu Shi'e's 陸士諤 (1878-1944) *New China* (*Xin Zhongguo* 新中國, 1905), or Wu Jianren's 吳趸人 (1866-1910) *New Memory of a Stone* (*Xin shitou ji* 新石頭記, 1906), to name only a few of the best-known of them.

Ba Jin takes the opposite way. *A Dream on the Sea* is guided by another temporal conception focused on “à-venir”, the yet to come, which is radically distanced from the future, and inclined towards the non-actualised, the unfinished, and the returning.

In the spirit of such a non-prophetic utopia (Chalier 2006), the plot consists of continuous actions. The abuses perpetrated by the invaders and the oppressors as well as the sufferings experienced by the

people are accurately described. It justifies a persevering struggle through permanent commitment. Therefore the narrative is built on the rhetoric of repetition and return. Repeated failures stimulate renewed revolts. The heroine herself incarnates the figure of return, by coming back to the island three times in a row, alternating between prison and exile. The cyclic nature of action is a sign of an uninterrupted process, which proscribes any prospect of definitive victory. In this respect, the sole triumphant scene is significantly an oneiric one, where Lina dreams of the advent of a free country. This deceptive narrative mode compromises any realised future.

Certainly, there is an expectation, an aspiration, even hope, since the very word "messiah" is pronounced: "the slaves are waiting for their messiah" (*meige nuli... qiancheng de qidao yige jiushizhu jianglin lai jiejiu tamen* 每個奴隸...虔誠地祈禱一個救世主降臨來解救他們。). However it is by definition the non-advent that is predictable, all the more so as the recurring question characters ask is "when the final settlement intervenes" (*zong jiesuan* 總結算). It reminds of the similar question Zhang Weiqun asks Du Daxin in *Destruction*, "when does the Revolution come?", or "when will the light triumph?" (*geming shenme shihou caineng daolai* 革命什麼時候才能到來; *guangming shenme shihou caihui shengli* 光明什麼時候才會勝利, Ba [1929] 1988, 99). The actual change will not take place, in the suspension of ending (*jieju* 結局) as both end and outcome. This messianism proves to be a promise that defies the *chronos*, a linear, homogeneous and ascending time, in favour of a form of *kairos*, an agitated, shaky and discontinuous one. At the end of the novella, the watch stops, breaking definitively this teleological linearity. Still, hope remains against fatality, as shown by the juxtaposition and variation of the same plot: in the oral account assumed by Lina in the first part, her lover and fellow soldier she calls "child" (*haizi* 孩子) dies due to illness, while in her diary, which spreads over the second part, she was expecting him to come and free her from prison.

4 Dream of Freedom and World of Possibility

In substance, the generic device of "Tales for Children" (*tonghua* 童話) defuses historic and teleological determinism. By transforming the 'will be' into 'could be', in other words, by transforming the future tense into the conditional, therefore, effectiveness into potentiality, Ba Jin shows doubts about the legitimacy of the pervading realism, and prefers to explore the eventualities. When he ceaselessly claimed that he was not a writer or a novelist *stricto sensu* and he was writing just for what he believed in, it was less a sign of false modesty than a profession of faith, a declaration of principle, as he listened to 'faith', the religion of the human being, which moves him away from

immediate realities and political emergency and makes him prefer to build a possible world. This imagined and potential space, which is favourable to the dream of freedom or the desire for freedom, implies the annihilation of any instituted authority as well as any self-generated one. Therefore, it is invested with as many desires as uncertainties, so that the narrative is constructed on the interrogative mode and on a huge ambivalence, which can be observed at the symbolic, ethical and textual level.

The night and the sea are two emblematic elements, which request a nuanced reading, regarding the overlapping connotation between domination and revolt, or between darkness and light.

The night may reflect the gloomy reality of occupied territory, the persecution of its inhabitants, and the despair gnawing at them. It may also hint at clandestine resistance. In this respect, it already partially joins the symbolism of the sea, since the roar and the storm accompany the thundering anger and the outbreak of revolt. Like the tide and the surf, there is an irrepressible and always reborn aspiration to freedom, in the heart of darkness. Redundant passages on this subject confirm Kafka's negative utopia and Adorno's critical theory, which suggest that the dim present is illuminated by a glow coming from a spatiotemporal otherness (Löwy 1992, 71-94). It enables the opening of breaches and seeing the possibilities of a "free country" (*ziyou guojia* 自由國家), which should be read in the double meaning of 'sovereign country' and 'country inhabited by free men'

Nevertheless the sea conceals its deadly teeth. It is synonymous not only with misleading promises by raising the swell without the unleashed storm, but also with the graveyard, since it becomes the sepulchre for Yang, a revolutionary and Lina's first lover, while threatening to swallow up the slaves' district and thus to bury the resistance forces. No doubt that is the reason why the sea is associated with Lina's torment as well as her impenetrable mysteries. For her, freedom is an object of quest, as well as a source of unanswerable questions. Liboluo (利伯洛), a mutinous island is represented as a mirage oscillating between Atlantis and Hope, between dream and action. For this purpose, it is not useless to remember the project Ba Jin had in 1947 of writing a fiction entitled *Dawn* (*Liming* 黎明), which would take place in 2000. It could have been a sequel of *Destruction* and *Renaissance* (*Xinsheng* 新生, 1934). But it never came about (Zhou 2016, 31).

Lina's distress transfigured by the ambivalent force of the sea, in fact, is intimately connected to her ethical questioning. The dilemma between revenge and forgiveness in *Vengeance*, or between love and sacrifice in *Destruction*, is found extended to *A Dream on the Sea*, which raises additional issues concerning the relationship between individual freedom and social responsibility.

The question arises from the sense of guilt, which strikes Ba Jin's characters. Lina feels sinful for her 'aristocratic' origin and her self-

ish love. "We were guilty of loving each other" (*Women ai women jiu you zui le* 我們愛我們就有罪了), this sentence that Souvarine addresses to Etienne in Zola's *Germinal* (Zola [1885] 1968, 438) resonates like an obsessive refrain. Taking as a model Helena, a young bourgeois woman who abandoned everything to follow her lover, a Bulgarian revolutionary student, in Turgenev's *On the Eve* (1860) (Turgenev [1860] 1950), Lina considers her own commitment as a necessary act sacrificing privileges and personal freedom. The fight in which Lina engages is as much against the external enemy as her inner demons. It consists of transcending the feeling of sacrifice, so as to put individual freedom in connection with social responsibility. From today's point of view, democracy is at stake, as pointed out by Arif Dirlik:

At a time of social breakdown and individual alienation, anarchists imagined a society where individual freedom could be fulfilled only through social responsibility, but without being sacrificed to it, which is the essence of socialist democracy and may be central to any conception of democracy (Dirlik 1991, 4).

However, in the novella the question remains unanswered, obliging Lina to persevere in her efforts.

The unresolved issue about democratic behaviour is transposed to a textual level with particular narrative echoes. The dialectic of individual freedom and social responsibility, in connection with the refusal of any normativity, leads Ba Jin to defy the writer's own authority. Like Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), who makes *The True Story of Ah Q* (*Ah Q zhengzhuān* 阿Q正傳, 1921) a democratic fiction, as clearly pointed out by Veg (2011), Ba Jin also opens a space for debate, where the writer's authority is submitted to the test of dialogism.

In appearance the authorship is settled and assumed, even with emphasis. A double signature, of the narrator and the author, enhances this impression, insofar as they converge in the preface and in the epilogue, by repeating "such a woman must exist; I have to go looking for her" (*wo xiangxin ta yiding cunzai, wo yao jixu zhuixun ta* 我相信她一定存在, 我要繼續追尋她). The redundancy seems to act as a reassertion of the author's legitimacy and command, while, in addition to it, the narrator completes the maieutic gesture in provoking and commenting on Lina's tale. However, this apparent assurance masks doubts and questions. The discourse loses its coherence since the author's statements contradict the narratorial account over the dream effect: "I woke up from the dream when I finished writing this novella"; "I do not think it's a dream that I lived". (*Xie wan le zhe xiaoshuo, wo de meng xing le* 寫完了者小說, 我的夢醒了; *Wo jue bu xiangxin wo de zaoyu hui shi yichang mengjing* 我絕不相信我的遭遇會是一場夢景, Ba [1932] 1988, 4, 93). The cleavage is accentuated when the narrator seriously calls into question the existence of the island

as described by Lina. Doubting Lina's story is tantamount to disbelieving the narrator since the very story results in the author-narrator's transcription and re-appropriation.

Such a weakening attempt of authorship gives way to a form of dialogism that integrates the readership. The epilogue, as such, constitutes a privileged place and moment of debate. The pragmatic shape allows the author-narrator to engage in a jousting with friends around the story's authenticity, the value of dreams, and the meaning of life. The polyphony creates a public space, which conjures up the spectre of 'thesis novel', *roman à thèse*, removing the didacticism which characterises Jean Grave's *The Free Land*. As a result, the author has his certainties shaken.

Probably, that is the way Ba Jin pursues the quest for freedom, which finds a tremendous parable in *A Dream on the Sea*. The island utopianises freedom in the sense that it creates a desired space for freedom, since, for La Boétie, freedom and the desire for freedom are one, and to want to be free is already to be free. This is the reason why this utopia is built on a negative, if not agonistic mode, the fight against oppressors requiring that against the voluntary servitude, again in the words of La Boétie (1576). *In fine*, Qin Hui is perhaps not so wrong to put side by side Lu Xun and Ba Jin, two "slave heart" slayers (Qin 2018). Lu Xun's 1925 reflections may serve as ultimate exegesis of Ba Jin's narrative:

But however fine the phrases of those splendor-loving scholars, or however grand the expressions they use in their chronicles, such as "the rise of the Hans", "the age of Han expansion", or "the age of Han resurgence", while appreciating that their motives are of the best, we cannot but feel their wording is too ambiguous. A much more straightforward mode of expression would be:

- 1 The periods when we longed in vain to be slaves,
- 2 The periods when we succeeded in becoming slaves for a time.

These periods form a cycle of what earlier scholars call "times of good rule" and "times of confusion". From the viewpoint of later subjects, the rebels were simply paving the way for their "masters". This is why it was said, "They cleared the path for the sagacious sovereign".

I am not quite sure what period we are in now. But if we consider our classicists' veneration of national characteristics, our writers' praise of Chinese civilisation and our philosophers' eagerness to return to the ancient ways, we can see that they are all dissatisfied with the present. But which way are we going? Whenever the people are confronted by a war they cannot understand, the richer among them move into the foreign concessions while women and children take refuge in the churches, for such places are relatively safe. For the time being they are not reduced to long-

ing in vain to be slaves. In short, whether classicists or refugees, wise men or fools, worthy men or rascals, all seem to be longing for the peaceful days of three centuries ago when the Chinese had succeeded in becoming slaves for a time.

But are we all like the men of old, to be content forever with "the good old ways"? Are we all like those classicists who, dissatisfied with the present, long for the peaceful days of three centuries ago?

Of course, we are not satisfied with the present either, but that does not mean we have to look backwards, for there is still a way forward. And to create a third type of period, hitherto unknown in Chinese history, is the task of our young people today. (Lu Xun 1925, 152)²

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² This passage is translated by Yang X. ang G. Yang.

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The May 4th Movement in 1919 – and more broadly the so-called New Culture movement in the 1910s and 1920s, – a landmark in the history of China, was marked by a great wave of translations, without precedent other than the one inspired by the Buddhist faith more than 1000 years before. This volume, which includes five papers presented at the conference *4 May 1919: History in Motion* (Université de Mons, Belgium, 2-4 May 2019), seeks to define and measure, in all its dimensions and complexity (from tragic theatre to revolutionary novels to literary journals), the impact of this intense translation effort in the early years of Republican China.



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