ESTABLISHING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHINA: TRACES OF RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN LITERATURE IN THE NEW CHINESE LITERATURE

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Russian literature is traditionally regarded as one that served a model and guide for Chinese intellectuals in developing their national literature. It is also recognized that Eastern European literatures drew much attention of Chinese intellectuals in their quest for national identity and modernization. This thesis is aimed at providing a more detailed look at the Chinese-Slavic literary discourse of the 1920's, focusing on Russian literature as a recognized literary "authority" of the time, and Ukrainian literature as an example of a literature of an oppressed nation, which went under both Russian and Eastern European "labels" at the time. I argue that challenged by a deep social and political crisis, Chinese intellectuals were compelled to develop a unique form of national identity, basing it on two usually mutually exclusive forms of nationalism, which manifested itself in the literary works of the period.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ROLE OF LITERATURE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

In academic discussions about the establishment of the new Chinese literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian literature is traditionally regarded as one that served a model and guide for Chinese intellectuals in developing their national literature. It is also recognized that Eastern European literatures drew much attention of Chinese intellectuals in their quest for national identity and modernization. This thesis is aimed at providing a more detailed look at the Chinese-Slavic literary discourse of the 1920's, focusing on Russian literature as a recognized literary "authority" of the time, and Ukrainian literature as an example of a literature of a small oppressed nation, which went under both Russian and Eastern European "labels" at the time, and which also evoked much interest in Chinese writers. Through the literary connection with both cultures, I will demonstrate the development of a national identity in China in the turbulent years of the May Fourth period. I argue that challenged by a deep social and political crisis, Chinese intellectuals were compelled to develop a unique form of national identity, basing it on two usually mutually exclusive forms of nationalism, which manifested itself in the literary works of the period.

In 1920 Shen Yanbing, who was already a well-known young author writing under his pen-name Mao Dun, became editor-in-chief of the Shanghai *Short Story Journal* （小说月报）, where he was invited to reform the magazine according to the new trends of the New Culture Movement. After successful transformations, the journal started publishing articles and overviews of world literature in vernacular Chinese, along

with translations of the world's most prominent writers, translated by Mao Dun himself and other leading intellectuals of the movement. The following year *Short Story Journal* published a series of overviews of world literature with translations, among which one issue was devoted to an overview of Russian literature and another issue to the "Literature of Damaged Nations" （"被损害民族的文学"）. The latter one was focused on literary heritage of European nations, which included Polish, Czech, Serbian, Finnish, Jewish, Ukrainian literatures, and "Literatures of Small Rising Countries" (as the article is entitled), which included Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia and Armenia.

This issue is one of the very few cultural connections between China and Ukraine, and probably the major one for the 1920's. However, the fact that Ukraine (or Little Russia/小俄罗斯 as Ukrainian lands were officially called throughout nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century) and Ukrainian literature were considered and presented separately from Russian literature (or literature of Great Russia/大俄罗斯), which was one of the most esteemed literatures of the period, definitely deserves attention. This thesis is devoted to Lu Xun's translations of Taras Shevchenko's poem "Testament" published in his article about Little Russian literature and Mao Dun's translation of Lesya Ukrainka's poem "Babylonian Captivity", published in the same issue, and how these cultural explorations of the two Chinese authors fit into a larger Chinese-Slavic cultural exchange of the New Culture Movement.

I am also focusing my work on Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" and Mao Dun's *Rainbow* as evidence of reflection of mixed nationalist context in their works. Of course, there is no way to expect independent influence of Ukrainian literature on Chinese literature, or anything close to the influence of Russian literature. However, the interest of

the May Fourth intellectuals in Eastern European literatures and Ukraine specifically opens up a new perspective on the development of national literature and national identity in China at the time. In this thesis I argue that national literature of the oppressed nations and Eastern European literatures specifically, became a source of inspiration for May Fourth intellectuals in the process of rethinking Chinese national identity at the moment of political and social crisis. Within this larger discourse contacts with Ukrainian literature, one often seen in opposition to the more dominant Russian counterpart, constitute an interesting case for viewing Chinese interest in Russian and Eastern European literatures as engaging a revolutionary spirit of resistance against multiple or even mutually exclusive forms of domination.

May Fourth Movement and Modernization

The late 1910's and early 1920's were turbulent years that followed the biggest and most fatal military conflict at that point of world history, World War I. As the war involved all major players of world politics of the early twentieth century, the wave of post-war consequences spread throughout the globe from their capitals to the most distant peripheries, bringing the decline of old empires and rise of new states. The world was reshaping itself, producing new ideas and new concepts of existence. For Europe, this was the moment for big empires to reform themselves, which was the case for post-revolutionary Russia, and for smaller nations to seize a chance to start their independent nation-states, which was the case for Poland, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine and other Eastern European nations. Surprisingly, the 1920's had a similar effect in China, where the new

intellectual elite was looking for ways to reform its post-revolutionary society to give it a new start.

The crisis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in China forced May Fourth intellectuals to search for ways to create and maintain a new strong centralized state. Often described as an effect of awakening, the May Fourth period produced a sense of a nation, national character, and national identity, which galvanized the nation's unification and rise. Formally sparked by the unequal decision of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), when the Shandong province, previously colonized by Germany, was handed to Japan, the May Fourth Movement was more than a response to the state's undermined sovereignty. It was a result of decades of national fermentation under the pressure of colonial aggression, and general omnipresent backwardness with the failure of the 1911 revolution to produce a strong progressive state. All of that was accompanied by the profound fear that the Chinese civilization might fall and disintegrate if no successful social revolution took place. In attempts to survive in long years of decay, it became clear for Chinese intellectuals that the only way for successful transformation of the state and nation that would fit and survive in the new world of modernity was through the transformation of social consciousness.

Such revolutionary utopianism became a widespread feature in public discourse, supported by most leading figures of the movement. As Peter Button points out, Lu Xun, one of the key figures of the movement, maintained a strong faith that "a critical reflection on and transformation of China's own national character (国民性 *guominxing*) was as vital to a brighter Chinese future as a proletarian revolution", and Mao Dun saw the discourse of national character as the only way to enter "world literature" (Button 1).

The idea of "entering world literature" was a cultural solution to modernization and building a strong nation, which were the core ideas for iconoclastic May Fourth intellectuals. Associating weakness and backwardness of the Chinese society with Confucian traditions that they sought to dismantle, May Fourth thinkers relied on "science and democracy" as the social reform principles: "The rise of science went hand in hand with modern nation-state building, as science promoted an objective recognition of citizens that overlooked their religious, ethnic, or regional ties" (Chan, *The Edge of Knowing* 20). In this sense, science was equally important technologically and socially in the process of building a nation-state. Facing an urgent need for social revolution, May Fourth intellectuals considered culture and art as the most effective tool for vast social transformations, where they implemented the principles of scientific thinking: "The 'spirit' of science, its liberation from dogma and tradition, its emphasis on individual investigation, and its focus on practical application, became incorporated within the cultural ethos of the May Fourth Movement" (Chan, *The Edge of Knowing* 20).

This cultural approach was not new. At the eve of the twentieth century a leading intellectual of late Qing period Liang Qichao stressed the importance of culture, and literature particularly, for major social transformations:

> If one intends to renovate the people of the nation, one must first renovate its fiction. Therefore, to renovate morality, one must renovate fiction; to renovate religion, one must renovate fiction; to renovate politics, one must renovate fiction; to renovate learning and arts, one must renovate fiction; and to renovate even the human mind and remold its character, one must renovate fiction. Why is this so? This is because fiction has a profound power over the way of man. (Liang 74)

May Fourth intellectuals based their opinion about the importance of literature in the process of social transformation on the history of nation-formation in Europe as well as

world literary criticism. One of the most respected Russian critics of the nineteenth century Vissarion Belinsky (who later also became popular and much cited in the PRC), justified the role of literature for nation formation in mid-19th century, suggesting that the "national spirit of European nations is so sharply and originally expressed in their literatures that any work, however great in artistic merit, which does not bear the sharp imprint of nationality, loses its chief merit in the eyes of Europeans" (Belinsky 12). A "true founder of Russian realism", as Lydia Ginzburg called him, Belinsky's literary criticism played one of the major roles in establishing Russian national identity (Ginzburg 58). Facing the problem that Chinese literature was "lifeless and stale, unable to stand next to that of Europe," as Chen Duxiu described it, the new scientific orientation of the May Fourth thinkers turned into the promotion of realism in Chinese literature, which became a way for objective representation of social reality and expression of criticism of the modern world (Chen 140).

Theory of Nationalism: Official Nationalism vs. Resistant Nationalism

The question of nation, nationalism and national identity are addressed by numerous disciplines (with political science and sociology playing leading roles among them), and therefore the precise definitions are highly debatable and largely differ according to disciplines or applied theories. The two leading ways of defining national identity are from the primordialist or from the contrustivist points of view: looking at nations either as an ancient and natural social phenomenon which is primarily defined and unified by a language, or as a socially constructed community which unifies to enter modernity. From the *primordialist* point of view, nations, naturally defined by their

language, have always existed, just “waiting” for a historical moment to be “awakened”. The *constructivist* perspective claims that nations are products of nationalism, and do not necessarily have to be objective or real, and can be deliberately created through the national ideas developed by intellectual elites. Ernest Gellner, one of the leading constructivists, suggests that nationalism is a necessary aspect of the modernization process, which shapes homogeneous and centrally directed social and cultural units, where political and cultural boundaries meet. He also suggests that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (quoted in Anderson 6). In his book *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson, also a constructivist, elaborates on this opinion, suggesting that nationalism does not “invent nations” in a sense of fabrication or producing “fake communities”. According to Anderson, nationalism rather provides an opportunity to “imagine” the boundaries of a certain community, making it a nation. “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear from them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 6). Any community that is larger than a primordial village, where everyone knows everyone, is an imagined community that has to have other ways of unification, different from mere personal contacts, and culture becomes this unifying tool. From the political perspective national identity is “a set of individuals who fall within the decision-making scope of the state, and determining national identity becomes determining who is included and who is excluded by the national boundaries, however the state chooses to draw them” (Dittmer and Kim 6). However, from the cultural and literary point of view, nationalism is to be

understood not as a political ideology, but rather as “a large cultural system that preceded it, out which - as well as against which – it came into being” (Anderson 12).

Describing the mechanism of formation of national identity in “imagined communities”, Anderson suggests a theory of “print capitalism”, stressing the role of media and literature in a nation formation process. Describing it as “a vernacularizing thrust of capitalism” Anderson refers to the history of printing in sixteenth century Europe when, seeking to expand their markets and maximize press circulation, capitalist entrepreneurs started printing books and media in vernacular languages, attracting much larger numbers of readers. Turning away from Latin which, similar to classical Chinese *wenyan* language, was a language of privileged social groups, created a basis for mutual understanding and common discourse among larger groups of readers. Anderson argues that such print-languages became a basis for national consciousness, and led to the formation of the first European nation-states later on.

> Speakers […] who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. (Anderson 44)

Print capitalism created a new form of imagined community, where large numbers of community members could relate to each other, having no chance to know each other personally, which created “a deep, horizontal comradeship” that set the stage for the modern nation (Anderson 7). The print-language became more than just a language of

printed material. It became a language of education for the masses, which required no privileged education and was comprehensible to the vast majority of people.

Similar to early modern Europe, the dissemination of knowledge in China before May Fourth Movement reforms required training in classical Chinese, which was available only to a narrow group of educated people. Challenged by a vast national crisis and an urgent need for effective modernization, May Fourth intellectuals introduced language reform as one of the first steps towards further transformations in social consciousness. Describing the nature of identity crisis, Lucien Pye suggests that an identity crisis results from a realization of a certain community that "what it had once unquestionably accepted as the physical and psychological definitions of its collective self are no longer acceptable under new historic conditions" (quoted in Dittmer and Kim 7). Looking for ways to fit into the new historical context, such a community has to rethink and redefine who they are, and how they are different form all other political and social systems. To make this project successful, it is important that all members of the community accept a new redefined identity. Facing such a challenge in populous China, May Fourth intellectuals reformed the language, changing classical Chinese for vernacular, making it a new "print-language" to engage the masses. They also established a new mediums of knowledge dissemination, which included the journals *New Youth* （新青年）, and later the *Short Story Journal* （小说月报）, where intellectuals published new literature in vernacular that would shape a new "imagined community", unifying the nation and creating national spirit and national identity.

In his book *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson defines two types of nationalism: "official nationalism" and "colonial", or popular nationalism. Using the term

coined by Hugh Seton-Watson, Anderson suggests that the project of Russification in the nineteenth-century Russia is the brightest and best-known example of "official nationalism". Prior to Anderson, Seton-Watson explained the nature of such imperial decisions:

> The leaders of the most powerful nations considered in their task, and indeed in their moral duty, to impose their nationality on all their subjects – of whatever religion, language or culture. As they saw it, by drawing these people upwards into their own superior culture, they were conferring benefits on them; while at the same time they were strengthening their state by creating within it a single homogeneous nation. (Seton-Watson 148)

Benedict Anderson stresses that waves of "official nationalism" emerged in Europe after or in reaction to the popular national movements spreading in Europe since the 1820s. In the context of the Russian Empire such movement were, in part, represented by Ukrainian nationalist fermentations, which Anderson uses as an example of resistant nationalism together with other Eastern European movements (Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians etc.). Within this theoretical framework, Ukrainian literature was an example of a formation of "popular nationalism" which, together with movements of other nations, opposed Great Russian "official nationalism". Describing the emergence of Ukrainian nationalism, Anderson provides a detailed description of the process:

> In the eighteenth century, Ukrainian (Little Russian) was contemptuously tolerated as a language of yokels. But in 1798 Ivan Kotlyarevsky wrote *Aeneid*, and enormously popular satirical poem on Ukrainian life. In 1804, the University of Kharkov was founded and rapidly became the center for a boom in Ukrainian literature. In 1819 appeared the first Ukrainian grammar – only 17 years after the Russian one. And in the 1830s followed the works of Taras Shevchenko, of whom Seton-Watson observes that "the formation of an accepted Ukrainian literary language owes more to him than to any other individual. The use of this language was the decisive stage in the formation of a Ukrainian national consciousness". Shortly thereafter, in 1846, the first Ukrainian nationalist organization was founded in Kiev – by a historian! (Anderson 74)

In terms of forms of nationalism, the interest of May Fourth writers in Russian and Ukrainian literatures presents an intriguing case of rethinking and "rebranding" Chinese national identity. Speaking in terms of Anderson's theory, China by no means was a nation that needed to resist an imposed imperial nationalism. For millennia China had been an empire itself, the Middle Kingdom as the very name states. However, experiencing a great political crisis in which China lost control over a number of territories and was being "cut" by foreign forces, a model of "official" nationalism, similar to Russian one, was not of much use. Challenged by a status of a declining empire, Chinese intellectuals turned to "resistant nationalism", through which they "reshaped" and "rebranded" Chinese national identity. Constituting a radically iconoclastic cultural revolution that sparked at the moment of the world "apogee of nationalism" (as E.J. Hobsbawm, another leading constructivist scholar of nationalism, defines the period between 1918 and 1950 of world history), May Fourth put "resistant nationalism" in use to oppose the old, declining empire within itself and to give rise to a new, "reborn" China (Hobsbawm 8).

New Literature of New Times

Although the May Fourth generation followed a radical anti-traditionalist agenda, they nevertheless preserved a traditional concept of literature as "the conveyer of morality", as Mark Gamsa puts it. Creating new literature in a new "print-language", leaving the sophism of classical Chinese behind, May Fourth intellectuals still adhered to an age-old premise that literature must be created for a moral purpose: "The fundamental assumption of Chinese tradition was that the scholar-official class should offer a moral

example to the ignorant masses. In the last three decades of the Qing, this requirement was joined with determination to uncover the 'secret' of the West by obtaining the knowledge it possessed" (Gamsa 19). For imperial China, classical Confucian writings were a sort of moral guidelines for proper individual behavior, social relationships, political opinions and philosophical consideration. Reinventing the form of Chinese literature, May Fourth intellectuals kept its traditional didactic use: the purpose of literature was still to teach readers, who had to perceive a writer as their teacher. Moreover, reading and translating foreign literature, they also focused on authors who played a role of "great teachers" for their people, and whose works contained deep moral and philosophical meaning. As Gamsa describes it, intellectuals themselves also "wanted to be taught, not merely intellectually challenged; May Fourth was for many a time of a serious search for answers to questions as fundamental as the meaning of life" (Gamsa 15). The writers also continued "uncovering the secret" of the West, mostly choosing "fathers" of national European literatures, intrigued by "a recipe" for successful nationalism and uniting national spirit. [1]

Among many Western literary modes addressed by the May Fourth writers and critics, romanticism and realism gained the most attention. Neither of the modes had equivalent analogues in the Chinese literature, which was generally considered by the May Fourth thinkers as moribund and irrelevant to the real. Searching for ways to represent the real, both inner and outer, May Fourth writers turned to these two literary

[1] Although Mark Gamsa stresses the didactic use of literature only, it is important to note that May Fourth writers were also inspired by the aesthetic value of foreign literature, on which they reflected in their articles. In particular, Lu Xun wrote in his famous essay "On the Power of Mara Poetry" (which I am going to talk about in more detail later in this chapter): "From the vantage point of pure literature, the essence of all art is to rouse and delight its audience, and so it should be with literature, as one of the arts. It has nothing to do with existence of individuals or nations. It is completely divorced from material gain and no philosophy to be dug out of it". (105)

modes to revive Chinese literature and enable it to produce social transformations. Mao Dun also paid close attention to naturalism, but "eventually retreated from the hard objectivism of this mode of writing and came to favor a more active role for the author's subjectivity in the creative process" (Denton 118). In turn, both romanticism and realism literary modes offered methods to construct and promote nationalism, and therefore, both were tried out by the May Fourth generation.

As translators and writers, Lu Xun and Mao Dun started off with romanticism, exploring national literatures of the world and translating the most famous works into Chinese. In 1908 Lu Xun published his famous article "On the Power of Mara Poetry", where he provided a detailed overview of European Romantic poetry:

> Borrowed from India, the term 'Mara' - celestial demon, or 'Satan' in Europe – first denoted Byron. Now I apply it to those, among all poets, who were committed to resistance, whose purpose was action but who were little loved by their age; and I introduce their words, deeds, ideas, and the impact of their circles from the sovereign Byron to Magyar (Hungarian) man of letters. (99)

In this article Lu Xun explores European "Mara poets", within whom he includes Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Petofi. Suggesting that "taking a nation's spirit forward depends on how much one knows of the world", Lu Xun eulogizes European poets, "fathers" of their national literatures, who "spoke with strength to stir new life in their countrymen and make their country a great one" (107). Concluding his thoughts, Lu Xun questions: "Who on Chinese soil can compare?", rhetorically "pointing" at himself (107).

"On the Power of Mara Poetry" was the first essay where Lu Xun mentions Nikolai Gogol, already calling him one of the most prominent Russian writers, and comparing him to Shakespeare. Ten years later, Lu Xun would publish his most well-

known story “Diary of a Madman” that would be based on Gogol’s story of the same name and with a similar plot. In “On the Power of Mara Poetry” Lu Xun presents Pushkin as “poet of the nation” and explores Lermontov, but limits his attention on Russian literature there. More than a decade later, in the issue of the *Short Story Journal* devoted to Russian literature, Taras Shevchenko would be included into an overview of the thirty most prominent writers of Russia. The same year, in an issue “Literature of Damaged Nations” Lu Xun would describe Shevchenko as the most prominent Ukrainian poet, whose poetry widely embraced a nationalist spirit. In the same issue Mao Dun also published his comments on Ukrainian literature along with his translations of the folk songs:

> They were first ravaged by Genghis Khan, then Poland and Turkey. They defended bravely again and again. Their genius in literature had been developed under such circumstance. A rich collection of songs has been passed down from history, and it's the record of their history. (Mao Dun, *Yinyan 5*)

These chronological facts serve as evidence of the writers’ growing interest in Eastern European and Russian literatures during the period, and the development of their deeper understanding of historical and cultural relation of the region.

Russia as a Model of Modernization

Mao Dun generally focused his attention on three “big literatures”: English, French and Russian. Same as Lu Xun and other writers of the time, he was also much inspired by Russian literature, openly eulogizing it, and suggesting that “Russian literature moulded by Tolstoy was superior to any other in the world”, comparing it specifically with English and French literatures, “and so great had been the moral force of

the Russian literary awakening that it should be considered the origin of the Bolshevik revolution" (Gamsa 18). Both writers were inspired by socialist ideas that were boiling in Europe at the time and watching transformations after the 1917 Russian Revolution. Michael Hunt suggests that "the Bolshevik revolution seemed to offer the only successful model of social revolution and state building, and the Soviet Union was the only power that appeared sympathetic to the aspirations of Chinese patriots" (Hunt 69). Although Russia also constituted a serious sovereign threat just a few years earlier, its revolutionary society and literature became a model for Chinese intellectuals. Celebrating Russian-Chinese literary ties in 1932, Lu Xun summed up its effect stating that "Russian literature was our guide and our friend", and suggesting that "things have grown from it already, as we have seen for ourselves: endurance, groans, struggles, revolt, fighting, changes, fighting construction, fighting, success" (Lu Xun, *The Ties Between Chinese and Russian Literatures* 210).

As Mark Gamsa notes, most May Fourth intellectuals considered Russian literature closer than any other European one due to "roughly comparable conditions" under which both Russian and Chinese literatures developed (Gamsa 31). Although Russia, and its literature, was a "weaker" example of successful modernization compared to Western Europe, it could offer what Western literature could not: it was a revolutionary society "one step further in progress", and therefore, a much more relevant role model. According to Gamsa, China was "so radically distant" from Western European epicenters of modernity, both geographically and culturally, that Russia, "suffering from its inferiority in relation to Europe could plausibly present itself as the harbinger of modern civilization in its Far Eastern periphery" (Gamsa 7). Theodore

Huters also suggests that the way China developed made it quite incomparable with the Western states:

> The key impasse would seem to be that traditional Chinese and Western literature never existed in the same space and time. The two literatures can only be compared against descriptions of themselves, descriptions that present themselves as being too open-ended to persuade those who are devoted to the notion that all literatures are alike in their basic essentials of some fundamental differences residing between Chinese and Western discourse. (15)

Turning to the West for methods of modernization, China used Russia as "a bridge" with Western cultures. Challenged by a status change from Middle Kingdom (中国) to East Asia (东亚), and striving to catch up with the modernity of Western Europe (西欧), Chinese intellectuals used Eastern Europe (东欧) as a "medium" to connect with the most developed states. Suffering through the "century of humiliation" after centuries of glorious imperial past and facing its inferiority in all spheres, China turned to revolutionary Russia, a neighbor that shared struggles of inferiority complex before the West, but which was successfully overcoming it through the revolution. However, a major historical difference between the two countries lied in the fact that Russia never experienced anything like the "century of humiliation", losing control over the territories being torn apart by the Western colonization, which happened to China. As foreign imperialist oppression was one of the major and most deleterious problems for China, May Fourth intellectuals also turned to other Eastern European "oppressed" nations in search for the spirit of national resistance. Considering this dual interest, translations of Ukrainian authors published in the *Short Story Journal* in 1921 fall under both requirements: it was (Little) Russian literature of the "oppressed" that was made of nationalist revolutionary spirit.

In this thesis I am focusing on two of the most prominent writers of the new Chinese literature, Lu Xun and Mao Dun, their translations of Ukrainian authors published in the *Short Story Journal* in 1921, and their most prominent works, written around the same period. In the second chapter I am going to focus on Lu Xun's translation of the poem "Testament" by a Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, and Lu Xun's most iconic work "Diary of a Madman", exploring both through the prism of the concept of a literary monument that serves as a symbol of a nation. In the third chapter I am going to focus on Mao Dun's overview of the Ukrainian female poet Lesya Ukrainka and Mao Dun's translation of her poem "Babylonian Captivity". Exploring the notion of an Eastern European heroine popular at the time, and focusing on Mao Dun's novel "Rainbow", I am going to demonstrate a complicated process of development of ideas of national and feminist resistance at the period. In the fourth chapter I will present my conclusion, recapitulating the main argument and evidence for the formation of a mixed national identity in China of 1920's.

CHAPTER II

LU XUN'S LITERARY MONUMENT: THE SYMBOL OF A NEW NATION

On December 30, 1932, in his address devoted to celebration of Russian-Chinese literary ties, Lu Xun, describing the influence of Russian literature in China, proclaimed: "Russian literature was our guide and friend" (Lu Xun, *The Ties Between Chinese and Russian Literatures* 210). This phase soon became one of the most cited in the Soviet Union, as Gamsa notes, as evidence of the triumphal march of Soviet culture in a friend state of China (Gamsa 18). It was the time when Russian literature was successfully "rebranded" into Soviet literature, and most authors of the 19th century imperial Russia were "re-claimed" by the USSR. Therefore, the fact that writings by Gogol, Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy and others were well-known in China, influencing new Chinese literature, was also a matter of great pride for the Soviet people. The preceding years of the New Culture Movement were a unique historical moment in this sense: such vast presence of Russian literature in Chinese culture had never happened before, and in total lasting from 1910's till 1960's when the Sino-Soviet split cut nearly all ties between the two countries, would never repeat later. May Fourth Movement was a unique gateway for Russian literature to come to China, and Lu Xun played a crucial role in this process.

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, an urgent need for modernization in conditions of general social decay was a major drive for May Fourth generation to look for ways to "awaken" the society and "catch up" with the West. As large of a concept as it is, "the West" was also quite a blurry notion at the time, including ideas of political and economical success of England, France, the US, and being synonymous for "modernity". "Their 'West' was not only composed of abstractions but also constructed out of some

very concrete, visual images: the sight of foreigners, glimpsed on the street but seldom engaged in conversation; the views also of the Bund, the Art Deco, architecture and the British police in Shanghai; the signboards of foreign bookstores" (Gamsa 3). The idea of the West and Western-inspired modernization started from quite an abstract vision and was shaping up along the way, but one thing was clear from the start: it did not include Russia. How did Russia provide so much influence, then? In his speech in 1932 Lu Xun gave his answer:

> The Russian literature of those days - the late nineteenth century – especially the work of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, had a great influence on German literature; but this had no effect on China as very few Chinese at the time studied German. The greatest influence came from the English and American imperialists who translated the selected works of Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekhov; at the same time they used Indian primers to teach our boys and girls the dialogue of Rama and Krishna; but they also gave us the opportunity to read the selected works as well. Stories of detectives, adventures, English ladies and African savages can only titillate the surfeit senses of those who have eaten and drunk their fill. But some of our young people were already conscious of being oppressed and in pain. They wanted to struggle, not to be scratched on the back and they were seeking for genuine guidance. That was when they discovered Russian literature. (Lu Xun, *The Ties Between Chinese and Russian Literatures* 210)

Although Lu Xun spoke German and Japanese, and did not speak Russian, he used his knowledge of foreign languages to translate Russian literature, and was less interested in the literatures of Germany or Japan. He was even less interested in English or American literatures, partially associating it with earlier translations by Lin Shu (1852-1924), published in Shanghai entertainment journals in the late Qing, which would later receive much criticism from May Fourth generation. Another reason was the rejection of England and the US as nations that brought a century of humiliation to China. Although imperial Russia had also been "cutting up the Chinese melon" along with other Western countries, its literature happened to fit into the Chinese vision of a "perfect" literature that described

struggles of the oppressed and had a didactic purpose. In his famous speech in 1932 Lu Xun also mentioned: “Of course we knew that tsarist Russia was invading China, but that literature taught us important lesson that there are two sorts of men in the world: the oppressors and the oppressed” (Lu Xun, *The Ties Between Chinese and Russian Literatures* 210).

In 1936 Zhou Yang, a famous literary theorist and Marxist thinker, reflecting back on New Culture Movement, wrote: “The efforts of writers in the past to draw close to reality have left us the legacy of literature’s foremost tradition: realism” (Zhou 335). In the same article he mentions that “although Russian realism had no firm foundation until Gogol’s time, the lyric poets Pushkin and Lermontov laid first cornerstones” (Zhou 336). The first exploration of Russian literature, and works by Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol specifically, was presented in Lu Xun’s famous article “On the Power of Mara Poetry” (1908), which was discussed in the previous chapter. There Lu Xun described Gogol as one of the most prominent Russian writers, who laid the foundation of a new literary epoch:

> Russian silence; then stirring sound. Russia was like a child, and not a mute; an underground stream, not an old well. Indeed, the early nineteenth century produced Gogol, who inspired his countrymen with imperceptible tear-stained grief, compared by some to England’s Shakespeare, whom Carlyle praised and idolized. (98)

Recognizing Gogol as one of founders of Russian national literature, Lu Xun agreed with probably the most influential critic of Gogol’s time, Vissarion Belinsky, who essentially made Gogol “a standard-bearer of realism”, as Bojanowska describes it, and called him “the most national of Russian poets” (Belinsky 13).

Literature of Official and Resistant Nationalism

Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48) and Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) were both active contributors into public discourse about national development in the 19th century Russia. The first half of the century was a period of formation of nationalism in Russia, which Benedict Anderson defines as "official nationalism". In 1832 Count Sergei Uvarov, who later became a minister of education, in an official report proposed his new ideological doctrine: Russia, as a country that follows the only right from of Christianity and therefore enjoys special providence from God, is to be based on three main principles "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality". While the ideas of orthodoxy and autocracy were already well-known and accepted in the society, the idea of nationality was completely new. Catching up with social transformations in Europe, 19th century Russia started its own project of constructing their nation, nationalism, and national identity. The new doctrine was favored at the court, and brought Uvarov a position of Minister of Education already the following year. In his new status Uvarov founded *Journal of the Ministry of National Education*, which became a new platform for discussions. Among various political and cultural discussions, the *Journal* also published Gogol's essays, which later were included into *Arabesques* collection. Nikolai Gogol, although a Ukrainian-born writer himself, was very interested in the new nationalist ideas. As Bojanowska suggests, his works were largely inspired by such ideas, and it made him a key figure in establishing nationalism in both Russia and Ukraine.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Benedict Anderson defines two types of nationalism: nationalism that emerges against imperial pressure, and a top-down official nationalism that becomes a governmental response to self-emerging national feelings.

Anderson also defines Russian nationalism as a classical example of official nationalism, and Ukrainian nationalism as the opposite resistant type. While Gogol's role in establishing Ukrainian nationalism evoke some debates among scholars, his role in building Russian official nationalism is undisputable, and such reputation was for a major part constructed by Belinsky.

Belinsky considered literature as a tool for reforming society, shaping it up and making it a nation that would fit into the world context. In his article "Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature" he suggested:

> The national poet must possess a great historical significance not for his country alone – his appearance must be a thing of world-wide historical significance. Such poets can appear only in nations that are called upon to play a world-historical role in destinies of mankind, namely, whose national life is destined to influence the trend and progress of all mankind. (Matlaw 14)

For Belinsky, literature was an instrument to appear on the world stage and prove one's historical significance, and this idea has developed his own opinion on nationality. "Central to his theory was the argument that nations exist, not for their own sake, but in order to prepare people for a higher historical purpose - specifically, participation in the modern cultural community of all humankind" (Rutherford 1). Although very enthusiastic about nation-building trend of the time, Belinsky did not recognize every attempt to build a nation. Such "problematic" attempt was an arising Ukrainian literature together with Ukrainian nationalism, both for a major part represented by poetry of Taras Shevchenko, all of which Belinsky denied. For Belinsky, Southern lands of the Russian empire, or Little Russia as they were officially called, were an embedded part of Russian culture, and therefore, of Russian nationalism, and could not have their own national literature. In his opinion, the lack of statehood and the need "to leave behind the era of

'tribal' self-centeredness and orient itself toward supranational civilization" made Ukrainian arising literature and nationalism simply impossible (Bojanowska 309). As Bojanowska describes it, "Belinsky's encounter with Hegelianism, which he tended to oversimplify, led him around the early 1840's to proclaim Ukrainian literature as an axiomatic impossibility" (309). For him, Gogol, whom he praised and promoted, was the only "correct" way for a Ukrainian-born writer to exist: writing in Russian with occasional incorporation of Ukrainian plots as a part of a larger Russian national literature.

> This resulted in a truly paradoxical situation, whereby the cultural manifestations of an incipient national culture ostensibly under review by Belinsky – written in the Ukrainian language, concerned with the life of Ukraine, and clearly in touch with what one might term "civilization", as in the case of Shevchenko – served Belinsky to disprove the very existence of such a culture. He thus argues the impossibility of Ukrainian national culture even as it was staring him in the face. Axiom overrode praxis. (Bojanowska 309)

Other Russian critics of the time were less radical in their reviews of Shevchenko's works, although most were finding Ukrainian literature "the last echo of a dying world" (Kovalchuk 170). In their reviews critics focused on a question if it necessary to revive a declining language and culture at all, but also noted that if some of Shevchenko's poems were written in Russian, they would join works of top ranks in Russian literature.

As Anna Kovalchuk explains, "Shevchenko's representation of the national family was in line with the Romantics, who understood national development genealogically – as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity" (Kovalchuk 165). Writing in "the golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs" as Benedict Anderson described nineteenth century, Shevchenko followed the German Romantics, basing his writing on folk culture

and vernacular Ukrainian language, which by themselves were evidence of the nation's historic roots and its genealogical continuity. "In the Russian empire, the Petrine reforms and the resulting schisms between the language and customs of the commoners and the elites made articulating a common national identity difficult" (Kovalchuk 165). Hence, Shevchenko's Romantic genealogical framework was met with resistance.

Considering such intertwined connections of various literary heritages which nineteenth-century Russia left behind, its special place in the reforming China during the New Culture Movement is not surprising. Russian literature, which included literary works, literary criticism, various forms of nationalism and a later successful revolutionary experience naturally drew a lot of attention of May Fourth generation to whom Russia looked ultimately inspiring.

Lu Xun, Gogol, Shevchenko

In 1908 in his article "On the Power of Mara Poetry" Lu Xun introduced Gogol to his readers for the first time, eulogizing him as one of the greatest writers of Russia. From that moment on, Lu Xun continued exploring and translating Gogol's works. In 1937, while working on the translation of *Dead Souls*, Lu Xun published a short article "Almost Groundless Tragedy", where he discussed the reception of *Dead Souls* in Russia, noting on Gogol's Ukrainian origin and how it had influence on his works:

> … the audience at that time were very dissatisfied. The usual argument was to say that Gogol did not really know much about Russian landowners. This is understandable. The author was a Ukrainian. … However, even if he did not know the situation very well, his work was still very prominent. (1)

Over the three decades that separate both articles, Lu Xun explored various Eastern European and Slavic literatures, and these explorations are, in part, reflected in the *Short*

Story Journal which this work is focusing on. Although Russian revolutionary literature was a great model in various aspects, from literary aesthetics to its social impact, it did not entirely correspond with the social and political crisis in China at the beginning of the 20th century. Russian literature, and especially realist literature, represented by Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy and others revealed social problems, but from an imperial, "householder's" position: these are the problems that *we* have within *our nation*. Russian literature embraced "official nationalism", where all nations are enclosed within an overarching imperial "*we*", which did not really focus on the agent of "*other*". Although China undoubtedly was an empire, too, its new status of "a declining empire", vanishing under oppression of foreign forces ("the others"), required another form of literature, different from realist novels of Russian writers. China was in need for literature that could "awaken" the people and unify them in the spirit of resistance, eventually shaping them into a nation. While Russian literature could serve a great model for literary aesthetic form, it needed a "sharper" revolutionary spirit to work in the context of the Chinese crisis. Looking for such spirit, May Fourth translators turned to literature of small oppressed nations, which were widely present in Eastern Europe. In the foreword of the issue "Literature of Harmed Nations" of the *Short Story Journal*, Mao Dun explained its significance:

> Why do we need to explore literature of harmed nations? Every nation's literature is expression of their nationalism; it is a record of their historical and social background. It is a mixed product of a nation's reflection of the times. We must understand the true inner spirit of a nation, and we can find it only in literary works. All people on Earth are sons of mother Earth; nobody is better than others, and no one deserves to be called "superior." Literature as spiritual crystallization of all nations should be considered as treasure, treasure of humanity! In the world of art, there is no elite distinction. We are touched by the harmed and oppressed souls because we [Chinese] are also the victims of unfair thoughts and systems. Those harmed but uprising souls

> among them are even more touching because it strengthens our belief that "high quality gold hides in the sands" and our future is bright regardless the present darkness. For this reason, we issued "Literatures of Harmed Nations". (Mao Dun, *Yinyan* 2)

Identifying themselves as similar "victims of unfair thoughts and systems", the writers turned to literatures of Polish, Czech, Ukrainian and other nations of Europe, whose national literatures were an expression of their hopes for independence and sovereign nation-states. Their literature was "sharper" in a way that it embraced a revolutionary spirit of resistance, and that was exactly what the Chinese nation needed at the moment of crisis. Looking for "high quality gold in the sands", Chinese translators paid special attention to "fathers" of the nations, who were mostly represented by writers of Romantic nationalism. One of them was Taras Shevchenko, a "father" of Ukrainian literature, of whom Seton-Watson also observes that "the formation of an accepted Ukrainian literary language owes more to him than to any other individual" (quoted in Anderson 74).

Ukrainian literature was presented through short literary overviews and translations prepared by Lu Xun and Mao Dun. As neither of the writers spoke Russian or Ukrainian, their overviews were based on available English or German translations. The journal published Lu Xun's translation of an article *General History of World Literature* by a German literary scholar Gustav Karpeles, where Lu Xun added his translation of Taras Shevchenko's poem "Testament":

> 倘若我死了，便埋我/ 在我的乌克拉因的/ 遥远的平原的中间/ 坟山的上面，/ 使我看见涅普尔德/广阔的平原/ 和崖间的隙岸，/听到那奔迸的一般/仇敌的血潺潺的滚进青的海里/ 出了乌克拉因,/那么是的，那么我要将山与平原，/我要全都放掉了，/我要自己飞向神明而且祷告，——但到那时为止，/我不认识神明，埋了我/醒过来并且拗断了/你们的锁索，用那坏的。
>
> When I die, then make my grave/ High on an ancient mound, / In my own beloved Ukraine, / In steppeland without bound:/ Whence one may see wide-skirted wheatland, / Dnipro's steep-cliffed shore, / There whence one may hear the blustering River wildly roar. /Till from Ukraine to the blue sea/It

> bears in fierce endeavour /The blood of foemen - then I'll leave/Wheatland and hills forever:/ Leave all behind, soar up until/ Before the throne of God /I'll make my prayer. For, till that hour I shall know naught of God./ Make my grave there - and arise, / Sundering your chains, /Bless your freedom with the blood / Of foemen's evil veins! /Then in that great family, / A family new and free, /Do not forget, with good intent /Speak quietly of me. (Manning, *Taras Shevchenko* 10)

"Testament" is the central poem among Shevchenko's writings, and Ukrainian national literature overall, and serves as a literary monument of Ukrainian nationalism to this day. A concept of literary monuments was important for Romantic nationalist literature, which served as an undisputable symbol of a national idea. However, becoming a national symbol such literary piece usually loses its original meaning, acquiring a new significance of a national memorial and a symbolism of "the poem".

According to Anderson's theory of imagined communities, memorials are one of the strongest nation-building symbols. In his book Anderson provides an example of memorials of unknown soldiers, suggesting that

> [no] more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. … Sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings. (Anderson 9)

Similar to the actual monuments, literary monuments play the same role for imagining a national community. As any memorial, literary monuments are not about the dead (not even about the author of the poem), they are about those who continue living and struggling on, struggling together within the boundaries of an "imagined" community sharing the same sense of a national identity.

Lu Xun's interest in Shevchenko's "Testament" is quite evident: it was a testament from the "father of a nation" for the living with a strong nationalist resistance

message, appealing for awakening, arising and fighting back. The themes of "death", "testament", "memory" and "awakening" were close for Lu Xun. As Eileen Cheng notes, "Lu Xun had an inordinate and moribund interest and fascination with death", and that later found expression in many of his works, most well-known of which are "Diary of a Madman" and *Wild Grass* (Cheng 5).

Wild Grass is a collection of prose poems written between 1924 and 1926, which are largely made of imagery of death and decay and eulogies to the dead. Scholars propose multiple interpretations of the collection, suggesting that it could be "an embrace of modernism, romanticism, symbolism, or a mixture of all three", but all agreeing on its uniqueness among other realist works of Lu Xun (Chan, *The Edge of Knowing* 40). While the collection can be subject to various explanations, its overall engagement with the themes of death, memory and author's testament lie in the very names of the prose poems: "The Epitaph", "After Death", "The Awakening". A question whether Lu Xun intended to make it a literary monument is also open for debates, and as Roy Chan suggests, "for all its poetic resonance and formal elaboration", the author probably did not (Chan, *Literature's Work* 3). However, the collection definitely follows an overall poetic line of a testament, urging to rethink the notion of death and awaken the next generation. Guiding through the labyrinth of "close-to-death" and "close-to-madness" states, Lu Xun brings readers to the last piece "Awakening", praising the new generation of young writers:

> Yes, the young people's spirits have risen up before me. They have grown rough. But I love these spirits which bleed and suffer in silence, for they make me know I am in the world of men – I am living among men. (Lu Xun 68)

Unlike the *Wild Grass* collection and Gogol's story of the same name, Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" achieved its iconic and "monumental" status in the new Chinese literature. Also due to Lu Xun's canonical status as an author, "Diary of a Madman" is traditionally interpreted as "a grand allegory about the evils of traditional society", as Roy Chan describes it, and as a symbol of fight against "cannibalism" of the old society and a hope to "save the children" of the future. The "Diary" is traditionally read politically, and as Chan suggests, "Lu Xun himself was not immune to the pressure to commit his writing to social purpose" (Chan, *Literature's Work* 1). In 1928 in his essay "Literature and Revolution" Lu Xun admitted himself that literature can be used in different ways, most often for political purposes:

> To struggle is right, I believe. If people are oppressed, why shouldn't they struggle? But since this is what respectable gentlemen dread, they condemn it as "radical", alleging that men the world over are meant to love each other and would do so were they not corrupted by a gang of bad characters. Thy well-fed may quite likely love the starving, but the starving never love the well-fed. In the days of Huang Chao when men are each other, the starving did not even love the starving; however, this was not due to trouble stirred up by the literature of struggle. I have never believed that literature has the power to move heaven and each, but if people want to put it to other uses that is right with me. It can be used for "propaganda" for example. (Lu Xun 27)

Further on, the writer explains that any literature is propaganda, and to avoid propaganda one should simply stop writing. Among other works of the canonical writer, "Diary of a Madman" became one of the most important "political" works of Lu Xun.

The Two "Madman's Diaries"

Many Chinese and Russian scholars compared Gogol's and Lu Xun's "Diaries". Exploring different aspects of the stories, scholars usually come to the same conclusion

that Lu Xun, following Gogol, “elaborated methods of realistic depiction”, “enhanced socio-political pathos” and generally “surpassed his teacher” (Wu 32). Comparing two works, scholars also usually refer to Lu Xun’s own comment about his “Diary”, where he suggested that his story contains much more “hatred” compared to Gogol’s. Indeed, while the two stories to a large extent resemble one another, Lu Xun’s “Diary”, published almost a century later, had an incomparably greater social resonance in China than Gogol’s story in Russia. The “hatred” that made Lu Xun’s story sharp is similar to what we find in literatures of the oppressed nations. I argue that it is “resistant nationalism” that made Lu Xun’s story an icon of its time. Following the form of Gogol’s story, Lu Xun combined it with the narrative of the oppressed, making his story a powerful tool to “dissect” and “cure” the Chinese society.

Both stories employ the trope of protagonist’s madness to portray the “madness” of the worlds they live in. However, these worlds are completely different in their nature. In Gogol’s story nobody is sane: the protagonist notices that the world is wrong, but he has no attempt to change it, or cure the others. Gogol’s madman is a part of the general madness, and instead of changing it, he tries to find his place in such a world, suddenly “realizing” that he is the King of Spain. Embracing all “evils” of a mad society, which is the power of money and social status, both accompanied by general indifference of people, the protagonist “realizes” that he has a royal status, too. Unable to really attain his new royal position, Gogol’s madman is perplexed, finishing his diary in delirium: “And do you know that the Bey of Algiers has a wart under his nose?” (Gogol 32).

Although Gogol’s story was well-received by contemporary critics, who praised its wittiness and humor and its unique way to deride state’s bureaucracy and general

indifference of the society, it did not really stand out among Gogol's other works. Including the story into *Arabesques* collection, most of which was published in Uvarov's *Journal of the Ministry of National Education,* Gogol used the trope of madness to criticize the system which he identified himself with in a light satirical way. Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" has no notion of "other". His "Diary" is rather a humorous way to point out at the problems of the time, to be more specific: "our problems" of "our system". In other words, Gogol's story is a manifestation of official nationalism: a story about "*our*" empire that "*we*" live in.

In contrast with Gogol's story, Lu Xun's madman is one of the few "sane" people left in the society who have not yet been "infected" by cannibalistic traditions. The protagonist sees the evils of traditions, and not only opposes it himself, but also tries to save the others. He is a lonely fighter who tries to eradicate the evils from an existing system to give hope for the future generations. Similar to Shevchenko's "Testament", where the poet appeals: "Make my grave there - and arise, / Sundering your chains, /Bless your freedom with the blood / Of foemen's evil veins!", Lu Xun's madman appeals to the few sane people left in the society:

> "You can change! In your hearts! Soon there will be no place for cannibals in this world of ours. And if you don't change, you will be eaten. However many children you have, you will all be destroyed, like reptiles – by real humans, just as hunter kills a wolf!" (Lu Xun 30)

The more the protagonist writes, the more he realizes that the catastrophe is inevitable. Trying to save the future, he ends his diary with the words: "Save the children…" (Lu Xun 31).

Unlike Gogol's story, Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" is a testament for "the sane" to save themselves from the cannibalistic "other". Lu Xun's madman is not a part of the

world he sees, and he fights it back, trying to save the future. Lu Xun's "Diary" is a manifestation of the "resistant nationalism": there are few of *us* left but *we* can, must and will fight back to "save the children".

Using an idea, form and tropes of Gogol's "Diary of a Madman", Lu Xun filled it with the opposite form of nationalism: nationalism of resistance. Appealing to his readers to resist and fight back for the hope of the future, Lu Xun's story became both "a testament" and "a memorial" of the May Fourth period. Similar to the literature of the oppressed published in the *Short Story Journal*, Lu Xun's story became an iconic work, "a literary monument" and a symbol of the new nation. Similar to how Shevchenko's "Testament" constitutes a national idea of Ukraine, Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" defines the national idea of the new society: anti-feudalist and iconoclastic. However, as the "new society" was essentially the old empire in need for revival, the use of the resistant nationalism to revive a declining empire became an unique case of a mixed form of both, usually mutually exclusive, forms of nationalism.

CHAPTER III

MAO DUN AND A NEW WOMAN OF THE EAST

In 1908 a new collection of poems by an already well-known female writer Lesya Ukrainka was published for Ukrainian readers. At the moment of the release the poet herself was spending time abroad in the vain search for health and strength to fight tuberculosis which had struck her down at a young age, and which turned her rather short life into a “Thirty Years’ War”, as Lesya herself described her lifelong fight for health. The illness isolated a nine-year-old child from most of the normal activity kids of the same age would do; however, it also compelled her to live in the world of books, which replaced most of the real world for her. Daughter to the writer Olena Kosacheva and niece to a famous Ukrainian scholar and professor of Kiev University Mykhailo Drahomanov, twelve-year-old Lesya sent her very first collections of poems for publication under pseudonym of Lesya Ukrainka, “Lesya the Ukrainian”, taking after her famous uncle, who also used the pseudonym “The Ukrainian” to publish his essays. From that year on, Lesya published her lyrical and dramatic poems, while also trying to fight her disease, and therefore, producing each of the poems as the last one, and making many of them a final testament. Living in the peak period of the Russification campaign, which resulted in absolute prohibition of books in “Little Russian” (Ukrainian language) within the territory of the Russian Empire, Lesya Ukrainka still created poems in the forbidden language, making them a call to struggle, sacrifice and love for country. Being broadly educated, the poet took inspiration from “the ancient world, from the Bible, from the sufferings of the Jewish prisoners after the fall of Jerusalem and during the Babylonian Captivity, from the efforts of the early Christians to maintain themselves against the

power of pagan Rome, from the struggles of the Scotch under Robert Bruce to free themselves from the power of the English King" (Manning 14). The biblical stories about sufferings of the Jewish people became the basis for a number of poems, where they turned into a grand allegory of an enslaved nation to portray national oppression in Ukraine. The collection published in 1908 included one of them, "Babylonian Captivity". "It was a clear statement that Ukrainians as people, as a European people, had the right to draw upon the total literary inheritance of the continent and of the ages" (Manning 14). Five years later, in 1913, Lesya Ukrainka died at the age of forty-two, which was only a few years before an independent Ukrainian National Republic was created in 1918 (although for rather short period, already collapsing in 1920).

In 1921 in the *Short Story Journal* in Shanghai, Mao Dun published his Chinese translation of Lesya Ukrainka's "Babylonian Captivity" among other articles and translations of literature of the oppressed nations. As Mao Dun did not have Russian or Ukrainian in his arsenal of foreign languages, he made the translation from English, using a collection *Five Russian Plays with One from the Ukrainian* published by British writer Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts in 1916. Considering a large interest of Mao Dun in problems of nationalism, feminism and modernization, as well as a popular image of an Eastern European woman circulating in Chinese culture at the time, Mao Dun's translation opens a new perspective on the development of an idea of a New Woman as a tool for modernization in China.

The Babylonian Captivity of Ukraine

The dramatic poem "Babylonian Captivity" was written in 1903 and later published in 1908, together with the following poem on the biblical theme "On the Ruins" (1904). The poem opens with the setting of bloody-red sunset in the Jewish settlement of Babylon:

> A wide plain lying at the confluence of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates in Babylonia. The crimson of the setting sun turns the waters into the semblance of blood. Scattered all over the plain are tents of the captive Hebrews. (Lesya Ukrainka 92)

In the settlement of people whose life is filled with misery emerges an argument between Jewish and Samaritan prophets on national and religious supremacy in their settlement. The prophets are soon interrupted by a young prophet-singer Elazar, who has just come back from Babylon. The prophets immediately finish their argument, teaming up against the young singer to accuse him of national and religious treason. In turn, Elazar reproaches the prophets for bringing discord into the settlement and forgetting about the common goal of liberation, which becomes the central monologue of the poem. The poem ends with Elazar's words: "Still Israel lives, although in Babylon!"

A common opinion among Ukrainian literature scholars is that "Babylonian Captivity" does not belong to Lesya Ukrainka's masterpieces due to its aesthetic primitivism. As a dramatic poem, it is considered too plain and static, lacking action and storyline details. Nevertheless, it is usually regarded as one of the works with the strongest appeal for national liberation. Despite quite a straightforward allegory of the Jewish captivity and its parallelism with the state of cultural oppression in Ukraine, the poem was not much understood or well-received upon publication. Instead, it provoked criticism about the choice of a "foreign" and "unrelated" Jewish theme. This compelled

the poet to create the following poem “On the Ruins”, which was similar in its overall theme but appeared in more familiar allegories (“the Ruin” is a term in Ukrainian history for the period of political turmoil in the seventeenth century) and a less critical manner.

In his translation of the poem, Mao Dun included Roberts’ introduction of the Ukrainian poet as a foreword:

> A word or two may be said of Laríssa Petróvna Kossátch (1872-1913), whose pseudonym is “Lésya Ukráinka”—“Lesya of the Ukraine.” The same influence that is visible in Chéhov and ripe in Evréinov has been felt also in the newly revived Ukrainian, or Little Russian, literature. Lésya Ukráinka gave it a depth and wealth of vocabulary it sadly needed and, by introducing the European, has countered the decadent spirit of the ultranational Ukrainians. *The Babylonian Captivity*, translated as an epilogue to this volume, represents the enslavement of the Ukraine by its powerful neighbours; but its style is a victory. (Roberts 1)

The problem of enslavement by a strong neighbor as well as ultranationalism resonated much in China of the 1920’s, which was torn apart politically, and externally threatened by Japan. The problem of the Jewish nationalism was also reflected in the journal together with other literatures of Eastern Europe. Naturally, a literary work that combined all these important issues drew the attention of Mao Dun.

The themes of the Jewish enslavement and national oppression were circulating in Europe at the very end of the nineteenth century due to publications and political activity of Theodor Herzl, who was a founder of modern political Zionism and is known today as the father of the State of Israel. In 1896 Herzl published his work *Der Judenstaat (The State of Jews)*, which immediately spread among Jewish communities throughout Europe, evoking both acclaim and controversy. The book argued that the Jewish people had nationality, and had to create their own nation-state, as the only place where they would be able to practice religion and develop culture without facing anti-Semitism. At the turn

of the centuries the book received much international attention, and provoked other oppressed nations for debates about their national ideas (Alverini 4).

In Ukraine, which constituted a significant part of the Pale of Settlement, a special borderland region where the Jews were allowed to live in the Russian Empire, Herzl's ideas were naturally received with interest, too. As Asher Wilcher writes, Lesya Ukrainka's contemporary, a famous Ukrainian poet and political activist Ivan Franko, was enthusiastic about Herzl's ideas, meeting him in Vienna in 1893, and commenting on Herzl's book in his publications in the following years (Wilcher 1). The idea of a revival of a nation and construction of an independent nation-state to a large extent went parallel for Jewish and Ukrainian, and later Chinese peoples.

The New Woman of Modern China

As it was discussed in previous chapters, the problem of nation-building and national awakening was a major problem for China at the turn of the century, too. "In China as in other nations-states developing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the two categories of women and literature were important sites for the construction of the modern nation" (Larson 7). The women category constituted a concept of women's liberation through education, break with the traditional notion of "a virtuous woman", and active engagement into a social and political life. For early modern intellectuals, the status of women was perceived as a symbol of China's backwardness and lack of power and prestige. For this reason, late-Qing intellectuals "proposed a national self-strengthening scheme that promoted Chinese women's modern education for the sake of national prosperity" (Feng 18). As Wendy Larson mentions in her book, in

1896-97 Liang Qichao “produced a strong argument for women’s education, claiming it would allow women to take part in productive labor and thus avoid oppression, expand their vision and make them qualified to work in the professions … and thus benefit the entire nation”, and in 1898 Kang Youwei “decried Chinese social practices as inherently unequal and argued that discrimination against women must be eliminated before a utopian society could be realized” (Larson 27).

Literature, similar to other spheres, was considered a field that needed to include more women. Although women writers did exist in premodern China, they remained subjects to a common belief that literary talent was to be developed by men, and “the mere participation of women as writers did not create a niche for them” (Larson 4). Moreover, a popular maxim that a “woman’s lack of talent is her virtue” (女子无才便是德) discouraged women even from “mere participation”. In order to erase an old belief that literature is incompatible with women’s virtue, progressive activists started publication of women’s magazines and newspapers.

As Hu Ying argues, the period between 1898 and 1911 was the most prosperous in terms of publication of journals by Chinese students in Japan, which served as “intermediate space between the West and China” (Hu 109). Most of these journals followed a strong feminist agenda, publishing translations, essays and biographies of famous women from abroad. It was also in one of these journals where a Russian anarchist Sofia Perovskaia was first introduced, later to become one of the most iconic women figures from aboard, whom I am also going to discuss it in more details later in this chapter.

The tradition of publishing feminist journals continued during the New Culture Movement. As Jin Feng mentions, from 1910s to 1930s multiple journals were started in major cities in China, such as *Lady's Journal* (妇女杂志, 1915), *New Women* (新妇女, 1920), *Women's Newspaper* (女报, 1909), *Women's Time* (妇女时报, 1911), *Women's World* (女子世界, 1914) etc. According to Jin Feng, these publications culminated in a two-volume, ten-section book entitled *Anthology of Discussions on the Chinese Woman Question* (中国妇女问题讨论集), which was published in 1924, and reprinted twice within the following decade (Feng 28).

As Wendy Larson argues, "the literary field and the modern woman became the site of a debate that revolved around inclusion of women writers, feminine styles, and female topics in an arena that was becoming globally significant in the sense that it involved positioning China in a worldwide power hierarchy" (Larson 43). The "women question" comprised the question of social progressiveness, modernization and overall national identity, and therefore, was much addressed by most of the leading intellectuals of the New Culture Movement.

In 1920 Zhou Zuoren, who together with his brother Lu Xun was in the vanguard of the May Fourth movement, gave a speech "Women and Literature" to the Student Council at Beijing Normal College. In his address Zhou argued that women should step away from inherited negative attitudes of the past and live life of self-awareness:

> A woman of self-awareness should adopt this attitude, resolutely affirm life in human society, get rid of the inherited prejudices against women, and participate in activities of life as a member of humankind in order to establish the so-called third motherland founded on the love of oneself and of other human beings. Once we understand this, we will not have any problem understanding the spirit of modern literature, for literature is a form of life and part of life." (Zhou 231)

In his speech Zhou Zuoren insisted on the active role of women in all spheres of life, including literature production. Recognizing that women voices that truly speak about womanhood in the society are largely unheard, he proposed:

> From now on, women should take advantage of artistic freedom to express their true feelings and thoughts and to dispel the age-old misunderstandings and confusion about women. But the possibility is limited to the few women who have a talent for writing. (Zhou 231)

Despite significant progress in promoting feminist ideas through numerous publications and public discussions, the feminist revolution could not happen immediately. Although an abundance of platforms that addressed "the women question" had been created, the editorial staff and contributors of almost all of the journals were still men. What is more important, it was also men who formed the journals' editorial vision of Chinese women, which in turn influenced the readers' understanding of Chinese women and modernization, as Jin Feng rightly observes (Feng 28). It becomes a vivid illustration of the fact that despite tremendous efforts, the problem remained in its two-sided nature: the number and scope of control of male literati by far surpassed female agency, and a female initiative was not strong enough to change it.

Such gender misbalance led to what Hillary Chung describes as a phenomenon of "appropriation of female roles" by male writers. Promoting awareness of the "women problem" and decrying the old corrupting traditions, male intellectuals gradually "moved" to the women's side, recognizing themselves "just as much victims of such abhorrent practices as were their female comrades". As Hilary Chung writes: "from this easy assumption of advocacy, it was no difficult leap for May Fourth male intellectuals not only to identify with the new woman's quest for identity and meaning but also

appropriate it" (Chung 5). As I am going to demonstrate in this chapter, Mao Dun was one of the leading feminist writers of the New Culture Movement who "appropriated" female identity in his works, speaking on behalf of women.

Considering the phenomenon of gender appropriation, Mao Dun's translation of Lesya Ukrainka's poem published in 1921 becomes an interesting case of not only gender, but also a nationalist appropriation through translation. As two projects of nation-building and modernization went hand-in-hand in China of 1920's, a female writer whose very pseudonym spoke her national identity naturally evoked much interest in a writer who was actively engaged in a quest for national idea, and was interested in feminist resistance. Lesya Ukrainka's employment of Jewish nationalism to portray Ukrainian national crisis became appropriated in both nationalist and gender dimensions through its Chinese translation. Moreover, the idea of an Eastern European female revolutionary woman echoed with the popular cultural icon of "an Eastern European heroine", which I am going to discuss next. However, similar to translations of Shevchenko's poems published in the same journal, Lesya Ukrainka's poem promoted resistant nationalism, much needed in China at the time.

A Cultural Icon of an Eastern European Woman

An interest in revolutionary women sparked among Chinese intellectuals even before the May Fourth period. As it was mentioned earlier, late-Qing student-run journals published in Japan introduced famous Western women through their biographies, portraits and essays. One of the most popular figures that was "imported from abroad" was Sofia Perovskaia, a Russian revolutionary anarchist, notorious for the assassination

of Tsar Alexander II. As Hu Ying writes, the first biography of Sofia Perovskaia was published in *Zhengjiang Tide* (浙江潮), a monthly periodical run by radical students of strong anti-Manchu agenda, on September 12, 1903. The biography was received with much interest among the journal's readers, which led to further numerous publications of fictionalized versions of the story in newspapers, which were often accompanied by portraits of Sofia or drawings of assassination scenes.

Multiple publications of the biography culminated in a novel *The Woman Hero of Eastern Europe* (东欧女豪杰), which told a story of a female protagonist Hua Mingqing, who became involved into a Russian anarchist movement in Europe. The first five chapters of the novel were published between November 1902 and June 1903 in the *New Fiction* journal (新小说), launched by Liang Qichao in Japan. Since 1904, the figure also started appearing in chapters of Zeng Pu's novel *Flower in a Sea of Retribution* (孽海花), where Sofia Perovskaia turned into a fictional character of Russian background Sarah Aizenson.

As Hu Ying explains, "Chinese intellectuals' intense interest in anarchism around the turn of the century had much to do with the perceived similarities between Russia and China, in terms of their vast territory and the ambiguity and strength of their monarchical institutions" (108). "An imported cultural icon" of Sofia Perovskaia epitomized Russian revolutionary spirit, anti-monarchism and modernity, all in a strong female persona. Transforming from a historical figure from abroad into a transnational legend, the image of Sofia embraced the spirit of the time: against the Manchu government, away from old corrupting traditions and towards a new modern life of a liberated woman. As Hu Ying mentions, a famous Chinese female revolutionary Qiu Jin recognized Sofia as one of the

models for emulation in her lyrical narrative *Jingwei shi* (Hu 107). The legend of Sofia Perovskaia soon transformed into a cultural symbol of a new woman, moving away from an anarchist ideology and turning into an image of a modern woman Su Feiya, who is struggling with the evolving social role of women. The image of Sofia was later reflected in a famous story of the New Culture Movement "Miss Sofia's Diary" written by Ding Ling in 1927, after which the image of Sofia became deeply entrenched into Chinese culture.

At the moment of translation of Lesya Ukrainka's poem in 1921, a concept of an Eastern European female nationalist much corresponded with the evolving legend of Sofia, and therefore, an Eastern European female poet writing on behalf of a nation was a perfect combination of a female revolutionary with a poet of resistant nationalism. As the "women question" was at the center of most debates among intellectuals, the figure of Lesya Ukrainka, introduced by Mao Dun, was a sort of visualization of the socio-political goal: to have a national female writer, who would be a voice of female and national resistance. Oddly enough, this position was eventually taken by the translator himself, when Mao Dun, appropriating this role, became a feminist voice of the new China.

Mao Dun and A New Woman

Mao Dun was one of the leading intellectuals who addressed the problem of a new woman. Being in the vanguard of the New Culture Movement, Mao Dun started his career as an editor, literary theorist, and translator, later continuing as a fiction writer in late 1920s. In his literary development, Mao Dun put large emphasis on realism, and similar to other writers of the time, was taking inspiration from foreign literature, naming

Emile Zola and Leo Tolstoy his major masters. David Wang provides the writer's quote on the two European writers:

> Zola explored human conditions because he wanted to be a novelist, while Tolstoy started to write novels only after experiencing the vicissitudes of life. Despite the two masters' different starting points, their works shocked the world equally. Zola's attitude toward life can be summarized as cool detachment, which is in sharp contrast to Tolstoy's warm embrace of it; but the works of both are criticisms of and reflections of reality. I like Zola, but I am also fond of Tolstoy. At one time I enthusiastically propagandized for naturalism. Yet when I tried to write novels, it was Tolstoy I came closer to. (quoted in Wang 70)

Although at first Mao Dun was interested in Tolstoy due to both philosophical and aesthetical values of his works, he soon switched to Marxism as his main ideological belief, leaving the rather pacifist ideas of Tolstoy behind. Nevertheless, as Mikhailova notes, the influence of Tolstoy manifests in Mao Dun's efforts to follow a large-scale novel form, address deep social issues and create protagonists of complicated personalities (Mikhailova 4). As Hillary Chung observes, Mao Dun eventually developed his own unique literary style which was made of three prominent intertwining elements: his realist literary theory, his revolutionary commitment, and his stance towards women's issues (Chung 1).

As a writer, Mao Dun is known for focusing on young women as main protagonists. As Hillary Chung describes them in her book, "they are usually, but not exclusively, of middle class backgrounds, and the waxing and waning of their emotions and political allegiances comprise much of the substance of these works" (Chung 9). In his autobiography published in 1980's, Mao Dun explained his tendency to write about women:

> There is a reason for this. Around the time of the May Thirtieth Movement Dezhi (his wife) was involved with the women's movement, the main targets

> of her work were female students, teachers in primary and secondary schools, wives and daughters from enlightened families and other petty bourgeois intellectuals. They often came to our house and I gradually came to know them and to understand something of their nature. During the great revolution in Wuhan I also came across a good number of this type of woman. They shared characteristics common to the intellectual class but differed in nature and personality ... and they became material for my writing. (quoted in Chung 9)

Despite a rather innocent explanation that the author gave himself, scholars usually point out that Mao Dun's obsession with women is deeply rooted in his relationship with his mother, to whom he remained very close throughout his life. His father died when he was nine, and the lack of male influence in his life is also generally referred as the reason for a lack of positive male characters in his novels, as Hillary Chung suggests (Chung 9). Regardless of what could be the true reasons behind the author's choice to write about women, their description in Mao Dun's novels attract many scholars' attention, provoking most different interpretations. What scholars usually find most problematic is the writer's focus on protagonists' near-hysterical emotions and sexualized depiction of their bodies, which logically should be avoided in feminist literature of socio-political purpose. As Roy Chan notes, Mao Dun's employs clichés of emotionality and sensitivity along with detailed body descriptions, which reveal the author's chauvinistic attitude. Referring to Rey Chow's work, Chan writes: "While emphasizing women's inner psychic life, he also indulges in detailed and perhaps lurid descriptions of women's bodies, a kind of sexual objectification that threatens to delimit the power of these women's inner mental lives" (Chan, *The Edge of Knowing* 90). While different scholars propose different explanations, Chan suggests that such descriptions of female bodies should be read as allegories of "the chaotic tumult of the historical moment" and "of his own narrative: seductive, passionate, and volatile" (Chan, *The Edge of Knowing* 90).

Elaborating from this idea, I propose to interpret Mao Dun's novels through the lens of gender appropriation, which opens a new perspective on the author's narrating style.

In his novel *Rainbow*, which was one of the first novels of the new Chinese literature in general, Mao Dun presents a story of a young revolutionary woman Mei, whose life comprises the "woman question" debate through tough choices in situations with an arranged marriage, working, being socially and politically active, and engaging in the revolution. Throughout the novel, the protagonist's body attracts much attention from men she encounters, which makes her learn her way to be a revolutionary woman in a sexually charged society where her body largely defines her fate. Describing scenes in which men inscribe meaning to the protagonist's body, the writer incorporates very detailed descriptions of the protagonist's breasts. In her book Rey Chow provides a few examples of such descriptions:

> Ms. Mei's face was now radiating with a beautiful red light. And the curves of her breasts were trembling so nicely…
> She felt that her body was hot all over. Unbuttoning her clothes in front and enjoying the moonlight's caresses, she suddenly noticed that her breasts seemed to have grown bigger than before; they were lying full and tight inside her foreign-cloth blouse.
> The drizzles suddenly turned into a heavy pour. As Ms. Mei reached No. 240, her dress, long soaked through and tightly sticking to her body, was outlining her highly-rising breasts. (quoted in Chow 106)

As Rey Chow explains, on one hand, such detailed descriptions seemingly fit into Mao Dun's "objective narrative modernity", where detailed bodily descriptions become "demystified" and lose their embarrassing or forbidden meaning. However, Chow continues, with the descriptions provided, it is difficult to agree that the descriptions were intentionally made objective and desexualized. Instead, they imply the writer's obsession with female bodies, which establishes a gap in the narrative language, reversing a woman

from “a reflexive mind” back to a traditional fetishized and objectified sexual body (Chow 107). The bodily descriptions, many scholars agree, betray the author’s determination for objective narration, working against it as a manifestation of sexual oppression within the very narration. As Chung describes it, “as much as he seeks to inscribe new meanings onto the modern woman, in response to his own quests, beliefs, and crises, the sexual nature of metaphor disrupts and threatens his male-centered discourse” (Chung 7).

Although the body descriptions turn out problematic for the feminist narration as the main agenda of the era, interpreting it through the lens of not sexual but mimetic desire for his female characters might give another insight to the problem. By mimetic desire I understand the appropriation of female roles, through which the author solves the crisis of self as well as adopts a female role to promote the idea of feminist resistance. As many scholars generally agree, women characters are the Mao Dun’s “contradictory” approach to realism, as his very pen name indicates. As Rey Chow suggests, Mao Dun “perceptively identifies women’s lives as the place where the most intense ideological issues can be dramatized” (Chow 104). According to her, the spectrum of his female characters throughout his works represents different social “roles” of the new era. At the same time, female characters become a space for the author to solve the crisis of the self, and his narrations reveal the writer’s “contradiction” between the two goals.

As was mentioned earlier, “the women question” was an important part of the modernization agenda, and most May Fourth intellectuals addressed it in their works. The beginning of the May Fourth period is also characterized by efforts of resolving the crisis of the self, and as Jin Feng suggest, women served as agents of “othering” in a larger

process of social and political transformations. According to the scholar, at the moment of general search for identity a female Other was important for the formation of male subjectivity. In this process, "a new woman" encapsulated the self-other relationship between male intellectuals and their female Other. Mao Dun also largely employed this practice in this early works. Jin Feng provides a detailed explanation of his early writings:

> In all his fiction written in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he self-consciously represented strong-willed and over-sexualized women revolutionaries who often overwhelm their male counterpart, weaker modern male intellectuals, in their joint search for meanings in the chaotic Chinese revolution … After all, he was apparently writing about female "others" with objective modes of narration. More importantly, it was precisely through the exposure of male weakness by comparing him to the woman revolutionary that the author displayed his own mastery of personal despair and his ability to move beyond pessimism in search of painful yet liberating historical truth. (Feng 105)

Resolving the crisis of self, Mao Dun creates "avatars" of his female representations in his novels. Voicing the emotions of women, the writer attempts to solve his own hysteria, and the hysteria of the times.

The idea of appropriation sheds lights on unclear boundaries between the narrator and female protagonists, which recur throughout Mao Dun's novels. In his book Roy Chan provides an example of such blurred boundaries in the novel "Midnight", which is presented through the method of free indirect discourse:

> Mrs. Wu was startled into a panic. "Reality" and "dream" within an instant flowed into each other, and she almost could not believe her eyes. (quoted in Chan 97)

As Chan points out, it becomes unclear who out of the two, the narrator and the heroine, is trying to decide what is dream and reality. Using Chung's concept of appropriation, it becomes clear that through the blurred boundaries the writer "appropriates" the protagonist's thoughts, partially identifying himself with her. By doing this, the author

does not seek to express his sexual obsession with his female protagonist. Instead, he is employing his mimetic desire to “step into her shoes” and “appropriate” her crisis of identity.

Mao Dun’s “contradictory approach” to realism and to depiction of the “women question” sheds light on the construction of the national identity in China in 1920’s. Although the feminist theme was widely promoted during the New Culture Movement, the period did not have its single female literary “icon”, which appeared only in 1930’s in the figure of Ding Ling. At the early stage of the New Culture Movement, this gap was filled my male writers, who appropriated the female role to promote the idea of revolutionary struggle and resistance. Mao Dun’s translations of Lesya Ukrainka published in 1921 represent a sort of a literary goal of the time: to create a writer who would speak on behalf of women and the nation. A few years later, nevertheless, this position was taken by the translator himself, who became a new feminist voice of China. Similar to Lu Xun, Mao Dun used an eclectic approach in developing his literary style, combining different literary and nationalist forms to create new literature of national feminist resistance.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: ESTABLISHING A NEW NATIONAL IDENTITY

As Hobsbawm rightly observes, the years between 1918 and 1950 were the world's "apogee of nationalism", and it was exactly during this peak period, when China was "rethinking" and "rebranding" itself, seeking to create a new successful national idea that would become a remedy in the process of overall decay and corruption (Hobsbawm 5). Placing their stake on social transformations through culture and literature, intellectuals of the New Culture Movement were actively seeking for successful models of national unification in foreign literature. As leading writers of the period Lu Xun and Mao Dun later admitted, Russian literature became "a moral guide" and "a teacher" in the process of development of a new post-revolutionary Chinese culture, and played one of the leading roles in the establishment of the new Chinese literature. In the quest for national identity and modernization, Russia became a perfect "bridge" to Western modernity, and played a role of a harbinger of a successful non-Western revolutionary society. Although it has been widely accepted that Russian literature played one of the leading roles in development of the new Chinese literature and was "a better fit" in comparison with Western European literatures, a closer examination of both literatures reveal a striking difference in forms of nationalism that both literatures propagated. While Russian literature was undoubtedly the most esteemed out of all foreign literatures, it still could not provide a successful national idea that would create a spirit of resistance within the society. Searching for strong models of national resistance, May Fourth intellectuals turned to Eastern European literatures of oppressed nations, whose national literature constituted a powerful appeal for unification, resistance and rise. The issue of

the *Short Story Journal* devoted to “Literatures of the Damaged Nations”, which was published in 1921, exemplifies the quest of the May Fourth intellectuals for resistant nationalism of the time. As this thesis demonstrates, in the process of “rebranding” itself during the May Fourth period, China developed a unique form of nationalism, which included two often mutually exclusive forms, official and resistant nationalisms, and this unique combination of forms also manifested itself in the literature of the period.

As Benedict Anderson famously argues in his book, any nation to a very large extent is “an imagined community”. Any national idea seeks to become an answer to the “who we are”, and what is even more important, the “who we are not” questions. As Anderson suggests, “print capitalism” in the form of press and literature plays one of the major roles in defining the boundaries of any “imagined community”, uniting the most diverse and spatially distant individuals under a common umbrella of clear understanding of what they have in common. National literature plays a crucial role in defining what a nation is made of, what it needs and where it is going. These answers become major signposts on the imaginary map of a nation, showing “a way in” for those who share these ideas, and insisting on “a way out” for those who do not. At the moment of a social or political crisis, these answers create “a shield” against the “others”, encouraging everyone “inside” to unite and rise to protect their “imaginary community”. However, if the social crisis eliminates these “signposts”, leaving the community without clear understanding of its boundaries, the only way to protect such community from crumbling is to “re-establish” the signposts, “redefining” the borders. The movement of 1920’s in China was the case of re-establishing new national ideas in order to protect old boundaries of the society.

According to Anderson, nationalism has two forms: resistant, when a certain community "builds a shield" of nationalism to resist an imperial oppression, and official, which defines the community boundaries in a way that brings all diverse cultural groups under an umbrella of "a single imperial unity". The crisis of a Chinese empire at the beginning of the twentieth century under oppression of foreign forces created a unique case of employment of both forms of nationalism to keep the old boundaries of the Central Kingdom and at the same time create the spirit of resistance to fight back the foreign forces.

The most iconic literary piece of the period, Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" exemplifies such combination of forms of nationalism. Taking inspiration in Gogol's "Madman's Diary", a work of Russian official nationalism, Lu Xun followed Gogol's aesthetic form and the trope of madness, but significantly transformed the message of the story, making it an anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist testament. Similar testaments constituted major "signposts" in the national literatures of oppressed nations, where they turned into literary monuments, demarking the boundaries of national ideas and unifying nations within. Comparing Lu Xun's story to Shevchenko's "Testament" it becomes evident that both share the same function of "signposting" national boundaries and providing answers to the "who we are" questions. Both works are aimed at creating a strong spirit of resistance and national unification. However, in case of China, the national boundaries were defined by its official imperial borders. Nevertheless, the resistant type of nationalism was employed to achieve the goal of official unification.

China's quest for national identity was accompanied by a parallel quest for modernization. A significant part of the modernization agenda was devoted to the

"women's question", which also became largely reflected in the literature of the period. Being generally considered a historical model for all spheres of development, Russia "exported" a cultural icon of a strong revolutionary woman Sofia Perovskaia to exemplify an idea of "the new woman". Despite the tremendous revolutionary and anarchist spirit that the image of Sofia contained, which later had its influence on the most prominent Chinese revolutionary heroine Qiu Jin, it did not become another "signpost" of the new "imaginary" nation. This gap was later filled by a male writer Mao Dun, who attempted to demark the new national boundaries through the prism of the "women question". Similar to other writers of the time, Mao Dun recognized an exceptional significance of the Russian literature for the period, personally admiring the novels by Leo Tolstoy. However, similar to Lu Xun and his relationship to Gogol, Mao Dun merely followed Tolstoy's large-scale novel forms with deep social questions addressed, making his own novels revolutionary female testaments, instead. In his novels Mao Dun promotes women's resistance to the old corrupting traditions, equating it to the larger national resistance. In his literary ambitions, Mao Dun was attempting to become a feminist voice of the new Chinese literature, similar to what Lesya Ukrainka represented for Ukraine. Same as Lu Xun, Mao Dun combined different nationalist and literary forms to create a unique version of national feminist resistance.

Despite the unquestionable influence of the Russian literature on the new Chinese literature, a closer examination reveals significant differences between goals and functions of the two. The translations of the literature of Little Russia, presented in the *Short Story Journal* in 1921, unveil a new dimension in the Chinese-Russian literary discourse of the time. Despite a popular speculation about the questionable status and

value of Ukrainian literature as a part of a greater Eastern European literary heritage, it provided a more successful example of revolutionary resistance in comparison with the Russian literature.

The interest in Eastern European literature also opens up a new perspective on the Asian-European cultural connections of the period. While China was compelled to catch up with the Western European modernity, it viewed Eastern European culture as a "closer" and "more comparable" option than the one of the West. Challenged by a new status of the world's "East" ("东亚") instead of the traditional notion of being "the center" ("中国"), Chinese intellectuals turned to the European "East" ("东欧") to find more applicable models of development. However, even within the European "East" the preference was given to smaller oppressed nations that produced the national ideas of resistance. Challenged by a deep social and political crisis, the Chinese intellectuals switched for strikingly different forms of identity in their quest for a new national idea. A mixed form of nationalism employed in the new Chinese literature suggests a similar mix in the national identity of the time: having lost its imperial status, and being challenged by the foreign colonization, Chinese intellectuals adopted a new identity of a weak oppressed nation only to revive the nation and return to the original official identity later.

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