PARIS BY WAY OF THE MOON: TRANSLATIONS OF FRENCH

POPULAR FICTION IN LATE-QING CHINA (1899-1912)

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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During the final years of the Qing dynasty, works from outside of China were finding greater and greater popularity among Chinese readers, due in large part to the fact that translators altered them significantly. I confront the tendency of scholars who see these translations as either a betrayal of their source material or target readership by elevating the importance of the reader and source culture. By doing so, we see not only how the idea of fidelity in translation should work both to and from the translator, but also how source cultures were each translated differently. I focus on French works so as to demonstrate how French cultural authority in the 19th and early 20th centuries was preserved, but put into dialogue with traditional Chinese literary forms so as to both challenge and accommodate the Chinese reader simultaneously.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1902, the great Chinese writer Lu Xun published two of his first works: translations of the Jules Verne novels *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The former included, among its many dramatic changes, the conscious decision to eliminate half of the story as he received it from the Japanese translation that served as his source material. The latter was rendered in third rather than first person, and switched the personalities of the novel's two protagonists so that the young scientist Axel is made impetuous and his uncle Dr. Lidenbrock old and wise. A decade later, the Chinese translator and scholar Zeng Pu published his translation of Victor Hugo's novel *Ninety-Three*. Among the many other changes made to the novel was the complete elimination of a full forty-page section detailing a meeting of the National Assembly, the body tasked with completing and executing a constitution for the newly minted French Republic.

These two bookends serve as a relatively good introduction to the translation practices of the era, in which an explosion of interest in non-Chinese literature led to a highly eclectic approach to how those texts were presented to the public. This thesis takes as its point of departure the very simple question of what we are to do, as scholars, about such an approach. Theoretically, the conscious, large-scale alteration of a source text is deeply suspect, both because it appears to present the reader with a text that in no way resembles its predecessor, and because it violates an unstated responsibility to its source to transmit it faithfully. Practically, it can be assumed that any reader thinking they have accessed the "real" source culture was bound to be disappointed.

I will argue, though, that both of these positions depend in large part on a relative inability on the part of translation studies and modern Chinese literary studies to conceive of a more robust relationship between the fundamental pairs of their analyses: the translator and the reader in translation, and the source and target cultures in modern Chinese literature. There is a tendency, in the first case, to suggest the reader is either completely inaccessible as a theoretical concern, or else already predetermined in her reception by the application of power within a global capitalist system. In the second case, the source culture is often portrayed as either purely the invention of the translator, or else determined entirely by the power structures she exercises in the market.

A true appreciation of late Qing translation depends on finding a middle ground. The reader and translator were discovering foreign literature at the same time, and both were aware of the creative intervention of the other. Translators formatted their texts accordingly, drawing off of elements of the domestic publishing market so as to include the reader as much as possible. The source culture, at least in the case of Europe, the United States, and Japan, had already decisively intervened in China's affairs so they were not unknown entities. Many of the most popular translations of the era were predicated on the belief that literature could give readers access to the cultures that produced the texts. What resulted was a combination of what the original novels demanded be known about their cultures, and what Chinese translators believed Chinese readers needed to know in the creation of an aesthetic space wherein the reader could encounter a foreign culture in domestic terms.

In what follows in this introduction I will present a brief overview of the problematic. I will begin with a few of the more interesting attempts to move away from

such fundamental terms as "faithful" and "equivalent" in translation studies. Each such attempt concerns the reader, even if only implicitly, but is wholly unequipped to appreciate the prominent position of the reader in late Qing translation. After this, I will look at a pair of studies in modern Chinese literature on the role of translation the late Qing. Both either over or underdetermine the role of the source culture in translation, and are unable to account for the highly nuanced way late Qing translators approached the countries that produced their texts. I will then suggest how we might chart a middle course, and set both the source culture and reader in a more prominent role, which is key to appreciating translation in the late Qing.

<div align="center">Beyond or Into Equivalence: The Reader and the Goal of Translation</div>

For as long as translation has existed as a practice, there has been reflection—whether by translators themselves or by people reading translations—on how exactly to understand the relationship between a text and its translation. As numerous histories of translation have pointed out, such reflections are usually to the detriment of the translator, whose work is ideal insofar as it is invisible, allowing the reader apparently complete access to the original text. Much of the modern, institutional approach to translation studies has focused on the explanatory power of the terms used to describe this relationship, so that a text is "faithful" or "equivalent" to an "original" or "source" text. As should be clear from what has just been said above, if we judge a translated text's success by how "faithful" or "equivalent" it is to a text which, because it is an original, has greater value than what proceeds it, there is little to defend in the late Qing.

The difficulty is less in the terms themselves than in how they are applied. One of the fascinating aspects of translation studies is that it is next to impossible to eliminate

the basic relationship of one text to another, or one group of readers to another, without also eliminating the subject of translation itself. Even the boldest theoretical strokes eventually return to the grounding concepts of faithfulness or equivalence by a different route. In what follows, I will present three of the most interesting such attempts. I will then argue that they all fall short in their reliance on a theoretical approach to translation whose greatest weakness is an inability to include, in her historical and cultural specificity, the reader in their considerations. When we are able to conceive of a more robust relationship between translator and reader, one whereby the reader is far from a passive recipient of a text but rather an active participant in its creation, then the question of fidelity or equivalence is transformed because it extends both ways. This, in turn, allows us a far more effective lens to study and appreciate translation in the late Qing, whose true value lay in the way translators and readers had to be faithful to each other.

Walter Benjamin, in his "The Task of the Translator", a preface to his translation of some of Baudelaire's poetry, insists that translation cannot be addressed by a consideration of the relationship between writer and reader. There is no ideal reader of a translation, since every reader only comes into existence through the reading of a text. Instead, it is better to speak of translation as bringing something new into existence that transcends the specific linguistic codes of the text. In seeking the right language to express this purpose, Benjamin looks to the natural world: "Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife...The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its

own, and is merely the setting for history, is credited with life."[1] Far from siding with one or another side of the "original" and "translation" divide, Benjamin insists that the underlying quality of a literary work that suggests a desire to share it with others is something shared between it and its translation. It is revealed over time, as the text is shared among successive generations. It is, in other words, brought forth rather than found. For Benjamin, no text is truly great until it is seen to flourish over the course of history. To say simply that a translation is unlike the text that preceded it, or that it lacks some essential quality of the original, is also to say that a text on its own, at the moment of its publication, or even of its composition, is great.

Benjamin goes further, though, and concludes that even a literary text's relationship to its translation is eclipsed by one language's relationship to another. "For in its afterlife," he writes, "the original undergoes a change. Even words with a fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process. The obvious tendency of a writer's literary style may in time wither away...What sounded fresh once may sound hackneyed later...For just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well."[2] In effect, whatever once defined both the original and the translation when they were composed is so changed over time that they no longer exist. What one compares, when studying an original and its translation, is by necessity the development of languages. It is also a means of looking beyond the words on the page to

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[1] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), 71.

[2] Benjamin, *Illuminations,* 73.

the intent behind them. A translation's very existence suggests that there is something in a literary work that requires a larger, more communal experience, and should not be limited to a single edition. "Any translation of a work of art," comments Benjamin, "originating in a specific stage of linguistic history represents...translation into all other languages."[3] By this, Benjamin does not mean that on some mystical plane all works exist universally, but rather that the moment a work is translated, it becomes a part of history, changing in the mode of its appreciation just as a language changes in the way it is used.

Benjamin's gambit is to relocate considerations of faithfulness or equivalence from the words on the page to the realm of language and intention. In effect, a translator must seek to find something equivalent to not merely what the writer said, but what he or she *meant* to say, or even further, the effect he or she meant to have. "The task of the translator," he writes, "consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original."[4] This borders on tautology, of course, since the true effect of the original only adheres in its experience over time, which depends on translation. Furthermore, there are only grounds to judge the success of such an enterprise when, in a distant future, it is possible to do so from the perspective of a "pure" language. Benjamin's is a fascinating gesture because it affirms the basic terms of translation studies while simultaneously extending them to a distant, ideal future.

For Paul Ricoeur, these same terms are only truly useful as a statement of

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[3] Benjamin, *Illuminations,* 75.

[4] Benjamin, *Illuminations,* 76.

impossibility, a point at which the translator must pause, recognize her limitations, and press on anyway. "The dream of the perfect translation," writes Ricoeur in reference to Benjamin's essay, "amounts to the wish that translation would gain, gain without losing."[5] But from its very beginnings, translation has always been a practice that loses something. The translator is a mediator of sorts, and by the very nature of that position is freighted with a desire to bring both parties to a perfect understanding of each other. Yet this is quite literally impossible, since it would mean either transforming one into the other, or else creating a perfect bridge between the two. The latter of which requires what Willard Orman von Quine called a "third text": a fictional entity that serves as a sort of Rosetta stone, allowing both parties in the translation process to see perfectly how the other functions.[6] The acknowledgment of this impossibility requires a moment of mourning wherein the translator recognizes that there is simply no way to fully reconcile the original and the translation, the reader and the writer, or the source culture and the target culture, because the standards used to judge both mutually exclude each other. In Benjamin's text this moment is replaced by an almost eschatological expectation of a future perfect language, but in Ricoeur's it is an eternally-receding horizon. Refusing to mourn the loss of this ideal can only lead to further agonism over the plight of the translator, and dismissal of all texts that do not fit some given value of translatability.

Not only that, but "recaptured universality would try to abolish the memory of the foreign and maybe the love of one's own language, hating the mother tongue's

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[5] Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation*, trans. Eileen Brennan (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

[6] Quine, Willard Orman Von. *Word and Object* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2013), 50.

provincialism."[7] There is no way to perfectly bridge the gap between the participants in translation, and the very positing of the gap as problematic frustrates the ability to love and appreciate the beauty of both positions. The foreign is something to welcome, to cherish, not something to resolve. The familiar is something to cherish as well, accepting that it does not need the foreign to have value. Translation does not fulfill a need or a lack, but rather brings together two parties with a mutual desire to appreciate each other. The term Ricoeur gives this gesture is "linguistic hospitality," where "dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house." Readers of a translation, in this approach, are as aware as the translator of how flawed the practice is, and that the text they encounter is not the same as it is in another language. When they welcome it as such, they acknowledge both the impossibility of a perfect bridge, and a desire to reach out anyway. This, Ricoeur insists, is the greatest lesson from the oft-cited Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, wherein God frustrates humanity's ability to speak together easily. To be sure, mutual unintelligibility would appear to give rise to both a practical need for translation and a nearly God-given prohibition on complete understanding, but the abiding desire to understand and be understood, even partially, survives nevertheless.

For Emily Apter, this desire is far from a benevolent gesture, and what appears to be hospitality is in fact a concealed desire for possession. There is, from this perspective, a fundamental denial of a culture's or language's right to resist incorporation into the global circulation of texts called World Literature. Translation studies as an approach

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[7] Ricoeur, *On Translation,* 9.

appended to the broader field of World Literature tends to approach its subject with a glib

assumption of righteousness, assuming that to translate at all is to share the wealth of the

world's literature with those who wouldn't have experienced it otherwise. To do so, in

turn, must mean the broadening of ideological boundaries, a de-provincializing of

literature and literary theory.

Yet, insists Apter, assuming any kind of seamless connection between the

literatures of the world is to universalize a single, Euro-centric approach with its roots in

"classical genre theory, Renaissance humanism, Hegelian historican consciousness,

Goethean *Weltliteratur*, Diltheyan *Geistesgeschichte* and the Marxist ideal of an

"International of letters."[8] In particular, the tendency to ignore the explanatory power of

the Untranslatable (which I will capitalize, because she does) is symptomatic, since it

asserts that everything should make sense. After all, underpinning the idea of World

Literature is the publishing market that enables it, which suggests in turn that no matter

how "hospitable" another culture is, it is preceded by a desire for possession, for

incorporation into a broader system of capitalist exchange.

This is true not only of exchange between cultures, but also exchange *within*

cultures. "Literary communities are gated...authors *have* texts, publishers *have* a universal

right to translate...and nations *own* literary patrimony as cultural inheritance."[9] The latter

is particularly important because it suggests that a text declared canonical or

representative within a single culture—such as *Dream of Red Chambers (Hong Lou*

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[8] Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013), 23.

[9] Apter, *Against World Literature,* 33.

Meng) in China or *In Search of Lost Time (À la Recherche du Temps Perdu)* in France—
is merely a domestic manifestation of the same problem. To be allowed to not make
sense, to have one's work lie outside the bounds of any literary economy, is, for Apter, a
means of reclaiming a measure of self-determination. The Untranslatable is presented as
a powerful remedy because it points always to those weaknesses in our assumptions of
sense-making across cultures. It creates a zone of necessary confusion, of
inconvertibility, in otherwise monolithic constructions of literary universality. Long-form
studies of the Untranslatable, such as Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables,*
attempt to chart an alternate history of world literature that is based on misunderstanding
and appropriation. Cassin's project, in particular, supplies with each entry in the
dictionary an explanation of the linguistic history of that entry's translation, or rather mis-
translation, with an eye towards enabling the reader to better understand how discourse
across cultures has far more fraught than its participants realize.

Apter's approach puts the stress on the nearly limitless plurality inherent in the
world's literatures, and even in the terms we use to discuss them. Her suggestion is not
that translation should never happen, but that the terms in which it functions should be
scrutinized more rigorously, and the Untranslatable is, for her, an important tool for such
analysis. By taking seriously the limit cases of translation, we as scholars and literati are
afforded the chance to rein in our cultural hubris.

In each case, there is very little room for the late Qing translator's conscious,
large-scale alteration of the source text because of the inability to posit a contributing role
for the reader. Each of the approaches just presented in effect brackets the full range of
responses to the reader in translation studies. Benjamin, for example, tacitly rejects the

reader's participation, insisting that the primary relationship in the process is between the translator and the language systems he or she engages. What is curious is his fascination with a "pure" language and dismissal of any practitioners of that language. A good way to think about it is to say that he does not envision any practitioners at all, but merely a perfect means by which any prospective practitioners might interact. The reader of a translation in Benjamin's essay is, in a peculiar fashion, also an ideal reader: someone who can be understood entirely through her system of communication, and not the varying ways he or she might use that system. It is indeed useless to theorize such a reader, not because it is impossible to do so, but because an ideal reader is static, and therefore can be included in a study as a given. To put it crudely, the reader is brought into being by the translated text, and understanding the latter by necessity leads to the former.

Ricoeur's linguistic hospitality is—depending on what one expects from a tentative theoretical exploration like *On Translation*—either frustratingly vague or bracingly open with regards to the reader. We are told that linguistic hospitality allows the presence of the foreign as such, and Ricoeur stops short of suggesting the possible effects of that experience, either for the reader or the writer. Also left out of consideration is whether or not the reader, too, must mourn the loss of an ideal when encountering the translated text. For Ricoeur, it is the translator's privileged (and fraught) position as a mediator that brings about this need, but it is also the case that the translator's meaningful engagement with the text depends on setting aside the possibility of an ideal. Is this to argue, then, that the reader's appreciation of the foreign is a foregone conclusion, something already accomplished by the translator, or is it a matter of participation that

Ricoeur is unable to analyze? In Ricoeur's "welcoming house," the reader appears to be like the members of the house who attend a dinner already prepared in advance by the domestic servants.

Apter's model is unique in that it has the most potential to be developed into a practical approach to reading, but fails to do so. Her concern is for the way texts are appropriated by the global publishing market, and circulated under the assumption that cultural equivalence is both possible and desirable. In such a presentation, the reader is also a purchaser, an active participant in the market. The reader's individual intentions are not frequently accessible, but the figures that mark her intervention in the market certainly are. Instead, Apter is more concerned, as was Benjamin before her, with re-thinking translation in its theoretical potential rather than its active manifestation. The reader is either a passive victim of capitalist appropriation, or else the overdetermined member of a linguistic group whose very different way of reading a text from its translation is elided.

In each case, the reader is a purely passive entity, yet as Michel de Certeau points out, reading is a powerfully creative process and a subtle form of resistance. De Certeau critiques the idea of passivity in reading: "To read is to wander in the midst of an imposed system...the reader invents other things in the text than what was 'intended.' He detaches them from their origin...He combines fragments and creates with them an undetermined space that organizes their capacity to allow an indefinite plurality of significations."[10] The power of reading, for de Certeau, is also the thing that makes it

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[10] Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien* (*The Practice of Everyday Life*) (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 255.

hard to study definitively, since it is a form of wandering, of going where the writer never intended. Yet it is also this that makes it questionable to suggest, as Apter does, that deleterious effects are guaranteed by mistranslation, or even by accurate translation that assumes a self-righteous position. Put simply, the reader is as involved in the translation as in any other form of writing, and will always make of the text something different. As De Certeau acidly reminds us, "It is important to remember that the reader is not an idiot."[11]

Benjamin, Ricoeur, and Apter all wrote, or are writing, from a tradition wherein readers are both well-stocked with translations, or are themselves polyglots. Thus, their starting point is always the need to re-think what translation means, rather than to think it for the first time, as was the case in the late Qing. De Certeau's notion of wandering is important in understanding how we might better appreciate how translators approached their craft, because it suggests an element of purposeful imprecision. Late Qing translators certainly understood how new their texts were in the Chinese publishing market, and accommodated their readers' wandering by presenting texts that were at once familiar and foreign. They drew freely from China's urban publishing markets, but still preserved enough elements from their source texts to make of those domestic elements something new. That there is no unifying standard across these texts is testament less to the paucity of thought on translation in China than to a faithful relationship to the reader and her need to wander.

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[11] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien,* 255.

<u>A Source is Just a Source: Modern Chinese Literary Studies</u>

<u>and the Question of the Source Culture</u>

Just as the reader is either over- or underdetermined in translation studies, so too the source culture is over or underdetermined in analyses of translation in the field of modern Chinese literature, and for many of the same reasons. Like the reader, the source culture is either inaccessible because its essential characteristics are no more than superficial stereotypes, or of little value because it is only visible through the eyes of the translator. Yet in the late Qing, when foreign cultures loomed large in the everyday life of many Chinese people, particularly in China's coastal cities, identifying and understanding the culture whose written works animated its power was a prime concern. In its earliest stages, this took the form simply of attempting to understand the technical details of European naval and industrial power, but after several ruinous wars, it became clear that more was required.

Yan Fu's 1896 translation of T.H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* is the usual starting point for any study of the impact of translation on the development of modern China. The impetus for the project was China's ruinous defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, which many Chinese intellectuals asserted was due to a lack of critical understanding of Western culture, rather than of Western industry. However, Yan's reliance on proper classical Chinese made his translation far less accessible to the average reader than the text that might be considered truly to have kicked off the translation boom in China: Lin Shu's translation of Alexandre Dumas Fils' *Lady of the Camellias* in 1899. The novel was a surprise success, and went on to become one of the highest-selling works of the early 20th century in China.

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In both cases, there was an overt fascination with providing for the Chinese reader a way to access the cultures that were deeply influencing the course of their country. The same was true of most other translators working in the era. Literature in particular was seen as a window onto the rest of the world. In studies of translation during this period, the emphasis is usually placed on how translators changed their source texts, and how they chose to re-figure their materials so as to reach a wider audience. It is only natural, then, to see the source culture as inconsequential, since even if a novel could be said to present an essential part of the culture from which it comes, in the process of being altered by the translator, that essence is lost. This leads to a flattening effect, so that there are no meaningful differences between English, French, Russian, or other novels in translation. Translation erases their distinguishing features.

It is my contention, though, that even while changing much of their source texts, late Qing translators still relied heavily on what their source materials said about their cultures, and relied equally on what their readers had already experienced of foreign intervention in China. Indeed, ignoring them completely would have meant an inability to reach the audience they craved, since Chinese readers at the time were certainly not without pre-existing ideas about foreign cultures. In what follows, I will look closely at two of the more interesting attempts to understand the Chinese translator's relationship to the world of arts and letters beyond his border. After this, I will suggest how we might find a stronger middle ground between the two approaches, one that allows for us to suggest a real, influential place for the source culture a study of late Qing translation without succumbing to ideas of cultural essentialism.

For Lydia Liu, describing either a source or target culture is of far less importance

than interrogating the power dynamics in which both participated. Liu was one of the first to suggest that the "Euro-centric" terms decried by Emily Apter, above, were themselves produced in novel ways within Chinese culture itself. This is an important intervention because it allows us a way to understand Chinese participation in a global order that has its own characteristics. "I am struck," she writes, "by the irony that, in the very act of criticizing Western domination, one often ends up reifying the power of the dominator to a degree that the agency of non-Western cultures is reduced to a single possibility: resistance."[12] Rather than focus on the degree to which China has been dominated--whether physically or discursively--by the West, Liu focuses on how that domination functioned, and specifically how the terms of domination were conceived of in China. The work of assimilating and adapting discourses from other cultures required far more from Chinese intellectuals and writers than simple resistance, or even simply the desire to emulate what more powerful countries did. Liu gives, as an example, the attempt to establish an equivalence between grounding concepts like "self" and "individual" in the West and *ziwo* and *wo* in China. The latter have ancient roots, and do not map well onto their Western counterparts, yet they have been pressed into service anyway. The creative work required to do so, both in China and outside it, is what most concerns Liu's analysis.

Crucially, when analyzing the power dynamics involved in such "translingual practice," Liu rejects entirely the notion of personal or even national agency in the process of translation. She writes, "The business of translating a culture into another

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[12] Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), xvi.

language has little, if anything, to do with individual free choice or linguistic competence...we must confront forms of institutional practices and the knowledge/power relationships that authorize certain ways of knowing while discouraging others."[13] Understanding the individual decisions made to transmit a text is nearly irrelevant, and Liu's work presents it as such. Of even less consequence is how we might describe the traits of the cultures involved. To be sure, Liu refers directly to discourses within China on Chinese national character and culture, particularly in her chapter on the classic Lu Xun short story "The True Story of Ah Q,"[14] but these are summarily disassembled into their constituent parts. A discussion of the long-standing belief that the story embodies the Chinese national character turns into a discussion about, among other things, the peculiar relationship between reader and writer that the narrative presents, and the way it troubles interpretation. What Lu Xun understood about other cultures, and about Chinese culture, is less important than how his beliefs figured within a larger network of cultural and literary exchange.

It is also important to point out that Liu's understanding of translation is broad enough to include original fiction as well, since for her the works of the May 4th Movement of 1919—the moment often considered the true beginning of modern Chinese literature at least from an aesthetic standpoint—which were inspired directly by European

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[13] Liu, *Translingual Practice,* 3.

[14] "The True Story of Ah Q" tells the story of a village idiot of sorts, a peculiar protagonist with a peculiar name. Ah Q (the English letter is kept even in the Chinese version) is a man of so little consequence, and so little understanding of what goes on around him, that he likes to assert his relationship to the oldest families in his village, despite having being in effect an orphan, and gets manhandled or bullied by everyone from a louse-ridden beggar to a housewife. He badly misreads the political situation of the day, and ends up arrested with other supposed "revolutionaries," a mishap that leads to his death at the end of the story.

and Russian fiction, function as a form of cultural translation. Translation in this case has a great deal more moving parts, none of which fall under the particular control of any entity, but which concern the interaction of all entities together. This is another way of saying that it has far less to do with "China" or "France" than with the innumerable networks of power and knowledge that make up both of those countries. In her approach, the source culture in particular is overdetermined by the power it exercises.

Michael Gibbs-Hill's work, while tacitly acknowledging the importance of Liu's work in dismantling simplistic notions of equivalence, also insists that there is great value in focusing on the interaction between a single translator and the culture within which he works. He also insists on a narrower definition of translation. In a sense, he turns the clock back on the study of translation, so that, instead of serving as a "shorthand for naming myriad processes of cultural mediation, borrowing, and adaptation," it is a seemingly ordinary process of transfer.[15] Yet, he insists, "I am interested in the problems that arise in this period precisely because work that self-consciously represented itself as translation in the early twentieth century was anything but ordinary."[16] For Lydia Liu, what a translator says or believes about his craft is a starting point for a broader analysis of the networks in which that translator is enmeshed. For Gibbs-Hill, it is necessary to gain a far more comprehensive understanding of what a translator says or believes before anything like Liu's starting point can be established.

Far too often, it is simply assumed that the translation itself has nothing to say.

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[15] Michael Gibbs-Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13.

[16] Gibbs-Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.,*13.

There is a tendency to devalue the actual texts of translations in favor of their prefaces or accompanying notes, the idea being that the latter provide the essential material, while the former are derivative. "The problem here," writes Gibbs-Hill, "is not whether (such) scholarship is true to its sources; rather, if mental labor is only made visible within the boundaries of original thought, then certain cultural producers are predestined to appear unsystematic or simply to be silenced."[17] By focusing on the broadest possible understanding of translation, Liu's work in particular is already predisposed to see the translator as entirely lacking in agency. Gibbs-Hill's book-length study of the prolific and popular translator Lin Shu, however, amply demonstrates that far more was happening within the pages of a single translation than could be described in an analysis of the forces that produced it. A translation is always more than the sum of its parts.

A perfect example is Lin's translation with Wei Yi of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The overwhelming tendency among critics has been to seek to the understand the text entirely from the perspective of its fascinating preface, wherein Lin Shu attempts to draw a straight line between the fate of African slaves in the United States and the "Yellow peoples" of Asia. Left out of the discussion is whether or not, in the translation that follows, Lin carried through on his interpretation, and if so, how. In his analysis, Gibbs-Hill demonstrates how, most notably, Lin's and Wei's distaste for Christianity leads them to present the reader with a completely different hero. Instead of Tom, the slave who endures abuse from slave-owners with the constant solace of his Christian faith, the Chinese translation presents George Harris, an escaped slave. In

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[17] Gibbs-Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.,*18.

service to this, the translators must not only re-write the text's usage of Christianity, but also play up the national origins of the text's most important characters, thereby emphasizing the connection between the fate of African slaves and that of an entire nation: China.

Naoki Sakai questions the very notion that anything distinguishable between cultures exists before it is put into words. "The object does not exist out there of and by itself," he writes, "and…even if it is merely to be described, of necessity it demands a certain participation on the part of the observer…and unless the student has a practical relation to his object, he or she cannot have an epistemic relationship to it either."[18] Study in general, and description in particular, requires the presentation to oneself of the object of study, and thus it matters greatly where one's position is at the moment of description. In cultural terms, describing something in a position of colonial authority—or even semicolonial authority, in China's case—means coloring the object of study with a preconceived notion of either inferiority or charity. It colors the observer, too: "One cannot encounter cultural difference without encountering other people; one never experiences it in a social vacuum; to encounter other people is to be engaged in some social relation with them." The student of another culture is changed in the process of study, if only from one who hasn't studied that culture to one who has. Since both are changed irremediably, it follows that inquiring into the essential characteristics of either is pointless. Such things are lost forever the moment the relationship between student and object of study begins.

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[18] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 118.

For Sakai, there is an important and productive tension between the "inside" and "outside" positions of this relationship, or between those who purport to be of a culture and those who claim only to be observing it. One is always involved in participating in, and reflecting on, one's cultural identity. "It is important to stress," he writes, "that so-called Asians themselves can never regard themselves as purely practical subjects, as genuine natives who inhabit their own social worlds immediately and originally; for the articulation of cultural difference takes place at the very sites where the synchronic opposition of the native and nonnative…is radically problematized."[19] Since one is neither completely outside nor inside a cultural group, at least theoretically the way is open for more dynamic participation in the formation of cultural difference. The scholar involved in the field of Asian studies, who constitutes Sakai's primary concern in this argument, must reckon with how he is being impacted by his studies, and how that relationship colors what he studies in turn. In terms of Asian texts, at any rate, "students of Asian Studies are Asians insofar as they observe, try to comprehend, and enunciate various determinations concerning Asian texts, texts in the broadest sense."[20] Sakai's argument is not, of course, that there is no difference between a Chinese and French person, but rather that when we consider how their identities are articulated, both are implicated, and so neither category can remain unchanged.

There is a tendency in these studies to simplify the source culture or else place it in the background. For Liu, who is most concerned with the application of power, both in China and outside it, the characteristics of the source culture are much less important than

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[19] Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity,* 125.

[20] Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity,* 125.

the way its exercise of power influenced the adaptation of some of its grounding concepts in China. For Gibbs-Hill, the source culture is necessarily always seen through the eyes of the translator, and perhaps at times through the eyes of the original author. For Sakai, not only is the source culture inaccessible, but it never existed as a thing to be translated in the first place. The moment a translator reads a text, the culture that produced it has been changed. In none of these cases is it considered possible for the reader to have access to the "real" source culture, a perfectly reasonable assertion given that such a term usually describes a set of generalizations that are largely inaccessible in lived experience.

All these approaches critique the idea of the source culture as something whose identity is well-established before the translation, and can be transmitted through it. Since both are untenable, it doesn't behoove the scholar of translation to inquire much into the nature of the source culture. Epistemologically this makes a great deal of sense, but from the standpoint of the publishing markets of the late Qing, it is also beside the point. Late-Qing translators were in the peculiar position of having to meet and make markets at the same time, generating desire for a product that had previously never existed. Doing so meant more than providing a desirable story; it meant providing a desirable culture. In order for there to be a market for French courtesan fiction, for example, readers had to be as attracted to the vision of France presented in the novel as to the narrative itself. How translators went about doing this is the subject of this dissertation.

This was more complex than simply rendering the world of a novel in the most attractive possible colors, because although most Chinese people had not visited Europe or the United States, they had certainly caught enough glimpses of it—in newspapers, or in the actual presence of foreigners in in coastal port cities, or even in the foreign

products on sale in the markets—to have pre-existing notions of what it was. The translator's job was to both affirm and challenge these expectations, to give the reader what they had already experienced of a foreign nation, and what made them curious about it.

Practically, this meant a curatorial process of keeping some of the original content, but altering other parts. In the main, it is possible to link the former to a specific element of the Chinese reader's experience of a given country. In his 1902 translation of Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon,* for example, Lu Xun kept intact much of the science of the original novel, which was a key feature of France's reputation in the West, but re-framed it as the kind of arcane art that was a crucial component in any martial arts romance. By so doing, he gestured towards the industrial power manifested in foreign navies cruising through China's ports, but remedied the lack of access most Chinese readers had to such power by suggesting that, as an arcane craft, it was no more than a step away from anyone. Rather than years of schooling, one simply needed the presence of an adept in the craft. In this way, France's scientific reputation was affirmed, but subtly altered to allow access to the Chinese reader.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

This brings us to a question implied by De Certeau's notion of readerly wandering above: where, exactly, was the reader to wander? The most interesting aspect of late Qing translation is in how it took full advantage of commercial publishing in the construction of the fictional worlds presented to readers. At one and the same time, both the reader and the source culture are elevated. The reader's right to wander through the text is fully encouraged, which would appear to clearly demand that the source culture be reduced

because its specific contours are less important. However, late Qing translators were working to create a market for precisely *foreign* works, not simply works that Chinese readers would know. Readers were given the right to wander, but it was still essential that they know they were not wandering in a perfectly familiar place. It would be foolish to say that the translator in this approach had no hand in the depiction of the foreign culture, but so too would it be incorrect to say that because of this, the voice of the foreign culture—its authority and even power—were eliminated.

Studies of the market's influence on literary reception, in any form, never depart far from the terms used in any other study of the market. In seeking to understand how and why things are exchanged, for example, labor is a crucial component. Both Karl Marx and Adam Smith agreed on the fundamental position of labor as the factor determining the value of a commodity, but disagreed on what this meant. For Smith, although the value of a commodity is based on the labor necessary to produce it, in a market the determining factor is actually the labor necessary to acquire it. "Though labor be the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities, it is not that by which their value is commonly estimated...It is adjusted...by the higgling and bargaining of the market, according to that sort of rough equality which, though not exact, is sufficient for carrying on the business of common life."[21] However much one might work, and whatever the nature of the product of that labor, what ultimately matters is how much another person is willing to work to acquire it. Marx adopts strikingly similar language in explaining the difference between "use value" and "exchange value": The usefulness of a

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[21] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 51.

thing makes it a use-value...It is conditioned by the physical properties of the commodity, and has no existence apart from the latter...This property of a commodity is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities."[22] Marx, like Smith, also points to the fact that the labor that goes into a product does not, in fact, ultimately determine what someone will pay to acquire it, which is its "exchange value": "Exchange-value appears first of all as...the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind. This relation appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value...seems a contradiction in terms."[23] It is important to remark, though, that even though the use-value of a commodity is not germane to the determination of its exchange value, it is still important than it be distinguishable from something else. There is no price attached to the use value of a commodity, but neither would there be an exchange value if the use value were not known.

I do not intend, at this late stage, to embark on a full explication of basic economic theory, both because that would require a great deal more space, and because it would be unnecessary. I would instead like to make two brief points by way of explaining the uniqueness of the late Qing. First, in seeking to create, and participate in, a new publishing market, translators had to be able to offer a commodity whose use value—or, perhaps better in this case, cultural value—was different. Purely appealing to the domestic audience would not have supplied anything new or different, so it was necessary to emphasize what about France was unlike China, and by association, what

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[22] Karl Marx, *Capital,* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 126.

[23] Marx, *Capital,* 126.

about its literature was different. This helps explain why so many of the culturally-specific French details were kept in the text, rather than eliminating them all in favor of a completely familiar Chinese tale.

Second, both Marx and Smith center their analyses on labor as a means of producing a material object, or as a means of acquiring a material object. The moment of acquisition is also the moment when labor, as a point of theoretical concern, ends. This dynamic extends throughout all studies of market-related activities, which are almost always studied by what they produce. Where there is no material result, analysis usually fears to tread.

In studies of commercial publishing, the bulk of the analysis is on its quantitative elements: numbers of books sold per year, the material used to produce them, the spread of titles in a certain journal over the course of a month, etc.[24] There is little room for studies of the reception, or use, of these works because such would require either great speculation or else a psychological methodology with access to the minds of those acquiring printed texts. Yet without being able to present the reader as something other than a passive recipient, it is also quite hard to see a period like the late Qing as anything other than a stage in global capitalism's ongoing victory march. In the vast majority of studies of this period, scholars and readers both are always positioned either for or against the onrushing tide of Western domination, a position which makes a great deal of sense when seen through quantitative analyses of the market. The sheer number of new

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[24] This is by no means to denigrate them. Scholars like Christopher Reed, Chen Pingyuan, and Cynthia Brokaw, among many others, have produced extremely important works on the publishing environment in the late Qing while leaning almost entirely on quantitative data. My point is not that their scholarship is lacking, but that it cannot, by its very nature, address what happens *after* printed texts find their way to the reader.

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foreign works in translation in China, and the profound influence they had on future

writers, has a powerful inertia in the field.

I will argue, though, along with Michel de Certeau, that if we are to truly

understand the role of the market in this period, we have to theorize a much more robust

and nuanced relationship between the reader-consumer and the goods she purchased. In

de Certeau's analysis, the dichotomy of producer/consumer errs in that it asserts power

on one side, and weakness on the other. To be sure, the producer—and analogous figures

like the writer or the architect—is possessed of a certain kind of power, but the range of

options available to a consumer make it impossible to reduce her position to merely that

of a receptacle of industrial production. The difference, de Certeau asserts, is that of a

"strategy" vs. that of a "tactic":

> I call 'strategy' the calculation of power relations that become possible when
> a subject possessed of will and power is separable from an 'environment.' It
> suggests a place capable of being circumscribed as 'one's own' and thus
> serves as a base for relations with a distinct exteriority…
> "On the contrary, I call 'tactic' a calculation that can't count on a space of
> 'one's own,' nor on a frontier that distinguishes the other as a visible totality.
> The place of a tactic is always that of another.[25]

What is most intriguing about these two terms is their asymmetry. It is possible, in De

Certeau's system, to be without power, without a "place of one's own", and yet, by virtue

of the consumer's creativity and dynamism, not be powerless. Translation in the late

Qing can be usefully compared to one of De Certeau's tactics because, although it

presented readers with a place that was not originally their own, by altering the reading

experience they were still able to make of it something more familiar. For De Certeau,

such things are always no more than "games with power," but this is a more important

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[25] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien,* xlvi.

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phrase than might appear, because even games are played, as Gadamer reminds us, with the utmost seriousness, and winning presents rewards that carry value beyond the seeming frivolousness of play. One does not have to unseat power in order to succeed.[26]

The profound intervention made by late Qing translators, then, was to make a "place of one's own" within another's place. A salon in Paris could still become a place where the Chinese reader could wander and explore without fear of domination, a place that the Chinese reader in fact desired to visit. The importance of such an intervention is that it establishes an entirely new dynamic between the country that produced the work— and which was, in nearly every case, seen as the representative of imperialism or at least intrusive capitalism—and the consumer who received it. The "place" of the work is literally in France, or in an area described by a French writer, but this becomes a starting place rather than a destination for the Chinese reader. It provides valuable new experiences, raw materials for the construction of new ways of reading.

This dissertation will set out to demonstrate this dynamic through a series of case studies. For each one, I will begin with a grounding assumption: that the popularity of a genre of writing in the Chinese publishing market allowed translators a window onto what and how their potential public were reading. Translators combined a careful study of these visible elements of their readers' participation with the experiences they themselves had with foreign cultures in Chinese cities. The resulting texts were always strikingly different from each other because they were drawing off of different genres, and presented for different audiences. Through a close study, we will see how nuanced

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[26] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Continuum Publishing Group, 2004), 103.

were the ways in which Chinese translators and readers created a space of their own in a foreign world.

As it has been my suggestion that difference source cultures were appealing for different reasons, I have chosen a single culture—France—as the focus for my research. The most obvious reason for this choice is France's pre-eminent position in the 19th and early 20th century's world of arts and letters. Such a position would appear to carry with it a concomitant need to transmit its works in as intact a fashion as possible, but in the late Qing this was not the case. Nevertheless, there was still a clear appeal to France's reputation that is visible in every translation of a French novel, one that differs from other countries.

In what follows, I will present three case studies. The first is Lu Xun's 1901 and 1902 translations of a pair of Jules Verne novels: *From the Earth to the Moon* (discussed above) and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. We will see here how Lu Xun drew heavily on elements from martial-arts romances (the most popular fictional genre in China at the time) to re-cast France's industrial and scientific capacities as an arcane, mystical art. The second is Zeng Pu's 1912 translation of Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three,* in which Zeng removed almost all specific mentions of republican political ideology, but left the geographical, historical, and cultural details largely intact. In his hands, France is a republic without republicanism, a space where the Chinese reader can explore the effects of a revolution without having to wrangle with the intellectual tradition that produced it. The third case study will be the Big Bang of late Qing arts and letters: Lin Shu's 1899 translation of *Lady of the Camellias.* Here, Lin adapted elements of China's own genre of courtesan fiction to Dumas' novel, in particular removing all of Dumas'

references to spiritual salvation, which was supposed to animate the protagonist's carnal pursuits. This way, both Armand Duval and Marguerite Gautier are focused entirely on their own gain, which allows the reader, too, to focus on his or her own gain.

A concluding chapter will look at what I call the "linguistic turn" of the 1916 New Culture Movement, which looked away from the spaces constructed within a translation and to the language used to construct them. I will analyze Hu Shi's translations of two Guy de Maupassant short stories--"Two Friends" and "Menuet"--and demonstrate how his work relied on an already-existing audience for French fiction. His concern was to redirect his audience's attention to their own language, and the worlds his readers were constructing outside of the text itself.

CHAPTER II

INSIDE-OUT: LU XUN, JULES VERNE, AND THE MASS-MARKET READER

Lu Xun's storied writing career is almost always read through the lens of his work beginning in 1919, with the publication of *War Cry*. The scholarship that exists on his work prior to 1910, when he was still a student in Japan, understands it in terms of the presumably fuller accomplishments of his later writing, and the resulting narrative is either that what he produced in these early years was a well-meaning, but immature, presentation of what would come later, or else the genesis point of a consistent viewpoint that would gain in sophistication as the years progressed.[27] Neither is able to take into account the central mediating role played by the publishing market in Lu Xun's earliest works, particularly his translations. Taken on their own terms, his translations in 1903 of a pair of Jules Verne novels—*From the Earth to the Moon* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*—constitute a sincere attempt to shape a modern Chinese readership, the nucleus of a modern Chinese nation, through the distributive power of the publishing market, replacing the need for a critically-thinking individual with an enlightened collective. He drew on popular reading protocols—particularly those of *wu xia,* or military-historical romance in its English rendering—to re-present Verne's texts as tools which would allow the Chinese reader to access industrial science as a narrative form alterative to that presented by Chinese tradition, so as to "eliminate superstition, reform

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[27] For an example of the former, see Theodore Huters' *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, and for the latter, Shih Shu-Mei's *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937.*

thought, and rescue civilization".[28]

When we begin here, Lu Xun's later career is a far more dramatic split, and the fault line is precisely on his understanding of the value of the market. His later approach both to original fiction and translation demonstrates a belief that the market reified rather than reformed the Chinese reading public, endlessly augmenting an already-existing social dynamic. Jules Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages,* in particular, were composed and distributed in such a way that, even when altered significantly through translation, they extended the thoroughly modern belief that the entire world was capable of being apprehended and comprehended through the mediation of the written word. The enlightened collective that was Lu Xun's goal in his translations becomes, for him, nothing more than a collective, endlessly circulating the same kinds of texts in order not to have to grapple with the real world, a state of affairs to which he himself contributed. In response, his later works systematically undermine both familiar reading protocols and the vernacular language that facilitated them, taking aim at the conditions that enabled mass-market circulation. The reader of these works is left nowhere to stand, and it is struggle, rather than familiarity, that finally grounds her experience.

The unifying idea on both sides of the divide is the formation of a self-conscious community that, if not exactly a nation, is at least what Benedict Anderson would call "the embryo of the nationally-imagined community."[29] Lu Xun begins with a positive community—one that identifies itself through a shared set of reading protocols—and

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[28] Jules Verne, *De la terre à la lune,* trans. Lu Xun (Beijing: Chinese-English Press, 2014), 152.

[29] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: London, 1983), 46.

ends with a negative community that is brought together by its shared lack of any familiar reading protocols. In the latter case, the community thrives by destroying and remaking itself endlessly, in a direct reversal of what Lu Xun saw as the market's reification.

This chapter will attempt to reverse a common approach to Lu Xun studies by analyzing his early translations without the mediating influence of his later work, and studying his later career as being a direct response to them. I take seriously the more or less traditional view that his career was dedicated to creating a modern Chinese readership that could stand with the readers of any other modern nation, but suggest that our view of what exactly defined that readership becomes far richer when we take the presence of the publishing market as a grounding concern.

<u>Jules Verne as Military-Historical Romance</u>

In 1902, at the age of twenty-one, Lu Xun went to study in Japan, after a largely unsatisfactory stint in several Chinese government-funded schools. He first enrolled in the Kobun Institute, a preparatory language school for Chinese students hoping to study at Japanese universities. Among other adventurous gestures in the two years he spent before entering the Sendai Medical Academy in 1904, he translated a pair of Jules Verne novels: *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. In all likelihood, he had first encountered them in Japanese translation (he spoke no French) during his stint at the Jiangnan Naval Institute's School of Mines and Railways from 1899-1902. Certainly his publication of Verne's novels in 1903 would indicate he had come into contact with them early enough to have completed translations of them.[30]

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[30] This dissertation will not be exploring the Japanese translation on which Lu Xun based his work for several reasons, but most notably because the original

His experience in Japan was both liberating and sobering. While his exposure to new ideas, and chance to publish, were certainly thanks to his sojourn, some of his deepest humiliations were suffered there, too. His decision to cut off his queue—something that would later earn him ridicule when he returned to China—was in large part due to the scorn he received from the Japanese because of it. The most famous such moment occurred after the publication of his translations, but is worth recording as an example of the environment that existed in Japan at the time. In the preface to his 1921 collection *War Cry*, he describes being in class at the Sendai Medical Institute, where he studied for a year and a half between 1904 and 1906. His professor at the time had the habit of showing students film strips of events happening in the world. "As the Russo-Japanese War was underway at the time," writes Lu Xun, "images of the war were comparatively common, and in the lecture hall I frequently applauded and cheered with the rest of the students."[31] One image stuck with him, though, and was the major cause of his subsequent ideological transformation and move back to China:

> Once, I suddenly noticed in an image a number of my fellow countrymen standing listlessly about a condemned Chinese man. They appeared strong in body, but listless in spirit. I said to myself: the condemned is someone accused of being a spy for the Russians, and is about to be executed by the Japanese, and standing about him is a crowd calmly taking in the scene as though it were a work of art.[32]

Lu Xun's shock here is important, but so too is the ghoulish enthusiasm expressed

by his Japanese classmates. Both were driving forces behind his decision to publish

his translations of Vere's novels, which would, he believed, enable Chinese readers

to be more enlightened participants on the world stage.

Lu Xun's eyes were thus not on Japan, or the rest of the world, but on China, and

specifically on China's exploding publishing market. His translations demonstrate a keen

awareness of this market's combination of old and new. At the time Lu Xun was

composing his translations, most popular works of fiction had been written, in some

cases, centuries earlier. Ellen Widmer notes, for example, that after *Dream of the Red

Chamber* was published in 1791, nine unofficial sequels were published before 1843, and

many of these were reprinted up to a dozen times.[33] Cynthia Brokaw observes that, if we

take market demand as our starting point, then book-buying customers "favored military-

historical romances, love stories, and tales of the strange."[34] Most of these, like *Outlaws

of the Marsh* and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from Liao Studio*, were written long

enough ago that they had already been subject to several rounds of censorship. Brokaw

also notes that the popularity of these genres remained constant over most of the 19th

century, and that a study of the major publishing houses in and around Chinese urban

areas suggests "that there was a core of common texts, perhaps even common titles…that

was reproduced at most commercial publishing sites in the eighteenth and nineteenth

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[33] Ellen Widmer, "Modernization Without Mechanization," in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008,* ed. Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 64.

[34] Cynthia Brokaw, "Reading Best-Sellers of the Nineteenth Century," in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China,* ed. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-Wing Chow, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 189.

centuries…”.[35] It made a great deal of business sense to maintain such a core collection, especially in an era that still used woodblock printing, since the same blocks, once engraved, could be used multiple times. After lithographic printing was introduced towards the end of the 19h century, there is no indication that the genres Brokaw mentioned diminished in popularity. On the contrary, several of them came to greater prominence because lithographic printing allowed for more extensive experimentation.

Particularly interesting for our purposes is the immense popularity of what Brokaw calls "military-historical" fiction, and what would be called, after 1905, *wuxia*.[36] Lu Xun's translations are deeply inflected by the genre, showcasing some of its most important stylistic features so as to effectively re-format Verne's texts as Chinese vernacular fiction. A few key examples will demonstrate the depth of Lu Xun's commitment to this project, and will point to how he intended for them to be used.

First, wuxia novels present their narratives in terms of an overwhelming problem, typically of a martial variety, that its hero or heroes must solve through the application of their craft, or wu. While Verne's original texts are presented as tales of adventure, each with its own set of challenges, Lu Xun's translations are both presented in terms of a "war between heaven and humans" (tian ren jue zhan), a phrase that occurs in both *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth,* though not in Verne's text, to describe the opposition human beings face from nature. The forces of nature seek to

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[35] Brokaw, "Reading Best-Sellers of the Nineteenth Century," 189.

[36] Liang Qichao is the first Chinese literatus to use the combined term wuxia, in reference to the late Ming novel *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shui hu zhuan) in the 15th issue of his literary journal *New Fiction (*Xin xiaoshuo*).* The term was used in print a few years earlier, though, in 1902 Japan: *Japanese Wuxia* (Wuxia zhi riben) and in 1904 in *Eastern Wuxia Fists* (Dongyang wuxia tuan*).*

hide their secrets and power from humankind, and only those most driven to oppose them can ensure victory. Lu Xun writes, in an opening prefatory section in *From the Earth to the Moon*: "Using steam to race along iron rails, pushing warships along at breakneck speeds, humans govern the rising of the sun, and the power of nature begins to wane, the four corners of the globe come into correspondence, giving each other the gifts of civilization, and becoming the world of today."[37] The language here stresses that civilization and nature are mutually opposed, with one thriving only at the expense of the other, and civilization's rise comes about precisely through the mediation of industrial technology: "iron rails," and "warships" specifically. These are, of course, martial images in their own right, and suggest that the struggle is to be won through an active and even aggressive assault on the elemental components of nature: earth and water. They also indicate the stakes of the war, since it is only through their intervention that "the globe come[s] into correspondence" and "the world of today" can arrive. Civilization is thus presented as a species-wide phenomenon, established through the connection between representatives of the species who have otherwise been kept apart by nature's opposition. It is not the distractions of the modern that are on the table, in other words, but the hitherto unrealized evolution of the species itself.

A second example is related closely to the first. In any good wuxia novel, the solution to the central problematic requires both a martial craft—a good working definition of wu—as well as a borderline outlaw figure—the xia of the wuxia genre title—to make it work. Ideally, the two should be so well integrated that they are

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[37] Jules Verne, *Yuejie lüxing,* trans. Lu Xun (Beijing: Chinese-English Press, 2014), 152.

inextricable. The status of the hero as an outlaw or knight-errant is exemplified by his mastery of a craft that lies outside of society's experience, and the craft's status depends on its application by one willing to look outside of the normal means of acquisition and mastery. It should be clear from the above examples that Lu Xun's translations position science—particularly its application in industry—as the wu of his novels, and therefore it stands to reason that the scientist-adventurers of the stories must be its xia, which is indeed the case. To some extent, Verne's texts are already possessed of outlaws or knights-errant for protagonists. Most of his protagonists—from Phineas Fogg to Captain Nemo—are well outside society's norms, and *From the Earth to the Moon's* main characters—Barbicane and Michel Ardan—are themselves willing to break rules and brave circumstances ordinary people wouldn't. *Journey to the Center of the Earth's* Professor Lidenbrock positively delights in thumbing his nose at fellow scientists, declaring in a sneering tone to his nephew's insistence that "all the theories of science demonstrate" that the proposed journey is impossible, "All the theories say that? Ha! These villainous theories! How they seek to bother us, these poor theories!"[38]

Lu Xun's translations, however, remove a key element from Verne's texts that would otherwise have situated his protagonists within the clearly-defined spheres of either empirical science or the politics of the nation-state: the scientific gloss. Verne includes numerous lengthy explications of scientific, historical, or geological information. In *From the Earth to the Moon*, there is a history of lunar cartography and orbital physics, while in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* we read about everything

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[38] Jules Verne, *De la terre à la lune* (*From the Earth to the Moon*), in *Oeuvres Complètes* (*The Collected Works of Jules Verne*) (Kindle e-book: Arvensa Editions, 2016), location 6893.

from Icelandic domestic life to volcanology. Such passages provide an essential limiting factor on the heroes' actions, making them mavericks within a given field, but still circumscribed, even if tenuously, by those fields. Lu Xun completely eliminates all of these passages, but preserves in almost pristine form several equally technical passages that are delivered as near-monologues by one or another of the main characters. *From the Earth to the Moon*, in particular, delivers a long public discourse by Michel Ardan and a de-facto seminar on ballistics and orbital physics by Barbicane in a manner impressively close to Verne's original. Without the surrounding science glosses delivered by the narrator, though, the overwhelming impression is that the novels' heroes are the only ones with access to such knowledge. They are not mavericks of their field, because essentially they have no field. They stand alone, and in true wuxia fashion, it is unclear, and in fact inconsequential, whether they stand alone because of their mastery of a strange and powerful craft, or whether that craft is strange and powerful because they are the ones practicing it.

Third, and finally, Lu Xun penned original poems to end each chapter in the text of *From the Earth to the Moon*, a common feature of Chinese vernacular fiction since at least the mid Ming dynasty, but obviously absent in Verne's originals. These frequently take the form of heroic elegies, invoking terms like "knight errant" (xiashi), "heroic warrior" (zhuangshi), and "hero" (yingxiong) such as in the following examples: "The heroic warrior doesn't dare leave the years void / for what reason would the migrating bird settle in a courtyard?" (ch. 1), "The knight errant passionately defends the world, and the enlightened monarch submits things to the hero" (ch. 11), and "The strong man is

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won over by new adventures, and creates great new ways to peep into heaven" (ch. 12).[39]

One of the more interesting poetic passages in *From the Earth to the Moon* comes when

Barbicane, challenged to a wager by his nemesis Nicholl over the proposed success of the

Gun Club's moon-shell, responds to say he accepts it. In Verne's text, Barbicane

telegraphs the following terse response: "accepted," but Lu Xun's text presents a poem

that reads: "The buzzing cicada / is content with knowing the seasons / and it is only the

great scholar / who is at ease in distant travel".[40] Key in this passage is Lu Xun's precise

description of what makes a hero. The cicada's buzz is an instinctive gesture, done

unthinkingly in the presence of favorable environmental conditions. It is an indication of

safety, and of things being as they should. The opposite of this is the great scholar's ease

in the unfamiliar and the unknown, that which militates against instinct. Not only that,

but the term "travel" indicates an ongoing situation, suggesting that the moment a true

scholar or hero is comfortable, it is time to move on.

In these and every other example we might list, the translations lack most of the

rigorous scientific research of Verne's texts, presenting science as an application first,

and an analytical methodology second. What is interesting about Lu Xun's translations in

this respect is that they are far from the drastic betrayals of Verne's originals that some

scholars have assumed.[41] Rather than cast Verne's heroes as something they aren't, or

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[39] List taken from Sun Yaotian, "'Kexue' yu 'renqing' de jiuge—lun Lu Xun de kexue xiaoshuo fanyi" [The Struggle Between 'Science' and 'Emotion': On Lu Xun's Science Fiction Translations] (*Wenyi Yanjiu* [Arts and Literary Research 5, 2017): 56-59.

[40] Verne, *Yuejie lüxing,* 35

[41] David E. Pollard, for example, writing about Lu Xun's poetic additions, says, "…the translator-creator can think of nothing very significant to add and has to resort to this kind of puppetry" (1998, 190).

altering the meaning of the text, Lu Xun accentuates a few key characteristics at the expense of some of their limitations. Verne's maverick scientists and industrialists become Lu Xun's outlaw heroes, but as Xu Yuan has noted, the dividing line between bandits and heroes in the wuxia tradition was always blurry.[42] Even for Verne, the ultimate goal of science was industrial application, which is why the engineer is the great Verne-ian hero. The leap from the engineer to the wuxia master is peculiar, but certainly not unimaginable.

<div align="center">Laboring Through Imagination in Chinese and European Science Fiction</div>

In fact, the biggest difference between Verne's and Lu Xun's texts is in the realm of application. Both writers deploy the craft of writing mimetically, drawing on the way their readers actually experience science, and then suggesting in print how that same experience might be extended. Their audiences, though, were approaching science—and particularly the industrially-applied science that grounds the *Extraordinary Voyages*—from opposite directions, which allows us to better understand why the resulting texts are different in execution, but similar in concern.

Verne's readers, as with most readers of early science fiction, were beneficiaries of "the arrival of scientific and technical institutions that provide[d] training for a lower-

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[42] Xu Yuan, "Wuxia xiaoshuo de lishi xing" [The 'historicity' of wuxia fiction]. *Xinan Daxue xuebao* [Journal of Southwest University] 45, no.1 (2019): 148. This observation is nothing new, of course. Sima Qian made a similar observation in the "Biographies of Knights-Errant", a chapter in his *Records of the Grand Historian*: "Even though the behavior of these knights-errant is against official justice, their words lead to actions, their actions lead always to results...they think nothing of their own physical selves, they go willingly into death and hardship…and live on the margins of life and death."

middle-class generation as scientific workers, teachers, and engineers,"[43] With the shift in

business focus brought about by the advent of advertisement-based publishing in France

and England in the early to mid-19th century, publishers began seeking reader attention,

and marketing new kinds of stories as a way to do so. "The key," writes John Rieder,

"was a shift from maximizing the extraction of labor from workers to a new emphasis on

turning them into reliable consumers."[44] Rieder's emphasis on the proactive nature of this

business model is key, since publishers were and are always more interested in a means

of creating lifelong consumers. This meant, in Jules Verne's day, shifting focus from the

creation of products for the consumer to the creation of the consumer herself. While

Rieder insists that the connecting thread among all forms of mass-market publishing was

the advertisement, there is also an ingenious mechanism within the narrative world of

Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages* itself that channeled the patterns of industrial labor into

the imagination. Verne's reader was never simply a consumer, but a co-creator, someone

committed to the active development of a world entirely managed by the circulation of

the written word.

This came about largely in the narrative space between Verne's hard science

glosses and their eventual realization as objects of technological wonder later in the

novel. Commenting on the difference between his work and that of H.G. Wells, Verne

said, "...I have always made a point in my romances of basing my so-called inventions

upon a groundwork of actual fact, and of using in their construction methods and

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[43] John Rieder, *Science Fiction and the Mass-Cultural Genre System* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 37.

[44] Rieder, *Science Fiction and the Mass-Cultural Genre System,* 45.

materials which are not entirely without the pale of contemporary engineering skill and knowledge".[45] Crucially, for Verne his creations are only "so-called," or so well-researched and explained that the only reason they do not already exist in reality is that no one has yet taken the chance to pursue them, and it is the research itself that is meant to set them apart. His novels are perhaps unique among the science fiction genre in how they deploy their scientific knowledge. Verne is scrupulous about explaining every aspect of his creations, often to tedious effect, whereas the vast majority of other works in the genre give either cursory explanations, or present conversations between experts in the novel that give the reader hints, but never the whole picture. In effect, Verne gives his readers the fruits culled from his own research, and does so before he demonstrates how these are to be extended. His novels are effectively the industrial working model in print, with the worker first given the schematics for what is to be produced, and then set to work producing it. The crucial difference is that in Verne's novels, the physicality of industrial labor is relocated to the imagination, so that in the place of the sound and fury of modern industry is pure creation. The appeal of Verne's creations for the modern European reader was thus at least partly the chance to experience the marvels of scientific development without any of the instrumentalization of daily life, a kind of modern industrial utopia where one still works, but does not labor.

This was all in the service of a project whose modest goal was, in the words of Verne's publisher Jules-Pierre Hetzel, "to summarise all the knowledge of geography, geology, physics, and astronomy that modern science has amassed, and to retell, in the

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[45] Cited in Timothy Unwin, *Jules Verne: Journeys in Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 9.

attractive and picturesque way that is his hallmark, the history of the universe".[46] The

totalization of the project was a uniquely modern conceit. The explosion of print media

made possible by technological advancements in printing, as well as the cheaper formats

enabled by advertising, meant that a vast array of textual commodities was available to

the European consumer. One of the results of this state of affairs was the belief that

reality was not only capable of being accessed entirely through the written word, but was

possibly better accessed that way.

Verne in particular was a believer in the superiority of print media as a way of

knowing the world, saying in a 1905 interview for the *Chicago Evening Post,* that "...an

attentive reading of the most well-documented works on any subject is worth more than

concrete experience...A good book on the customs and morals of a country can only be

written after years there, while I, at best, can effect only a quick journey..."[47] His goal,

both as a reader and a writer, was to extend the reach of the written word so that there

was nothing beyond it, and his means of accomplishing this was a tandem effort between

his own research and his readers' imaginations. He drew on their existing experience as

increasingly skilled industrial workers to format a work of fiction that was industrial in

nature, and then spelled out in its execution how his reader-workers were to extend that

work beyond the technological marvel at the center of the narrative. While they were not

called on to write anything themselves, they were called on to follow Verne in his efforts

to encompass the world in print by continuing to purchase his novels and participate in

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[46] Unwin, *Jules Verne: Journeys in Writing*, 26.

[47] Cited in Daniel Compère, *Jules Verne: Écrivain* (Jules Verne: Writer) (Genève: Droz, 1991)*,* 45.

their collective imagination. They might have been primarily consumers, but in the Verne-ian universe they were also, precisely through consumption, co-explorers.

Lu Xun's efforts were no less committed to the idea of the market as a way of extending the power of the written word beyond the individual's application, but his audience began from the opposite end. Where European readers came at Verne's texts as increasingly savvy industrial workers, late Qing readers of science fiction were still unlikely to experience industrial science except in one of two ways: its military application in one of the Treaty Ports established by European powers on Chinese soil, or the technological advancements of the publishing industry. In the latter case, science was nearly invisible, its lithographic machinery only deducible from its productions, but never (or rarely) seen by the public.[48] In the former case, science was visible but never accessible, which is to say it was something that forced itself upon the viewer, rather than offered up as subjects of study. Lu Xun almost certainly drew upon this dynamic in his comments on how "iron rails" and "warships" were enabling the onward march of humanity, since these were two of the most common reference points for the Chinese reader. The reading audience was thus already aware of the intimidating power of science's industrial application, just as they were unconscious participants in its commercial expansion; the task for any writer hoping to harness that for the purposes of reform was to preserve the familiarity provided by the latter alongside the potentially

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[48] Printed texts describing science were themselves only barely visible. Benjamin Elman notes that the Translation Office of Jiangnan Arsenal had by 1880 sold 31,111 copies representing 83,454 volumes, but these were all full-length works like *A Treatise on Practical Geometry* and *a Treatise on Algebra*. Both of these were relatively successful, but even then they were hardly examples of popular publishing (2005, 387).

alienating power of the former.

Lu Xun's solution was to re-present science as an alternate form of narration in its own right, and to introduce its reformative effects first, before the reader can even understand them. This much is clear from *From the Earth to the Moon's* preface, in which he comments that, "The common person has difficulty bearing science, and even before having finished reading, wants to drift off to sleep...[fiction] can play the fool and allow even the most abstruse concepts to penetrate deeply into mind and sinew, without causing weariness...[so that the reader can] think without great effort."[49] The goal is engagement, invigoration, but not so that the reader proceeds from interest in the material to an attempt to fully understand it. Notice that "abstruse concepts" must be able to penetrate, not be understood, and the reader should think, but only without great effort. The middle ground is at stake, a place between dismissal and individual application. This is a plea for a mass readership rather than the establishment of critically thinking individuals, with the goal of "eliminating superstition, reforming thought, and rescuing civilization"[50] through the rapid and easy dissemination of ideas facilitated by the market. Nowhere in the preface does Lu Xun express the hope that his readers will purchase and study scientific texts. This is a plea for popular science, not hard science, and the social reformation he seeks is to come precisely through the narrative heart of the text.

Lu Xun's reformatting of Verne's novel so that science is its wu and the scientist-adventurer its xia*,* with other attendant generic protocols, provided his readers with a

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[49] Verne, *Yuejie lüxing,* 152.

[50] Verne, *Yuejie lüxing,* 152.

means of accessing science in the only narrative form that preserved both its distance and accessibility. Wu is, as has been mentioned, a craft that alternately creates, or is embraced by, outlaws, which means that as a narrative trope it is only one step—albeit a large one—away from the reader, and that step is never taken in official channels. It is perhaps distant from the reader's experience, but its generic familiarity makes it a comfortable distance, a step outside the lines rather than the giant leap to another continent implied by the study of science. The reader can see the power of the hero's application of wu in the text, and can in a mimetic fashion re-imagine the real power of modern industry's presence in Chinese society. This provides an alternate narrative to what has, according to Lu Xun, produced "superstition". There is thus a hermeneutic gap similar to that which Verne created for his readers, save that while the Verne-ian text recruits the reader's imagination to perform the narrative leap from scientific research to fictional marvel, Lu Xun's text takes the reader in the opposite direction: from the fictional marvel to its scientific foundation. Lu Xun's gambit is that science in its wuxia narrative garb can issue Chinese readers into the modern industrial world through the back door, beginning with its impact on the way readers narrate their lives as a society, and only later, if at all, with its individual application.

<div align="center">Lu Xun and the Literature of Cognitive De-Estrangement</div>

Lu Xun's efforts are thus predicated on a fine balance between familiarity and estrangement, between drawing his readers into a new world in print, and pushing them as a group into new areas. The hinge point between his early and late (post-1918) writings is his perception of the market's formative capacity. As we have seen, his 1903 translations demonstrate a belief in the market as an ideal vehicle, one that is

ideologically neutral and therefore capable of perpetuating the effects a savvy writer can bring to bear on it. The social change Lu Xun sought through his translations was precisely market-based in that it was meant to propagate widely, without encouraging individual critical thought. A large group of like-thinking, and modern-thinking, people could be brought together quickly, and form the nucleus of a new China.

In this, his efforts closely mirror the development of national consciousness in early mass-market print cultures in Europe. Benedict Anderson, commenting on the titanic impact of Luther's vernacular German translation of the Bible, writes, "The coalition between Protestantism and print-capitalism, exploiting cheap popular editions, quickly created large new reading publics…and simultaneously mobilized them for politico-religious purposes."[51] Through the logic of the market, it was essential to cater to the requirements of these new reading publics, and that meant using both recognizable vernacular languages and familiar print genres, which often took on a religious character. As they bought and circulated such texts, readers came to identify with something beyond their local communities. "These fellow-readers," writes Anderson, "to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community."[52] Anderson's language is intriguing both because of its implication of immaturity to this early state and its seeming assumption that once begun in this way, communities are at least highly likely to develop a self-conscious national identity. The key components are the circumvention of

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[51] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: London, 1983), 42.
[52] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 46.

government mediation and geographic distance by the print market and the shared

cultural heritage of language and text, both of which have a certain anarchic quality to

them because they are not officially directed.

What should interest us primarily in Anderson's account of the industrial

intervention in national consciousness is the lack of importance placed on the content of

the materials being circulated. Take, for example, his description of the formative power

of the newspaper on 19th century readers:

> The obsolescence of the newspaper on the morrow of its printing…creates
> this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous
> consumption…of the newspaper-as-fiction. We know that particular morning
> and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour
> and that, only on this day, not that. The significance of this mass
> ceremony…is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the
> skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is
> being replicated by thousands…of others of whose existence he is confident,
> yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.[53]

Anderson's analysis focuses on the simultaneity of the experience, and the way it leads to

the imaginary awareness of others who are partaking of the same experience. The time of

day, the material presence of the newspaper, all are crucial to the experience, but not the

content. The reader of the newspaper does not imagine that all others reading the

newspaper are experiencing the content in exactly the same way, or interpreting it with

the same gravity, nor does this matter greatly to Anderson's study, since he is less

concerned with qualitative than quantitative extensions of the reading experience. It is a

"mass ceremony," formative insofar as it happens widely and in a similar style. This

applies to the identities of those partaking in the ceremony. It is unnecessary to have any

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[53] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 36.

specific knowledge of others apart from their participation. Similarly, readers of Luther's German translation of the Bible formed "the embryo of the nationally imagined community" because they each held a work whose unifying power was its material presence, its industrially-certified simultaneity whereby everyone who acquired it knew that precisely the same volume was being held by others.

Lu Xun and his contemporaries were split on the importance of this kind of simultaneity, with some believing that it was the most important factor in creating new modern readers, and others believing it to be possessed of a corrupting power if not approached cautiously. The prolific translator Lin Shu was, at least in his early career, a member of the latter camp. He composed most of his early works—such as translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Lady of the Camellias*—in an identifiable classical idiom. Michael Gibbs-Hill points out that this was due less to Lin's committed love of classical learning than his recognition that the classical language was still the intellectual *lingua franca*, and was a better fit for the material than any other language at that time. Indeed, with the oncoming collapse of the Qing dynasty, and the erosion of other traditional means of social identification, the classical language became important as a means of identification as well of communication. "Faced with a weak central state," writes Gibbs-Hill, intellectuals needed a language that could "shoulder the conceptual burden of translating and debating Western learning, provide some form of continuity with previous written styles, and, at the same time, manage the demands of an expanding reading audience with diverse educational backgrounds."[54] The ideas and concepts that might

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[54] Gibbs-Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.*, 47.

properly preserve the Chinese people were too weighty for any vernacular to impart, and also couldn't be properly discussed in fiction, which was a vulgar art, and at the same time, adaptation of the classical language meant using well-established avenues of circulation that vernacular fiction was only beginning to create. For Lin and similar reformers, it was precisely because modern works of this sort were likely to find a wide audience that the language shouldn't be adapted. Only when formatted so as to match form to content could the writer ensure that his efforts would meet with the right reception.

Other reformers, though, did not hold to the same notions, and advocated new forms based almost entirely on their reach alone. This is how Chen Pingyuan reads Kang Youwei's famous pronouncement that "The classics are not as good as the eight-legged essay, and the eight-legged essay is not as good as fiction."[55] For Chen, each "not as good" (bu ru) implies a hierarchy of popularity in circulation, ascending from the classics up to fiction. This is also primarily what concerned Liang Qichao when he issued his clarion call for new fiction in the first issue of his epochal journal *New Fiction* (Xin Xiaoshuo). Liang's belief that "those desiring to reform the nation must first reform its fiction" is well-known, and often overshadows the fact that his primary interest in fiction was its presence in the market, not its ideological fitness for reform. It was capable, like a seed, of propagating its effects slowly but surely throughout the world, or like alcohol to cause intoxication long after its active reception has ended, so that one "could drink for

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[55] Chen Pingyuan. *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo de qidian* [The Beginning of Modern Chinese Fiction] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chuban She, 2005), 84.

ten days, and then be drunk for one hundred".[56] The emphasis throughout is on the way

fiction is disseminated, its active networks of circulation, and its appeal. Content was to

be trimmed to fit these networks, expanding their reach so as to bring more readers

together over the same texts.

This is not the same thing, of course, as saying that content didn't matter; it is

rather a suggestion of how the creative process was to occur. Chen Pingyuan observes

that the great shift in Chinese publishing was less in the notion that one could make

money from writing—since there was a long-established tradition of literary patronage in

China—but that the commercial apparatus was so developed that for the first-time

financial interests were a part of the creation process itself.[57] Lu Xun's translation project

was based on these grounds, and the texts he composed were clearly designed to be

circulated first, cognitively processed second, if at all. Change could only come about

when readers came to identify with each other through the shared narrative power of the

popular novel.

It was also, from Lu Xun's perspective, a resounding failure. His later work

demonstrates a profound disillusionment with mass distribution, suggesting an awareness

that it was hardly the passive vehicle or at least ideologically neutral carrier he once

appeared to believe it to be. As early as 1909, he had already begun to radically alter his

translation style, when with his brother Zhou Zuoren he published two issues of a

proposed journal on foreign literature, called simply *Foreign Literature* (*Chengwai*

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[56] Liang Qichao, "Lun xiaoshuo qun shi zhi guanxi" [On the relationship between fiction and the governance of the people], in *Liang Qichao jingdian wen* [Classic writings by Liang Qichao] (Kindle e-book. Shanghai: Shanghai University Press, 2003), location 1168

[57] Chen, *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo de qidian,* 65

Xiaoshuo), with an eye towards preserving as much of the original text as possible, even at the risk of alienating his readers. This is a far cry from his hoping to ensure a minimum of energy in the reception of science. Deeper than that, though, it is likely he believed he had contributed to the problem. His iconic parable of the "iron house"—in which the sole awakened resident of a windowless, doorless iron structure is capable of awakening others, but wonders whether or not it would be worth it, if the only result is simply more people aware of their helplessness—is traditionally read as a despairing critique of the cultural torpor created by traditional Chinese learning. However, given his stated goal of making his later translations difficult for the reader to process, it seems likely that at least part of the sedative rendering the iron house's residents insensate derived from mass-market fiction, particularly the way it allowed a kind of change without reform, an increase in the reach of already-existing fiction without demanding more of its readers.

The problem, as Lu Xun's later work makes clear, was a misunderstanding of the role of the market vis-à-vis the reader. Its reach was unquestionable, and its value in circumventing official state formulations unquestionable, but its status as purely a vehicle, rather than a form of ideological formation in its own right, was absurd. Jules Verne's novels are a perfect example. They are sometimes called prophetic for their imagination of where technology might take us, thereby making them the genesis moment for the science fiction genre, but they are better seen as a particularly creative demonstration of realism, what Mariano Siskind calls "virtual realism": "the real of the bourgeoisie's technological potential, that is, reality not necessarily as it is but as it could

be".[58] Verne's works "account for the real of global modernity and of bourgeois social relations more productively than any realist novel could".[59] The totalism of Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages* is that of a modern society convinced of its ability to not simply understand, but control, all of reality through the power of their analytical tools. In this sense, although the *Voyages* extend to a literally endless horizon the European colonial project's intention to encompass the world, it is neither a reform nor a transgression of the reality that created it.

For Siskind, this is "virtual" in that it performs the bourgeoisie's operative capacities in a way designed to demonstrate where they might ultimately lead. However, it is questionable whether Verne's novels are even as progressive as this. The settings of his stories are generally in the contemporary world, even those like *Hector Servadac* that involve fantastic occurrences that take its occupants elsewhere, and the protagonists conduct themselves in a manner more or less expected of their class in the real world. Servants and slaves serve their masters even after being emancipated, colonial subjects behave in an appropriately exotic fashion, and gentlemen are invariably well-mannered and intelligent. The various cultures, too, behave the way anthropological journals would have expected them to.

More to the point, though, the very thing that usually earns Jules Verne the title of "prophet,"—his technological creations—can also be seen, from a narrative perspective, to be as conservative as they are progressive. We noted above how Verne intended for the

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[58] Mariano Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 42.

[59] Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires,* 43.

science in his texts to be as accurate as possible, and that readers were effectively given blueprints for a fantastic device that their imaginations then produced. In most of the novels where forward-thinking machines are described—the Nautilus in *Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, the moon-shell in *From the Earth to the Moon*, and even the various contrivances constructed by otherwise isolated shipwreck survivors in *The Mysterious Island*—the narrative space given their description, and the science that informed them, is so lengthy as to border on the tedious. It is in fact an open question whether the science exists to legitimize the machines, or vice-versa.

Jules Verne's creations point backwards—to the science that in Verne's day would have been available to anyone with access to Paris' extensive popular science journals, much of it published decades previously—as much as forwards. This much is clear from the peculiar qualifier "so-called" when referring to his technological creations in the citation above, suggesting that his intention was never to create dreams for his readers, but to more firmly root them in the present. Readers would have been able to imagine the machine in question, but the world in which it occurs—both scientifically and socially—was instantly recognizable, making even the prophetic moments in Verne's texts augmentations of reality as it then existed rather than its development. Each extension of the imagination in Verne's texts is another floor added to the European modernist edifice, rather than a new structure or even the dream of a new structure.

This is also why Darko Suvin, in his highly influential work initiating the serious academic study of science fiction in the early 1970's, did not consider Jules Verne to be truly science fiction. Science fiction, for Suvin, can be defined as the "literature of cognitive estrangement", understood as an "imaginative framework alternative to the

author's empirical environment".[60] A true science fiction work must be both cognitive and estranging, in the sense that the reader or viewer must be both drawn into the world of the narrative and distanced from it so that she will be forced to think critically about it. A work that seeks to be completely unlike the world of the reader will be too estranging, but a work that is either too much like it, or a utopian version of it, will be too little. Estrangement must also take the form of a "framework," which is to say it must be more than a single question or device. Suvin excludes many of the works of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells on these grounds since, for example, *From the Earth to the Moon's* only peculiarity is a habitable cannon shell that reaches the moon. Everything else is precisely what one would expect.

Lu Xun's translations essentially reverse Suvin's formula, assuming a public already estranged from its own world, and to a great extent from each other. The arrival of European political and industrial power was the kind of estranging event that would otherwise have structured a science fiction work, only in China's case it was reality, not fiction. Nathaniel Isaacson comments, "A technology gap threatened to undo the late Qing empire, and audiences sought literary interventions in the crisis that threatened to transform an Asian superpower into a crumbling backwater."[61] That literary intervention, as imagined by Lu Xun and other reformers, had to effectively undo the estranging dynamic of semi-colonial occupation and control, rallying readers around a consciously familiarizing element. As with any alien invasion, wholesale acceptance and circulation

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[60] Darko Suvin, "The Poetics of Science Fiction," *College English* 34, no. 3 (1972): 375.

[61] Nathaniel Isaacson, "Science Fiction for the Nation," *Science Fiction Studies* 40, no. 1 (2013): 38.

of completely foreign ideas was out of the question. Instead, readers were presented with a means of re-imagining the invasion of new technologies and ideas in a way that allowed them access, even if only of an imaginary kind.

In so doing, though, Lu Xun's Jules Verne translations merely enhance the *Extraordinary Voyage's* status as creations *par excellence* of the global publishing market. The open-ended totalism of Verne's project is inherently cosmopolitan, since the only price of admission—one paid by Verne himself—is access to the textual commodities. No one need have first-hand experience of the subject matter of the novels to enjoy or re-create them. If a Parisian bookworm like Verne can effectively invite readers to join him in India or the Americas without ever going there, then readers in other countries are perfectly within their rights to compose their own tales of France, Germany, or the moon. There is a textual simultaneity at work in the *Extraordinary Voyages* that means Verne's French readers were not pre-eminent, and held no greater interpretive license than did the reader's of Lu Xun's translations. Any translation of Verne's texts then was, by its very nature, an addition to a project premised on the market's production of textual commodities and the world it informed. Even the most spurious adaptation contributed to the goal of encompassing the entire universe in textually-defined limits. It extended the market's distribution network, introduced readers to a presentation of science that was more conservative than it was progressive, and presented the idea that reality itself was accessible entirely through the written (and purchased) word.

Let us revisit for just a moment the iron house analogy. Andrew Jones has pointed out the fact that what we usually translate as "iron house" is actually better rendered

either "iron chamber" or "iron room", and when we do so, we are led to turn our attention to Lu Xun's choice of construction material as much as the function of the structure itself.[62] There was no such thing as an "iron house" in Chinese life, but "iron chamber' was quite easily linked to "the purpose-built spaces of modern industrial and disciplinary institutions sharing a common Victorian provenance."[63] Jones then goes on to point out the intriguing parallels between Lu Xun's description of his "iron chamber" and the description of the *Nautilus* in the first Chinese translation of *Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea,* which Lu Xun had read avidly. While Jones' reading highlights the political control of China made possible by modern industrial and disciplinary institutions, it is possible to read the parallels between the "iron chamber" and the *Nautilus* as a description of the soporific effects of imagining or dreaming of industry as a narrative trope. Mass-market fiction in this scenario has provided readers the tools to imagine science in a meaningful way, but instead of resulting in reform, it has merely furnished more solid building materials to wall off the reader from the influence of truly challenging ideas.

We might well summarize this by saying that while Lu Xun's translations appear to seek the creation of readers who could identify with important new ideas as presented in recognizable, traditional generic forms, and through this respond to the political pressure of the West, in essence they merely added to the stock of readers whose primary unifying characteristic was market circulation. Where he wanted to make the first steps

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[62] Andrew Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011), 37.

[63] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales,* 37.

towards a modern nation, in other words, instead Lu Xun found himself creating a collective.

<div align="center">Lu Xun and the Literature of Cognitive Estrangement</div>

Lu Xun's later work sought to make unworkable the conditions upon which all market distribution of textual commodities is premised. Anderson's vernacular print cultures are a particular target, as Lu Xun set out to systematically dismantle popular genres and vernacular language, effectively the building blocks of any meaningful group of readers. In this, though, he was less interested in splintering apart "the embryo of the nationally imagined community" than in establishing a community based on something other than imagination. His advocacy of "hard translation", as well as his original fiction, presents the idea of a group of readers that can no longer imagine the present, but can only experience it. Positive identification—be it linguistic, generic, or cultural—is endlessly deferred, and what remains is a group whose unifying characteristic is an inability to finally identify itself. They are, in Wang Hui's phrase, in a state of "permanent revolution".[64]

One way to address this question is to say that Lu Xun was primarily concerned with *when* a cohesive political community called a nation exists, rather than *what* that community could be defined to be. A useful interlocutor in exploring this thought is one of Lu Xun's contemporaries, and a frequent colleague: Li Dazhao. In 1916, in the inaugural issue of the seminal literary journal *New Youth* (Xin qingnian）, Li contributed a peculiar piece entitled "Youth," a fascinating if at times unfocused prose poem/essay that blends Daoism, Buddhism, and modern

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[64] Wang Hui, "Dead Fire Re-Kindled," *Boundary 2* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 111.

biology to present the idea of youth as a universal concept that defines not only

individuals, but nations as well. Every entity, no matter how big or small, goes

through periods of rebirth and regeneration. Species evolve from their earlier

ancestors, nations move on from the ashes of their former glory, and even human

beings move on from the naïvete of their childhoods. For Li, each developmental

stage is unique, incapable of repetition. To declare that the structuring protocols of

an earlier era should still hold true in the present is tantamount to arguing that a

butterfly should still try to live like a caterpillar, and even the stage which we might

call "youth" is dynamic, ever-changing.

Li's perspective on China's history is that it is analogous. Earlier ages might

have been corrupt and corrupting, but much that was important emerged from them.

The way forward is not to root oneself in them, nor even to militate against it, but to

give birth to something new, something whose genes might rest in the old, but

which is otherwise unprecedented. He writes, "The solemn vow of my people's

youth cries aloud to the world that it will not authenticate the undeath of old China,

but is avidly pregnant with young China's rebirth".[65] The odd diction in the final

phrase is no mis-translation; in Li's writing, young China is quite literally

"pregnant" (huai yun) with "rebirth" (zai sheng). Presented here is a fascinating

palimpsest of potential. A pregnancy is, of course, quite literally living potential,

but in this case the future child is itself also potential, not a birth but a rebirth.

Young China, for Li, declares the birth of rebirth, the realization of one potential

[65] Li Dazhao, "Xin qingnian" [Youth], *Li Dazhao zhuan* [Selected works of Li Dazhao] (Beijing: Renmin Chuban She, 1979), 71.

whose ultimate purpose is to unveil yet more potential, in what one presumes is an endless chain.

There is thus no final realization of youth. It is a state that exists only insofar as one seeks to usher in what has not been before, but the moment that has been accomplished, it is time to seek yet another expression of youth, of newness, similar to the brave scholar in Lu Xun's chapter-ending poem above. It is even possible that youth only exists in the seeking itself. Li insists that the nation is no different. It is composed of people, for each of whom life presents itself in discrete quanta: "We have now a moment's world, and now a moment's youth, and most of all, now a moment's responsibilities towards the world".[66] A nation is composed of these experiences on a large scale, with the members of a culture seeking to know how in each given moment they can respond in a manner of appropriate to that moment, with the tools they have been provided. Claudia Pozzana comments on Li's ingenious use of the Chinese character *zhong* (中), one half of the Chinese term for China, *Zhongguo* (中国), as a temporal rather than a spatial term. Instead of meaning "central" or "middle," with the implication that China is the core of world development and civilization, it implies an irreducible present moment. "By forcing the name 'China' to pass through the realm of poetic invention," she writes, "and inserting it in a semantic play on *zhong* in its temporal sense, Li Dazhao marks the definitive introduction of the question of temporality, and of its unavoidable, noncyclical discontinuities, into Chinese intellectual space".[67] Thus, to

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[66] Li Dazhao, "Xin qingnian", 68.
[67] Claudia Pozzana, "Spring, Temporality, and History in Li Dazhao," *Positions* 3, no. 2 (1995), 292.

be fully and completely "China," the nation's representatives must, moment by moment, tear down and rebuild whatever preceded them in order to have always a political entity rooted in the present. Today's people can only live in today's nation, or perhaps better put, a nation is only ever what exists today.

In like fashion, Lu Xun's work in 1918 and later seeks to cultivate a communal experience that removes a unified imagination that transcends time, and roots the reader instead entirely in present struggle. This he does through what Nick Admussen calls, in reference to the composition of Chinese prose poetry, "recite and refuse," a dynamic by which a Chinese writer deploys a familiar generic element, then immediately problematizes it.[68] Some of his most significant original fiction, for example, is a shrewd dismantling of one popular genre or another. "Diary of a Madman," for example, begins with the relatively common explanatory classical preface, but undermines it by giving the reader no reliable information on the coming narrative, or interpretation that guides the reader's ethical application. "White Light" takes the highly popular tale of the strange and turns it into a grim death march, leading the protagonist to unearth (literally) the futility of his own life, and he proceeds to kill himself. The mystical folk cure in "Medicine" (yao) turns out to be quack science and results in a child's death. Reader expectations are assumed, and the effect of the stories is based largely on those expectations being not only frustrated, but mocked. Lu Xun had previously used popular reading protocols from a desire to more effectively circulate new ideas; his later work uses most of the same reading protocols, but in the service of a project designed to

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[68] Nick Admussen, *Recite and Refuse: Contemporary Chinese Prose Poetry* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016).

undermine the community of readers that resulted. It displays popular styles as fickle or arbitrary, as capable of producing difficult or objectionable material as agreeable stories.

It is in the realm of translation, though, that the scope of Lu Xun's efforts is best seen. He moved closer to a direct style translation over the course of the decades following his Jules Verne texts, frustrating many of his contemporaries in the process. The so-called Crescent Society, in their periodical *Crescent Moon* (Xin yue), issued a scathing critique in 1930 of Lu Xun's style of translation, coining the term "hard translation" to describe it, likening it as well to "dead translation".[69] In a conclusion to his article "Criticism and the Literary Arts, Liang Shiqiu takes Lu Xun to task over his translation style, writing: "Because the translator's skill is lacking, and because his knowledge of Chinese letters is fundamentally flawed, the translation...is hard to understand, and is full of twisted knots difficult to undo...and the only remaining hope is for the reader to toughen himself and endure".[70] Liang then goes on to write in "Is Literature Class-Based?" that "...there isn't any kind of literature like this that I can read and understand...The most difficult thing for me is the word choice...which upon reading is more difficult than the most abstruse of books".[71] He rounds out his comments by

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[69] Cited in Lu Xun, "'Ying Yi' yu 'Wenxue de jieji xing'" ["'Hard Translation' and 'The Class Character of Literature'"], *Lu Xun zuopin jingxuan: Er xin ji* [*Selected Writings of Lu Xun: A Halfhearted Collection*] (Kindle e-book. Liohai Publishers, 2009): location 1188.

[70] Liang Shiqiu, "Criticism and the Literary Arts," quoted in *Lu Xun zuopin jingxuan: er xin ji* [Selected writings of Lu Xun: A halfhearted collection] (Kindle e-book. Liohai Publishers, 2009]: location 1191.

[71] Liang Shiqiu, "Wenxue shi you jieji xing de ma?" [Is literature class-based], quoted in in *Lu Xun zuopin jingxuan: er xin ji* [Selected writings of Lu Xun: A halfhearted collection] (Kindle e-book. Liohai Publishers, 2009): location 1196.

concluding, "This style of dead translation will absolutely not last".[72]

Lu Xun's response takes the rather novel tack of not denying the charges. "My translation work," he writes, "is fundamentally not concerned with catering to the reader's 'refreshment'; quite the contrary, it frequently makes the reader uncomfortable, even going so far as to make the reader feel unhappy, frustrated, and indignant".[73] This is, for Lu Xun, in the nature not only of translators specifically, but cultural intermediaries generally: "I believe that those charged with passing things on should not do so out of sympathy, but out of a desire to change the world".[74] The translator's primary responsibility is to the wider world, and only secondarily to his compatriots and other players in it, setting it at only a slight remove from the observations in his 1903 preface on human beings as a species. In 1903, he spoke of human beings as a species locked in a fundamental struggle with nature, and believed science could provide the craft, or wu, necessary for great figures to rise up and lead humans to victory. Lu Xun's Jules Verne translations present humankind in its moment of triumph, and readers are invited to both enjoy and emulate the victory. By contrast, Lu Xun's post-1918 work internalizes the struggle and bitter challenges of a knight-errant, or xia, without any of the heroism. Rather than invite readers to partake in the joy of the inevitable upwards march of the human species, he challenges them to endure the struggles necessary for its facilitation on the page itself. Reading becomes the target of, rather than the vehicle for, science.

In essence, Lu Xun reverses the dynamic that informed Jules Verne's efforts. Verne

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[72] Liang Shiqiu, "Wenxue shi you jieji xing de ma?", location 1191.

[73] Lu Xun, "'Ying Yi' yu 'Wenxue de jieji xing", location 1219.

[74] Lu Xun, "'Ying Yi' yu 'Wenxue de jieji xing", location 1270.

presented readers with a curated collection of the most interesting discoveries in history, geology, geography, and other disciplines, then invited readers to join him in imagining where such things might go. The work of science is done, then the fruits are displayed in miniature for readers to see and, eventually, to narrate. In Lu Xun's later work, the reader becomes the variable in the equation, the subject of the experiment, and the wild creature under observation, all of which are expressive of the apparent chaos of reality apart from the precise and sterile explanations of science. His way of moving readers into this state is to pull apart the comfortable facilities in which they once functioned, facilities which his early translations served admirably to construct.

By so doing, he dismantled the essential components of the wuxia fiction he once mined for his translations. In his "hard translation," and in his original fiction, figures are outsiders with no wu, and no means of achieving any work greater than simply surviving. The most obvious example is the titular character to the classic novella *The True Story of Ah Q*, a figure of such transcendental buffoonery that he is ridiculed even by a louse-infested beggar in his village, and eventually meets his death in complete ignorance of why and how he came to this pass. One could not imagine a more complete contradiction of the wuxia hero.

Lu Xun dismantled genres, but even more interestingly, he sought to, if not dismantle, then at least frustrate, vernacular language itself. In a series of letters with Qu Qiubai in 1931 on Lu Xun's translation of Alexander Fedeyev's novel *The Flood*, Qu suggests that the real job of translation in their age is to aid in the construction of a "definitive Chinese vernacular" (juedui de baihua), which it can do by "helping us bring forth new diction, new phrases, rich vocabulary, and fine, precise, correct forms of

expression.[75] His definition of how precisely to define a "true" or "definitive" vernacular is simple enough on the surface: "So-called definitive vernacular is just what can be read aloud and understood".[76] It is, in other words, whatever people are currently speaking, whatever is "truly clear Chinese writing," something that is actually in use by Chinese people, "from what is spoken commonly by ordinary people all the way up to what is spoken in university lectures".[77] Qu seeks, in other words, a form of vernacular that is definitive for contemporary Chinese people, and not Chinese people in all other times. It is specific, and thus its major works will have to be judged by a very specific audience in turn, leading to a more precisely-targeted collection of texts to use in China's reform efforts.

Lu Xun both concurs and demurs. He is in agreement with Qu over the question of the modern Chinese vernacular's need to produce new forms, about which he writes, "Why not simply 'sinify' completely in our translations? My answer is that in not doing so, we do not simply create new content, but entirely new forms of expression...If I want to cure an illness, I believe it is best to consume something bitter, and by dressing up our writing in strange, outdated, unfamiliar, or foreign diction, we make something our own".[78] The "new forms of expression" under discussion are, of course, unknown at the time of composition. They can only be developed communally, with the translator

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[75] Lu Xun, "Guanyu fanyi de tongxin", in *Lu Xun zuopin jingxuan: Er xin ji* [Selected writings of Lu Xun: A halfhearted collection] (Kindle e-book. Liohai Publishers, 2009): location 1975.

[76] Lu Xun, "Guanyu fanyi de tongxin", location 1996.

[77] Lu Xun, "Guanyu fanyi de tongxin," location 2012.
[78] Lu Xun, "Guanyu fanyi de tongxin," location 2011.

pointing out the cracks in the edifice and inviting his fellow readers to join him in constructing something else. Lu Xun's work is thus open-ended, without a stated idea of what will define its future success, any more than an early hominid could have predicted the arrival of *homo sapiens.*

Lu Xun does not agree with Qu, however, on the question of what we might call the temporality of the vernacular in question. Where Qu calls for a vernacular that contemporary people actually use, and can understand immediately when they hear it read aloud, Lu Xun presses deeper into the renewing potential of translation. If the standard for "definitive" vernacular is what is spoken aloud in the present, he points out, then one is left with either a single local dialect that everyone is forced to learn (such as was largely common with the Beijing dialect in early 20th century Chinese literature), or else a "special" lingua franca that will inevitably have to draw in elements from the classical tradition in order to be understood by all. The ideal literary speech is, rather, that which is neither one thing nor the other:

> Now we must take elements from oral storytelling and remove those things that slip away from comprehension; we should chat, and remove what is sloppy, court the people's everyday speech and preserve what is relatively easy for all to understand, and by doing these things create a previously unknown creature. This vernacular must be living, and the reason it is living is because it is partly drawn from the everyday speech of the living masses, and partly from then on poured into their midst.[79]

The specific Chinese phrase that I have translated "a previously unknown creature" (*si bu xiang*) more accurately describes something that contemporary observers simply cannot name. It contains elements of many other objects, but is incapable of being fully associated with them and is therefore an anomaly. One of the values of such an object is

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[79] Lu Xun, "Guanyu fanyi de tongxin," location 2131.

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that it cannot be reduced to any one place or time, so those who use it are not its sole possessors. There is no question of where and when it originated, so it is capable of bridging thorny questions of local or regional politics. It is a *lingua franca* only if we can conceive of a *lingua franca* that is "drawn from the everyday speech of the masses" rather than unilaterally created and enforced by those with the know-how and power to do so. Furthermore, and most intriguingly, whereas a *lingua franca* is either the dominant language of a single group or a language that is made dominant, Lu Xun's conception of a living vernacular is neither. It is cyclical, dynamic, drawn from the people and instructing the people, with no clear notion of origin. People will both add to it and learn to speak it, but no one group will be able to claim authority over its management.

As one might expect, a vernacular on these lines has profound implications for communal identity, which Lu Xun believes to be important only when it is constantly changing. In his response to Liang Shiqiu, Lu Xun questions his interlocutor's claims of representation: "Liang Shiqiu believes that he represents all Chinese people, and that whatever he doesn't understand in these books is also incomprehensible to all other Chinese people".[80] Crucially, the basis of Lu Xun's argument is not in his own superior qualification as "the people's" representative, but rather in the very nature of reading communities, which are perfectly fluid entities:

> The existence of a 'we' by necessity implies a 'they' outside the we, and therefore, even though the New Moon School's 'we' assumes that my 'dead translation style will be gone before long,' we must assume the existence of readers who have read [my translations] without 'getting nothing,' and therefore my 'hard translation' exists in the midst of 'them,' and is distinct from 'dead translation'. I also am one of the New Moon School's 'them',

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[80] Lu Xun, "'Ying Yi' yu 'Wenxue de jieji xing'", location 1197.

because my style of translation and Liang Shiqiu's requirements are entirely different.[81]

No group membership numbers are discussed here. The entities he addresses are entirely abstract, as though in his critique he is unwilling to speak for others. Even readers of his own translations exist only as logical corollaries to the obvious idea that where there is a "we" there must also be a "they," terms that only have meaning in relation to one another, and lack any set of essential defining characteristics of their own. Reading communities are only identifiable negatively, with another group to define what they are not, and the moment they surpass that, they risk imposing on others a set of qualifications and reading protocols that they do not share. The only meaningful "we" is one composed of those seeking always to alter the boundaries of their territory, or even to erase the notion of boundaries altogether.

In effect, Lu Xun sought to establish a vernacular that was, from the standpoint of reader identification and circulation, not a vernacular at all. The result is what Wang Hui, quoting Takeuchi Yoshimi, saw as perhaps Lu Xun's most consistent value: "For Lu Xun, only 'permanent revolution' can break away from the never-ending repetition and cycle of history, and the one who maintains from beginning to end his 'revolutionary' spirit will inevitably become the critic of his comrades in the past…"[82] This revolutionary spirit adheres in his presentation of language as much as narrative. Only by never allowing the reader to be comfortable can any meaningful unity between readers be established, since it is as they struggle

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[81] Lu Xun, "'Ying Yi' yu 'Wenxue de jieji xing'", 1214.
[82] Wang Hui, "Dead Fire Rekindled," 11.

together that they become who they should be. In turn, the nation as understood as a community made possible by shared texts is destroyed and remade with each new encounter with the written word, readers learning to engage one another on ever-shifting ground. He shifts the focus from the written text to the one reading it. In this way, the Chinese reader in particular could be set free to participate in a true reform of Chinese society, one that both began and ended with the reader herself.

Conclusion

Ultimately this is the truly revolutionary gesture in Lu Xun's later work. His earliest translations began with a belief that readers could be reformed *en masse* through the intervention of the market. As with any reform effort, it is directed by one who has a clear notion of the goal. After 1918, however, the translator abandons that position in favor of something so new that he himself has not seen it. The translator insists that the reader stand alongside him, a co-creator of a new literary language and a new community to use it. By presenting the reader with what amounts to broken materials, the translator takes the textual simultaneity of Jules Verne's corpus and transforms it into what we might call linguistic simultaneity, wherein every participant in the exercise of language—speaker and listener, reader and writer—occupies a similarly flawed position and must work with others to find new common ground. Lu Xun's original compositions fill a similar role, intentionally troubling accepted literary tropes with the aim of challenging readers to create something new. The stories themselves make it clear that he was not expecting readers to come away galvanized for a specific fight, but rather challenged to resituate the battlefield to their own selves, homes, and

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communities. His undermining of familiar reading protocols is performed from within the midst of fellow readers, demonstrating how language and literature have always been, at bottom, a creation of those using them, not those with the power to impose them. His goal is unclear because for the reader, the end goal is always reading itself, and thus the apotheosis of Lu Xun's translation work is to give complete control to the reader.

CHAPTER III

FRANCE AS AESTHETIC SPACE IN ZENG PU'S TRANSLATION OF *NINETY-THREE*

Zeng Pu is something of an anomaly among late-Qing and early Republican translators. First, he was one of only a bare handful of notable translators who was proficient in the language from which he was translating.[83] Second, his translation style did not change significantly over the course of his career. There are changes made to most of his source texts, but remarkable linguistic fidelity that few of his contemporaries could match, even into the late 1920's, when he founded a final literary journal dedicated to French literature in translation before his death in 1927. Third, and finally, Zeng remained deeply committed to a single literary tradition—French—whereas most of his contemporaries took a more pragmatic approach, translating what seemed most likely to gain an audience, or most likely to impart a desired political view. Even more specifically, Zeng was a profound admirer of Victor Hugo, and would eventually come to translate nearly ten of Hugo's works. The first of these, and the one that will concern this chapter, was *Ninety-Three*.

The timing of Zeng Pu's translation and publication of *Ninety-Three* in 1912 provides the kind of back-story that appears to make an analysis of the text nearly redundant. Zeng, a successful civil service candidate who went on to specialize in French and then to begin translating French literature, worked on his translation throughout the

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[83] The rest made use of what Michael Gibbs-Hill calls "tandem translation": a practice whereby one person fluent in the source language makes a rough translation into Chinese, and then a second, more educated, person takes the rough translation and re-writes it into more elegant, oftentimes classical, Chinese.

final years of the Qing court's collapse.[84] Hugo's text concerns the increasingly difficult consolidation of republican rule in the years following the French Revolution in 1789, tracking a set of protagonists over the course of an uprising in Bretagne. Ultimately the values and commitment of the novel's republican protagonists lead to the royalist villain's redemption, and decision to sacrifice himself to save those who were once his victims. Zeng's translation was published shortly after the Xinhai Revolution toppled the Qing and established the Chinese Republic, and Hugo's republican tendencies would seem to make Zeng's decision to work on and publish the novel a clear and dramatic gesture of support for the fledgling new government.

Instead, Zeng's translation deploys a fascinating combination of conservative and reformative elements, altering Hugo's text so that it describes post-revolutionary France in such a way as to safeguard traditional Chinese thought. This was far from Zeng's first attempt to bring about a dynamic fusion of traditions. His first great literary success, and one of the late Qing's bestsellers, was the original novel *Flowers in a Sea of Sin*. The story, based on a real Chinese embassy to Russia from 1887-1890, concerns a pair of characters: Jin Wenqing and Fu Caiyun, the former a Confucian scholar and the latter his concubine. Over the course of a whirlwind journey, they experience the limits of their abilities—Wenqing's in the realm of traditional Confucian learning and Caiyun's in the realm of worldly practical skills—and return to China changed, but unable to depart from

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[84] Zeng's exposure to French culture came from the Qing court's first official diplomat to France: Chen Jitong. Chen was something of a sensation in France, both because of his command of the French language and his eagerness to embrace French customs. His promotion of French literature was particularly meaningful to Zeng because it came laced with a Chinese diplomat's first-hand experience. It is likely that many of the cultural and historical notes Zeng chose to include in his final translation came courtesy of Chen.

their structuring worldviews. As we will see shortly, Zeng did more than try to narrate a real historical moment; he also took a pair of archetypal characters in Chinese literature, narrated their exposure to an unfamiliar world, and brought them back for consideration by his readers.

Zeng's approach to cultural dialogue was thus rooted in, and in fact rarely departed from, the idea of travel. For him, nothing could be recognized for what it was until it had been to a foreign land, and that was equally true for characters, cultures, or bodies of literature. His interest in Victor Hugo was never in how Hugo's works could remake Chinese literature in a new form, but in how they could inform a more robust sense of the "Chinese" in Chinese literature. This is in fact Zeng's fundamental grounding idea for all translation: the point was not to present something wholly new to the Chinese reader, nor to completely domesticate it, but rather to drawn on elements of both to force the reader to move outside of his or her accustomed ways of reading, then revisit them with new eyes.

In this chapter I will begin with a discussion of the push-and-pull of Zeng's artistic thought by looking at one of the last essays Zeng ever wrote, in which he discusses at length his views on how a nation's artistic tradition must be made to travel if it is to ever become fully what it was meant to be. I will look at how his views in this essay sometimes agree with, and at others starkly diverge from, those of Victor Hugo, his biggest non-Chinese influence. Second, I will present a consideration of *Flowers in a Sea of Sin*, paying particular attention to that novel's canny deployment of certain vernacular fictional genres in the service of narrating a real historical moment. Finally, I will move to a consideration of Zeng's translation of *Ninety-Three*. Here, like Lu Xun and Lin Shu,

he was using translation as a means of modeling the way a significant body of Chinese readers was interacting with a certain genre, but in this case his source material was his own fiction. The commercial success of *Flowers* provided Zeng with a way to study how contemporary readers responded to a work of fiction that was at once familiar and unfamiliar, and he extended this in his translation.

In the process, he re-created the geopolitically specific entity of France as an imaginative space much along the lines of the countries to which Wenqing and Caiyun traveled in *Flowers*, which is to say it was demonstrably non-Chinese, but with protagonists that fit quite well in the Chinese literary landscape. Given that China's urban landscape was already undergoing dramatic changes at the hands of European powers, this notion of travel without leaving one's home was far from fantasy. In fact, Zeng's success testifies to this very dynamic being one of the most important in the publishing market.

There and Back: Zeng Pu, Victor Hugo, and the Scope of Literary Travel

In 1930, Zeng began publishing a journal of foreign works in translation called *Truth, Beauty, Virtue*. In the introductory article for the journal, Zeng explains why he chose these terms as a title, stating that "truth is the physical structure of literature…beauty is what organizes literature…and virtue is the goal of literature".[85] Truth, he writes, is the "events and emotions" the text contains, and there is no need to depict these "as they are in reality," but as they are in their ideal state. They must be "written within their proper limits, without imitation, deception, or exaggeration, but

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[85] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian" [A few thoughts from the editor], *Zhen mei shan* [Truth, beauty, virtue] 1 (1927): 1-2.

brought out faithfully in writing, and this will call the reader to make them a part of his imagination, and he will forget that he is reading words, and will simply call it 'truth'". [86] Even this single formulation betrays a debt to the French literature Zeng was reading, as it is almost a direct gloss of Germaine de Stael's (1766-1817) discussion of the three types of fiction in *On Literature*, the third of which is at the same time "invented and imitative", and is where "nothing is real, but where everything is true."[87] For De Stael and Zeng, literature cannot be purely realistic, in a journalistic or even historical sense, but must strive to inspire the reader to something higher than that to which he or she is accustomed, and this cannot be done by presenting the reader with reality as it always is. Indeed, Zeng would judge the modern vernacular fiction that had emerged after the May Fourth Movement in 1919 as being guilty in precisely this respect. There is, in such fiction, no room for reader development.

Where truth corresponds more to an ideal than a realistic depiction of the world, beauty in Zeng's trifecta is meant to be the motive force driving the reader to pursue that ideal. The writer must "through his craft…like a furnace that brings forth a living machine, or like a living being is brought forth from dead flesh and bones, bring forth spirit, fascination, liveliness, and feeling, and all that can move the heart and draw the eye."[88] Literature's unique power, as it was for Zeng's contemporary Liang Qichao, was its ability to excite interest and create a desire for something new. Yet Zeng's description

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[86] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian", 1.

[87] Germaene De Staël, *Écrits sur la littérature* (Writings on Literature) (Kindle E-Book, Librairie Générale Française, 2006)*,* location 3672.

[88] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian," 2.

goes a step further, suggesting in its association with industrial production that literature does not simply appeal to emotion, but actively synthesizes it, giving meaningful expression to otherwise chaotic elements. "Spirit, fascination, liveliness, and feeling" are brought forth through the creative process. There is also a partnership between reader and writer, since just as no furnace can contribute to the creation of a machine without the proper supply of materials, so too the work of literature cannot create "spirit, fascination, liveliness, and feeling" without the reader's pre-existing emotions, unformed and unarticulated though they may be. Beauty, then, is as much a productive as a motivating principle.

It is in his discussion of "virtue" (shan) that Zeng makes clear his efforts. He appears strangely non-specific in his description of virtue, saying simply that as literature's goal, it "hopes for what has not yet come, not for what is already here; it changes, and does not conserve; it contains experimental works, and not familiar ones...it does not cross the boundary line (jie xian) of true principles…"[89] This is so, irrespective of whether it pursues "political," "moral," "intellectual," or "social" questions.[90] Although Zeng offers no more details as to what exactly the goal is, he does suggest that the way towards achieving it lies through a meaningful interaction with non-Chinese literatures. This, he insists, is a universal truth of literature. "Had Milton never visited Italy, and there been influenced by Dante, where would he have gotten *Paradise Lost*…Had Goethe not visited the French countryside, from where would the success of

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[89] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian", 2.

[90] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian", 2.

Faust have come…"[91] Other great writers, from Hugo himself to the French Romantic

movement as a whole, are similarly framed. Each figure is seen as an outstanding

representative of their literary tradition, yet each arrived at that point by leaving, and

coming back to, that tradition. Thus, what we might call "literariness" is super-national,

and although Zeng will insist later that each nation has its own "essence," that essence

functions merely to provide a base on which innovation and change can occur, and in no

way overdetermines literary expression. "Truth, beauty, and virtue" are shared features

across national boundaries, and in fact ultimately only realized when those boundaries are

crossed.

Zeng's de-territorialization of literature, though, produces in its stead a way of

creating a literary re-territorialization, one where the work of literature is constituted by

its own unique topography and realms. These encompass a vast range of reading

experiences, and include both those that challenge and those that console the reader.

Zeng's favorite writer, Victor Hugo, set forth in dramatic tones a version of this

productive duality in his preface to *Cromwell* (1827), on the final page of which he writes:

> …the poetic form of our age is the drama; the nature of the drama is the real;
> the real results from a natural combination of two types, the sublime and the
> grotesque, that collide in the drama, as they collide in life and in the Creation.
> True poetry, complete poetry is in the harmony of opposites. Thus, it is time
> to say proudly…that everything which is in nature is in art.[92]

For Hugo, the sublime and the grotesque correspond to other, lower expressions like

beautiful and ugly, or high and low, which in previous eras were diametrically opposed.

Indeed, many of Hugo's contemporaries still held to this view. The "complete poetry,"

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[91] Zeng Pu, "Bian zhe de yi dian xiao yi jian," 7.

[92] Victor Hugo, "Préface de *Cromwell*" ("Preface to *Cromwell*") (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2002), 16-17.

though, cannot exclude either pole if it is to aspire to its true role. His usage of the term "harmony" is instructive, in that it argues for a space within which opposing elements can maintain their own specificity, but through the labor of a third party can be made to interact in such a way that something beautiful, not synthetic, results. For Hugo, this labor is imitative of nature, which sees no reason to separate the sublime and the grotesque.

In pursuing a project that occurs in nature, it might be argued that the work of art is purely imitative, a copy of the real thing and thus subordinate to it, which was a prominent line of thought in much of the literature in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Europe. Hugo's final line, though, "that everything which is in nature is in art" dispels that, both by insisting on the vast scope of art, and also for its independent status. His language maintains an important analogical distance between nature and art, since the sublime and the grotesque collide "as" they collide in life and in the Creation. Art functions *like* nature, but cannot be subsumed into it, and consequently the artist is always on a different plane from nature, just as the original Creator, God, figures in the Bible. Hugo makes explicit the divine, or at least quasi-divine, nature of the artist in his discussion of the different epochs of artistic creation. For primitive man, all was worship: "His lyre has but three strings: God, the soul, creation."[93] The simple-mindedness of such art—which is not consciously aware of its own nature—gives way to the artistic works of Greek antiquity, in which "social instinct succeeds the nomadic."[94] Here, humanity

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[93] Hugo, "Préface de *Cromwell*," 4.

[94] Hugo, "Préface de *Cromwell*," 4.

comes to see itself in terms of nations, and art begins to concern itself less with the gods than with ideas, events, and things of the human world. The next age "teaches man that he has two lives to live: one fleeting, the other immortal; one on the Earth, the other in heaven…the first departs from stone to arrive at human existence; the second departs from human existence to arrive at God."[95] It is here, writes Hugo, that we have the seeds of modern man, and the precise wording of that claim is important. The imprimatur of the modern work of art is nothing less than Godhood, both in terms of scope and ontology, for the artist is as concerned with, and distant from, creation as is God. The modern artist responds to the harmony of nature by harmonizing the previously disparate elements of the grotesque and sublime, but in so doing leads both artist and public to realize their position above creation, since only the Creator can reflect consciously on Creation.

Hugo's influence on Zeng's writing is clear, but it is important to emphasize a clear point of innovation on Zeng's part. Hugo's language is expansive to the point of hyperbole, stressing the near-infinite capabilities of the work of art. Zeng, although indebted to Hugo's approach, brings to bear a specifically geopolitical tone, stressing that no national literature ever fully distances itself from its home culture and language. Indeed, it is through distance that, in effect, it *conserves* its home, because the reader who has been pushed to encounter new things will encounter familiar ones with new eyes. Zeng's "complete work of art" is thus only made complete when it includes both reader and writer, the pedestrian world of familiar experience and the exalted one of the unfamiliar.

Zeng Pu's *Flowers in a Sea of Retribution*

[95] Hugo, "Préface de *Cromwell*," 7.

Before we look more closely at how this was achieved in *Ninety-Three*, though, it is important to consider the novel that made Zeng's reputation, and which is as close to a canonical piece as the late Qing produced: *Flowers in a Sea of Retribution*. Here we see the earliest gesture towards the kind of imaginary space that Zeng would later establish more fully in his translations. The novel's story is based on the Qing court's first diplomat to Russia, Hong Jun, during his term of service from 1887-1890, and the famous courtesan who accompanied him: Sai Jinhua. In the novel, these two become Jin Wenqing and Fu Caiyun, respectively, the former a classical scholar and *optimus* in the Palace Examination of 1868, and the latter one of his wives. Jin Wenqing is, throughout the novel, in way over his head. His immense erudition in the Chinese classical tradition renders him intellectually rigid and unable to adapt to the peculiar languages and circumstances of his journey, a particularly noteworthy case being the celebrated episode in chapter 12 where Jin pays an exorbitant sum for a shady character named Pierre to secure for him a map of the Sino-Russian border, only to discover far too late that the map gives much more territory to Russia. By contrast, Fu Caiyun is everything her bumbling husband is not: good with foreign languages, crafty, wise in the ways of the world, and possessed of a natural cynicism that means she is not often taken advantage of. She is also a lustful young woman and spends much of the journey in amorous encounters with Jin Wenqing's manservant, Ah Fu.

There is no reconciliation between the two characters, nor any point at which their skill-sets converge. Jin Wenqing's classical learning never makes him a useful diplomat, and Fu Caiyun's craftiness, although far more useful during the journey, is still no match for her more experienced foreign interlocutors, and eventually she comes to grief when

she and Wenqing return home and the latter dies. Scholars therefore read the novel in an essentially pessimistic vein, as the Chinese embassy's Western counterparts nearly always have the upper hand, and in several cases actively swindle their way to victory. Theodore Huters writes, "Neither Caiyun nor Wenqing proves up to the task of striking a happy medium that would accommodate the full spectrum of Western learning on the one hand and the adaptation of Chinese ideas to the new era on the other…It thus stands as a frustrating reminder of Chinese inadequacy in the face of an unprecedented challenge."[96] This view was widespread among Chinese scholars at the time, with various theories presented for the dominance of Western technology and politics. Yan Fu, in particular, blamed the lack of modern science and scientific methods for China's deficiencies, and his 1895 translation of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics* was meant to be a way out of the morass. The difficulty, though, was that for the most part, as in the novel, the dominant mode of scholarly analysis and propagation did not appear suited to the modern context presented by Europe.

For Huters, Caiyun and Wenqing present two sides of the same frustrating coin, one detailing the "superficial tricks" that Caiyun deploys to gain the upper hand from time to time in the novel, and the other the "noble tradition of Chinese learning" that renders scholars unable to adapt to the modern world. The former allows for limited success, but cannot possibly lead to the kind of widespread reform that a truly valuable engagement with the West would provide. It is superficial, and is fine for the purpose of talking oneself out of a difficult situation, but no more than that. Chinese classical

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[96] Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 179.

learning, on the other hand, has the reach and the history to make it a vehicle for true reform, if only someone could discover how to truly modernize it, but within the world of the novel, such a thing isn't possible. "Is there any way that the two kinds of knowledge represented by Wenqing and Caiyun can be brought onto the same horizon of understanding?"[97] Huters' semi-despairing question provides an interesting way forward in its suggestion that although the two sides are ultimately contradictory and impossible to reconcile, there might be a third option, a "horizon of understanding", that provides either a synthesis or at least a convenient cherry-picking of each side's essential elements. Of course, the question is posed negatively, suggesting that at least within the world of the novel, there is no way forward.

Yet within the scope of the text as a commercial artifact, one written to be circulated among a modern readership, the opposition itself is less important than why the characters are opposed. In this case, they are irreconcilable because the archetypal figures on which they are based provide no previous published examples of reconciliation. The erudite but naïve classical scholar is a familiar trope in the vernacular fiction of Feng Menglong, Ling Mengchu, Li Yu and many others, and is never a match for the savvy, usually overly-sexualized femme fatale character, an equally common feature in courtesan fiction, and most notably in classic works like *Plum in the Golden Vase* and Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from Liao Studio.* In fact, *Flowers in a Sea of Retribution* is so faithful to each type that there is little surprising in their actions. The Chinese reader who has read *The Book of Swindles* or a similar collection (and publishing figures demonstrate that this type of fiction was by far the most popular in the late Qing) will have expected

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[97] Huters, *Bringing the World Home,* 195.

the classical scholar in possession of a beautiful young wife to be a bumbling idiot, and in *Flowers* that is more or less born out. Similarly, Chinese readers would have been well-prepared to expect a young, beautiful woman with experience in the world to be wise in areas that allow her to get ahead, and this, too, occurs with little interruption.

That they are not reconciled, however, is certainly no reason to expect that a form of synthesis is not possible. In *Flowers in a Sea of Retribution*, where Caiyun and Wenqing's Chinese embassy travels to ports unknown (at least for them), the true innovation lies not in challenging readers to change the way they read, but rather extending the way they read into unfamiliar territory. The pair of archetypal characters are thrown into a wider world that is alien to them within the realm of the plot, and bizarre for the reader beyond it. Modern notions of character, culminating in Bakhtin's proposal of the "polyphonic novel"—in which characters are independent even of the narrator, and interact with readers beyond the plane of the narrative itself—stress a psychologically involved interaction between reader and character, so that the more the character engages the reader on a personal, emotional level, the better-sculpted that character appears. This also demands a level of surprise, with the reader never truly knowing what the character will do next.

Yet when the narrative revolves around archetypes, much of the appeal is the opposite: the reader goes along because he or she knows what is going to happen in general, and wants to see how it is played out specifically. In Zeng's text, this results in a fascinating combination whereby the expected happens, but in an unexpected place. The reader is ushered into a previously unknown world, but her chaperones, as it were, function precisely as expected, allowing the creation of a dynamic whereby the space is

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unfamiliar, but the way in which it is engaged is not. It is thus a gentle introduction to the outside world. Europe and Russia become the places of imagination where both the familiar rubs shoulders with the unfamiliar, thereby creating something new, all without eliminating what preceded it.

<div align="center">Zeng Pu's Alterations to Ninety-Three</div>

Zeng Pu's work is dominated by questions of space. Translations of foreign works allow for a nation's literature to visit other realms, and to return more assured of itself than before. Archetypal literary figures are taken abroad, placed in a physical realm where they have not previously existed. In both cases, there is an anchor in place, a sense of continuity grounded either in familiar characters or familiar styles. Foreign places are described directly in *Flowers in a Sea*, and more indirectly in translations, but the goal in both cases is to create a space within which Chinese readers can interact with things that are not Chinese, and then always return home. Zeng's alterations of Hugo's *Ninety-Three* exemplify this approach. He profoundly alters significant portions of Hugo's text, but close scrutiny of these changes demonstrates an effort to continue what he began with *Flowers in a Sea*, which in this case is to present a republican political world without the presence of specifically republican ideas. It is a republic made safe for Chinese visitors.

Although an exhaustive catalogue would yield a fascinating diversity of changes, three sections in particular stand out. The first, which is one of two extensive political allegories in the text, occurs early on in the novel, when Lantenac, the novel's royalist villain, is being ferried to Bretagne from exile in England by royalist supporters in France. Hugo spends a full chapter describing the damage caused by a poorly-secured cannon which comes detached and careens about the lower deck of the ship. Only

Lantenac's leadership and self-sacrifice prevent the situation from becoming a catastrophe, seemingly bearing out the royalist idea that the only effective form of leadership is that which comes from above.

Zeng leaves most of this section intact, but does make a few very subtle changes to the conversation between the captain and his first mate that sets up the thematic spine of the allegory. In Hugo's version, the captain observes, "I know more or less all the possible kinds of leaders: there are those of yesterday, those of today, and those of tomorrow."[98] Zeng truncates this to simply read, in his translation, "I know well all the so-called leaders we have today."[99] He also slightly alters another statement from the captain, which in the French observes that soldiers need only "a good leader, and gunpowder."[100] In Zeng's translation, this becomes, "soldiers need a leader the way a gun needs powder." In Hugo's presentation, a leader is defined by his place in history, and specifically by a concern for what has already been done, or what has yet to be done. Soldiers, in turn, need a good leader in addition to the powder that makes their work possible. It is not enough, in other words, simply to be able to kill; a soldier needs to know that the killing is in the service of something higher, and a good leader can provide that. For Zeng, however, a leader's function is peculiarly weaponized. It is not, as in Hugo's version, that soldiers need a good leader and gunpowder, but that a good leader is

[98] Victor Hugo, *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* (*Ninety-Three*) (Paris, Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle: 1928), 25.

[99] Victor Hugo, *Quatre-Vingt-Treize,* trans. Zeng Pu *Jiushisan nian* (Shanghai, Shanghai University Press: 2014), 16.

[100] Hugo, *Quatre-Vingt-Treize,* 16.

like gunpowder, which enables the violence of the gun without any pretense towards guidance or judgment. The leader enables the soldier to pull the trigger, but does not provide any moral context.

These reflections find resonance with a far more dramatic alteration of the original text later in the narrative. Hugo's most direct historical section, entitled "The Convention", depicts a gathering of the National Convention[101], and is arguably the thematic hub of the novel. Hugo describes it, in his trademark understated fashion, as follows: "There are the Himalayas, and there is the Convention. The Convention is perhaps the apex of history."[102] The next several pages take the reader on a tour of the meeting hall before the meeting itself even begins, describing everything from the meeting hall's architecture to the history of its busts. Just as with the cathedral in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, history is writ large in the stones of the building itself, and those meeting within are a continuation of it. The architecture presents a direct link between the radical republicanism of the French Revolution and the rest of French history, suggesting that the revolution was not a rupture with, but a continuation of, earlier political concerns. The meeting itself proceeds with verve and passion, while Hugo stresses the members' dedication to the public good. They debate policy, argue over how to serve the people in various parts of Paris and the country, and suggest ways to tamp down royalist resistance. The entire twenty-seven-page section is unabashedly

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[101] The short-lived National Convention (1792-1795) was appointed by the Legislative Assembly, after the deposition of Louis XVI, to draft a constitution without a monarch. It was radical for its time in insisting that its members be selected by an electorate composed of all French men 25 years of age and older, who were self-sufficient and living in their own domicile for at least a year.

[102] Hugo, *Jiushisan nian,* 163.

rapturous, and leaves the reader with no doubts as to the narrator's political convictions.

Zeng, by contrast, eliminates all but the very last page or two of the section, a brief epilogue in which Cimourdain, who amounts to the novel's hired gun, arrives to get the Convention's blessing to hunt down and eliminate Lantenac. The history grounding the actions of the Convention, the dynamic interplay of the Convention itself, the architecture of the meeting hall in which history is invoked in every corner, all are excised. It would be difficult to underestimate the importance of this editorial decision. "The Convention" is the only direct appearance of France's republican government in the text; all other references are second-hand, with one or another of the protagonists either invoking or condemning it from afar. Typically, this takes the form of violence. Lantenac seeks to overthrow the Republic, and both Gauvain and Cimourdain fight against him to protect it. The Convention in Hugo's text provides a monolithic, historically-consistent entity in order to make the violence legible as part of a broader narrative. Zeng eliminates that and leaves simply the violence. In fact, the only appearance of the Convention in Zeng's text, during which it deputizes Cimourdain and sends him after Lantenac, enables political violence. Like Zeng's earlier translation of the ship captain's statement to read "soldiers need a leader the way a gun needs powder," the vast truncation of "La Convention" suggests that the function of the leadership in Hugo's novel is to enable action, not moral guidance. The French Revolution has succeeded in wiping out the monarchy, but it has not been able to replace it, in Zeng's text, with an effective governing body. It exists merely to act, not to guide.

The second of Hugo's clearly allegorical sections is where we see Zeng bring his perspective most directly to bear on the question of tradition. Midway through the second

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half of the novel, in a larger "book" entitled "The Vendée", the newly-deputized Cimourdain arrives finally in Bretagne and makes contact with forces led by Gauvain, the young, idealistic republican hero who is also, in a characteristically Hugo-ian twist, Lantenac's nephew. They harry Lantenac and eventually have him penned in near a large manor house where, along with the bivouacked soldiers, the three children kidnapped by Lantenac are kept. As though to erase all doubt about the allegorical import of this section, which is otherwise entirely concerned with the violent confrontation of the two military forces, Hugo entitles it "The Three Children". The hub of the allegory concerns a peculiar series of actions performed by the children in the library where they are imprisoned with regards to a treasured book.

In Hugo's text, the children awaken and revel in the new day, despite the army encamped outside. They begin to play, and their games eventually take them over to a bookshelf, on which is set a folio edition of the works of St. Bartholomew open to an illustration of the saint. The eldest child, René-Jean, climbs a nearby chair and takes hold of the page. "Upon reaching this summit," writes Hugo, "he felt the need to do something impressive; he took the 'gimage' by an upper corner, and tore it carefully...he left in the book the entire left corner with an eye and a bit of the halo of the old apocryphal evangelist, and offered to Georgette the other half of the saint...".[103] René-Jean's brother, Gros-Alain, asks, "and me?", and his brother gives him the other half of the page. "Thus began the carnage," says Hugo, as René-Jean begins to tear out other pages from the book and hand them to his siblings, who proceed in their turn to shred them into smaller bits, joyfully tossing them into the air with the cry, "butterflies!"

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[103] Hugo, *Quatre-Vingt-Treize,* 115.

The specifically republican character of the allegory can be seen in the lack of any effective leadership among the children. René-Jean is the largest of the three children, and this allows him access to the book, but his impulses match those of his siblings. They want merely to play. As a result, they bring about the destruction of an important representative of religious tradition. The indiscriminate, and naïve, destructiveness of the children mirrors closely the mob rule that succeeded at various points during and after the French Revolution. Hugo's text carefully does not declare for or against the value of the book's contents, nor does it judge the children to be self-willed and malicious; the problem is simply one of ignorance. We might recall Hugo's enthusiasm for the National Assembly, which he describes both in terms of its connection to history and its dedication to public welfare. It was a representative assembly whose members were selected by their peers based on what were believed to be ideal characteristics. As a result, they represented the best parts of the French people, or at least of the French male population, suggesting both that the people themselves were capable of recognizing superior ability, and fundamentally desired to be led, if only by one of their own and not the member of a royal house.

Zeng does not translate the majority of this passage, and what he does translate is quite different indeed. When René-Jean climbs the chair and takes hold of the book, it is with none of the youthful curiosity and innocence of Hugo's description. Rather, he "grasped the book in his fists and, sneering at the saint with a furious glare, tore it in half, and in a moment half of the body rested in his fist, only an eye and a shoulder..."[104] Alain

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[104] Hugo, *Jiushisan nian,* 145.

asks after his share of the bounty, but whereas in Hugo's version René-Jean simply tears

out a page for his brother, with no comment or description, in Zeng's he cries out, "Woo-

ah! I was just about to give it to you!"[105] As René-Jean reaches the end of the available

pages and lets the book fall to the floor, Hugo's text simply comments, "giving is a form

of superiority, and Rene-Jean kept nothing back," but Zeng's launches into a long (for his

otherwise terse translation) commentary:

> Among all of humanity there is none more powerful than the one who is able
> to bestow gifts upon others, and those who have this power are either
> generous or stingy. René-Jean, in seeking to satisfy Alain's and Georgette's
> desire, had left nothing. Alain and Georgette loudly praised all of their elder
> brother's actions, not knowing in their praises that countless commentators
> had been destroyed, with not a sole survivor.[106]

Zeng's translation presents its protagonists in an entirely different light. Gone are the

innocent children whose actions, though certainly destructive, are carried out with no

malice or forethought. Gone, too, is a sense that the children's danger is in their not

understanding the import of their actions. Instead, the destruction of the book is instigated

and directed by a leader, René-Jean, who in Zeng's version is fully aware of the import of

his destructive actions. His sneer as he grabs hold of the book shows a level of spite

completely missing from Hugo's text, and is so peculiarly adult in its self-awareness that

one cannot help but read it allegorically. He is at one and the same time too young to be a

responsible leader, yet old enough to desire the power that accompanies leadership.

Zeng's translation does not go so far as to suggest that René-Jean is aware of the identity

of the saint whose image he is tearing up. We read only that he sneers at the saint before

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[105] Hugo, *Jiushisan nian,* 145.

[106] Hugo, *Jiushisan nian,* 145

tearing him out of the book, suggesting that the source of René-Jean's anger is not the saint in particular, but perhaps the age and vulnerability of the book in general. In any case, Zeng makes clear in the short commentary quoted above that René-Jean seeks power consciously through his actions. Giving is power, writes Zeng, and it was René-Jean's intention to satisfy his siblings by way of attaining that power. It is canny and calculating, and by depicting it as such, Zeng removes any option of reading the three children as innocent. The two youngest are led into destruction by someone who knows precisely how to draw them into his project, and they in turn give free rein to their desires.

Perhaps most intriguingly, whereas Hugo's word for the destruction is "carnage," Zeng's word is "reform" (gaige): "All the holy texts of history, the source of the river of knowledge...religion from ancient times to the present, all was destroyed in a matter of moments...(in) this so-mighty reform..."[107] Like René-Jean's sneer, it does not fit well into its context. It is also, for that reason, an interesting window onto the translator's notions of "reform" in general. It displays a profound skepticism that any project involving the destruction of a part of the tradition can be called reform. In the case of the tradition the works of St. Bartholomew represent, there is nothing left to reform. Something that is destroyed cannot be reformed, and the word in the text is jarring because it is abandoned on the page, with no further commentary or translation to allow it to function properly. Hugo's "carnage" provides a neat end to the episode, leading the reader to focus on the remnants of the destroyed text, but Zeng's "reform" points instead to the lack, the emptiness that lingers in the aftermath. The children in the former are effectively the people who, as with the careless sailor in the first allegory, are dedicated to, and

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[107] Hugo, *Jiushisan nian,* 146.

passionate about, what they do, but require a steady hand to carry it out because they are essentially ignorant about its full import, while in the latter case these same children are possessed of malevolence and self-consciousness, an active threat to tradition.

These three examples are emblematic of what appears to be either a frustrating lack of political focus or else a refusal to take sides. The allegory of the cannon is translated precisely, with the only changes serving to strengthen the power of the authority figure, what might be seen as a clear appeal to the preservation of the monarchy. The allegory of the three children deploys significant changes so as to, apparently, demonstrate the danger of allowing a single leader to dictate reform. Between the two, the entirety of a section dedicated to an elegy for republican government is effaced. Zeng appears to present the text in a number of different, and contradictory, guises, first siding with republican France, and then siding against it.

<u>France and Not-France: The National as the Aesthetic</u>

Whatever might be the resolution to this conundrum, it must take into account Zeng's abiding admiration for Hugo's work, as well as the pains he took to faithfully render much of the rest of *Ninety-Three's* French references. Most of the geographical locations in the novel, such as Saudraie and Argonne, in France are transliterated. Most character names are transliterated, as well, so as to keep as much of the sound of the original as possible. Zeng even goes so far as to provide transliterations and glosses of key French political figures like Marat and Richelieu in his footnotes, along with the occasional brief explanatory note. The opening page of the novel, alone, contains seven such footnotes offering transliterations of three different place-names, as well as four historical and cultural explanations. Clearly, then, Zeng's goal in effacing or changing

much of the rest of the novel was not motivated simply by a desire to eliminate all foreign content and make the text easy to sell.

Instead, Zeng's translation begs a different question, one suggested by his peculiar use of the term "reform" and explicitly argued in his 1927 essay: to what extent does the importation of foreign texts necessitate cultural change? Zeng's career would seem to suggest that it was at least possible, if not probable, that a Chinese scholar's interest in another culture's work could be motivated by a desire to ameliorate, rather than fundamentally alter, that culture's literary tradition. Recall that in his essay, he suggests that it is through contact with the foreign that a literary tradition becomes fully itself, capable of change without destruction, of improvement without reform.

He states this as well in a peculiar passage from the preface to *Ninety-Three*. Zeng writes, "Those with no religious thought can't read my *Ninety-Three*; those with no political awareness will not desire to read my *Ninety-Three*; those with no literary sensibility will not dare to read my *Ninety-Three...*"[108] Zeng's phrasing is curious, in that he appears to position his translation as a kind of apophatic experience: all we can truly know about it, before we read it, is what it is not. Those without "religious thought," "political awareness," or "literary sensibility" will not be able to engage the work well. There is an inherent promise of something to be gained through the reading of the text, but this is never spelled out. Rather, Zeng specifies what certain groups of readers must possess before they ever begin reading. The implication is that what they arrived with will be deepened or extended in some way, but not that it will be overturned.

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[108] Zeng Pu, "Zixu" [Preface], in Victor Hugo, *Jiushisan nian* 九十三年 [Ninety-Three], trans. Zeng Pu (Shanghai: Shanghai University Press, 2014).

In the same preface we find the passage cited in the beginning of this chapter, which has to do with "the way of the human" (ren dao), and which I suggested is peculiar in its attempt to fuse two seemingly disparate concepts. What qualifies the way of the human is, based on the rest of the novel and Zeng's other work, precisely this experience of a foreign influence as a means of amelioration. Contact with something foreign does not necessitate an elimination of the familiar. Hugo's influence looms large here, as the true novelist is able to include everything in nature in his work, so that even contradictory ideas, or for that matter an approach to translation that alters its source text, are perfectly acceptable.

This is particularly important with regards to the Chinese reader's encounter with France, which Zeng changes in some ways but preserves in others. In *Ninety-Three*, the Chinese reader is not required to leave behind China to travel to France nor, in fact, to convert intellectually to republicanism to experience life in a republic. It also, not coincidentally, presents France as a universal cultural arbiter far beyond what the European continent experienced because it is capable of vastly different kinds of encounters.

One of the things marking off Paris in particular as the capital of what Pascale Casanova calls the "world republic of letters" is that it symbolized, during the 19th century, "the Revolution, the overturning of monarchy, the invention of the rights of man—an image that would earn for France its grand reputation of tolerance with regards to foreigners and a refuge for political outcasts." [109] Indeed, it is in large part due to the

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[109] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres (The World Republic of Letters)* (Kindle E-Book: Editions du Seuil: 2008), 47.

literary romanticization of Paris as a site of all things revolutionary and modern that its "literarity" was established. This "city of 10,000 novels" as Balzac called it, was at once a creation of literature and the stamp needed to establish what literature was, a reciprocal relationship that deepened as the century wore on. It was, however, also highly particular. The French Revolution might have eventually become a matter of romance and near-mythology, but its defining moments occurred in places that could be seen by any visitor to the city. This, in fact, was a large part of its romantic appeal.

Yet Casanova also points out that that a double motion was involved in this romanticization. The specific events and places of the French Revolution inspired countless novels, stories, and poems, but these novels, stories, and poems extended the Revolution beyond its own borders. "This is why," writes Casanova, "historical chronology is less important here: the sites in Paris most commonly described are transnational and transhistorical. They are a measure of the form and diffusion of literary faith."[110] As Paris enters the pages of literature, in other words, it leaves the specific control of France and the French. It becomes a world literary capital, one that anyone can access through literature, and one in turn that any writer is free to occupy on his or her own terms. It becomes "the capital of those who declare themselves to be without nation and above any political law: artists." [111] One could say that by the time such novels as Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three* arrived in China, Paris in particular, and France more generally, was less important in its historical specificity that in its role as a site on which

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[110] Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres,* 52.

[111] Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres,* 55.

to imagine revolution in all its romantic capabilities. For at least a generation of readers, the Revolution was an event limited entirely to the pages of literature, and was thus as much a creature of imagination as of history.

The difference between the canonization of the French Revolution in European arts and letters, and its re-presentation in Zeng's (and eventually others') translation of French literature lay in the world the reader was drawn to imagine. The most celebrated European works of literature—both original and in translation—on France allowed the reader to imagine their own version of the capital of the world republic of letters, but no matter what the product of the imagination, the reader was still given access to France as a historically and geographically specific place. Zeng's Chinese readers could not possibly have been expected to make such a leap, since French presence in the Chinese media before 1900 was almost entirely limited to references in newspapers. The passage from historical particularity to literary universality was only really possible for those with some prior knowledge of France's reputation on the world stage. In place of this, Zeng cut around the historical particularity of the French Revolution and went directly to the idea of France as a universal possession, a site of imaginary engagement that did not require French negotiation or control to accomplish. The France that contains Bretagne and Argonne is not the France of the newspapers or the Treaty Ports, but of the novel in hand. The historical France is in fact the fictional France, but that does not make it any less real.

Zeng Pu's France requires no ultimate decision or reconciliation. It is quite beside the point whether his readers ever come to a "correct" knowledge of the country since, among other things, the novel's preface makes clear that no such goal is in view. Always

in Zeng's plan for the translation is the eventual return of the reader to a domestic literary space after a journey through the foreign world of the text. His translation presents France as a space that a Chinese reader will desire to enter, and then leave. Ultimately, unlike the three children in the library in either Hugo's original or Zeng's translation, the goal is neither to preserve or destroy tradition, but to expand one's experience of it.

CHAPTER IV

BUSINESS, BUT NOT AS USUAL: LIN SHU'S TRANSLATION OF ALEXANDRE

DUMAS FILS' *LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS*

Lin Shu's 1899 translation of Alexandre Dumas Fils' *Lady of the Camellias* marks a departure from the other two chapters of this dissertation because it deals with a genre common to both the Chinese and French literary traditions: fiction about prostitutes generally, and courtesans specifically. The genre had numerous examples running across several centuries in both China and France when Lin published his translation, one of many reasons why it became a runaway bestseller, and arguably broke the necessary ground for all future translations of non-Chinese fiction.[112] But of course its popularity was also due to at least some of the same reasons such novels were popular in France. Illicit sexual relationships in literature have always provided something of a safety valve for readers who, safely ensconced in their imagination and out of view of the rest of society, are able to vicariously enjoy those acts forbidden them by their culture's dominant moral system.

One of the interesting points of intersection across the Chinese and French incarnations of the genre is the mediated nature of desire in the narrative. In nearly all cases, the putative object of one or more protagonists' desire—the body of the courtesan—actually serves to point the protagonist beyond it to the true object of desire, which in most cases is the right to belong to proper society. Rather than satiate her patron's sexual desire, the courtesan transfigures it into a desire for the dominant social,

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[112] Chen Pingyuan, *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo de qidian* [The Origins of Modern Chinese Literature] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005), 30.

moral, or economic system he has fled in order to be with her. This she does by desiring

her patron's society for herself, an ultimately doomed emotion since the invisible barrier

which the genre erects between their social classes guarantees she can never realize her

goal. It is in large part the fraught nature of her desire that awakens her patron's interest

in his own society.[113]

When it is a case of a translator from a linguistic community far from a cultural

center—which was China's situation during the 19th and early 20th centuries—the

translator of such tales takes on a role analogous to the courtesan herself. The translated

narrative is configured to appeal to the reading public's desire for a certain kind of story,

but once this desire is satiated, the reader is then redirected to the true object of desire,

[113] Examples abound for the dynamic I suggest. The obvious starting point—a novel which functions as a set piece in Dumas' *Lady of the Camellias*—is Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, the story of a young nobleman, the Chevalier des Grieux, who forfeits his family title and wealth to run away with the novel's titular character on her way to a convent. Manon's desire for luxuries, which des Grieux cannot always support, leads her to prostitution. The two lovers eventually end up in New Orleans and, when des Grieux's appeal to the governor to allow him to properly wed Manon is rejected, the Louisiana countryside, where Manon dies. Des Grieux then returns to his family. Here the mediation is straightforward: Manon desires wealth and status, not true love. Des Grieux arguably desires the reverse, and when that is revealed as impossible, he must return to what he knows, on the arm of an old friend, Tiberge, who is the true representative of their class and the only figure who has stood by him.

Interestingly, in the French tradition, prostitute fiction often models a kind of negative mediation. Zola's *Nana,* for example, is effectively the story of a prostitute who arouses such passions that her patrons (or victims) are unable to ever turn back to their own society. Blind to the kind of status and power she truly desires—which is provided by their class, not their love—and unable to learn from it, they end up in ruin or death. Edmond de Goncourt's *Young Elisa* tells the story of a young woman who turns to prostitution to escape the awful home into which she was born. She falls in love with a soldier but, when he tries to rape her in the Bois de Boulogne, she murders him and spends the rest of her life in prison. Her lover, as with Zola's tragic figure's lovers, is insensible to the better life he represents for her. In both novels, the titular character's desires lead, not to the kind of reunion seen in *Manon Lescaut*, but to the corruption of her lovers, who in effect move away from their class to that of the prostitute.

which the translator insists, through changes made to the text, is the culture that originated the text.

Lin Shu's translation is a mediator in its own right, demonstrating to the genteel, educated reading public to which he first marketed the book how to desire a seemingly scandalous narrative in a chaste way. This he does by altering enough of the language so that the novel is less about the romantic love of European convention and more about the social propriety of traditional Chinese relationships. The novel thus becomes a bridge between two very different publishing markets: vernacular fiction, still considered highly vulgar even in the 19th century, and the refined, genteel world of the educated Confucian scholar, which had little place for such narratives. Lin alters the original novel so that the core narrative of spiritual salvation, which is supposed to make possible the otherwise forbidden love of a young aristocrat and a courtesan, is completely eliminated. In its place is set a frank pursuit of individual gain by both parties, either for sexual excitement or social advancement. By removing the possibility of either redemption or true love, the novel's sexual escapades become something a good deal more acceptable for genteel Chinese readers. In the process, Lin Shu presents France as a place with a common moral grounding as China, as well as an environment within which the pursuit of individual gain is acceptable. Unlike Lu Xun's appeal to French industrial might in his translations of Jules Verne, Lin's translation makes France truly desirable.

This was as much a personal as professional goal. Lin had been educated in the imperial examination curriculum, and was a staunch proponent of traditional Chinese learning. His earliest literary efforts were geared towards the publication of new versions of classical Chinese literature. In 1897, he published a book of original poetry called *New*

Music Bureau Poems from Min County, a collection of reformist-minded pieces promoting everything from education for women to the expansion of Chinese industry.[114] He only considered translating Dumas' novel as a way to cope with the death of his wife later in 1897. Even then, the language in the novel is still resolutely classical in tone, and would remain so for most of his publishing career. His translation of *Lady of the Camellias* demonstrates a profound desire to bring in new stories to China without losing its traditional values or literary styles. That his efforts were hugely successful is indicative of the fascinating plurality of markets coming together in the late-Qing publishing scene.

In what follows, I will begin by discussing the idea of mediated desire in the courtesan fiction of China and France. I will then look at how this mediating function plays out in *Lady of the Camellias*, and how Lin Shu redirects it. Then I will discuss how Lin Shu adapts this dynamic by leaving out a key narrative thread that, when excised, allows for the union of a traditional Confucian moral system with the seemingly incongruous demands of global print circulation.

<div align="center">René Girard and Mediated Desire in Literature</div>

In literature generally, and in narratives centered on desire in particular, desire is never a spontaneous experience. It is always, or almost always, mediated by a third party, someone who instructs the protagonist of the tale how to truly to desire the object of his or her affections. René Girard calls this "triangulated desire," and differentiates between two approaches: external and internal mediation. Girard explains the difference this way:

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[114] Michael Gibbs-Hill, *Lin Shu, Inc.: Translation and the Making of Modern Chinese Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

"We shall say *external mediation* when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers…internal mediation when this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other."[115] Don Quixote is, for Girard, the exemplar of external mediation, since the Don's dedication to the fictional Amadis of Gaul precludes any actual contact.[116] Most narratives involving romantic jealousy or envy tend towards the latter, such as Julien Sorel in Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, since the rival/mediator and the subject will likely come into contact during the course of the narrative.

In the case of external mediation, as Girard comments about Cervantes, "the mediator is enthroned in an inaccessible heaven and transmits to his faithful follower a little of his serenity."[117] It is also the case that the mediator never changes, nor requires change. Don Quixote's tragicomic adventures in pursuit of Amadis' ideal do not ever essentially alter his character, since his goal will always remain perpetually distant and resistant to change. Much of the comedy of Cervantes' narrative derives from the various interpretations made of Amadis by the Don, in attempting to bring him closer to the living world just as the Don tries to leave it. He can only imagine what his mediator might have done or said in the same situation, which is inevitably ridiculous, and only the

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[115] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 9.

[116] Amadis of Gaul was the titular character of a multi-volume series that was one of the most popular chivalric romances of its day. It was also, not coincidentally, Don Quixote's favorite work. Much of the humor of Cervantes' novel comes from the ways in which the Don consciously tries to emulate Amadis and falls short.

[117] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel,* 8.

creation of Don Quixote's own mind.

Internal mediation in the modern novel of Stendhal's age arguably flips this idea on its head, since in Julien Sorel's case, it is possible to attain that which one's mediator models. Girard writes that "there is less of that divergence between the worlds of disciple and model which makes a Don Quixote or an Emma Bovary so grotesque," but this is, if not an illusion, that at least a misapprehension. The assumption in Stendhal's case is that a character like Julien Sorel vies primarily with a romantic rival for the right to possess the object of his affections, but of course the central tension in the narrative is never relieved. This is because the object of affection is actually changed over the course of the narrative. "The mediator's prestige," writes Girard, "is imparted to the object of desire and confers upon it an illusory value. Triangular desire is the desire which transfigures its object."[118] The subject's fascination with the object of desire, which the narrative claims to satisfy, is misplaced; in point of fact, the primary fascination is with the rival himself, and the narrative only truly makes sense, from Girard's point of view, when we understand that the rival and the mediator are one and the same. In vying with Monsier de Rênal, Julien Sorel also secretly strives towards him, and in displacing him he only deepens his fascination. Thus, although Amadis was a clearly impossible mediator to emulate because of his material distance from the Don, Julien Sorel's mediators are equally distant, albeit in a different way, because the object that brings them into Sorel's sphere is so changed over the course of time that the rivalry can only change with it.

There is a crucial element of creation in both cases. The subject who makes reference—whether explicitly or implicitly—to an external mediator gestures always to

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[118] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel,* 17.

an imaginary figure, one who resides in a realm so far removed from lived reality that there can be no question of reaching them. In the case of internal mediation, as the object of desire changes, so too does the mode of mediation, so that by necessity the mediator is as protean as the external mediator is distant. In both cases, the subject must effectively create the terms of the mediator's engagement, since those terms cannot ever be transmitted by the external mediator, and will always change in the case of the internal. Thus the mediator is always, to some degree, as much the creation of the subject as a figure in her own right.

Contagion and Containment in French Courtesan Stories

The significance of this aspect of mediated desire lies in how it allows us to understand courtesan fiction in China and France, both of whom have a long history with the genre. In all cases, the flow of the narrative centers on the interaction between a protagonist and a courtesan or prostitute, but the thematic core suggests that the latter is not the object of desire, but its mediator. In the vast majority of these stories, the courtesan or prostitute is sequestered from proper society, and her interactions with the protagonist merely serve to reinforce the barrier between them. The protagonist learns implicitly from his female interlocutor the solidity of the system of moral values that keeps them separated, and learns even to desire them. The barrier between them is always a social creation, designed to ensure a bare minimum of cross-contamination. Yet this rarely takes the form of outright destruction, since the issue is not truly transgression, but containment.

In France, this was an institutional decision. In 1836, just weeks before his death, Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet published an exhaustive study of prostitution in Paris,

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relying on surveillance data, medical cases, registration information, and arrest reports. Prostitutes had been heavily regulated for decades, but Parent's report contributed "scientific" support for the regulatory system, putting it beyond the reasonable doubt of that era by relocating it to the realm of the empirical. His report underscored for authorities the crucial importance of collecting all prostitutes into *maisons de tolérance* where they could ply their trade under the watchful eyes of the state, a system that had been in place for several decades by the time the study was published.

The report's reasoning placed at the center the supposed contagion of the prostitute, her ability to insinuate herself into good company with no one the wiser until it is too late. It is not something one can simply train away, either, as though the contamination were simply a matter of environment. Parent writes, "A good number of erstwhile prostitutes return to society. They surround us, they penetrate our homes, into our households. We are constantly exposed to the possibility of confiding our most cherished interest to them."[119] Parent's language, redolent with overtones of contagion, is expressive of the climate of fear and disgust that arose among the upper classes of Paris during the 1832 cholera epidemic, where a disease that began in the slums found its way into every corner of the city, and the once impenetrable barriers between low and high classes, both in their moral and geographical specificities, were rendered porous.

Novels in the period frequently played off of this dynamic, ultimately resolving it and restoring the previously porous barrier. A prime example is the figure of Fleur-de-

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[119] Quoted from Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 37.

Marie in Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris*, one of the bestsellers of the era. Fleur-de-Marie is first encountered in the Cité section of Paris, a squalid, diseased area where, in 1832, the cholera epidemic that killed over 18,000 Parisians claimed its highest toll. This is not coincidence. As Charles Bernheimer notes, prostitution was described analogously with disease in print.[120] "Thus," writes Bernheimer, "her commercial sexuality is associated…with the organic rot of working-class life, an association that includes contact with the great center of Parisian decomposition, the Montfaucon dump…and also includes dread of the final disarticulation awaiting the corpses of prostitutes in hospital dissection rooms."[121] Fleur-de-Marie is presented according to type: someone whose profession and origins are equally filthy, and who is a figure of morbid fascination and fear.

The story goes on to present her as one who, although having given her body over to sinful vice, is not possessed of a sinful nature. Rodolphe, the novel's savior who will eventually be revealed as her father, recognizes her inner worth, and works to redeem her by relocating her to the countryside, in whose bucolic pleasures she will find peace and, hopefully, salvation. Her contact with local clergy and religious villagers convicts her of her sins, but in so doing also reveals to her that the virtuous and beautiful life to which she aspires can never be had. She will always be aware of her contamination, and the closer she gets to either true love or true redemption, the more pain she suffers by the knowledge of its impossibility. She ends up in prison, having been recognized, once back

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[120] Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 47.

[121] Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute,* 47.

in Paris, as someone on the police files as a prostitute.[122] In Saint-Lazare prison, she succeeds in reforming the most notorious female inmate, La Louve (the she-wolf), whose aggressive sexuality is eventually tamed and turned to the best possible end: the decision to settle down with a husband on a plot of land in Algeria. Marie's eventual death, either because of or simply along with her guilt, is as expected as it is unfortunate.

The prostitute in Sue's novel is almost explicitly a mediator, one whose job is, in desiring to possess a place for herself in proper society, illustrates to others the value of that society. Yet in this, she becomes in effect Rodolphe's rival, since as Parent and others noted in their reports, if once a former prostitute can insinuate herself successfully into such circles, it points out their arbitrariness. Either she can find a home there, or Rodolphe can, but they cannot both do so together. Her desire for such society in effect transfigures it, from a place which Rodolphe is sure will accept her kind, penitent spirit, to one defined in large part by the exclusion of people like her. Rodolphe might mourn, but he still rejoins his world, changed as it is through his encounter with Fleur-de-Marie.

She is, in fact, only a part of society when she remains on the other side of a wall, whether that be her youth in the *cité* region of Paris, or in a prison. Remark that her most positive contribution—the conversion of La Louve—occurs in prison, after being recognized by the authorities. Once back under the watchful eye of the state, as the person she was originally labeled, she is able to do more. Similarly, La Louve only

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[122] Prostitutes had been closely regulated since at least the time of Napoleon, but following Parent-Duchâtelet's 1936 two-volume study, prostitutes were required to ply their trade in *maisons de tolérance*, where they could be watched by police. Prostitutes had to register with the *Bureau des mœurs* (literally "Bureau of morals"). Fleur-de-Marie's recapture results from her registration in the Bureau.

attains some measure of redemption when she flees not only prison, but French society itself. She cannot hope to redeem herself and join the rest of society, so the next best option is flight.

The narration itself functions as a safe barrier. It constructs walls between Fleur-de-Marie and other characters, but also forms a buffer zone between the world of the demimonde and the genteel French reader titillated by its excesses. Bernheimer comments, "The destabilizing force of the prostitute's erotic body can be safely evoked, if only in disguised or displaced manner, because the narration is structured to contain and discipline her unruly energy."[123] Writing itself, in this case, becomes a safe means by which to expose the genteel reader to the horrors of a moral underclass, since it was possible to imagine it in all of its sensual degradation, then see it placed safely away on a shelf.

Honoré de Balzac's *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans,* a loving prostitute story that Balzac grudgingly admitted was his attempt to follow in Eugène Sue's footsteps, and hopefully financial success, presents us with a slightly different understanding of the prostitute's mediating role. Balzac's is a story of failure in which the young patron of a prostitute is unable to correctly understand the model of desire presented him, so that rather than look to the greater values and goals of his own class, he falls away from it to the prostitute's own level. Neither arrive at their goal, because the prostitute's mediating function can only ever point one way: to the society she desires but cannot have. The inability to learn from that desire leads to destruction.

In the novel, the young Lucien de Rubempré agrees to follow the guidance of

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[123] Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute,* 52.

Vautrin, a supposedly experienced man of the world in order to obtain success in Paris. While there, though, he falls in love with the prostitute Esther van Gobseck, and she with him. In order to keep things under control, Vautrin locks Esther away in a house in Paris. She is spied by the Baron de Nucingen, however, and he in turn falls for her. Vautrin and Lucien decide to work the situation to their advantage, hoping to use the wealthy Nucingen to pay off their debts and buy back some family land. However, after making him wait for months, Esther gives herself to Nucingen, after which she kills herself. Lucien and Vautrin are arrested under suspicion of murder. In prison, the guilt-ridden Lucien kills himself, while Vautrin manages to secure his own release.

Balzac's novel effectively takes Sue's concept a step further, asking what might happen if, instead of serving as a rather implausible redeeming angel, Rodolphe had fallen for Fleur-de-Marie. The obvious complications of such a union are the fodder for Balzac's narrative, which effectively destroys both sides of the romantic relationship because they have committed themselves to something that cannot be. Like Fleur-de-Marie, Esther van Gobseck's downfall begins when she appears close to attaining something that is manifestly impossible: the true, committed love of a member of polite society.

In the opening scene of the novel, a group of dandies, "emeritus flaneurs," their wives, and other associated socialites are at a masquerade. Lucien dashes off after someone in a domino mask, and the men in the group speculate that he is in fact chasing after Esther van Gobseck, popularly known as "La Torpille" (the Torpedo). One member of the group, Lousteau says, "She seems to have a magic wand with which she can unchain brutal appetites otherwise violently suppressed among the kind of men who still

have a heart for politics or science, literature or art".[124] His friend Bixiou responds, "The

Torpedo is infinitely better than all that: you've all been her lovers, more or less, but none

of you can say she has been their mistress; she can always have you, and you can never

have her."[125] This far, there is no particular problem, because it is accepted that a member

of the lower classes could arouse the base passions that define that class. There is, to be

sure, a certain degree of resentment because van Gobseck is in such control of her art that

none of those with whom she becomes involved are in a position to master her, but this is

a sentiment that still leaves no room for class transition. Van Gobseck might be an adept

prostitute, but in this brief exchange there is no question that she will ever be more than

that.

The breaking point, given the reader at the outset of the novel, is the change that

has come over her. The reason none of the characters are sure the domino-masked figure

they see is Esther van Gobseck has less to do with her mask—since the men in the group

appear quite equal to the task of recognizing her body—than with her comportment.

What masks her is the true love that is visible between her and Lucien. The narrator

gushes:

> She was under the heavenly vault of Love, like the madonnas of Raphaël
> under their gilded oval…the fire of her gaze left the two holes of her mask
> and shone in the eyes of Lucien, and the gentle shudder of her body seemed
> to move in concert with her lover…The innocence of a virgin and the graces
> of a child betrayed themselves beneath the domino…Lucien and his beautiful
> domino brought to mind those angels busy with flowers or birds, and which
> Gian-Bellini's brush put under images of the Virgin Mother; Lucien and this
> woman seemed to belong in a fantasy, which is above art as cause is above

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[124] Honoré de Balzac, *Oeuvres complètes* (*Complete Works*) (Kindle E-Book. Arvensa Editions, 2005), Location 107726.

[125] Balzac, *Oeuvres complètes,* location 107732.

effect.[126]

Crucially, Vautrin later attempts to "redeem" Esther, ostensibly so that she can present herself to Lucien cleansed and pure from her past sins. Posing as the abbé Carlos Herrera, he inculcates in Van Gobseck the same self-denying lessons imparted to Fleur-de-Marie. He urges her to reject the body entirely, and look to the spiritual realm instead. In this way, at least in God's eyes, she will be a virgin once again.

In reality, it is not love, but possession, that is the goal of the enterprise. As was made clear at the masquerade, a prostitute capable of being involved in a committed, equal relationship is an impossibility. Bernheimer points out that "The loving prostitute exemplifies the renunciation of a predatory female sexuality in submission to paternal Law."[127] He sees Vautrin's underhanded efforts as being calculated to overcome the resentment Balzac describes at the masquerade, but also eventually to become a commodity herself, under the exclusive possession of Lucien.

While she most certainly has been "tamed" in some way, Bernheimer is incorrect in his judgment that her ability to arouse animal passions is the primary threat. To be sure, an upper class subject to the sexual wiles of the demimonde is problematic, and ostensibly that is the stage on which Balzac's drama takes place, but ultimately this is only a problem if it diverts one of its members—like Lucien—from being productive members of society. Underneath this is the far more insidious threat of real contamination, of the prostitute arousing, not animal passion, but the true love that is based on respect as much as attraction. Vautrin's "conversion" of Van Gobseck does not

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[126] Balzac, *Oeuvres complètes,* location 107782.

[127] Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute,* 52.

lead to a truly spiritual relationship based on something besides sex, but to a physical

relationship based on the exclusive possession of Van Gobseck's body. In other words,

he removes the possibility of mutual love, which might have led to not only Lucien's

downfall, but also the realization of the truly porous and arbitrary nature of class

differences.

Van Gobseck's mediation is comparable to Fleur-de-Marie's. Both seek more

than their stations will allow, and seek spiritual redemption as a way of attaining it.

Where Rodolphe keeps his distance, and sees the apparent dignity of his society through

Fleur-de-Marie's impossibility of attaining it, Lucien is contaminated by his involvement

with a prostitute whose love is the real threat. The latter seeks, through Esther's physical

commitment to him, to become the productive member of his class whose threat Vautrin

ostensibly sought to remedy, but he is cavorting with someone whose desire to rise above

herself is ever-present and uncured. His destruction is as inevitable as is Rodolphe's

victory.

It should be pointed out that in these and other such examples from the genre in

France, while one or another character may momentarily appear to cross the barrier

erected between them, the existence of that barrier is never questioned. It separates

classes, and affects their actions, since in the prostitute fiction genre, either the patron or

prostitute or both seek to transcend it. It is the narrative spine of the genre. Without it, the

18th or 19th century French reader would have been faced with an anarchic tale whose

entire moral universe was relativistic, and whose characters were animated by wholly

unidentifiable motives. The upper classes' great fear, as we have seen, was not the

possibility of contamination by the lower classes, but rather their successful integration,

since that would prove the purely arbitrary nature of any class. With a barrier in place, upper-class readers could look with pity or even sympathy at those striving for the better life their own, higher, class represented, without fear of a true breech occurring.

<center>Through the Looking-Glass: Chinese Courtesan and Prostitute Tales</center>

Unlike most of the examples in the French tradition, Chinese courtesan and prostitute tales are much more willing to problematize the idea of a barrier between patron and prostitute. Of particular importance to our understanding of Lin Shu's translation is the notion of the symmetry that such a barrier presupposes. In Chinese prostitute fiction it is often the case that the pair of lovers—or the prostitute/patron pair at any rate—pursue different goals, according to their interests. Sometimes this has the result of the prostitute not merely modeling a proper desire for her counterpart's society, but actually enacting it for him. In other cases, one character's strategy (usually that of the prostitute or courtesan) is revealed only later in the story as having been planned well in advance of anything her patron has set in motion. The barrier between them still exists, but since it is often the case that the prostitute, not the patron, is the one possessed of all the narrative's financial and mental resources, the reader is left wondering why the barrier even matters. In addition, if each character follows an independent agenda, then it is possible for them both to succeed in completely different ways, almost as though the barrier separated two distinct stories rather than a conjoined pair.

One such tale is "Painted Wall", from Pu Songling's 1740 collection *Strange Tales from Liao Studio*, one of the bestsellers of the Qing. In the story, a pair of friends, Meng Longtan and Provincial Graduate Zhu, travels together to visit a monastery. In the main hall, flanking a statue of the Zen Master Baozhi, is a pair of extremely lifelike

<center>109</center>

murals. Zhu notices, amongst the many fairylike beings in the painting, one "with unbound hair, a flower in her hand and a magically smiling face."[128] He stares at the image until he is somehow transported into the image itself, where he and the celestial maiden cavort for two days, after which the other young women around joke about how Zhu's celestial woman is no longer a maiden, but still wears her hair up like one. She therefore dutifully pins it up. Before they can continue their liaison, though, a guard demands to know if there is a human in the woman's room. She insists there isn't, then leaves to placate him. Zhu hides under the bed.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the painting, Meng is wondering where his friend is, to which the monk replies, "Not far from here." The monk then taps on the wall and asks, "What has kept you so long, sir?"[129] Instantly, Zhu is visible in the painting, and then drifts out of it into the real world, where he reports having heard a banging like thunder while hiding under the bed, which called him back. The men look at the painting, where the celestial woman can now be seen with her hair up.

Particularly important is how the story reverses, as Judith Zeitlin points out, the economy of viewing that accompanies episodes of artistic appreciation in most stories: rather than depict the viewer gazing at the painting, Pu depicts the painting gazing at the viewer, with the celestial maiden's gaze appearing first in the narrative.[130] It is the

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[128] Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (Liaozhai zhiyi), trans. John Minford (Kindle E-Book. London: Penguin Books, 2006), location 775.

[129] Pu Songling, *Strange Tales,* location 775.

[130] Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 185.

uncontained nature of feminine sexuality that draws Zhu on by provoking his desire.[131]

Zhu is snared, his will taken away, in a textbook example of the effects of an excess of

yin energy.[132] The celestial maiden's sensuality is powerful enough, even in static form,

to compromise the physical barriers between different realities. Pu's description of the

celestial maiden itself functions cathectically, drawing the reader's gaze as much as

Zhu's, and then plunging them both into the painting.

The monk's intervention is also intriguing because, although he can impact the

world beyond the painting, his gestures are distorted. When he flicks the wall, Zhu hears

it as "a banging like thunder," loud enough to summon him back. Zhu can hear, but he

cannot see, just as, on the other side of the painting, Meng and the monk can see, but not

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[131] The matter of male and female sexual energy in Chinese culture is one with a long and well-documented history. Without entering into a full treatment of the topic, Chinese tradition associated untamed, powerful forces with women's bodies. Maram Epstein notes that "the Chinese narrative tradition identifies women with the messy biological processes of their bodies more closely than men and uses effluvia to naturalize the female body as a site of transgressive desires" (1999, 36.). These desires are transgressive in a particularly physical way, since they quite literally arise from within to find expression without, visible to the otherwise self-contained gaze. The woman's inability to contain her bodily fluids was seen as indicative of an unbalancing effect, one that had the potential to overcome masculine containment as well. "Medical and folk traditions," writes Keith McMahon, "attach sinister power to women by imputing the harmful, sometimes demonic, influences of the pollutions of childbirth…the woman is in effect shrewish by default, simply because of her supposed innately superior capacity." (1995) The woman will always dominate, in other words, if her energies are not properly contained by the internalization, through ritual, of a Confucian moral system.

[132] The system of *yin* and *yang* energies relies on balance, and much of the drama in Chinese literature derives from an imbalance in the system, with either the active male (yang) or the passive female (yin) force in the ascendant. Feng Menglong's classic 1620 story "Jiang Xingge Reencounters His Pearl Shirt" (jiang xingge chong hui zhen zhu yi) is a particularly accomplished example, as two different husband-and-wife pairs trade off dominance with ruinous results. The only character at the end of the story to have what we might call a "happy ending" is a virtuous wife who is afforded more children and a happy marriage.

hear. The barrier between the two will not permit representatives of the patriarchal culture, in the form of the monk in particular, to communicate effectively. In the place of a clear verbal summons there is a terrifying bang, the shock of the monk's attention effectively shattering the sensual world that has corrupted Zhu. When he returns to the real world, he is "dazed and deeply abstracted, like a lifeless block of wood, his legs swaying unsteadily from side to side."[133] His sexual escapades have so reduced his vital energy, his *yang,* that it has physical ramifications. It also has physical ramifications for the celestial maiden, now no longer a maiden due to Zhu's attentions: her hair is no longer up, physical proof of her changed sexual status.

The physical presence of the wall is fascinatingly porous, but remains intact, and will not allow a complete transference between the two worlds. Judith T. Zeitlin comments that, "as a suddenly permeable membrane, it becomes the point of entry that allows Zhu to cross over into the properly separate realm of the painting, but when Zhu returns to the human world…it reverts to a solid barrier dividing the lovers forever."[134] Zeitlin's observation is important because it stresses the dual nature of the barrier, which is rendered malleable through an excess of desire, but malleability is no indication of impermanence. The wall returns to its solid state after Zhu leaves, and although changes have been made, the nature of the dual realities and the literal wall between them remain.

Unlike Fleur-de-Marie and Esther Van Gobseck, the celestial maiden is unrepentant, and in fact is the initiator of the amorous sequence. Yet in some ways, this only underscores her importance as a mediator of desire, because it is her gaze, her desire

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[133] Pu Songling, *Strange Tales,* location 811.

[134] Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 193.

for the world of which Zhu is a part, that attracts him in the first place. Given the resounding gong generated by the monk's simple finger flick, we might also say that it is a larger, more powerful manifestation of reality than that in the painting. It is exactly this moment, in fact, that draws Zhu back. He sees, or in this case hears, his own world from the place of the Celestial Maiden, is overwhelmed by what he experiences, and immediately returns.

Zhu's experience is arguably more intense than Rodolphe's, because he is allowed to physically occupy the space of his mediator, whereas Rodolphe can only experience it vicariously. Zhu is also the only one made to choose between worlds, and the only one for whom the two worlds hold many charms. The only marker we have in Pu's text that the world of the painting is a place to be avoided is the shaken state in which Zhu returns, which indicates the draining of his masculine energy.

One of the tales in the Chinese canon that gives us an example of how the prostitute can hold morally or financially higher ground than her patron is Feng Menglong's "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," from his 16th century collection *San Yan*. In this tale, a young scholar, Li Jia, goes to the capital to attend a university. There, he falls in love with a courtesan named Du Shiniang. He stays with her until his money starts to run out, after which Du Shiniang insists on staying with him, which drives the Madam to offer, in exasperation, to release Du if Li Jia can come up with three hundred taels. He is only able to borrow two hundred, but Du herself acquires the remaining sum, and after bidding a warm farewell to her sister workers in the house of pleasure, during which she is given numerous gifts, the couple leaves to go south. Li's father is as angry with him as Zheng's was with him, so Du suggests the couple live for a

time in Hangzhou or Suzhou while they wait for Li's father's temper to subside.

Their journey down the river is eventually stalled by inclement winter weather, and one day, when Du Shiniang raises the window to empty her chamber pot, a wealthy voyager named Mr. Sun on a boat nearby catches sight of her, and is immediately smitten. He invites Li Jia to his boat and, claiming to be thinking only about Li's sadly ruined relationship with his father, offers Li a sum of money for Du Shiniang, which the young man accepts. When Du finds out, she claims to accept the situation, but while crossing between the boats, asks to have her jewel box, from which, to both young men's amazement, she extracts handfuls of jewels and precious stones, flinging them into the river as she denounces Li's infidelity and Sun's venality, then leaps into the waters herself, never to be seen again.

The story explicitly poses the question of whether or not true, dedicated love can overcome the opposition of traditional mores. Du Shiniang is the force in this experiment. As each crisis in the story arrives, she is the one to discover a way out. When Li—who is consistently hapless, bordering on idiotic—is unable to raise a cent to redeem Du from the brothel, it is the latter's donation of 150 taels of silver, secreted in her mattress, that breaks the impasse. When Li is unable to pay for any travel expenses, it is Du's fellow courtesans who help them. Li even has clothes to wear by redeeming several garments from a pawn shop with money given him by Du. Even the final moment, when Du reveals her hidden treasure, demonstrates her ingenuity: "The treasures in the jewel box were worth no less than ten thousand taels of silver. I meant to add some grandeur to your return, so that your parents might act out of compassion and accept me as a member of

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the family."[135] Her scorn for the perpetually clueless Li she expresses this way: "What a perfect plan—what began as an affair of passion now ends in proper decorum!"[136] Li has hardly acted like a good filial son for the rest of their relationship, and his halfhearted attempt to do so at this juncture is seen as not only a betrayal, but as a failure to recognize a happy ending that would have brought both worlds together.

Du Shiniang's plans are predicated on an imperfect understanding of the class to which her beloved belongs. Her intention is to present her lavish jewels as a way to better her new husband's lot and thereby hopefully win over his father, but the story makes clear that his father's opposition is not to his son's penury, but to the inappropriateness of his relationship with a courtesan. Put simply, if we are to understand the figure of the father as being precisely as the story presents him, no amount of money will change his mind. Traditional Confucian morality put great weight on the company a person kept, and money was not the way to circumvent the negative influence likely to be brought to bear on a member of a good family. Even if the couple had managed to get to their destination, the story suggests, Du's efforts would hardly have been likely to bear fruit.

Du's mediating function is geared towards showing her lover how to desire a life of passion that can overcome any social barrier, the end of which is, if we take her at her word, acceptance by aristocratic society.[137] In the world of the narrative, this was always

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[135] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection, vol. 2,* trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, 562.

[136] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World, vol. 2,* 562.

[137] Certain scholars have suggested that Du is not quite the dedicated, virtuous pursuer of love she appears to be. Patrick Hanan has pointed out that Du doesn't reveal her extensive wealth until the story's end, after her lover in his apparently straitened

a fool's errand, albeit a beautifully romantic one. Interestingly, though, Feng's narrative

appears to suggest that the barrier separating the two lovers is less one of class than of

character. Du's financial schemes, as has been noted, were unlikely to have borne fruit,

but could her intended husband have done something? The story's insistence on Li's

constant weakness and timidity disqualifies him at every turn from the kind of life Du

Shiniang proposes for him, but it also implicitly suggests that such a life is indeed

possible for someone with greater will and ingenuity. No such solution is presented, and

one of the tantalizing remainders in Feng's narrative is the possibility that such a solution

is still possible, even if not easy. Readers are left to imagine it for themselves.

  Lin Shu's translation of Lady of the Camellias picks up where this story left off,

suggesting that suggesting in effect that when a solution appears impossible in a certain

society, it might be beneficial to look to another. The great advantage to the version of

France he portrays in his translation is, as we will see shortly, that he preserves all the

proprieties and strictures of Chinese polite society, but relocates them to a foreign world

where, unlike in Feng Menglong's writing, anything is possible.

<u>Lady of the Camellias, Lin Shu, and Morality on the Market</u>

  It should not be hard to imagine the dynamic changes that would have to occur in

translating from the French tradition to the Chinese. While it is true that both require the

presence of a social barrier, and a mediating function for the prostitute/courtesan, the

Chinese tradition is perfectly willing to look to the realm of the fantastic, or simply to

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circumstances has resorted to selling her away. According to Hanan, she never had any
intention of living a simple life, but planned to live a life of luxury, and was testing her
lover's commitment to her. Patrick Hanan, "The Making of The Pearl-Sewn Shirt and
The Courtesan's Jewel Box", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, no. 33 (1973): 152.

ascribe an asymmetrical relationship to the patron/prostitute pair, to find ways around that barrier's effects. It is preserved, but made either benign or inconsequential. Lin Shu's translation in effect converts Dumas' *Lady of the Camellias* to the Chinese version of the genre, so that its characters are not bound by the kind of symmetry demanded in the French texts. Lin effectively reframes the game, as it were, so that rather than Dumas' tale of redemption, it becomes one of self-interested gain. True love is not, in Lin's version, ever truly at issue, and while the social barrier so important to most works of this genre is still preserved, the removal of the connection that is supposed to transcend that barrier suggests that the outcomes for the characters do not depend on each other. Lin's implicit suggestion for the Chinese reader will be that through their emotional involvement with the narrative, they are also free to pursue their own gains.

Moreover, Lin's translation points to an added dimension of the mediating function discussed so far. In his work, the translator mediates the reader's desire for the originating culture, demonstrating how and what to desire through his changes to the text. This being the first major translation of any work of French literature for the Chinese publishing market, Lin's role as mediator cannot be overemphasized. The reader of his translation is led to see not simply the reading of the novel, but the consideration of the culture that produced it, in the light of self-interested gain. Just as Armand Duval and Marguerite Gautier, the novel's protagonists, are depicted in Lin's version as possessing goals for themselves that are eventually shown to be mutually exclusive, so too the Chinese reader's desire to gain from the experience of the French text is not bound to correspond to anything in French culture. The translator opens the door for his readers to see France as a place that grants one the right to engage the world around them on their

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own terms, without any need to follow another culture's lead.

Alexandre Dumas Fils' *Lady of the Camellias* narrates the story of Marguerite Gautier, a famous courtesan, and the man whose love has pulled her away from her profession: Armand Duval. When the novel opens, the narrator learns that the remaining worldly possessions of the recently deceased titular character are to be put up soon for auction. Out of curiosity—Gautier was so well-known that the narrator has heard of her—he attends the auction, and there impulsively bids on, and wins, her copy of Prévost's *Manon Lescaut,* inside of which is inscribed the following: "Manon to Marguerite: Humility. Armand."[138] The mysterious Armand appears soon after at the narrator's house to beg for the return of the book, which the narrator gladly grants. The grateful young man then brings the narrator along with him to attend, first, the relocation of Marguerite's body to a more suitable resting place, and then his bedside as he convalesces from an illness brought on by grief.

While together, Duval recounts his tale, in which his love for the famous courtesan leads to a powerful romance that, at one point, takes her away from her life as a courtesan so that she can live in monogamous bliss with Armand. This comes to an abrupt end when, inexplicably, she leaves him and returns to her former way of life. Enraged, he first attempts to take his revenge on her by taking up a mistress, and then simply abandons her in an extended period of travel. Eventually, Armand notes, while traveling abroad, he learns of Marguerite's death and finally is able to read the letters which never reached him, in which is revealed the fact that she left him to save his

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[138] Alexandre Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias* (*Lady of the Camellias*). Kindle E-Book. Public Domain, 15.

family, and particularly his sister, whose proposed marriage to the man she loves is impossible if her brother is so involved with a notable courtesan. Thus Marguerite dies alone in her grief, with no one to attend her but a priest and one faithful retainer, and of course the lingering glow of her single act of self-sacrifice.

To his credit, Lin Shu preserves the narrative complexity of Dumas' text, albeit with the incorrect assertion of the narrator's voice specifically to Dumas fils himself in the frequently appearing "Dumas fils says" (xiao Duma yue), an error which is quickly forgiven since Dumas fils' story is itself based on a real courtesan, Marie Duplessis, whose client he was for a time, and thus is presented as a true story.[139] What appears to have drawn Lin's greatest concern is the exact nature of Marguerite's relationship with Armand, which was deeply problematic in a society still dominated by Confucian notions of propriety. Hu Ying notes that the most dramatic alterations to the text occur in moments when Dumas appears to suggest that a courtesan's love can be comparable to that of proper young ladies.[140] This is not a matter of emotional integrity, but of ritual propriety. The romantic notion of "pure" love is only operative in the sense that those who profess it are also able to abide by the proprieties that ensure its social acceptance. By way of understanding how this informs Lin's alterations to the text, let us look at a few examples from Dumas' original novel, then see how Lin changed them.

Shortly after meeting Marguerite, Armand reflects on the weakness and fragility

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[139] Jann Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria, and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109.

[140] Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 28.

that attend a young lady who comes from a good family: "Convents do not have walls high enough, nor mothers locks strong enough, nor religion a sense of duty constant enough, to keep these charming birds in their cage."[141] They will, on the contrary, come to desire that which is withheld from them, so that the first temptation that comes along will be met with enthusiasm. The implication is that the proprieties are not enough to protect young women from either themselves or the temptations of their societies, that they are fundamentally wayward, so that a fall from grace is nearly inevitable.

By contrast, the courtesan's love is tested and seasoned, and the courtesan herself as a figure capable of complete redemption. Not only this, but the redemption is something provided by the man, and returned to him in kind, bringing about a double salvation that no union between virgins could possibly supply:

> For them, the body has used the mind, the senses have burned the heart, debauchery has put iron bands around the feelings. They are well-acquainted with the words we say; they know all our methods, and even the love they inspire is for sale…Thus, when God allows love to a courtesan, this love, that seems first a pardon, almost always becomes a punishment. There is no absolution without penance…and when she has sworn this love, how the beloved thus dominates her! How he feels strong with this cruel right to say, "You are doing no more for love than you did for money."
>
> But, when the man who inspires this love that redeems the soul is generous in accepting it without remembering the past, when he gives himself to it, when he loves at last, as he is loved, this man exhausts in a moment all earthly emotions, and after this love his heart will be closed to all others.[142]

Remark first that this love is bestowed on the courtesan as a gift from God, a mark of her redemption which, although characterized by a need for penance, demonstrates that the presumed moral superiority of the virgin is purely arbitrary. It is the man who completes

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[141] Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias,* 81.
[142] Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias,* 81.

the process, affirming the integrity of the courtesan's gesture and thereby ushering her into a new life. In the process, he himself will close his heart to all others, both because the intensity of this spiritually-inflected love is so much more meaningful than all others, but also implicitly because God's involvement demands commitment that might be missing otherwise.

The salvific note is stressed more clearly later in Dumas' original text, when Armand's father confronts him about his improper dedication to a courtesan, affirming that a cultured man of the world keeping a mistress is perfectly acceptable, but when that mistress becomes a wife, or even like a wife, catastrophe ensues. He upbraids Armand with the wanton destruction of not only his own social standing, but that of his family as well. To this, Armand replies, in Dumas' text, "Let come what may, if this woman I love can be regenerated by the love that she has for me, and by the love that I have for her! Let come what may, if finally, there is conversion!"[143] By this point in the text, Armand has placed himself squarely in the role of savior, one whose interest in Marguerite is as much for her moral redemption as for her body. Undoubtedly one of the appeals of the novel in its original form was this bizarre suggestion that carnal satisfaction and spiritual redemption could be united.

Lin Shu's firm belief that the prostitute's affection should not in any way be made comparable to the proper love of genteel ladies leads him to significantly alter the language in all of these passages, introducing the specifically Confucian term *lifa* or sometimes simply *li*—which usually translates into ritual correctness or propriety—as a

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[143] Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias,*131.

way of drawing a distinction between the two kinds of women and the love they might be said to have.[144] In Armand's reflection on the higher value of attaining a courtesan's love, Lin alters the passage to read, "Ancient sages created lifa as a safeguard. Like fences, lifa are to guard a woman's mind from entertaining wayward thoughts…Yet when her heart is awakened, then even strong fences would be of little use."[145] Lin in fact does not use the word "love", substituting instead a descriptive phrase like "a woman's mind that may entertain wayward thoughts."[146] He works the same changes in the exchange between Armand and his father, once again eliminating the word "love" from the discussion. Hu Ying comments, "This language poses a serious problem for the Chinese translator, since the behavior is clearly outside the bounds of propriety, and consequently, no respectful diction exists ready-made in the classical language to name such 'love' in a woman from a respectable family."[147] The problem, according to Hu, is that in the same passage Armand's father explains that Armand's sister is in love with a man whom she hopes to marry, but whose family will oppose the match if Armand allies himself with a courtesan.

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[144] A simple example of this can be seen in Confucius' *Analects* (lun yu), as translated by Wing-Tsit Chan: "Among the functions of propriety (*li*) the most valuable is that it establishes harmony. The excellence of the ways of ancient kings consists of this. It is the guiding principle of all things great and small. If things go amiss, and you, understanding harmony, try to achieve it without regulating it by the rules of propriety, they will still go amiss." The question of harmony is not abstract, as Confucius makes clear in a passage adjacent to the one just cited: "Have no friends who are not as good as yourself." Ritual proprieties should lead one to companionship with those whose moral character is at least similar to one's own, and such company in turn allows one to understand how harmonious social relationships work. By no stretch of the imagination, or at least the Confucian imagination, would a courtesan qualify as a proper companion.

[145] Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation,* 81.

[146] Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation,* 81.

[147] Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation,* 81.

The same word in the French text is used for the love of both Armand and his sister, but suggesting that such a commitment could be the same for both Armand's sister—whose emotions in the Confucian sense would have been mediated by a series of ritualistic steps—and Armand, who will obey none of the proprieties, would have been shocking. Lin disposes of the problem by altering the language so as to smooth the way for Chinese readers.

The threat, in the Chinese case, comes from the suggestion that a woman outside the bounds of propriety or ritual correctness embodied in lifa might succeed in obtaining a life otherwise deemed impossible for her. Indeed, Dumas' original is remarkable for its genre in that Marguerite becomes the ultimate representative of a world to which she has been denied access. She does not simply desire Armand and his world—teaching the former how to desire the latter—but surpasses him. Where Armand selfishly (from the standpoint of his class) refuses to give up Marguerite to save his sister's happiness, Marguerite gives him up instead, an unacceptable gesture from Lin Shu's perspective because it means she is capable of filial behavior—the cornerstone of Confucian ethics—where her patron fails.

When he loses sight of the redemptive mission he claims to have set himself, she effectively does that for him, as well. The final letter Armand receives after Marguerite's death is written by the one faithful serving woman who has stood by Marguerite to the end. She describes her mistress' death, and particularly the moment when the one willing priest can be found to come and confess her. Marguerite and the priest are closeted for some time, after which the priest exits to say, "She has lived like a sinner, but she will die

like a Christian."[148] Marguerite's suffering at the end, miserable though it is from the standpoint of the reader, allows her to attain that which the narrative has posited throughout she has most desired: redemption. In the process, she provides Armand with the selfless example he needs to redeem himself and return, humbled, to the arms of his family, which he does arm-in-arm with the novel's narrator on the last page. While her example would have certainly fit within the ethical framework Lin Shu espoused, her ability to save both herself and him would not, since it proves her superiority. Perhaps even more troubling, her ability to find her own path and, through the priest's final pronouncement, her own promised land, also establishes her independence. Not only does she redeem herself with no help from her patron, but that redemption was not ever something he planned to give, and is not available through the proprieties of his class and gender.

Ultimately, in Dumas' text Marguerite models the kind of spiritual redemption that Armand claims as the property of his gender early in the novel. Her example is meant to demonstrate that Armand never truly desired redemption for either her or himself. Evidence of this can be found in the kind of salvation Armand eventually finds, which is neither of or by another woman, but of the men of his own class. The first time Armand appears in the novel is after the narrator has purchased the copy of *Manon Lescaut*, for which Armand pleads. The narrator happily turns it over in exchange for hearing more of the story. Their relationship proceeds with curious rapidity to an intense intimacy. By only their second meeting, we find the narrator committed to sitting by Armand during his convalescence, despite knowing nothing about him except his

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[148] Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias,* 176.

connection to Marguerite. In fact, it is several chapters in the French before the person of Marguerite is even introduced, and that only through her decayed, rotting corpse, which is unearthed for identification before being relocated. This physical reminder of what truly righteous desire looks like rocks Armand to his core, and cements his bond with the narrator, to whom he pours out all the details we read about subsequently. In a near-perfect mirror-image of Marguerite's own life, the narrator then literally leans on the narrator as he is escorted home to his father. He understands at last the truly redemptive nature of his society, and understands himself as the sinner, as it were, rather than the savior. "In the place of the jealous love with whom Armand imagines himself in competition for his beloved Marguerite's actions," writes Jann Matlock on this point, "the novel reveals his own father."[149] Imagination is indeed the key, and in the vast majority of courtesan tales, this one particularly, it is the patron's imagined desire for the courtesan's body that is the most problematic, and which must be eliminated. When it cannot, as in Balzac's tale, tragedy inevitably results. Happily (at least from the standpoint of the narrative) for Armand, Marguerite has already pointed the way for him.

There is an elegant symmetry to the novel's plot structure which Lin eschews. Marguerite moves upward through increasingly more complete offerings of atonement, until finally moving beyond all that the male representatives of her society can provide, to the transcendent love of God. Armand moves in reverse, finding his turning point in Marguerite's union with God, then descending to a male representative of his society, and eventually ending up with his family, which is of course where he started. Just as he

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[149] Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction*, 109-110.

replaced the language of love in Dumas' original with references to propriety, Lin Shu

breaks apart the symmetry of the novel by removing all language of redemption. Early on

in the text, after acquiring *Manon Lescaut* at auction, the narrator offers the following

lament for courtesans in specific, but prostitutes more generally:

> Poor creatures! If it is wrong to love them, then at least we can plead their case. You plead for the blind person who has never seen the sun's rays, the deaf person who has never heard the chords of nature, the deaf person who has never been able to share the voice of his soul, and, under a false pretext of modesty, you don't want to plead this blindness of heart, this deafness of soul, this muteness of the conscience that drives mad the unfortunate sufferer and makes her, despite herself, incapable of seeing good, of hearing the Savior and of speaking the pure language of love and faith.[150]

The narrator presents all prostitutes as unfortunate sufferers, not only of their

constitutional inability to hear the calls of virtue and love, but also of the lack of

compassion among hypocritical people who refuse to accord them the same treatment

offered to those suffering physical handicaps. The typical body and soul, or body and

mind, dichotomy is collapsed here with the suggestion that physical lack is analogous to

spiritual lack. There is also the implicit suggestion that of the sufferers described, it is the

prostitute whose state was forced on her, and which, although it is not here specified, is

capable of reversal in the right circumstances. One cannot restore the rays of the sun to

the blind, but one can restore virtue and love to one whose only crime is never having

encountered them.

Before Armand appears in Dumas' original, then, it is the quest for redemption

that grounds the narrative. The narrator's lament resonates with Armand's own

declaration of the superiority of a courtesan's love, and his defiance of his father in the

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[150] Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias*, 16.

name of "converting" Marguerite. Lin completely eliminates the narrator's lament, and, as we have just seen, alters the language of Armand's defense of a courtesan's love so that it appears to be a completely different type of emotion. In point of fact, there is only one episode which Lin preserves intact: the moment of Marguerite's confession, when the priest declares that she will die a Christian. In this case, the language in the Chinese is in nearly word-for-word agreement. Without the preceding comments on redemption, it is a strange episode. It is not foreshadowed by Armand and the narrator, but simply exists in the text as a peculiar moment of cultural specificity. Its importance lies in its independence—discussed above—from Armand's class. There is no need to ask about the nature of Marguerite's love for Armand if her eventual desire for herself is to transcend him, to find grace beyond this world.

It also delinks Armand's and the narrator's professed desire for redemption, presenting Armand as simply a besotted young man out of his depth, and the narrator as a curious collector of stories. Only Marguerite seeks, and finds, salvation for herself. Instead of two symmetrical stories, Lin presents them in parallel, with entirely different goals. Marguerite models desire for Armand in the abstract, teaching him not *what* to desire, but *how.* This also has the effect of setting their respective societies, or at least social circles, at a remove. In Dumas' original, both the narrator and Armand present the prostitute as a figure unfairly maligned by their societies, and capable of redemption at the hands of God and, crucially, in the hearts of good members of those societies. The suggestion is that the prostitute is kept out of polite society because of the hard-heartedness of its members. Lin Shu's translation removes this line of thought, and allows salvation for Marguerite only after she leaves all human society to be with God.

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The wall between her world and Armand's is firm, but also curiously inconsequential. Armand might be said to have been the catalyst that began her search, but her ultimate desire is beyond him, so the barrier between their classes matters very little because she was never truly seeking to cross it in the first place.

In altering the way Marguerite's relationship to proper French society is presented, Lin changes the object of every character's desire. This also changes the reader's own experience, which in translation is as mediated by the translator as the protagonist's experience is mediated by the courtesan. Lin's intervention in the text was undoubtedly one of the major reasons for its success, suggesting a fascinating link between ritual propriety and economic viability. The book-buying public—and Hu Ying notes that this was made up largely of the intelligentsia—were not only sensitive to Confucian propriety, but were also likely to only spend their money on texts that didn't fly in the face of it. Lin presented his text to a market that had only a handful of foreign texts in translation on offer, making his novel the first major submission of its kind.[151] As with other translators in this dissertation, Lin's task was not simply to make a text interesting and accessible, but to make room for his audience's already-existing experience with the culture that produced it. Lu Xun had the relatively simple task of drawing off of France's industrial power, which required a means of introducing his Chinese audience through the back door, as it were. Lin, on the other hand, had to present France as something desirable, a culture defined by stories such as *Lady of the Camellias*. Removing passages that mitigated against cultural propriety was one big step in that

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[151] Chen Pingyuan notes that before 1899, Chinese publishers only produced seven different foreign works in translation, one of which was the lyrics of the "Marseillaise".

direction.

The other, more subtle, move was on the level of ownership itself. Who, in effect, controlled the narrative? This is as complex a question in Dumas' original as in the translation. The story is Marguerite's, but it is told by Armand to a narrator, who tells it in turn to an audience. In addition, as has already been noted, the courtesan in the novel was based on the real person of Marie Duplessis, thus adding another level of complexity. In Lin Shu's case, the translator is yet another in a long chain of people claiming their rights over the narrative. It is also true that at each stage, the "owner" or "narrator" stands to gain something through the act of recounting the story. In moving through increasingly more complete levels of atonement, Marguerite's confession of her own life gains her access to true redemption. Armand's recounting of Marguerite's story to the novel's narrator affords him redemption as well, and builds a firm and final bridge to the society which he left behind. The narrator stands to gain unique access to a story that eluded all the other people present at the auction of Marguerite's possessions. Perhaps the most obvious is Alexandre Dumas himself, who stands to gain financially from the writing of the novel.

Crucially, each of these steps is defined not simply by a desire for gain, but also by a stated disinterest in such gain. Dumas' financial goals in the publication of this novel (and his subsequent adaptation of it for the stage) are hidden behind the narrator, who in turn insists that everything we are about to read is precisely as it happened, with no embellishment. The text has not, in other words, been composed or doctored to appeal to the reading public. Armand's original desire for Marguerite's body is set within the context of his search for atonement, which makes the desire less important than his moral

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goals. Marguerite's own spiritual journey is hidden from Armand, and by association the reader, until after her death. In each case, a desire to profit from the story is accompanied by a larger, redeeming spiritual narrative. Those wishing to claim ownership over some aspect of the story, then, must have at least some measure of disinterested moral achievement to qualify it. The naked search for gain is unacceptable.

It is also, from the standpoint of Lin Shu's translation, absurd. It is far more honest to allow each figure their own obvious motive. In Lin Shu's translation, Armand wants Marguerite's body, not her salvation. The narrator is interested in hearing and communicating a bit of incomparable social gossip, not in browbeating high society to find room in their hearts for prostitutes. And, in a twist unique to Lin's work, Dumas himself has his own profit-driven motives for relating the story, since he cannot hide behind the narrator. None of these things thrives on the dissimulation of personal gain behind a veneer of quasi-religious commitment. It also, not coincidentally, transfigures the originating culture in true Girard-ian fashion. Lin works just enough to remove the impediments for his readers so that French culture is acceptable, but stops short of making it exemplary. The titular character and the narrator are both just as they are in the French: dedicated to each other, but still, on the whole, relatively venal young men. The society which they represent offered enough to the Chinese reader to make the novel one of the biggest bestsellers of the era. It is strange and exciting, oddly familiar in places, but not challenging.

This, as it turns out, is perhaps the crucial point in understanding the rise of translated French literature that followed this novel. The France of Lin's translation is one that encourages straightforward self-interest, something that a Chinese resident of

Shanghai strolling down the Bund and catching sight of a French naval vessel in the harbor might have already assumed. Readers are allowed to partake in the Parisian demimonde without any need to yearn for its moral transformation. They can grieve over Marguerite's loss without in any way assuming that Armand's moral project has been upended, because he never had one. It cannot be coincidence that what Chen Pingyuan calls the "commercialization of the novel" dates roughly from this point. Chen points out that although writers in previous epochs in China had certainly made money off of their writing, this was almost due to a system of patronage, whereas during the first few years of the 20th century, writers could actually pursue a career, independent of political patronage. There was less incentive than ever to appeal to one or another bureaucrat's or court member's sensibilities. From this point on, what was or was not objectionable derived from what the market would bear. Lin's translation suggested the way forward: remove just enough to keep the story from being offensive, but leave enough in that is excites the reader. For a significant number of Chinese readers in 1899 and after, France and French culture were the ultimate exemplars of this dynamic.

Just as Marguerite did for Armand, and any of the other courtesans or prostitutes mentioned in this chapter did for their lovers or patrons, so did Lin Shu do for France in the Chinese publishing market. He altered the novel so that the putative object of the reader's fascination—the central figure of French courtesan—receded behind the actual object of the reader's desire, which is French culture generally. Instead of gunboats and military conflicts, the Chinese reader was presented with a France that was open for business, as it were. Readers could find there a new vision for what literature had to offer in the world market, and if the subsequent publishing record of the final decade of the

Qing is any indication, in this, at least, Lin Shu succeeded brilliantly.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

LANGUAGE AND PERFORMANCE: HU SHI'S TRANSLATIONS OF GUY DE
MAUPASSANT, AND THE NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT'S LINGUISTIC TURN

In all three of the cases studied so far, the re-reading of French texts leads to a
collective experience of France as a place wherein popular hopes and fears—as expressed
in important performances of the dominant reading protocols presented in the publishing
market—are affirmed and challenged. France here is both geo-politically specific and
ideologically malleable; her revolutions and romances still occur in the right places and
times, but what they mean is significantly altered. While the translator is the most visible
figure, composing the product that readers buy, his methodology is drawn entirely from
the world of the reader's lived experience, of which active participation in the publishing
market is a key feature. The original texts are changed, in other words, because any text
in the hands of a reader is changed, whether solely in the individual reader's mind or in
the manifestation of that cognitive participation on paper.

As we have also already seen, this is not the usual trajectory, at least among those
major cultural powers for whom France was a dominant presence. The romance of the
French Revolution was not simply its literariness, but also its reality; one could
physically visit the sites in Paris at which the revolution was fought, and many did. This
was not so in China, where the vast majority of even those translators who translated
French texts not only had never been to France, but also did not speak the language.
France's presence in the popular consciousness was limited either to gunboats in Chinese
harbors, the occasional French socialite glimpsed walking down the Bundt in Shanghai,

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or in rare cases a school run by French Jesuits. For the vast majority of Chinese people, France was not simply the country *of* Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, and Alexandre Dumas (père and fils), but rather their creation. More than that, though, it was the product of the way Chinese readers and translators reformulated those texts, so that France was, at the risk of sounding quaint, neither here nor there.

This was to change dramatically, though, with the arrival of the so-called New Culture Movement of 1916, which was begun largely by Chinese scholars returning from institutions like Oxford and Cornell University. Then, translators like Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu began rendering French texts with the specific goal of similarity, with as few conscious changes made as possible. Not only this, but whereas romances and science fiction dominated the first decade of the 20th century, after 1916, realism and naturalism were the dominant choices, with writers like Guy de Maupassant and Honoré de Balzac replacing Jules Verne and Alexandre Dumas. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, an entire generation of readers had become accustomed enough to foreign works in translation to be familiar with them, and to less extensive explanatory work. As a result, the "direct translations" that Hu, Chen, and their colleagues writing for the epochal journal *New Youth* (Xin qingnian) favored were intended to take an audience enamored with France and move them in a different direction.

In what follows, I will present a single short case study: that of Hu Shi's translations of a pair of Guy de Maupassant stories for *New Youth* in 1916. In it, I will demonstrate the strikingly different way Hu translated his texts. In particular, I will insist that Hu's emphasis on the usage of vernacular language in literature was based on an understanding of vernacular literature as a performance, one constituted by a dynamic

reciprocity whereby vernacular language is elevated by its literary usage, and literature is made more accessible through its deployment of the vernacular. In this way, every translation has a primary relationship to its language, rather than to the source text. By drawing attention to language, and to translation as a means of performing language, Hu also shifted the attention from France to the French language itself. This relocation stressed French culture's ongoing development, rather than its arrival, and insisted that in this way, it held no superiority over China.

<div align="center">Hu Shi's Translations of Guy de Maupassant</div>

It is important to stress at this point how very different the Chinese reading audience was in 1916 when compared to that not even decade earlier. Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zuoren were in fact the first major Chinese writers to attempt an entire journal composed of direct translations that preserved as much of the source texts as possible. Their *Foreign Fiction* (Chengwai xiaoshuo), which ran to only two volumes published in 1909 in Japan, is the subject of substantial academic study today, but only sold a few dozen copies when it was released. The trouble was a combination of the strangeness of the Chinese—which was both far closer to modern vernacular than either writer's previous work—with an unfamiliarity with the source cultures.

By the time of the New Culture Movement, though, reading audiences had become more or less accustomed to foreign literature in translation. Hu Shi's translations of Guy de Maupassant more than bear that out. For example, Hu included critical commentaries as either prefaces or epilogues to the two Maupassant stories he translated in 1916: "Menuet" and "Les Deux Amis." Each provides historical context for Maupassant as a writer, as well as the literary movements in which he participated.

<div align="center">135</div>

"Menuet" (Meilü'ai) opens with the following, which I will translate in full because it bears analysis:

> Maupassant (Mo Po San) was born in 1850, and died in 1893. He was a leading literary figure of the last half of the 19th century in France. His novels are rich, and his poetry melodious. His short stories were particularly notable in his lifetime, and earned him the title of "the king of short stories." He was a contemporary with Flaubert. Flaubert and Zola were representatives of naturalism and realism in Europe. Maupassant was purely an adherent of the naturalist school. I believe naturalism peaked with Maupassant, and after him, could not carry on, so after Maupassant's death, naturalism went into decline. Its lifespan can be understood this way. The current translation is not enough to represent Maupassant's naturalism; but its extensive charms should appeal to the Chinese heart, and thus we begin. The title "Meilü'ai" is "Menuet" in French, "Minuet" in English, and is the name of a dance. During the latter part of the 19th century, as the empire was collapsing, it was forbidden.[152]

Even a cursory glance should demonstrate a profound difference between Hu Shi's presentation of the text and all of the others that have occupied us so far. The other lengthy introduction we have considered—Lu Xun's musings in the preface to *From the Earth to the Moon*—is full of speculations about world history, and the need to place the Chinese people on a more scientific footing. Nothing much is said about Jules Verne, his contemporaries, or even the particular historical situation during which the novel was written. The closest we get is a brief note on the translator's decision to use classical Chinese, and to efface even more of the novel than in the Japanese version. It is a true introduction, in the sense that it is assumed his audience has no prior knowledge of the text, the author, or the world that produced them.

Hu Shi's introduction, by contrast, contains multiple references that must either have been intelligible, or expected to become so. He mentions naturalism and realism, but

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[152] Hu Shi, *Zhonghua fanyi jiadai biaoxing yi wen ku: Hu Shi* [Chinese Culture's Representative Works of Translation] (Kindle E-book, Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2020), Location 752.

does not define them, possibly because his colleague Chen Duxiu, the editor of *New Youth*, had published a series of articles on European literature just a year or so earlier that explained what naturalism and realism were. He also mentions Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola, but again, apart from their being representatives of naturalism and realism, no information is given the reader. We only have two bits of information for Maupassant: his lifespan and his connection to French literature. Within the context of this short passage, the Chinese reader has no idea about Maupassant's connections to French politics, the changing face of the world, or any of the other things that concerned Lu Xun, Lin Shu, and Zeng Pu. Chinese readers were far more familiar with foreign literature than they had been at the turn of the century, so Hu Shi feels no need to set forth a manifesto. Hu's audience either already knew the writers and literary movements he mentions, or had the resources to find out about them. Indeed, if they were reading Hu's translations in the pages of *New Youth,* it is probably they got all the necessary background information from the same journal. In a sense, the introduction to "Menuet" takes Maupassant, and the literature he produced, away from the world of political reform, and situates them in a purely literary milieu. He is, to put it somewhat bluntly, just a writer.

The translation itself deepens this impression. Both "Menuet" and "Les Deux Amis" (translated by Hu Shi as "Two Fishermen")—the latter being the second Maupassant story Hu Shi translated in 1916—are more carefully calibrated to emulate the style and tone of the French originals than anything previously mentioned in this dissertation. The first-person narrator in "Menuet" is meant to seem highly educated, possibly even aristocratic, and his speech reflects that, which is fitting given that the story deals with a once-popular dance now censored by a society bent on eradicating its

oppressive aristocratic roots. "Les Deux Amis," on the other hand, presents a pair of

common people during the Franco-Prussian War (1870) who decide to take a risk and go

out fishing despite the possibility of Prussian patrols. Here, Maupassant's language is

more colloquial, with "Menuet's" more baroque phrasing giving way to shorter, more

concise sentences and a dialogue that at times almost feels bland, with the two friends

exchanging banal pleasantries about the weather. Hu Shi's translations follow the stories

closely. His Chinese in "Menuet" is resolutely classical, and strikingly vernacular in "Les

Deux Amis." The latter, in particular, is remarkable because it preserves some of the

phrasing of the French original, sometimes even with the same syllable count.

Each also refers to historical touchstones in a way that assumes their prior

knowledge. In an embedded comment in "Les Deux Amis," Hu suggests that Monsieur

Morissot's cynical dismissal of not only monarchical, but also republican, government

was based on the fact that the story was set only a few years after the end of the

American Civil War. [153] The same event was so little-known in popular circles only

fifteen years earlier that in Lu Xun's translation of *From the Earth to the Moon*, he

mistakenly said the story took place shortly after the American Revolution. Hu also

correctly identifies and explains the historical context of the story by saying simply, in

one sentence, that it took place in the Franco-Prussian War, while Paris was surrounded.

This, too, reflects the concise diction of Maupassant's original, which begins by saying

simply: "Paris was blockaded, starving, and moaning. Sparrows were rare on the

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[153] "With kings there was war outside, and with the Republic, there's war inside."
("Avec les rois on a la guerre au dehors; avec la République on a la guerre au dedans.")
(Guy de Maupassant, *Oeuvres de Guy de Maupassant,* 2038) Hu's translation is nearly
word-for-word: "In a kingdom there is war outside the country, and with a republic, there
is war inside the country" (Maupassant, "Meilü'ai").

rooftops, and the sewers were vacant. People ate whatever they could."[154] There is no

elaboration. The reader's attention is drawn directly back to the story.

In later comments on these pieces, Hu points out that he translated them at

different times, which accounts for the different styles used in each. He also gives a

specific indication of his audience, or at least of the audience he hoped he would have

someday: "I am an advocate for short stories. Unfortunately, I am unable to create any

myself, and can only introduce several famous examples so that future writers of new

literature will have materials to examine…"[155] There is a touch of Zeng Pu's own appeal

to the future in his preface to *Ninety-Three*, but whereas Zeng's appeal is to those

possessed of certain admirable social qualities, Hu limits himself to writers. This might

account for much of his audience, and to his assumption that such terms as "naturalism"

would be familiar.

<u>The Translator's Gift: Vernacular Literature as Performance</u>

We might well ask, though, what it was that Hu intended to impart to future

writers. The overwhelming majority of scholarship on Hu Shi focuses on his promotion

of vernacular language in literature, particularly in the essay "A Suggestion for Literary

Reform" (wen xue gai liang dang yi) and the book *A History of Vernacular Literature*

(bai hua wen xue shi).[156] There is a peculiar tendency, though, to ignore the idiosyncratic

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[154] Hu Shi, *Zhonghua fanyi jiadai biaoxing yi wen ku: Hu Shi,* location 2035.

[155] Hu Shi*, Zhonghua fanyi jiadai biaoxing yi wen ku: Hu Shi,* Location 491.

[156] It should be pointed out that this is particularly so in Western scholarship, which overwhelmingly focuses on Hu's tenure of study at Cornell, his work with John Dewey, and his impact on the journal New Youth as an editor. In the Chinese academy, a great deal more has been published on his translation efforts. A simple keyword search in

way he defined the term "vernacular," and this has led to a concomitant marginalization of his translation work.[157] He is generally presented as an essayist, reformer, and polemicist, rather than a literary figure in his own right. To be sure, his work tended overwhelmingly to promotion and argument, but to ignore the way he himself used vernacular language is to miss a crucial aspect of how he viewed its relationship to literature.

Hu is unequivocal in his insistence that the only living literature is vernacular, since it is the only form of writing that could be said to originate among the people themselves, and not imposed on them from outside. Hu's definition of "vernacular" (ba hua) is somewhat idiosyncratic, in that he allows for a trio of interpretations of the character "白" (bai) that forms the root of "白话" (baihua). "'Baihua' has three meanings," writes Hu in the introduction to his *History of Vernacular Literature.* "First, there is 'bai' in the sense of 'shuobai', a stage term which refers to audible, comprehensible speech; second, there is 'bai' in the sense of 'qingbai', which is unadorned and clear speech; third, there is 'bai' in the sense of 'mingbai,' which refers to

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the Chinese academic articles database (CNKI) for "Hu Shi" and "translation" yields over 250 articles and dissertations.

[157] A representative example is David Damrosch's 2016 article for the Canadian Review of Comparative Literature, "From Ithaca to Beijing: Hu Shih's Peripheral Centrality." Damrosch makes the valuable point that Hu's experience as a student at Cornell was far from the conversion experience of popular estimation. In fact, rather than win Hu over to the value of Western literature, the experience sharpened his understanding of his home culture. Damrosch's argument, though, hinges on Hu's explication of Chinese as a self-explanatory linguistic entity, rather than the fraught, varied performance Hu insisted it was.

a capacity for thorough understanding."[158] One of the things that sets Hu's short list apart

from others of his era is its emphasis on performance. The first "bai" in his list is taken

from the stage, suggesting that however one encounters vernacular speech, its foremost

qualification is that it is audible. Yet in this case, it must be audible from the stage. The

speaker must project his words, presumably so that anyone can hear them, even in the

back of a crowded theater.[159] Rather than simply understand this in terms of acoustics, we

would do well to take seriously the performative situation itself. Those gathered in a

theater are there for a very particular purpose, one that does not necessarily apply

elsewhere: the collective construction of a work of art, usually fictional in nature.

Everyone gathered—whether performer or audience member—also arrives with an

awareness of the creative task at hand, and has come prepared.

In other words, although vernacular language is completely organic, vernacular

literature is anything but. It does not arise naturally, when two people meet to converse.

This is crucial for understanding not only Hu's perspective on the vernacular, but also on

the way his translations mark a shift in how France in particular, and other countries more

generally, are understood in translation. First, although it is certainly possible to see each

"bai" in Hu's explanation as an independent element, it is also quite possible to see them

as occurring in chronological order. The performer on stage must speak clearly enough to

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[158] Hu Shi, *Baihua wenxue shi* [A History of Vernacular Literature] (Kindle E-book, China Pictorial Publishers, 2015), Location 94.

[159] In point of fact, Hu Shi's interest in literature arose simultaneously with a professional interest in public speaking and performance. While a student at Cornell in 1910, he took a number of debate and public speaking courses which coincided with his decision, shortly after, to shift his focus from agriculture to literature. For more, see Gui Liang's article "Lun Hu Shi wan Qing Min Chu de yuyan shijian" [On Hu Shi's late Qing/early Republican linguistic practice].

be understood, but then Hu's explanation moves on to the specific language used, which must be "clear and unadorned." Only after this does "bai" refer to the actual word choice and diction, which must not only be comprehensible, but allow for "thorough understanding." Understood this way, the entire series belongs under the umbrella of performance which, as we move on further into his *History of Vernacular Literature*, includes literature as well. This frees Hu Shi from any need to find a "definitive" vernacular, a search which haunted his contemporaries. Hu's goal is not to find a vernacular literature that appeals to all people in all places, but rather one that works within a specific performative situation, which by necessity must change depending on its goal.

This can appear at times to be at odds with his argument in the rest of the text, since in his discussion of how the bifurcation between vernacular and classical Chinese came into being, he insists that it can be better described as a difference between "natural" and "enforced" usage.[160] Classical Chinese owes its long survival, insists Hu, to the civil service examination system, which required mastery of not only classical Chinese, but also a very specific kind of classical Chinese, one often confined to a single literary form: the "eight-legged" essay (ba gu wen). Particularly damning is the fact that although it could certainly be read and understood, it could never be spoken, or if it could, it would be very difficult to understand. Vernacular Chinese could be said to have always experienced the reverse set of problems. It was immediately understandable to those speaking it, but incompatible with any official usage. Any attempt to maintain classical Chinese requires outside support, since it is an entirely artificial means of

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[160] Hu Shi, *Baihua wenxue shi,* Introduction.

communication, imposed on people for the purpose of ensuring efficient communication.

On the surface, then, this would seem to argue against the idea of *bai* as referring to performance, since a performance has an element of the unnatural to it. Yet Hu's text does not take vernacular language in general as its central topic, but only its deployment in literature, and therein lies the crucial point. Vernacular literature is not a term that functions as a conjoined set. Literature can be formulated in vernacular or classical, but it is in every case something heavily mediated by considerations of audience and genre.

The genre question is particularly interesting, given that Hu's history focuses on how different literary genres developed out of vernacular speech or, in some cases, were adapted to suit it. Most importantly, not every one of these developments was fully-developed literature. Hu's argument is as much grounded in aesthetics as history. In his analysis of early Tang poetry, for example, Hu notes that vernacular poetry has several wellsprings, one of which is "doggerel verse" (da you shi), which is "verse modeling a writer's usage of humorous phrases to mock something."[161] He goes on to argue that "although these kinds of poems often lacked any real literary value, they still made valuable contributions to the development of vernacular poetry." Tao Yuanming's poetry, he insists, arose from this tradition, and in fact, "Tao Yuanming's 'Dirge' (wan ge) says 'But when hatred is in the world, drink is not enough,' and this is his version of jocular banter; his 'Responsible Son' (ze zi) says, 'If heaven moves like this, then let us ourselves move into the liquor cabinet,' and this is his version of defensiveness."[162] Hu draws a firm distinction between a form of expression that arose entirely out of

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[161] Hu Shi, *Baihua wenxue shi,* Location 1714.

[162] Hu Shi, *Baihua wenxue shi,* Location 1720.

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vernacular speech, and its deployment in literature. The former has little literary value, and the latter, although drawing from it, made key innovations that changed it, but made it more literary in the process.

Tao Yuanming could thus be said to have been performing the style, re-deploying it for a different audience who were attuned to the literary cues he is able to provide. There is a crucial give-and-take here, with a form of expression without literary value meeting an art form with no vernacular purchase. Both need each other. It is not enough simply to speak clearly, or even to be understood, which is certainly what the vernacular can provide; anything purporting to call itself literature must also be "understood deeply," which is to say that it must do more than simply communicate.

<u>The Creation of the Heterogeneous in Literary Performance</u>

Hu effectively shifts the appraisal of Tao Yuanming so that scholars must take note of his interaction with non-literary sources, rather than simply his poetry's literary value. Language, not merely content or even genre, is of primary importance. Similarly, in translating Guy de Maupassant in 1916, Hu shifted his audience's consideration of France from a literary site for experiencing the modern world on Chinese domestic terms to a place identifiable by the way it uses its language to create literature. Put another way, Hu pulls attention away from France and onto French.

This amounts to a re-thinking of a literary genre unto itself. By the time Hu published his translations, France had become a powerful presence in the Chinese publishing market. Works by Alexandre Dumas (père and fils), Jules Verne, Victor Hugo, Camille Flammarion, and others were some of the most popular of the era. Historical and cultural elements were either played down or eliminated in Chinese translations, which

undoubtedly increased the texts' popularity. By the time Hu published his translations, there were 113 published French novels in Chinese translation.[163] This is remarkable given that prior to Lin Shu's translation of *Lady of the Camellias* in 1899, there were none at all. For that matter, as has been remarked already, the Chinese publishing infrastructure itself only adopted modern print techniques, like lithography, in the last decade of the 19th century.

The popularity of French literature, though, was based entirely on its translators' willingness to draw freely from the domestic publishing market in considering how to present their materials. While this certainly did not eliminate all particularities of French culture, it certainly chose a handful to represent it, and focused on those. Hu Shi's intratextual comments, and his close attention to the flow of the French language, demonstrate a sea change in translation methodology, one that chooses not to decide what, if any, cultural elements should be emphasized. Hu draws his readers' attention to the language in which his texts are presented, and not simply the stories or characters.

In so doing, he highlights a long-standing problem in translation, which Henri Meschonnic identifies as the confused reliance on *langue*, or the sign, as the basis for translation. Meschonnic insists that "If we stand in the discontinuum of the linguistic sign when translating a poem, we do not translate the poem, we only translate one language system into another."[164] The linguistic sign can only ever point to the discontinuum between signifier and signified, to "words as units," which in turn rivets our attention on

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[163] Cited in Chen Pingyuan, *Zhongguo xiandai xiaoshuo de qidian* [The Origins of Modern Chinese Literature] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005), 43.

[164] Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translation,* trans. Pier-Pascale Boulanger (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011), 57.

meaning as something conflated with definition. The whole idea of an untranslatable,

writes Meschonnic, depends on the sign as the basis for language, rather than discourse

or, as he puts it, the "sense of language" or its rhythm.

Although Meschonnic was writing much later than Hu Shi, their approaches draw

attention to a similar concern: that a perspective on the representation of language that is

purely linguistic in nature, and excludes the way that language is expressed in

performance (whether literary, theatrical, or other), cannot ever move beyond disjunction

and inadequacy. They are not independent spheres. Translating them as such is deeply

problematic, and is what leads to concerns for fidelity in translation. Meschonnic writes,

> …a translation of a literary text must function like a literary text, through its prosody, its rhythm, its signifiance, as one of the forms of individuation, as a subject-form…The equivalence sought is no longer between *langue* and *langue,* attempting to make linguistic, historical differences forgotten; it is between text and text, working on the contrary to show linguistic, cultural and historical alterity, as a specificity and a history.[165]

For Meschonnic "alterity" is not violent or ultimately exclusive, any more than the

contrasting notes in a song, or the stresses in a line of iambic pentameter, are violently

opposed. Indeed, for Meschonnic there is an equivalence of alterity, a mutual recognition

of the way two texts are two different performances. There is no such thing as—or at

least no meaningful distinction between—an original and a translation, since both have a

primary relationship to the language that led to their creation. Both perform, whether they

claim to or not, and in an economy where the discontinuum of the sign has given way to

the continuum of discourse or rhythm, this puts them into a much more dynamic, and

fruitful relationship.

What grounds Hu Shi's translations is a similar intuition that both translated and

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[165] Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translation,* 61.

source texts have a primary relationship to their respective languages, rather than to each other. They are both performances, and in such an economy, there is no subordination of one to the other. Hu's translations concern themselves with the manner in which Guy de Maupassant composed his text, the way he performed the French language for his readers in a way that was both clear and literary. There is an assumed reciprocity in this work, since Maupassant could never have attained his status as a literary icon without a keen eye for vernacular French, but vernacular French could also never have become a literary idiom with writers like Maupassant. Similarly, Hu's translations seek to both use and elevate Chinese.

The latter is achieved in a way strikingly different from that used by translators working even a decade earlier. In the case of each work studied so far in this dissertation, some measure of France's existing status as a world power—be it political, economic, or industrial—adheres in the translation. Each translator's alterations to the source text are in fact executed so as to facilitate the Chinese reader's engagement with one of the three terms. France is effectively mute here. It is quite literally re-presented to Chinese readers, with each translator drawing off of both real-world and market-based perceptions. All changes are accomplished on the Chinese side.

Hu's emphasis on performance in vernacular literature in general, and translation in particular, also allows for a great deal more complexity in our understanding of a "Chinese" reading audience. Naoki Sakai's differentiation between a "homolingual" and a "heterolingual" address is useful here, as it points out the dangers of assuming an audience is fully-formed before the moment of translation. In the former case, it is assumed that because the addresser and addressee speak the same language, effective

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communication is a given, and therefore translation is a secondary consideration. In the latter case, the anteriority of the addressee is assumed, even within the same language group, so that in addressing himself to an audience (of one or more), the originator of a message has a host of considerations to attend to, meaning some form of translation is always required.[166]

For Hu, the Chinese audience was never a fully-formed, homogeneous collective. Being able to compose good vernacular literature had less to do with one's ability to speak Chinese than with one's knowledge of how various sectors of the Chinese reading audience would respond to a given statement. In "What is Literature?", for example, he writes that good literature has three points, the first of which is clear understanding (echoing the formulation for "vernacular" presented above), but the second is "power to move people" (you neng dong ren) and the third is simply "beauty."[167] On the "power to move people," Hu writes the following: "Understanding isn't enough. It should also be the case that people cannot help but understand. Having understood, it should also be the case that they cannot help but believe, or be moved. If I want him to be happy, then he is happy; if I want him to cry, then he cannot help but cry…"[168] Hu's point is not that the writer should be omnipotent, but rather should have enough command over his craft to know who will likely read it and how.[169] This, however, is also a limiting argument,

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[166] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[167] Hu Shi, X*in shenghuo: Hu Shi sanwen* [New life: Essays by Hu Shi] (Kindle E-book. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Digital Publishing Company, 2015). Location 910.

[168] Hu Shi, X*in shenghuo,* Location 922.

[169] Hu's essay begins, after all, as a clarification of an earlier position of his that written language is "a tool used for expressing a people's thoughts and emotions; when

insofar as a writer can only move people who are familiar with his chosen form of literature. A poet, that is to say, can only move those whom he addresses through his poetry, and not those more accustomed to reading essays or short stories.

Hu makes this link concrete in "Where is the Language of the Masses," an essay that addresses a critique made by a colleague shortly after the advent of the May 4th Movement of 1919: to wit, that "what you are publishing is for university or high school students, but the common people cannot understand it."[170] In response to this critique, Hu set about writing a short essay entitled "New Life," endeavoring to make it as accessible as possible. Years later, after this same colleague edited a short-lived journal dedicated to "literature for the masses," he concluded that only Hu's article was really suitable for the common people. In conclusion, writes Hu, "Language of the masses is not some special linguistic case exterior to vernacular language. Language of the masses is just a technique, a skill, a means of making vernacular language understandable to a majority of the people." [171] His emphasis on "majority" is interesting because it makes explicit that even the most effective piece of writing can never include everyone, which is another way of saying no literary audience's positive response is ever guaranteed by language alone. The people, that is to say, are a complicated creature, and some measure of performance, of translation, is always required in addressing them, in whatever language one chooses.

The people are also, to return to Meschonnic, in a position of alterity, not only

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an idea is expressed well, and an emotion conveyed with excellence, then this is literature." (X*in shenghuo*, Location 910)

[170] Hu Shi, X*in shenghuo,* location 1020.

[171] Hu Shi, X*in shenghuo,* location 1043.

with regards to the translator, but with regards to each other, as well. Hu's lifelong insistence on the importance of vernacular language affirms Meschonnic's own positivity with regards to alterity in that it is assumed that connection through literature is always possible. Alterity in Hu Shi's work is productive and vibrant, and the generic limitations of poetry, fiction, and drama serve rather to facilitate that connection rather than to erase it. A good writer knows how to deploy language in a form that reaches those who "speak" a given literary language.

Thus it is, too, that in translating Guy de Maupassant under the same banner France is also made heterogeneous. The French protagonists of the stories do not speak in the same register, and Hu translates them that way. The implicit argument, which Hu underscores in the brief comments in his preface about Maupassant's prominence as a naturalist, is that when one seeks to present the people as they really are, there are more differences than similarities. This also becomes a means of erasing China's subordinate position to France in the world literary sphere, since French literature's relationship to its vernacular language is the same as Chinese literature's to Chinese. Both are performances, and both have a profoundly mixed audience. The countries are fellow-travelers.

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