

**Literary Cartographies:
Lu Xun and the Production of World Literature**

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For my parents

Abstract

This dissertation addresses three critical issues in the emergence of world literature as both a scholarly discipline and a pedagogical project. Using the prominent modern Chinese writer Lu Xun as a case study, the project challenges the unstated assumptions that have thus far undergirded world literature. First, it probes the tacit acceptance of translation as a necessity for the teaching of world literature. However, rather than predictably but pointlessly calling for the necessity of reading in the original, I instead argue that the history of a text's translation can be as instructive as the text itself. Looking at both Lu Xun's translations of Western works into Chinese, and translations of Lu Xun's works into Western languages reveals compelling stories about the influence of imperialism and the Cold War on the bidirectional reception of these texts. Second, the dissertation interrogates the aims of world literature as an area of study. Rather than casting it as an inclusive mode of representation, I envision world literature as a means of theorizing globalization on a cultural level, free of crassly economic paradigms. I analyze Lu Xun's exceptionally broad reading of both Chinese and Western texts to articulate an aesthetic epistemology that enables the development of high-resolution models to chart the movement of texts and ideas. Finally, I position Lu Xun neither as a Chinese writer, nor as an ill-defined "world" author, but as an active participant in both national and transnational literary discourses. As such, he serves as a counterexample to the tacit reliance on national categories found in many anthologies of world literature.

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A Note on Romanization and Translation

As translation is a major object of inquiry for this project, a comment on translation as practiced therein seems fitting; given the number of texts being translated, it is necessary. The most striking aspect of Chinese to those raised with different mother tongues is its orthography. The Chinese character continues to entrance the foreign public and frustrate language learners, which has produced an impressive mythology around the characters and resulted in the creation of several systems of transliteration. These things happen much to the dismay of the China scholar. The mythologies are almost entirely false, and the Romanizations inconsistent. The two most prevalent systems, Wade-Giles and Hanyu Pinyin, though useful enough individually, are just different enough to be confusing when employed simultaneously. To reduce confusion on the part of my readers, I have adopted the Hanyu Pinyin system almost exclusively. Certain proper names that have gained currency in English in either Wade-Giles or idiosyncratic renderings have been retained, but these are few.

Unfortunately, since the dissertation concerns itself with the study of the varieties of Lu Xun translations, different Romanizations appear in citation. The politics of Romanization are integral to the arguments made about translation, so I have presented all citations faithfully, and have not homogenized transliterations within them.

I have made a number of original translations for this dissertation. These appear primarily in Chapter Two. Based on my limited practice as a translator and my intention to convey something of the original diction and syntax, I have rendered the translated texts word-for-word as much as is possible in English.

Skinnedness. – All people of depth find happiness in being for once like flying fish, playing on the outermost crests of waves; what they consider best in things is that they have a surface: their skinnedness – *sit venia verbo*.

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Introduction

World Literature and the Problem of Parsimony

The comparatist today faces a staggering array of potential objects. Nominally, at least. The objects of actual comparative literary study remain fairly fixed by historical priority and contemporary fashion. The imperial languages continue to be well represented in articles and monographs, though in fragmented forms: the scholar of Spanish would probably not group García Márquez immediately with Cervantes any more than the student of English would directly link Austen with Walcott or Tagore. The postcolonial turn, among others, in literary studies has opened many new fields of inquiry, challenging established filiations and enabling novel political projects for criticism. Central to these projects are questions of representation, which have engendered the radical expansion of the literary field over the past half-century.

This expansion has not, however, extended to all corners of the globe. The primacy of the imperial languages, if in their newly fragmented forms, remains unassailable, and many languages continue to go underrepresented or even unrepresented in the critical literature. Inertia is likely the main reason for this state of affairs. The imperial languages have better exposure within the American academy institutionally, through the administrative division of the humanities; American high schools generally only offer the major metropolitan languages of Europe (though this may be changing); and, despite the disciplinary mandate, American comparative literature is usually a monoglot enterprise. We speak, write, teach, and largely read in English. Foreign works either get translated or go unacknowledged. This situation is unsurprising. Learning a language at any level is a difficult proposition, and gaining proficiency such that one

could participate in a foreign scholarly discourse is beyond the resources of most American scholars – not in terms of will, but of time in the face of often crushing institutional responsibilities for professors, graduate students, and the perpetually harried adjuncts. Beyond the challenge of just learning a language, finding instruction for languages beyond the imperial nations of Europe is an often-insurmountable obstacle. Unless one is at a hyper-polyglot institution like the University of Wisconsin or has the means to travel for an extended period to another country, many languages will simply be unavailable to American researchers. Translation thus becomes the necessary midwife of most comparative scholarship.

Already we can see the proliferation of categories in comparative literary studies. Major languages of scholarly inquiry become increasingly subdivided, while less commonly studied languages enter the fray *en bloc* through translation, sometimes subject to the same subdivision as their respective discourses grow. Against this background, and perhaps in response to it, world literature makes its contemporary resurgence. Rather than slicing Literature into finer and finer subcategories, world literature in its various modern forms offers a more macroscopic view of the literary field. However, world literature can neither ignore the myriad categories of literary scholarship nor supplant them. As a result, world literature becomes yet another category with which literary scholars must contend, and a puzzlingly ill-defined category at that.

What is world literature, asks David Damrosch, like many other contemporary researchers. For him, the circulation and making-intelligible of texts grants them a nebulous worldliness. For Pascale Casanova, it is their passage through an authorizing center, like Paris, that elevates them into the World Republic of Letters.

Others have adopted more quantitative, structuralist approaches; Franco Moretti's comparative statistics of literary production is the leader in this field. Most visible in the world literary field are the anthologies purporting to contain world literature, if only due to their size and pedagogical prevalence. Finally, world literature can be that which is not already another kind of literature: orphaned postcolonies, small languages, unpopular epochs. None of these definitions is mutually exclusive.

World literature is not unique in having many potential definitions. A debate on modernism alone could likely bring English professors to blows. Nevertheless, in most formulations, world literature appears as a supercategory rather than just another category, the reality of literary studies notwithstanding. Due to world literature's claim to transcendence, its definition has repercussions for literary studies broadly: constituents of the supercategory possess, intentionally or not, an implied superiority. After all, they represent the world.

World, though, is not a neutral term. It seems, at its most denotative, to signify the universal, as in Wittgenstein: "The world is all that is the case" (5). Although the early Wittgenstein might reject the association, world here is evocative of totality, the manifold. Yet we rarely use world as this unrestricted reference. Just as the *Tractatus* opens by giving us the world, it ends by closing much of it to us: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (89). Connotatively, our sense of world is the same. Rather than being a neutral invocation of totality, world defines the limits of our experience. The second-world is barely a memory for my generation, and the third-world is nothing more than a signifier of economic otherness, irrespective of its origin as a

polemical political position. World here is a limit to totality. As a child of the first-world, I can only define my economic others as belonging to another world.

World in the literary field is no different. Whether it is a signifier of excellence or otherness, the world of world literature marks a boundary. Inherent to the term is not the expression of totality but its denial. Only certain texts constitute world literature. In the spirit that gave rise to the proliferation of literary categories, we must ask after those texts that cannot be thought by the various theories and practices of world literature. As useful as Casanova's theory of urban literary capital may be on the abstract level, it has little specific relevance in the era of Lutetia. We might shift its focus to Rome, but a world away, Chinese literature of the Han dynasty would pass completely ignored. Similarly, the greatest work of literature may be untranslated and immobile in an unpopular language, which would deny it worldliness under Damrosch's theory. I am yet unsure what precisely we are to take from the quantitative theories of world literature, but those texts that resist subsumption by structuralist or statistical methods remain outside the world expressible by them. And in the anthologies, what does not appear is not worldly. Therefore, world literature is either an oxymoron in its rejection of the universality it promises, or it assumes the existence of many worlds, at which point we have left literary theory for theoretical physics.

World literature does little to untie the Gordian knot posed by the proliferation of subdisciplines within literary studies. Rather than offering a means to examine the literary field in its totality, as the name seductively suggests, world literature simply inaugurates yet another literary category, and possibly several. Moreover, this new category rests on often-unstated premises that are the necessary predicates of its

definition. Rather than having a supercategory for literary study, we have yet another subdiscipline masquerading as a macroscopic methodology.

The solution to the knot then is not the sword of Alexander but the razor of Ockham. Literary studies, with its near-infinite permutations resting often on half-assertions, is a particularly egregious offender against the *lex parsimoniae*. This is not without purpose, for the many useful political, pedagogical, and research positions that rest upon the plurality of the literary field can make important, limited claims circumscribed by the premises of their specializations. However, the proliferation of categories inherent to world literature undermines its utility as a supercategory or universal optic. Instead of trying to define world literature in more rigorous yet paradoxically more limiting fashions, we might eschew the term while embracing its spirit in order to create a truly universal, parsimonious optic.

Global literary production as a term rejects the complicated premises of the world literatures as categories and points instead to the texts that it signifies. Where world marks epistemological boundaries, global signifies a geographical space. This is not to say that global is not fraught with its own unfortunate connotations, thanks in large part to corporate doublespeak, but the term still indicates an empirical space at its most denotative. Barring any radical metaphysics, the globe is still our celestial sphere regardless of any accreted definitions. Unlike world, however, taking global as the globe as the predicate of an inquiry offers no obvious categories with which to delimit its object. This is precisely the point. The premises of many approaches to world literature are implicit, revealed only by probing the boundaries of their constructed worlds. A global literature, on the other hand, requires no such examination, since its borders and

are self-evident and its premises transparent, at least until xenolinguistics has a proper object.

But this is moving too quickly. The globe may be easily defined, but a global literature lacks the clarity of its geographic site. This term faces the same obstacles as does world literature. Both seem to posit supercategories that can subsume other categories or at least parts of them. What is global literature if not a slightly more epistemologically rigorous canon of world literature? The problem here lies not in the global scope of the term, but in its claim on literature. Asking what literature is, perhaps the oldest task of the literary critic, is not particularly useful. Aristotle's pioneering *Poetics* may be an exemplary text of genre theory, but it really brings us no closer to a definition of literature. In practice, literature is tied to canons. Not all texts are worthy of the label literature, we are told, so it becomes an instrument of literary critics seeking to achieve various ends by excluding texts that do not fit into their particular narratives of cultural development as dreck, doggerel, or *New York Times* Bestsellers. No true Scotsman indeed.

For a word with rather humble origins, literature has been pressed into service as a bulwark against the unwashed masses of lesser texts. Yet this sets the term at odds with itself. Originally, literature denotes writing, as it derives from the Latin word for letter. The word does not discriminate among different types of writing, perhaps because at the time of its introduction into English, any literacy was extraordinary. Rather than reinscribing the strictures of existing disciplines on to world literature, perhaps we can find a way to return it to its etymological roots. World literature then might take its constituent texts – those of global literary production – as atomic units and observe how

they interact with each other, asking why the interactions happen as they do. To this end, I will examine just a few texts from the whole of global literary production, as a test to see if such a project is both feasible and instructive.

The Author

In 2006, after beginning my study of Chinese literature in earnest, I spent a summer in Taiwan to do research and practice the language. In between teaching English and learning Chinese, I passed much of my free time in bookstores, hoping to supplement my rather meager collection of Chinese literature. In this task I was quite successful and amassed several imposing stacks of books, which took up a substantial amount of space in my already cramped garret. My prize find was the new collected works of the early twentieth century writer Lu Xun (1881-1936), released only a few months prior. I was surprised to find the set, which was published on the mainland, for sale in Taiwan. Lu Xun, who had been championed by the Communists after his death in 1936, had gone unappreciated and even vilified in Taiwan. My Taiwanese friends told me that his works had until recently only been available in a locked room at the National Taiwan University – to prevent ideological contamination. Nevertheless, I was able to purchase his works, imported from the mainland, in a Taipei bookstore. I even found a locally published edition of the collection, complete with traditional characters. Perhaps attitudes had changed since Lu Xun's Taiwanese "incarceration" at the university.

This was not quite the case. When a friend flew out to visit, I saw an opportunity to send some of my newly acquired library home without paying the exorbitant prices for international shipping. We loaded many books into my friend's luggage, but the eighteen-volume Lu Xun collection would not fit with everything else. Conveniently,

People's Literature Publishing had packaged the collection in its own tote bag, emblazoned with characters indicating its contents. My friend suggested that the bag of books could serve as a piece of carry-on luggage. At the airport, we said goodbye after checking the bags, and she proceeded to the security checkpoint with the Lu Xun collection in hand. Several minutes later I received a frantic phone call. She told me that one of the security personnel had interrogated her about her belongings, asking pointedly if she knew what was written on and contained within her carry-on. Having no Chinese, she did not, and the guard was forced to content himself with a stern rebuke of my friend's apparently Communistic reading habits. The Cold War was not as far away as I had thought.

Lu Xun's fortunes in the world of literature are not very different. Though Western publishers of Chinese literature are unlikely to frighten young American travelers, many of their orthodoxies date from the same era as those of the overzealous security guard. Contemporary Western representations of Chinese modernity are too often grounded in pieties that reflect supposedly long-past ideological battles. Discussions of China rarely occur without non-reflective polemics on human rights, Tibet, and Tiananmen Square; behind these lurk the ghost of Mao, the extremes of the Cultural Revolution, and the specter of communism. Yet these legacies cannot meaningfully represent the complexity of China's tumultuous twentieth century, let alone its present. Nevertheless, these discourses persist because they allow the West to represent China as morally inferior. Moreover, the cultural productions of modern China that have currency in the West rarely challenge this view. We probably know far more about "modern" China from Pearl Buck, Richard McKenna, and Steve McQueen than

from any Chinese source. Granted, recent academic critics such as Tang Xiaobing and Marston Anderson have approached modern Chinese culture with an eye toward recovering its complexity, but their work must contend with constant media saturation of China's supposed ills. Popular Western representations of contemporary China offer simplistic, teleological narratives of its cultural modernization that not only offer little resistance to the prevailing paradigm, but also work to justify it.

Among these representations is the positioning of modern Chinese writers within the growing discourse of world literature. China's millennia-spanning literary history is extraordinarily complex, since its continuous development engenders many simultaneously competing and colliding traditions, genres, and theories. Modern Chinese literature is no different. Rather than being a refutation of China's rich literary heritage, Chinese writers of the twentieth century further that legacy with divergent theories about the status of their cultural forebears and the role of literature in the modern nation-state.

In addition to negotiating their own cultural history, modern Chinese writers must engage the influx of literature from around the world. This is not to say that China had not encountered foreign literature prior to the twentieth century; the arrival of Buddhism for example shaped several traditions of premodern Chinese literature. However, the widespread access to foreign works in the early twentieth century thrust the issues of global literary production upon Chinese intellectuals.

These stories of cultural exchange, whether successful or not, are largely absent from world literature as it currently exists. World literature has an ambiguous mandate to research and teach the literary productions of the world, but has yet to arrive at an effective method for doing so or even defining what those productions are. Instead world

literature is little more than the concatenations of tautologically important texts assembled under nebulous frameworks derived from national canons. All the usual suspects show up, and few genuinely unexpected works ever appear as part of the new canons of world literature.

The banality of world literature, though, is not its greatest failing. It offers nothing new to those who engage it that could not be had from a judicious selection of national language courses. The stories, like those resulting from Lu Xun's translation and travel, figuratively and physically, find no place within the new field. I suspect that an exegesis of my friend's encounter with Taiwanese airport security could tell us as much if not more about the state of Sino-American and cross-straits relations than trotting out Lu Xun's work once again as a representative of China.

Moreover, even if we were to read Lu Xun in this fashion, we would be missing the most Chinese part of his text: the language. Reading in translation is an unavoidable necessity in any project with a polyglot focus, but again, rather than dismissing it in terms like "unavoidable," we might try to learn something from it. Lu Xun is exceptionally well traveled in translation. In English alone there are four major translations of his works, which have been anthologized and repackaged variously, as well as four more modest translation projects. At least French, German, Russian, and Japanese also have benefited from the fruits of major projects to translate Lu Xun, though these fruits vary unexpectedly among the languages. This topography of the relative importance of translations should itself be held suspect; the distinction of major and minor demands an accounting of its assumptions. Marginalizing translations simply through the diminutive is not an unmotivated act, and inquiry might reveal details of the taxonomist's

relationship to Sino-American relations. In this case, however, the distinction is of quantity translated and not of conscious political import. Nevertheless, the resulting question of why some translators took on more of Lu Xun's work than others remains unanswered, and will lead down paths that wander through the whole of modern Sino-Western relations.

Lu Xun, the penname of Zhou Shuren, is preeminent among Chinese writers. Hailed both in China and abroad as the founder of modern Chinese literature, he emerges as one of China's most vocal proponents of cultural modernization in the early twentieth century. Like many other Chinese intellectuals of the time, Lu Xun chose literature as his medium of political expression. The scion of a gentry family, he was well versed in the Chinese classical tradition, but the traditional path the scholar-bureaucrat was closed to him, first due to familial difficulties, and later because of the abolition of the Chinese civil service examinations in 1905. His family's slow decline led him, like many others of his generation, to seek out new educational opportunities. He studied first in China at newly organized schools based on the empirical sciences, which exposed him to ideas that were incompatible with and often antithetical to the orthodox education he received at home. He then traveled to Japan to pursue further studies in Western medicine, seeking to become a physician. While in Japan, he abandoned his medical studies in order to promote a nationalist literature for China. He began reading, translating, and commenting on Western works of literature and philosophy. These early efforts, however, were unsuccessful at sparking any sort of movement. Nevertheless, his exposure to these texts would shape his creative writing after he returned to China.

In 1918, Lu Xun published his first short story, “Diary of a Madman,” in the revolutionary periodical *New Youth*. The story, drawing its name and basic premise from Nikolai Gogol’s tale of the same name, is a product of Lu Xun’s foreign apprenticeship in Japan. In many ways it is a polemic against the traditional culture of China, insinuating that it is responsible for China’s contemporary woes. Grounded in the philosophy of Nietzsche and the newly received science of Darwinism, the text is indicative of the range of sources that are constitutive of Chinese modernity. The majority of the text is in *baihua*, or vernacular Chinese. This stands in contrast to the *wenyanwen*, or literary Chinese, that dominated Chinese literary culture since antiquity. This latter language was accessible only to those who had studied it, since it did not reflect the contemporary usage of Chinese; a comparable, if inexact Western example might be the inaccessibility of Chaucer to a contemporary speaker of English. *Baihua* by contrast was much closer to the contemporary spoken language. For these reasons, most accounts of Chinese history view the story as the beginning of Chinese literary modernity.

Lu Xun continued writing, becoming a literary celebrity in China, until his death in 1936. In total he produced three collections of short stories, a volume of prose poems, another of reflective essays, many classical style poems, countless occasional essays and journalistic pieces, and an astonishing number of translations. He remained engaged with Chinese cultural and political debates throughout his active period, and used his status to promote young writers and weigh in on current political issues. Despite his position in the Chinese cultural world, his influence waned as the political landscape became increasingly radicalized and a new generation of intellectuals came to the fore.

However, after his death Lu Xun gained new life as a political symbol.

Notoriously wily in his own political commitments, he became the posthumous torchbearer of revolutionary politics in China. This lionization was predicated on a narrow representation of Lu Xun, specifically that of his early, ostensibly iconoclastic stories like “Diary of a Madman.” The great diversity and political ambiguity of his work notwithstanding, Mao Zedong championed him as not only a model writer, but also a culture warrior.

It is this image of Lu Xun that has contemporary international currency. In the stand off between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan (Republic of China), Lu Xun became an essentialized representative of a particular thread of modern Chinese thought. With each China vying to appropriate the legacy of the May Fourth Movement, China’s early twentieth century cultural modernization, for itself, Lu Xun stood for the wholesale rejection of tradition. This suited the needs of the PRC, and it allowed Taiwan to personify its vilification of the radical politics that divided China. To this end, Lu Xun’s works were banned in Taiwan until fairly recently. Taiwan instead championed Hu Shi, a contemporary of Lu Xun with ties to the United States and an outspoken proponent of liberal democracy. Naturally, the PRC cast Hu Shi as a dangerous reactionary.

This essentialization of both Chinas and their supposed representatives has spilled over into broader discussions of literature and culture. Despite developments in Chinese literary studies proper, in the growing discourse of world literature Lu Xun’s complexity remains largely unexamined because of the ease of subsuming him under a narrow, spurious political legacy, particularly when that legacy suits the political needs –

conscious or not – of Western publishers and pedagogues. China's political status in the West during the Cold War (and beyond) has likely precluded serious investigation of Lu Xun's work. Given world literature's increasing popularity on college campuses ostensibly as a means to combat such Americocentrism, its insidious persistence is especially disturbing.

The prejudiced readings of Lu Xun are symptomatic of an essentialization of China in general. Lu Xun's dominance in Western representations of Chinese literature suggests that analyses of Chinese culture have not moved beyond these Cold War narratives. Particularly egregious in this regard are the anthologies of world literature, which frequently feature Lu Xun as the lone representative of modern China. Since Lu Xun himself recognized that he was part of a larger literary discourse both at home and in the world, these simplistic representations of Lu Xun mask the nature of global literary production as well as the complexity of modern Chinese culture.

I chose Lu Xun as the object for this study not because I hoped to recover some sort of authentic version of him from the politicized readings or because I had some grand claim to his work. The former is impossible in light of the past half-century's theoretical work on hermeneutics and the status of author. The latter would require contending with the veritable industry of Lu Xun criticism in Chinese, as well as substantial bodies of work in Japanese and the Western languages. This is not to say that an engagement with that critical corpus is absent from the project. On the contrary, Lu Xun's exceptionally well-documented life and works was the main motivation for his selection. However, this is not a single author study.

Lu Xun is the vehicle for a broader argument about world literature. The lives that his works have led in both Chinese and translation are of paramount concern for this project. The vast resources available to the researcher made asking after those lives much easier. In this regard, any major author would do, Shakespeare or Homer being obvious contenders. Yet the exceptionally rich cultural traffic that passes through Lu Xun, either personally or via his writings, offers a ready-made test case for a theory of globalization on a cultural rather than economic level. I hope to argue in later works that Lu Xun is merely an exceptional case and that we can find participation in global cultural currents in most if not all authors, but will content myself with Lu Xun's low-hanging fruit for the time being. Moreover, the stories to be gleaned from the lives of Lu Xun's texts possess an urgency absent from many other famous authors. Their entanglement in the relationship between China in the West offers an opportunity to explore that often-fraught linkage from a perspective that does not resort to simplistic claims about Communism and economic domination.

World Literature, Global Perspective

If we are to take China seriously, we must move beyond these essentialized representations in favor of a subtler understanding of the Chinese nation and the culture(s) that produce it. China is neither inscrutable nor mysterious, nor even so different from those who would portray it as such. What is incumbent upon us as readers of Chinese literature, and, more broadly, of world literature, is to turn to the constituent texts of these literatures rather than relying on models of cultural relations that seemingly obviate the need for a deep understanding of the literatures predicated on close textual analysis.

To accomplish this, as much as it can be accomplished, we need not all become scholars of Chinese culture in order to read a Chinese story. Such extreme measures notwithstanding, providing some context for our readings is crucial to overcoming many Western representations of China. At the most fundamental level, China is not the United States, and this difference must be acknowledged. What is most problematic about our representations of China, or really any culture beyond a rather narrow scope, is that in the subordination of the foreign to ideological frameworks, we impose alien descriptive apparatuses on the foreign culture. Again, this is not to say that China is radically different and thus exempt from Western descriptive categories, particularly since modern Chinese writers themselves respond to these categories in their works. However, they are also in dialogue with their own traditions, and this must be acknowledged. To name Lu Xun as a realist or a revolutionary is pedagogically economical because it allows us to position him quickly in a constellation of other realists or revolutionaries. What this does not take into account is that Lu Xun is perhaps the first Chinese realist, or might not even be a realist at all. Put differently, Lu Xun is not Tolstoy, so hasty classifications of him as a realist probably do not capture the scope of his work the way it might the canonical Western exemplars of the style.

Lu Xun is not China either. He certainly is an important figure in the development of modern China, but we cannot equate the two any more than we can sufficiently describe Lu Xun's work with exclusively Western categories. I do not believe that Western publishers of Chinese literature or readers of world literature carry out these simplifications maliciously or even volitionally. Nor do I believe that the airport security guard who startled my friend had read Lu Xun before criticizing him.

And in this lies the problem: we do not read when we read world literature. We have myriad theories and models for reading, but this kind of reading is always already limited in scope; a theory is, by definition, a method of looking at something. Theories assume the result of their investigation before beginning to read. Thus if our understanding of China is predicated on a theory of political commitments, it is little wonder that so many read Lu Xun as a proto-Communist or iconoclastic radical. This is not an attack on theory in general, since it would be impossible to approach a text without any preconceived notions. However, it is a call for a method of reading world literature that does not rely entirely on pre-established Western categories for its critical and contextual foundations.

What this dissertation calls for and intends to practice is a return to close reading and historical perspective. I take China and Lu Xun as my objects not only because they are emblematic of the problems posed by contemporary reading strategies collected under the name world literature, but also because they show that the utopian promise of world literature is not wholly untenable, provided we embrace it as such. Lu Xun was a careful reader and knew his history, yet this tends to be forgotten when he is read. Readers of Lu Xun would do well to follow his example and resist the temptation to theorize their objects to the exclusion of actually reading them. What emerges is a Lu Xun and a China resplendent with complexity and connection to world literature and the world writ large.

Therefore, this dissertation takes as its objects Lu Xun and his oeuvre, world literature as a discipline, and the practice of translation. By closely reading Lu Xun's texts I seek to make manifest their engagement with global currents of cultural exchange. By closely reading how translators have presented Lu Xun's texts over the past century, I

seek to demonstrate how the history of a text in translation can reveal much about the relationship between the source and target cultures that would be opaque were translation ignored as it traditionally is. From this analytical methodology, I argue that a discipline of world literature, focused not on texts as representatives of a cultural tradition but as expressive of cultural relationships, can not only productively supplement the existing fields of literary study, but also offer an alternative conceptualization of globalization that follows the flows of culture, not capital.

Outline of the Dissertation

Part I – Lu Xun Reading World Literature

This section examines Lu Xun's position in the global literary network during his lifetime. The investigation will focus on how he read world texts, translated them, and represented them to create images of the West and China.

Chapter 1 – A Node in the Network

Lu Xun's transgressive position in Chinese literature as well as his status within world literature suggests that traditional disciplinary categories such as Chinese or modern might not adequately represent the scope of his oeuvre. He is not unique in this regard among either Chinese writers or all writers to a certain extent. Nonetheless, the encyclopedic range of his influences demands an approach that is not beholden to any one disciplinary formation. An interdisciplinary field of world literature seems like the ideal way to approach a figure like Lu Xun, but as I will argue in Chapter Five, world literature as it is currently practiced tends to reinscribe disciplinary orthodoxies rather than shatter them. Given the lack of any extant suitable interdisciplinary model for Lu Xun's work, I would like to propose a new one.

I take my cue in this project from Edward Said's concept of beginnings. In contrast with the origin, which grants its product an oracular quality of unquestionable coherence, the beginning demands that an account be taken of its production. Chinese literature is, upon close examination, a murky concept with poorly defined borders and roots near the border of prehistory. World literature is even less well defined: I have yet to meet a native speaker of "world." These disciplines that emerge seemingly autochthonously in universities cannot give any account of their coherence other than recursive definitions or arbitrary delimitations. If a text is part of Chinese literature because it is written in Chinese, how do we account for the changes the Chinese language has undergone over the last few thousand years? Similarly, if we were to take literature written in Chinese characters as the basis for the category, we would have to include what are traditionally considered Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese works as well. Too often we resort to the device of the canon to define our literatures for us. Chinese literature is such because it has always been such. This is hardly a satisfying categorical definition given Lu Xun's complicated relationship to this Chinese canon.

To escape from this dilemma of definition, I again follow Said, this time to the Neapolitan historian Giambattista Vico. The Viconian approach to history is materialist, relying on extant texts and philological inquiry rather than rationalist speculation. Vico's method is, in a word, grounded. The Viconian critic can always point to not only where his inquiry begins, but also where his object begins. It is this method that I would like to use to situate Lu Xun.

The text, then, is the basic unit of my investigation, and the links between texts the product thereof. Vladimir Nabokov's translation of *Eugene Onegin* is in many ways

my model for this approach. In his commentary Nabokov meticulously documented every textual connection whether of form or content from Pushkin's text to its source based on painstaking research into the material traces of its composition: letters, variants, etc. Furthermore, he pursued some of the links beyond Pushkin's immediate sources to their own sources. Were one to visualize Nabokov's work, beginning with *Onegin* and tracing each of Nabokov's links, one would quickly see an intricate network emerge, with each linked text forming a node. If Nabokov's translation were inserted into this network as its own node, its links would radically reshape the network, since it draws not only Pushkin's text, but on every text that Nabokov believed Pushkin's did.

I intend in this chapter to construct a similar network for Lu Xun. It will not be an exposition of Lu Xun's literary influences, for many fine works on the subject already exist. Instead, I would like to trace the hermeneutic effects of approaching Lu Xun's corpus in this manner. The anticipated result of this construction is the possibility of representing Lu Xun's work not as part of a given canon of Chinese or world literature, but as a material substrate of culture that resists reductive categorization.

Chapter 2 – Lu Xun's Theory of Translation

Much of the creation of the textual network discussed above relied on Lu Xun's considerable facility with foreign languages to translate foreign texts into Chinese. Working primarily with German, Japanese, and Russian source texts, Lu Xun translated works of literature, philosophy, politics, and science. His translations differed from those of his contemporaries in that readability in Chinese was not his main goal. He instead pursued a program of what he called "hard" (硬) translation, evoking the theories of

Schleiermacher, Goethe, and Hölderlin. Rather than making the foreign texts conform to Chinese stylistics, he sought to bring Chinese closer to the foreign texts.

This transcultural project was not limited to translation proper. In addition to his substantial corpus of translated texts, Lu Xun's own literary production, both critical and creative, reflects an engagement with Western literary genres previously unknown in China. Most notable among these transcultural adaptations is Lu Xun's development of the modern Chinese short story. The first two collections of Lu Xun's stories, *Nahan* and *Panghuang*, reflect the development of this genre in Chinese. In addition to its engagement with genre, Lu Xun's work also translated Western literary movements, chiefly modernism and realism. These generic terms do not capture the scope of Lu Xun's efforts in translation and adaptation, but they do offer useful heuristic tools for engaging his work. He did not simply copy Western literary genres and movements. He responds to readings of foreign texts by integrating them into a wider discourse of literary theory in contemporary China.

The textual relations produced by Lu Xun's translation activities reflect the power of the literary network to manifest itself not just as an abstract model but also as reified in the cultural productions that rely on its material existence. Lu Xun shapes the development of modern Chinese language and culture by predicating his own literary output on the translation and adaptation of foreign works, chosen by the local needs of Chinese politics. What is called into question here is the status of the translated text when Lu Xun engages it. His translational gesture imparts a substantial autonomy to the text, but he still tries to capture something of the original context. How he negotiates between textual translation and cultural mediation remains an open question

This chapter seeks to answer this question by situating Lu Xun's translation practice within his larger engagement with global literary production. It aims to explicate the mechanisms Lu Xun uses to build the literary network that crystallizes in his own authorship. Whether his practice is best named as translation is also under investigation. Lu Xun does, to be sure, translate texts, but the systematic character of his work suggests that he hopes to accomplish something other than textual translation. Alternatively, he sees in textual translation the possibility of importing more than just texts: culture is his ultimate object. Therefore this project will draw on the work of polysystems theorists and world systems theorists in conjunction with the recent "cultural turn" in translation studies in order to produce a theoretical model adequate to the complexity of Lu Xun's work.

Part II – World Literature Reading Lu Xun

This section charts the path of Lu Xun's works through the world literary network. By analyzing how Lu Xun appears in both foreign and local representations and how his literary and political legacies are deployed, one can see what image of China (and of Lu Xun) the representers wish to construct.

Chapter 3 – Early Representations of Lu Xun

Translations 1926-1942

Lu Xun's work was already moving in world literary networks before the Communist takeover of China in 1949, and even before his death in 1936. These early translations shaped Lu Xun's image abroad by not only exposing him to a foreign readership, but also limiting that exposure. The translations were unsystematic and

stripped of all context; moreover, by virtue of their scarcity, they presented a narrow view of Lu Xun and his work.

During this period Lu Xun emerged in China as a symbol of the May Fourth Movement and an already déclassé strain of radical politics. While he was alive, he used this status to promote younger writers even as his own celebrity was fading. After his death, however, he was lionized as the embodiment of modern Chinese culture and made to serve as the political ground for further revolutionary actions. This sets the ground for future representations of Lu Xun both in China and abroad as being symbolically commensurable with China.

Lu Xun is a convenient figure in China's cultural history for those who would mobilize his legacy for political or profitable ends. Of course, the definition of that legacy does not happen without the work of others. Although his fame in China was secure by the time of his death in 1936, how that fame would be used remained an open question. Orthodox interpretations were quick to appear in China, but his reception outside China, particularly before the onset of the Cold War, has gone largely unexamined. In keeping with the materialist principles of this inquiry, this chapter will examine early translations of Lu Xun's work along with any accompanying commentary. The goal of this investigation is to trace the literary network that emerges around Lu Xun's work as a response to it.

Chapter 4 – Lu Xun in Institutional Translation:

1942-Present

Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Lu Xun began to appear in institutional translations. Beijing's Foreign Languages Press published

translations of Lu Xun for foreign consumption. Given FLP's ties to the Chinese government, these translations represent the official of Lu Xun that China sought to export.

However, Lu Xun does not appear solely in these authorized editions. Translators in France, Germany, and the United States have produced versions independent of those published institutionally in China. Differences emerge within the various Western language translations that color how Lu Xun's works are represented. Some texts exist in independent French translations that are only available in English from Beijing. Similarly, translations of Lu Xun's occasional essays are absent in American editions of his work, but constitute a substantial component of the primary Chinese-published English edition.

Multiple Lu Xuns emerge from these translations. Moreover, multiple Chinas emerge as well. The motivations of individual translators and publishers vary amongst the linguistic and political traditions that represent Lu Xun abroad. These intermediaries forge equivalences between their worlds and Lu Xun's in order to justify a given worldview. Lu Xun must not only serve the needs of Republican China, but also those of the Cold War states and beyond. Again, a local cultural production acquires global significance paradoxically because of its local esteem. Lu Xun is certainly emblematic of *a* China, but his translators represent him as a signifier of their Chinas. In this case, the global is an illusion achieved through translation. Lu Xun becomes present to his foreign readers, but never occupies a global space. Each translation of Lu Xun is a local production governed by local needs.

The emergence of the plural Lu Xun is indicative of the literary network expanding to such an extent that it becomes difficult to discern any point of entry that is not already beholden to its neighboring nodes. One cannot simply read “Diary of a Madman” without countenancing, if unconsciously, the dialectical relationships that govern not just its interpretation, but its very materiality. Just as Borges’ Pierre Menard cannot just rewrite *Don Quixote*, so too is it impossible to reproduce any text of Lu Xun’s without acknowledging the multitudinous claims already made on it. Therefore, this chapter will investigate how these many Lu Xun’s appear in the mature translations of and critical approaches to his work. Moreover, the degree to which the various Lu Xuns acknowledge one another and the literary network that sustains them will also be examined.

Chapter 5 – Lu Xun as World Literature

The emerging discipline of World Literature has not forgotten Lu Xun. His inclusion in anthologies of the subject affords him wide exposure outside of Chinese language and literature texts. Despite this new exposure, these representations of Lu Xun do not address the issues that arose in his early representations, and perhaps, even exacerbate them. These anthologies contain small samples of Lu Xun’s work: a story and maybe a few poems. This representation is not indicative of the mature state of Lu Xun translations, but suggests instead the deployment of Lu Xun for a particular purpose.

Given that these anthologies must be selective in collecting material, the choice of Lu Xun necessitates an inquiry into the criteria underlying that selection. Put differently, what makes Lu Xun part of world literature? Although he was a promoter of foreign literature during his lifetime, his essays on that subject do not appear in these anthologies.

His works are available in mostly complete, if ideological translations, but the anthologies do not give any hint of the breadth of his writing. Lu Xun is widely considered, in both China and the West as the founder of modern Chinese literature, and so represents a certain construction of China. By doing this he can ensure an anthology's geographic diversity.

This representation of China through Lu Xun reveals two things. The first is that World Literature falls victim to the same ideological struggles as do the more traditionally disciplinary representations of Lu Xun. Modern Chinese literature is complex, with many competing currents within it. Moreover, Lu Xun was only active for about twenty years in the early twentieth century, and can hardly be considered representative of what followed, or even of his own time: Lu Xun was quite independent in both literature and politics. These ideological portrayals come into sharper focus when one considers the other representatives of modern Chinese literature. Often Lu Xun's only linguistic compatriot is Zhang Ailing, a writer associated with conservative politics and thus a useful pendant to Lu Xun – in a Cold War paradigm.

Second, the inclusion of Lu Xun because he represents China reveals that world literature's project is motivated by a desire for geopolitical diversity rather than the construction or analysis of global literary production. The primacy of the nation-state and its pre-modern forebears in these anthologies belies a gastronomic conception of literature, in which each country offers up a choice morsel of its literary output to be consumed by readers of these anthologies. The local is made to appear globally, not as part of a utopian project, but as part of the commodification of culture. Lu Xun exists in

world literature as a representative of a particular construction of China to be consumed and dominated by his readers.

Lu Xun's appearance in these anthologies represents the attempted effacement of the literary network and the pale substitution by what essentially amounts to a list of nominally important texts. However, the material base on which one could argue for this importance is almost completely absent from these anthologies. This is not to say, though, that they do not rely on the existence of the underlying literary network. The texts selected for these anthologies are not chosen by chance nor do they represent a sort of naïve reading that escapes the complexity of the literary network. They represent instead the extremities of the network; the texts within the anthologies become just another node, linked perhaps to major institutional translations, which is far removed from Lu Xun or any other author's original text, if we can even speak of originality in a network model. Rather than offering selections from the flowering of global literary production, world literature culls from around the edge of the global literary network and in so doing collects not the texts in themselves, but the texts that contain the reified literary, critical, and political content that is produced by the expansion of the network.

Part I – Lu Xun Reading World Literature

Chapter 1

A Node in the Network

One's delusion vanishes as soon as one abandons general argumentation and turns to the
 “things themselves.”

Husserl, *Logical Investigations*

Aesthetic Epistemology

Global literary production, when envisioned in its totality, is an impenetrable object. Evocative of Kant's mathematical sublime, the staggering number of works exceeds the representative capacity of the mind. We can discuss this totality only in the most simplistic of terms, because we lack a framework to represent it. To posit that it exists tells us nothing about it, but to make a broader claim requires the ability to represent it in its totality. However, our inability to conceive of the whole of global literary production does not prevent us from accessing it part. The inability to see the ocean as a bounded object did not prevent cartographers from making maps that represented it as such. Like the ocean, global literary production is finite, if overwhelming, and thus could be envisioned as such given the proper tools.

Kant points the way toward those tools. To represent the ocean as a bounded object requires knowledge of its boundaries. Like the ocean itself, the boundaries cannot be perceived all at once. They can, however, be charted piecemeal. Kant suggests that our encounter with the mathematical sublime follows the same pattern:

This mathematical estimation of magnitude serves and satisfies the understanding equally well, whether the imagination selects as the unity a magnitude that we can

take in in one glance, such as a foot or a rod, or whether it selects a German mile, or even an earth diameter, which the imagination can apprehend but cannot comprehend in one intuition [...] In either case the logical estimation of magnitude progresses without hindrance to infinity. (110-1)

When confronted with the overwhelming object, we can move from an understanding of a part to an understanding of the whole. This exercise of mastery over the object produces the feeling of the sublime, an affective expression of a refined apprehension of totality. If we can envision the ocean as a bounded object, then why not the whole of global literary production?

We lack a clear means for representing a part of that totality analogous to the ocean's borders. Many potential divisions exist: languages, genres, movements, traditions, etc. Yet these categories rarely claim to be universally applicable, and instead define themselves as lenses into other pre-existing divisions of global literary production. These divisions concern themselves with internal consistency rather than the representation of external totalities. Therefore, we need a more atomic element of global literary production to serve as its representative kernel.

The author functions atomically in that we can define an author without appeal to other categories. But, to undertake the study of an author, we must first be able to define what that author is. The question may seem absurd at first blush, but how we answer it will decisively shape the study. In this case, the project asks us to define Lu Xun. Simple enough. He lived from 1881 to 1936; he established modern Chinese literature; he was a major voice in the Chinese cultural revolution of the 1920s and 30s. We can find arguments and evidence for each of these statements adduced in various historical

and critical texts, but even these basic assumptions about Lu Xun rely on the elision of certain questions about his identity. To assert that he established modern Chinese literature assumes the existence of a coherent Chinese literature to which Lu Xun contributed, and that his writings catalyzed a break in that coherent object. Furthermore, the ascription of modern to one side of that break rests upon a host of assumptions about what constitutes modernity as well as what it signifies, neither of which enjoys universal agreement in any context, and particularly fraught when used to underscore purported cultural boundaries. In his influential study of modernity and literature, Benedict Anderson decisively links the nation to modernity: “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (46). As compelling as Anderson’s argument is, and despite its apparent utility for analyzing writers like Lu Xun, his assumptions and key words rely on the Western political and historical tradition. Employing Anderson as an analytic lens for Chinese modernity or nationalism precludes a more specific analytic predicated on Chinese categories from emerging through theoretical domestication. Even if one were to offer an indigenous model of state development or modernity, as have Chinese scholars like Wang Hui, it would still not constitute a universalizable optic with which we could objectively define Lu Xun.

Certainly Lu Xun did write in Chinese and his writings do mark a shift in the Chinese literary tradition, but why must Lu Xun belong to this nebulously defined tradition as part of his fundamental definition? This is to say, are we bound to evaluate writers first and foremost as part of or in reaction to a canon? I realize the irony in using

a hypercanonical figure to attack the notion of literary tradition; however, Lu Xun's work demands a broader context than the canon of Chinese literature, if only because he read so far beyond his supposed "native" tradition. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the local historical circumstances that bind him to China, and thus cannot evade the question of tradition by declaring him a "world author" or some other inane sobriquet.

Lu Xun's incredible breadth of influences, although complicating any descriptive effort, makes him an ideal case study for an exploration of global literary production. Because his work draws on so many seemingly disparate traditions, it challenges simple appropriations as Chinese literature. Moreover, it upsets the stability of a model of global literary production predicated on national literary traditions.

His local historical circumstances are themselves contested by the many claimants to his legacy. We can speak of China's desperate political situations, both domestic and foreign, in the early twentieth century as contexts for his writing. Lu Xun was variously, even simultaneously, a radical, a conservative, a nationalist, an internationalist, a revolutionary, and a reactionary. Many factions wishing to bolster a given cause in China will attach Lu Xun's name to it. Mao Zedong lionized the author to support his projects. By contrast, his opponents have long circulated the apocryphal story of the Chairman, on being asked what Lu Xun would write today, responded that Lu Xun would be either silent or imprisoned. Both of these statements, among many others, testify to Lu Xun's symbolic power, yet it is exactly this power that makes reading him as a representative of a particular category of literature so difficult.

Studying Lu Xun within the framework of Chinese literature makes these legacies inescapable. To do otherwise would be to pretend they do not exist. However, Lu Xun is

not, at the most basic level, the various historical and political legacies that his image is mobilized to signify. He appears *as* the various epithets noted above, but they are at most epiphenomenal appearances. Though aware of his status within the Chinese intelligentsia, Lu Xun never arrogated such titles to himself. Thus these legacies remain fundamentally the productions of others. Even the accolade perhaps least freighted with partisan signification, acknowledging him as the father of modern Chinese literature, relies on a selective definition and reading of that literature, allowing for a moment the validity of such a construction.

Turning to the texts themselves is the most effective means of bracketing out the accreted legacies of Lu Xun that would otherwise color any research. Moreover, defining Lu Xun phenomenally as his texts, though not ontically equivalent with them, we can avoid subordinating his work to the category of a national literature, which is necessary for a project of world or global literature. Although Lu Xun spoke Chinese, wrote in Chinese, and was a Chinese citizen, the optic of Chinese literature is not necessarily the best way to engage his work. Lu Xun is exceptional in the global breadth of his reading and influences, hence confining his work to a single disciplinary genre seems unproductively self-limiting. However, the dichotomy between text and tradition is applicable in all cases, not just for outliers like Lu Xun's. I do not wish to discount the role played by a certain cultural knowledge on the part of authors, but I am highly skeptical of the possibility that any such knowledge is completely coextensive with one of the academy's national literature divisions. Lu Xun was undoubtedly conversant with a Chinese cultural tradition. What that tradition is, however, is likely impossible to define in scholarly terms. We can define, with varying degrees of difficulty, what texts

Lu Xun engaged and can therefore trace textual, material linkages rather than abstract, cultural ones.

Lu Xun and indeed any author can therefore appear not as a contested legacy but as a demonstrable body of work into which we can inquire. Rather than focusing on Lu Xun as the author of his texts, and dealing with the incumbent biographical baggage, we might turn to his texts themselves not as expressions of a historical moment or personal philosophy, but as the sedimentation of constellated textual relations. In this I largely follow Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author," which argues against the final, authoritative reading of a text: "In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered; the structure can be followed, 'run' (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 147). However, instead of bracketing out the author as a gesture toward New Criticism, as do many of the French poststructuralists, this move serves to recast the text as an intertextual composition instead of an entelechial object. Taking Lu Xun's texts as the fundamental objects of inquiry severs the Gordian knot of the complicated categorical, political, and disciplinary legacies that twist about him. By no means is this an indictment of those disciplinary pieties or political deployments as incorrect. It is rather an attempt to delineate a finite, communicable object on which to ground an inquiry. This move to define Lu Xun in material terms derives from a desire to trace the development of his work from its antecedents without appeal to supertextual constructs like literary canons.

Bracketing out Categories

Taking the text as the atomic unit requires a text for investigation. Lu Xun's "狂人日记," or "A Madman's Diary" is probably best known among his works and occupies a peculiar position in Chinese literature that underscores the problem of using categories to envision global literary production. It is considered the first modern Chinese short story and a major statement of the shift in Chinese culture during the Republican era (1912-1949). That widely accepted description invokes periodization, language, genre, culture, and nation as categories without defining any of them, which points toward their limitations.

The story itself concerns the thoughts of the titular madman about his neighbors and culture. He records these in a diary that becomes the text of the story, supplemented by a preface by a different hand that introduces the madman and his illness. The protagonist believes that his countrymen are interpellated as cannibals by key texts from the classical tradition. The story is usually read as an allegory for the assumed role of traditional Chinese culture in stunting China's development in comparison with the European nations and Japan.

So what is "Diary?" A text always looks like something, and it is in this *appearing as* that the complications of category emerge. Even the most basic categories rely on a prior knowledge of the category. That is to say, no category is immanent to a text. In the case of genre, a seemingly fundamental categorical distinction, how to classify "Diary" is not so clear. Genre's essence is a notorious problem in literary studies, the solution of which requires eliding the question of the hermeneutic circle. The priority of the category against the exemplar is indeterminate in all but the most

prescribed cases: identifying a sonnet as Elizabethan or Petrarchan is a relatively clear determination based on the rhyme scheme. Prose offers no such criteria for its genera. More difficult still is the generic identification of cross-culturally informed texts.

We could say that it is a short story, but this involves a linguistically specific classification that may not be directly applicable to “Diary.” French, for example, distinguishes between *conte* and *récit*, both of which can be translated by the English “short story,” though some instances of the latter can be translated as “novella,” itself a particularly fraught generic classification. In Chinese, the genres of vernacular prose fiction are named by 小说, “little speech,” reflecting its status as a deprecated genre. The category may be further divided into 长篇小说, “long fiction” and 短篇小说, “short fiction” based on length, but this still does not ensure categorical equivalence between “short story” and 短篇小说. Expanding the category of prose fiction beyond the vernacular yields additional generic subdivisions that correspond to the short story. 志怪 stories of the post-Han period and 传奇 tales of the Tang and Song dynasties are both short story genres in that both are short prose fiction. However, to claim that they are equivalent to the Western short story or even to each other would be like comparing Perrault’s *Contes* to Joyce’s *Dubliners*. The most useful generic translation of these might be “ghost story,” because all three recount tales of the fantastic, but even this effaces the formal differences between the three genres.

Further complicating matters is “Diary’s” own bizarre form, since it is ostensibly a diary rather than a short story. This trope is not unprecedented. The very loose inspiration for Lu Xun’s text, Nikolai Gogol’s “A Madman’s Diary,” uses it, and the

“Foreword” to Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* is similarly structured, though not explicitly a diary. Naming it as a short story historicizes it as part of the development of a particular, if poorly defined, Western genre. Naming it as a 小说 places it within a tradition that it self-evidently attempts to refute. Moreover, Lu Xun does not include himself or any of his contemporaries in his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, suggesting that he saw he break between his work and that of traditional fiction.

Going beyond the impasse of generic classification, any attempt to place the work within the context of a literary movement runs into similar problems. To classify Lu Xun’s work as realist requires a definition of what realism is. Furthermore, we might question the applicability of Western literary movements to Chinese texts. Contemporary with Lu Xun’s writing were calls for realism and romanticism in Chinese literature, espoused respectively by the Literary Research Association and the Creation Society. These labels have been taken up when discussing literature from the period. To speak of realism in China is to invite comparison to realism in Europe. A story like Lu Xun’s “My Old Home” resonates with Dickens’ work in that both depict the living conditions of the impoverished. However, Pip’s world of Victorian England is a very different place from that of Runtu or any of the other benighted peasants who pass through Lu Xun’s stories. To take realism as the name for works that engage social issues realistically grants the term a certain robustness, but also deprives it of any historical specificity, nearly neutering its categorical potency.

Romanticism poses an even greater challenge since, as much as any movement exists, it comes into being as a response to specific developments in European thought and history: namely the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution. Now in their

response to these events, common themes can be found in canonically romantic works. Exemplary in this regard is the glorification of nature as a pendant to humanity's attempted conquest of it; glorification expressed perhaps by a young, melodramatic protagonist. These particular elements can be transposed easily between works and cultural traditions. Yu Dafu's 1921 short story "Sinking" demonstrates this. And though the calls to patriotism of some European romantics may be found in their Chinese counterparts, their respective historical situations remain fundamentally different. The affinity of Republican era Chinese writers for East European romantics in particular overcomes the historical difference somewhat, for one could argue about a shared semi-colonial situation. However, this level of specificity detracts from the categorical power of romanticism as a term.

The descriptive utility of these categories decreases with their increasing specificity. However, the scope of a given category is not inherent to the texts it describes. Even though the historical situation of the European romantics differs significantly from writers of China's Republican period, to name both as romantic indicates that the name refers not to the emphasis on the natural world in the work of Coleridge or Shelley, but to the nationalist literatures of Petöfi or Pushkin. This does not exclude the other romantics, but instead asks the reader to look for something else in order to justify them as romantic. The ascription of literary movements to texts is a theoretical project, and relies on criteria external to the texts themselves, even if initially derived from them. Thus labels like realist or romantic tell us less about the text under consideration and more about the commitments of the critic making the distinctions. Lu

Xun's texts may be products of realism, but this is ultimately a phenotypic observation and tells us little if anything about the texts themselves.

Issues of category notwithstanding, Lu Xun was a great reader of European romanticism and realism. Yet his approach to these texts was not to take them as part of an extant literary movement. He instead grouped them into an intentional category.

Drawing on South Asian mythology, he dubs them the Mara poets:

I cannot detail each varied voice, but none has such power to inspire language as gripping as Mara poetry. Borrowed from India, the term "Mara" – celestial demon, or "Satan" in Europe – first denoted Byron. Now I apply it to those, among all poets, who were committed to resistance, whose purpose was action but who were little loved by their age; and I introduce their words, deeds, ideas, and the impact of their circles, from the sovereign Byron to a Magyar (Hungarian) man of letters. ("Mara" 99)

Not unlike Vico, Lu Xun traces the vigor of cultural institutions to their textual forebears: "Civilization's most potent legacy to later generations is the voice of the soul. The ancient imagination had access to the temple of Nature and tacit accord with all things, communed with them and spoke what could be spoken, and that was poetry" ("Mara" 97). This reads like the pontification of a romantic hero, but it need not be read as such, tempting though it may be. That optic is external to the text.

This dense, allusive essay is both a project and the product of a project. In its former capacity its success is difficult to judge, since it took ten years from publication for someone to take up the task of reinvigorating Chinese literature. That it was Lu Xun who did so, and in prose at that seems like cheating. New style poets did emerge, but

prose fiction was the definitive medium of the literary revolution. In its capacity of the telos of a project, however, the “Mara” essay was wildly successful. This is the success that cannot be measured in terms of books sold or regimes toppled, even if those are a project’s explicit goals. The success achieved by this essay is of a different kind. It calls into being certain constellations that would not have otherwise existed. The very scope of its references is staggering; Lu Xun moves fluidly from Chinese mythology to Plato, from classical poetry to German history, from Chinese nationalism to European romanticism and back again. By setting out to “introduce their words” Lu Xun sets in conversation texts that would otherwise go unrelated. This is not to say that the texts he references are inherently related. The essay acknowledges the constructedness of the Mara category: “Such a fellowship need not be labeled the ‘Mara School,’ for life on earth is bound to produce their kind” (“Mara” 108). The works of the Mara poets are just texts, but the essay describes them in such a way to make them appear as being related. That description of relation constitutes the genotype of the essay. The text cannot exist without assuming the existence of the Mara constellation, even if the constellation is only called into being by the essay.

Lu Xun’s presentation of European literature here is the reification of a reading program of world literature. It is the setting-together of otherwise unrelated texts that constitutes a node in the global literary network. In presenting the described texts *as* something, the essay calls them to presence in that capacity. We can still consider Byron a romantic poet, but that appellation is foreign to Lu Xun’s essay. The works of the Mara poets as the essay calls them forth are inaccessible in any other fashion without moving beyond the essay. Lu Xun the reader and creative agent may read these poems

differently, but he is not the voice of the essay. Similarly, the Byron of the “Mara Poetry” essay is not the Byron of *Don Juan*, but a representation of him *as* a Mara poet.

The Cartographic Method

Lu Xun’s production of the Mara constellation demonstrates how one can read texts with accreted legacies without reinscribing those legacies. Following Edward Said’s definition of a beginning as “the first step in the intentional production of meaning,” I would like to take Lu Xun’s writing, specifically “A Madman’s Diary,” as the beginning of an inquiry into global literary production (*Beginnings: Intention and Method* 5). Rather than draw on the categories to which Lu Xun has conventionally belonged, this project intends to account for Lu Xun’s work without rooting it in categories whose own beginnings are shrouded either in the mists of prehistory of the dictates of academic fashion. Similarly, Lu Xun has become an institution within literary studies, an institution whose development I also intend to trace. Neither project is possible without an autonomous determination of what Lu Xun is. Therefore, Lu Xun, materially defined as a body of texts, is the beginning of this project.

The bracketing procedure required to establish this point of departure borders dangerously on promoting ahistoricism. To take the decontextualized works of Lu Xun as the ground of the inquiry unmoors the texts from the historical circumstances that produced them. This, however, is the point of the exercise. Of course, Lu Xun’s texts are important primary sources from a turbulent time in Chinese history, but this project does not aim to document Republican China. Similarly, is a little historical flavor the only thing to be gleaned from reading Lu Xun as a world literary figure? This project seeks instead to map the textual relationships that crystallize in Lu Xun’s texts. Rather

than effacing history, this mapping brings history into sharper relief by focusing exclusively on the material traces of history as opposed to the epiphenomena that accrete to them through criticism and historical writing.

Said identifies the central importance of intention in an interpretive project. Intentional beginnings inaugurate the possibility of new knowledge, for they “perform the task of differentiating material *at the start*: they are *principles* of differentiation which make possible the same characteristic histories, structures, and knowledges that they intend” (Said *Beginnings: Intention and Method* 51). The history intended by this project is not that of peoples or nations, but of texts. This is not the same as literary history. That endeavor seeks to trace the development of literary traditions, and so always already presumes the existence of an object whose own beginnings are effaced by the assumption of its coherence. Instead, this project is a textual archaeology, not unrelated to philology. Lu Xun is its object only as much as his work constitutes an entry point, one out of many, into global literary production.

In taking the text as the atomic unit of global literary production, we have a means of representing its totality by parts. But what to represent it as? This object is far more complex than the oceans depicted by the cartographers. It has no shore to encompass it, but it is strewn with pathways that link texts to each other. These pathways overlap and intersect without regard for geographic or temporal distinctions. Where the geographic cartographer renders the ocean on a two-dimensional map, the literary cartographer represents global literary production as a three-dimensional network.

This network is a means of representing the totality of literary production both geographically and temporally. It recognizes no boundaries. Language and culture are of

course inscribed on texts, but the text as object is not equivalent to its mode of production. Texts are indebted to other texts. Sometimes obviously through direct citations, sometimes subtly through stylistic affinities. Conceivably these intellectual links could be traced in order to provide a map or maps, literal and figurative, of the global literary network. Of course, the potential objectivity of such a project is suspect. Mapping citational links, seemingly an easy task, requires that the literary cartographer recognize that a given passage is a citation, that the cited text is either extant or known to have existed, and that the cartographer can link the citation to its source. Stylistic and thematic linkages may be even more complex to establish. One could point to works with similar formal elements, but this is no guarantee that an actual genealogical link exists. Mapping stylistic and formal relationships relies on the cartographer's breadth of reading in order to identify them. Ten such cartographers would likely produce ten different maps. This, however, might be a strong point of the method: a completely objective discipline of literary studies seems terribly bloodless.

Fortunately, such a method is not entirely dependent on the whims of its practitioners. Texts do not float ahistorically. Although I propose to bracket out the historical entanglements that literature often causes or responds to, one cannot ignore the material history of texts. To wit: one cannot assert that Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was influenced by Lu Xun's theory of evolution in the short story "A Madman's Diary." Both texts rely on a concept of biological evolution, but Darwin was long dead by the time of "Diary's" composition. Thus we can safely say that Lu Xun's texts draws on Darwinian evolution rather than Darwin drawing on something "Luxunian." The tyranny of chronology is unassailable.

Similarly, not all texts can be legitimately linked together, even if chronologically possible. The simple existence of a text does not mean that a later text can be directly influenced by it: language may not be an ideal disciplinary boundary, but it is a very real obstacle to the movement of texts. Distance, both temporal and spatial, also poses a challenge to a text's reach. A great many scholars have documented and continue to document who was reading what when. Thanks to the data produced by their ongoing efforts, the problem of integrating the material history of texts into a map is not an insurmountable task for the cartographer of the global literary network.

Most complex would likely be the mapping of thematic links. Nationalism, on some level, is a thematic concern in Lu Xun's works, and one could potentially link his texts to others espousing similar sentiments. Such a linkage would necessarily be comparative rather than genealogical. Moreover, it leads the project back to the categorical entanglements the emphasis on texts seeks to avoid, and thus is beyond the scope of the current project. That being said, such an extension of the project could be fruitful in constructing a comparative framework in which to evaluate such loaded terms as modernity or the nation.

Reports of the author's death may have been greatly exaggerated. The network approach necessitates a revisiting of the intentional fallacy in order to acknowledge the material circumstances of textual movement. This by no means would be an overturning of the notion. Instead, the author becomes a nexus of possibility from which texts emerge. To conceive of texts as nodes in the global literary network, we require a creative agent who could potentially synthesize links of influence from other texts into something novel. In other words, the text as node cannot be linked to another text

without an author who could have conceivably encountered the linked text. The author is the burden of possible causality, and the means of the inscription of history into the text. Thus while we may take Lu Xun's texts to be the basic units of inquiry, Lu Xun the man is the historical condition of possibility for that inquiry.

Why, then, adopt such a theoretical framework for the analysis of Lu Xun's texts? Precisely because Lu Xun, the man, was a great reader of texts. His library contained thousands of texts in many languages. Although it is unlikely that he read more than a fraction of these texts, his own work reveals an exceptional breadth of reading. Subsuming his work solely under the rubric of Chinese literature privileges a small subset of the linkages that could be mapped from his work. As a consumer of global literary production in the broadest possible sense, to engage his work on any other scale risks oversimplifying the variety of influences – textual links – within his texts.

That Lu Xun the creative agent had documented access to so many texts underscores the necessity of this approach. Pascale Casanova posits the notion of a World Republic of Letters “in which, “great, often polyglot, cosmopolitan figures of the world of letters act in effect as foreign exchange brokers, responsible for exporting from one territory to another texts whose literary value they determine by virtue of this very activity” (21). Although in Casanova's world, all of these literary titans seem to dwell in Paris, hers is still a useful model for envisioning the possibilities available to Lu Xun. The literary “world” constituted by his library, itself a microcosm of global literary production, represents the totality of texts on which Lu Xun could draw. His own productions, creative and translated, establish him or at least his texts as the authorizing center of that world. Some links are forged whereas others remain merely potential.

Focusing on him, as Casanova does her Parisian esthetes, grants access to the movement of texts in the global literary space rather than under a categorical lens.

This problem of disciplinary versus global definition is essentially hermeneutic, or perhaps pre-hermeneutic. How we define him determines how we read his work. A turn to Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology explicates the vicious circle involved in the problem of definition. Heidegger identifies a pre-understanding that undergirds the interpretive project:

[...] the way in which the entity we are interpreting is to be conceived can be drawn from the entity itself, or the interpretation can force the entity into concepts to which it is opposed in its manner of Being. In either case, the interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving it, either with finality or with reservations; it is grounded in *something we grasp in advance* – in a *fore-conception*. (191)

What matters most is how one enters the hermeneutic circle. By carefully and intentionally defining both Lu Xun and the terms of our engagement with him, we can control what questions our inquiry can pursue. Granted, Heidegger's emphasis on this pre-understanding suggests an impossibility of escaping our pre-existing notions about an object: in this case, Lu Xun's status in a specifically Chinese literature will likely persist regardless of beginning intention. Nevertheless, given the orientation of this inquiry toward a Lu Xun defined narrowly through his texts, we can authorize certain questions while foreclosing other avenues of inquiry that rely more on our existing notions.

Turning again to Lu Xun's "A Madman's Diary," we can attempt an application of the cartographic method. Since the work is widely anthologized both inside and

outside of China and is hailed as the first modern Chinese short story, already in this formulation any broader resonances of the story find themselves subordinated to a historicist understanding of Chinese literature. Furthermore, defining the text in this manner requires ascribing a unity to all preceding Chinese literature, as well as assuming that the term “modern” has a definition that is directly applicable to a specific moment in the implied narrative of Chinese literature. Both assumptions have come under fire in contemporary scholarship, but the tenacity of this description demands the sort of bracketing gesture described above. What then is “Diary?” It is a text that comes into being at the center of a constellation of other texts, predicated on the creative agency of the historical Lu Xun. Thus the inquiry into the story is not the validation or refutation of claims made about it, but rather the charting of its relationships to the surrounding textual constellation.

As mentioned previously, Lu Xun’s work presents biological evolution as a frequent theme, and “A Madman’s Diary” is no exception. In a representative passage, the story’s titular madman remarks,

Brother, probably all primitive people ate a little human flesh to begin with.

Later, because their views altered some of them stopped and tried hard to do what was right that they might change into men, into real men. But some are still eating people – just like reptiles. Some men have changed into fish, birds, monkeys, and finally men; but those who make no effort to do what’s right are still reptiles. When those who eat men compare themselves with those who don’t how ashamed they must be. Probably much more ashamed than the reptiles are before monkeys. (1:48)

This is not the evolution of Darwin. The volitional change ascribed to those who evolve resembles Lamarck's theory rather than Darwin's, both of whom Lu Xun had encountered by 1907, though not directly (*Quanji* 8-17). Moreover, the discussion of shame in relation to biological change recalls the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer and others. Since Darwin's own work had not yet been translated into Chinese and Lu Xun had only a passing acquaintance with English. This suggests that Lu Xun's text does not directly engage Darwin's and instead references an intermediary text.

In fact, an intermediate text did exist; rather, several potential intermediate texts existed. Foremost among these was Yan Fu's translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. James Pusey, in his extensive study of Lu Xun's relationship to evolutionary thought notes, "In *Tian yan lun* [Yan Fu's text] there were many voices, Darwin's and Huxley's voices and voices Huxley sought to refute. In Yan Fu's commentary one could hear Herbert Spencer *über alles*, but also Yan Fu himself" (2). In Yan Fu's work we find a synthesis of voices from both China and England, in which the synthesis is the most salient feature. One could carefully unpack the work, comparing his translation to Huxley's original in order to determine what Yan Fu added by way of commentary, and what he changed for the sake of translation. One could similarly read Huxley's work with an eye toward his own amplifications and arguments contrasted with those of Darwin and others.

The first star in "Diary's" constellation begins to shine as Yan Fu's *Tian yan lun*. From it we can trace links to Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer. The latter two both reference Darwin themselves, creating more links. Just this cursory analysis reveals the tortuous

complexity of the global literary network. Our point of entry at “Diary” has already yielded five nodes and six links without even attempting a high-resolution close reading.

A second major influence on “Diary” is Friedrich Nietzsche. Lu Xun was a reader and translator of Nietzsche, having encountered *Also sprach Zarathustra* as early as 1908 (Lu Xun “Mara” 96). Much of Lu Xun’s text echoes the “Foreword” in *Zarathustra*. The constant invocation of “real men” in the cited passage resembles Zarathustra’s axiom, “Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and overman – a rope over an abyss” (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 7). Like Zarathustra, the madman opposes beasts to the real men, with the “common” man stuck between. The distinction between the common man and the noble man is prominent in classical Chinese philosophy, which Lu Xun would have known intimately from his childhood education steeped in ancient Chinese literature (Lu Xun *Blossoms* 125-7); however, by referring to the “real men” as “真的人” rather than the expressions from the *Analects* or the *Mencius* such as “士,” “君子,” or “大人,” he distinguishes the “real man” from the ethically loaded signifiers of the Chinese tradition and allows the new sign to emerge. Much as Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* is yet to come, Lu Xun’s “real man” is also an unfulfilled project: in addressing his perceived antagonists the madman exclaims, “However many of you there are, you will be wiped out by the real men, just as wolves are killed by hunters – just like reptiles!” (1:50). The evolutionary rhetoric cited earlier posits development as a human project, and here the madman explicitly marks it as incomplete. Again, the tension between the animal – wolves, reptiles – and the real man appears here.

Zarathustra’s parable of the “Three Metamorphoses” immediately follows the “Foreword,” and “Diary” concludes with a similar sentiment. Just as Zarathustra

preaches the transvaluation of all values, so too does the madman seek a radical change of values in his world. Their mechanisms for accomplishing these changes are nearly identical. Zarathustra's three metamorphoses end with the transformation into the child, who "is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying" (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 17). "Diary" finishes with a question and an exhortation: "Perhaps there are still children who haven't eaten men? Save the children..." (Lu Xun *Works* 1:51). As in Zarathustra, the children have the power to effect not only meaningful change, but also to inscribe new meaning on that change.

More broadly, the structure of "Diary" is not unlike that of Zarathustra's "Foreword." Although Lu Xun takes some elements of the story from Nikolai Gogol's work of the same name, essentially only the title is a direct appropriation. The madman's account actually follows Zarathustra's actions. Both characters awake from their dogmatic slumbers with a newfound awareness of their respective milieus. The striking difference between their awakenings is the time of their occurrence. Zarathustra "arose with the dawn, stepped before the sun" (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 3), whereas the madman's first remark is that "Tonight the moon is very bright" (Lu Xun *Works* 1:40). The descent into raving paranoia of "Diary's" eponymous protagonist parallels and parodies Zarathustra's joyful descent from his mountain. Both characters meet similar reactions from their would-be disciples. The villagers Zarathustra first encounters rebuff him in favor of the funambulist; the madman's fellow townsfolk consider him to be mad. Even the numbered episodes of the "Foreword" appear in "Diary." Gogol's text differs in that the diary entries are dated rather than numbered. "Diary's" own

framing preface explains this structure as separate entries in the protagonist's diary (Lu Xun *Works* 1:39); nevertheless, when taken with the story's other resonances, the organizational linkage seems plausible.

In addition to "Diary's" linkages to European texts, it also draws heavily on Chinese language material. Its much-trumpeted vernacularism can be called such only in relation to other, non-vernacular Chinese texts. Defining what constitutes vernacular Chinese is not an easy task. Assertions that Lu Xun's text is the first work of vernacular fiction are plainly false, since the vernacular tradition in Chinese language texts dates at least to the Ming dynasty and the great novels of that period. More contemporary with Lu Xun's time are the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly stories that appeared in the newspapers during the early twentieth century. In comparison with these more popular works, Lu Xun's text is less accessible, requiring a command of the cultural tradition it is alleged to repudiate. "Diary's" preface is itself written in the spare, literary Chinese associated with the classical culture than a written representation of popular speech. The main body of the text, though much closer to the contemporary language, is disclaimed by the preface. The author of the classical preface, who is not the diarist, notes that he presents the main text "as a subject for medical research," and that he has "not altered a single illogicality in the diary" (Lu Xun *Works* 1:39). This characterization of the text as deviant is even stronger in the original. The classical Chinese reads, "记中语误，一字不易," which translates more literally as "Among the diary's mistakes in language, not a single character has been changed" (Lu Xun *Quanji* 1:444). Not only is the vernacular diary the work of an invalid, but the vernacular language used in it is

nothing more than uncorrected errors. Finally, by adopting the diary, an ostensibly private genre, as its organizational logic, the text excuses to an extent its informality.

Nevertheless, the text exhibits a break between the literary language and the vernacular as it moves from preface to body. This is not an unmotivated literary experiment on the part of Lu Xun. “Diary” responds to a specific exigency expressed by two influential articles in the reform-oriented journal *新青年*, or *New Youth*. Hu Shi’s piece of January 1917, “Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature,” sketches an eight-point plan to develop a new literature. The proposals, some direct, some oblique, instruct readers to adapt a new literary style; Hu advocates for a change in form more than a change in content. Central to this reform is a break from literary Chinese:

Whenever I mention contemporary literature, only vernacular fiction (Wu Woyao, Li Baojia, and Liu E) can be compared without shame to the world’s literary “first rank.” This is for no other reason than that they do not imitate the ancients (although they owe much to *The Scholars*, *The Water Margin*, and *The Story of the Stone*, they are not imitative works). (Hu Shi 127)

This emphasis on avoiding imitation rather than just advocating a vernacular literature points to the problem of defining the split between classical and contemporary Chinese. Simply defining the former is a challenge because its cohesion as a language rather than a collection of imitative practices is tenuous (Rouzer xii). Hu notes that the imitative style, characterized by parallel prose, melodrama, and allusion, cannot reflect the world that produced it. He compares it to “adding several ‘realistic counterfeits’ to a museum” (126). In an uncanny presaging of Theodor Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*, Hu argues for the centrality of form as an expressive element in literature.

“Diary’s” experimental form, whether or not it represents a true vernacular, incorporates all of Hu’s proposals on form. Although Lu Xun imitates certain European writers in content, formally his work is unprecedented. The admixture of styles in “Diary” – the classical, imitative preface and the experimental body – calls attention to the differences between them. Hu’s fourth proposal, “Do Not Moan Without an Illness,” finds almost literal expression in “Diary.” Hu laments the melodramatic imagery endemic to classical Chinese literature as ineffective, stating “I am perfectly aware of the ills facing our nation today, but what effect can sobbing and tears have on a sick nation in such a perilous state?” (128). “Diary’s” madman does his share of moaning, but he conveniently has an illness to justify it. Of course, conventional interpretations of the text assert that he is lucid and that his fellow villagers are sick, but the madman’s illness is a result of his being set apart due his insights, real or imagined, and therefore speaks not melodramatically but as an expression of those insights.

The seventh proposal, “Do Not Use Parallelism,” is apparent in “Diary” through the non-appearance of parallel prose. The wandering rants of the madman are an anathema to the highly wrought parallelism of literary Chinese. The classical preface, though not the best example of the ornate parallel prose that Hu decries, still evinces its wrought structure through its minimal syntax and its stark contrast to the style that follows.

Hu’s final proposal, “Do Not Avoid Vulgar Diction,” is perhaps most evident in Lu Xun’s text. The difference between the preface and the body highlights the application of the proposal. It rests on Hu’s belief that the vernacular languages are central to the establishment of new literatures, giving the King James and Luther Bibles

as evidence (138). Of course, there is no single Chinese vernacular, and this was even truer in 1917 before compulsory instruction in Mandarin. Hu's proposal reflects this. “不避俗字俗语” is fairly translated as “Do Not Avoid Vulgar Diction,” but this does not completely capture the connotations of the proposal. In addition to “vulgar,” “俗” also means “popular” or “folk.” Advocating primarily for “vulgar diction” rather than an outright vernacular (this is less clear in the original – “俗语” means “popular language”) combats the classical language's tendency to use characters in ways that would be foreign to a speaker of a modern Chinese language. It is on the level of diction that “Diary” most distinguishes itself. The sheer number of characters that the madman uses to express himself differs dramatically from the minimalism of the preface. Furthermore, the characters used by the madman differ from those of the preface's author.

Most conspicuous is the use of the subordinating particle. The writer of the preface uses “之” whereas the madman uses “的.” The former appears only in literature, its use dating back to Confucius and the core of the classical canon. The latter, by contrast, is common in everyday speech. They differ in pronunciation as well as in orthography. The subordinating particle is among the most frequently occurring Chinese characters, akin to the apostrophe-s in English, but with more uses than just the indication of the genitive. It does legitimately appear as “之” in more formal contemporary contexts, so it is not inappropriate to use it in the written vernacular. Lu Xun does so often in his other stories. However, the madman only uses it twice: once as part of a

fixed expression in which it is invariable (*Quanji* 1:451),¹ and once when he recognizes his complicity in the cannibalism of his peers (*Quanji* 1:454). The controlled use of the archaic particle underscores the link between anthropophagia and classical culture in the text. Substituting the one character for the other is an unmistakable invocation of the popular language, operating on the level of the character, just as Hu Shi proposed.

Published a month after Hu Shi's "Proposals," Chen Duxiu's "On Literary Revolution" follows a similar tack, albeit more vitriolic. However, where Hu Shi's proposed reforms center primarily on form, Chen's address content. Chen's plan for a new literature revolves around abandoning older literary themes in favor of addressing contemporary issues:

- (1) Down with the ornate, sycophantic literature of the aristocracy; up with the plain, expressive literature of the people! (2) Down with stale pompous classical literature; up with fresh, sincere realist literature! (3) Down with obscure, abstruse eremitic literature; up with comprehensible, popularized social literature!
- (141)

Ironically Chen's harangues against classical literature are themselves written in highly parallel prose. Although the essay targets form, content is the main focus. Decrying the subjects of classical Chinese literature as "nothing other than kings and officials, ghosts and spirits, or the fortunes and misfortunes of single individuals," Chen underscores the distinction he perceives between the subjects of Chinese literature as it exists and what he

¹ “总之” – Substituting 的 in this case would yield a slightly different denotation rather than just changing the connotation.

envisions as its revolutionary future (145). The emphasis placed on realism and social commentary in his three “tenets” is echoed by his list of European literary champions: “Hugo, Zola, Goethe, Hauptmann, Dickens, or Wilde” (145). The piece’s combative tone further suggests that moving toward a realist literature is not enough, but that the new literature must explicitly repudiate the old.

Though much of Lu Xun’s work can be usefully described as realist, “Diary” would not be a strong example; however, it does answer Chen’s challenge to repudiate the literary tradition. The madman turns to his history texts to look into cannibalism, finding instead “scrawled over each page are the words: ‘Confucian Virtue and Morality’” (Lu Xun *Works* 42). The Chinese text amplifies this by citing “仁义道德” as the scrawled words (Lu Xun *Quanji* 1:447). These characters indict not only Confucian morality, but potentially Daoist thought as well: the four characters appear throughout the Confucian texts, and the last two are the title of Laozi’s text. This identifies the madman’s history book with what Chen names as China’s stale literature. The paragraph’s conclusion delivers the indictment demanded by Chen’s invective: “I read intently half the night until I began to see words between the lines. The whole book was filled with two words – ‘Eat people’” (Lu Xun *Works* 42). Thus the classical texts appear as the source of the anthropophagic behavior the madman sees in his neighbors.

Other texts exist that made related arguments for literary and cultural change, such as those by Liang Qichao, but they point to the same ideas. Despite China’s dire political situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the literature that responds to it is not a completely autochthonous production. Literature is an institution. As such, it is more than an inchoate “tradition,” rather a collection of material texts that

inform each other. This is the central concept of Giambattista Vico's *New Science*. Undoubtedly Lu Xun's text is more than an amalgamation of direct and indirect references to other texts, but to speculate on the source of creative genius runs dangerously close to the intentional fallacy. "Diary's" references to the classical tradition are not at all general. The madman's invocation of "仁义道德" points to a specific collection of texts, even if they are not individually named. Specific textual references emerge with the madman's citation of legendary anthropophages Yi Ya and Xu Xilin. The morbid treatment for tuberculosis adduced in this text and in Lu Xun's 1919 story "Medicine" parodies the inefficacious traditional medicine he purchased for his own father (*Works* 1:33). In addition to their relation to Lu Xun's biography, the pharmacological references in his texts have their textual basis in the compendia of material medica. Like the institution of literature, medicine too leaves material traces.

Mapping out the various textual references in "Diary" suggests that the work as a whole is somehow opposed to its constitutive elements. This, however, is a false dichotomy. Granted, the cartographic approach focuses less on the self-identity of a given work than it does on the links between works, but this does not discount the existence of the text as a coherent whole. Rather than asking whether the work or its constituents are somehow prior to the other, the cartographic method simply takes the text, in this case "A Madman's Diary" as the point of entry into the global literary network. Taking it as such does not preclude its analysis according to other methodologies.

What it does proscribe is the equation of the text with an unmediated expression of historical exigency. This does not mean that we cannot read history through a text.

Adorno, for example, sees in a work's form the concretization of history: Aesthetic expression is the objectification of the non-objective, and in fact in such a fashion that through its objectification it becomes a second-order nonobjectivity: It becomes what speaks out of the artifact not as an imitation of the subject" (111). This suggests that art has a relationship to the world that produced it, at least for what he terms "autonomous" art. It is important to remember that Adorno's aesthetics are, in part, a defense of certain developments in European art, namely the music of the avant-garde Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg and other examples of high modernism. Even those artists whose work Adorno lauds as autonomous are intimately connected to a given textual tradition. Schoenberg's serialism does not emerge without antecedents. They are not taken as immediate expressions of a historical moment. To look at a work as the unmediated expression of history risks reproducing the worst misrepresentations of the Orientalists. "Diary's" position in the emerging study of world literature with regard to this potential for misrepresentation will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.

If we reject the impulse to draw an unmediated connection between the text and the world, what emerges instead is a series of connections that come into existence with the production of the text. Paradoxically, the text cannot come into existence without the possibility of those connections being made. "A Madman's Diary" simultaneously produces and is produced by the links to the texts cited above. Were Lu Xun able to read Darwin in the original, or had he ignored the calls for literary change in *New Youth*, "Diary" would likely appear quite differently, if it appeared at all. Similarly, "Diary" is very much a commentary on the Confucian classics and is linked to any number of them. In this capacity, though, it is only an epiphenomenon of the appearance of the older texts

in the network. The *Analects* as a text does not change because Lu Xun indicts it, but its constellation changes with each new commentary. Each text, then, is a node in the global literary network.

These relationships that emerge with “Diary” recall certain categorical challenges. If we emphasize the text’s links to European science and philosophy, we risk effacing the historical exigencies that prompted the text’s production. If we read the text as an expression of Chinese history, as the links to Hu and Chen’s essays suggest, we efface the transnational character of the text. The choice is a false one. The decision to read “Diary” as an expression of Chinese nationalism or Europhilia is not inherent to the text. Although the text supports both readings by virtue of its textual linkages, any reading is by definition exterior to it. Interpretations are among the epiphenomena that accrete to texts, and can become nodes in the network themselves.

Despite being a great reader of European texts, he did not take them wholesale – nor could he – to integrate them into his won work. As the analysis of “Diary” demonstrates, his European references are always already mediated, if not through translation and recontextualization, as in the case of Darwin and Yan Fu, then through their very appearance as references in his texts, as in the case of Nietzsche or Gogol. Even on a thematic level, Lu Xun cautions against the wholesale appropriation of European models. In a 1923 lecture on Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, he rejects a triumphant feminist reading of the text to ask instead, “What happens after Nora leaves home?” (*Works* 2:85). He contextualizes the question with anecdotes from other writers in order to highlight how the play itself changes nothing. He dismisses the possibility of the play itself being social critique, saying, “Ibsen was writing poetry, not raising a

problem for society and supplying the answer to it” (*Works* 2:86). He mobilizes Ibsen’s play as a force for change by representing it as a prompt signified by his initial question. His response realizes Nora’s revolutionary potential by representing her as an economic agent:

Thus the crucial thing for Nora is money or – to give it a more high-sounding name – economic resources. Of course money cannot buy freedom, but freedom can be sold for money. Human beings have one great drawback which is that they get hungry. To remedy this drawback and to avoid being puppets, the most important thing in society today seems to be economic rights. First, there must be a fair sharing out between men and women in the family; secondly, men and women must have equal rights in society. (*Works* 2:88)

In this brief paragraph Lu Xun recasts Ibsen’s heroine from a model of liberation to an elucidation of fundamental economic issues as the foundation for social equality. And all this before he read Marx.

Just as Lu Xun does not fabricate his work out of the whole cloth of European letters, so too does he not abandon his own cultural tradition. His relationship to the classical literature bears mentioning here in relation to his reading of European literature. The development of vernacular Chinese literature advocated by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu is something of a misnomer. Lu Xun’s break with the classical past was foreshadowed by changing attitudes toward the vernacular on a broader scale, and not just in the abstract sense of “cultural shifts.” Milena Doleželová-Velingerová notes, “By the turn of the century, written baihua was being used in the revolutionary press, and in journals for women, not only for news items but also for the popularization of and education in

history, geography, school reform, industry, and science” (20). In terms of content, too, was Lu Xun’s attack on tradition presaged by earlier texts. Reformers like Liang Qichao lamented the responsibility of traditional values, as expressed in literature and particularly fiction, in causing China’s semi-colonial state: “This has gradually led to the formation of secret societies such as the Old brothers and the Big Swords, culminating in the Boxer Movement which was responsible for the loss of the capital and for bringing foreign troops into China. This is all because of fiction” (Liang Qichao 80). One of the last major vernacular novels, *The Travels of Lao Can*, though expressing an awareness of China’s political situation, remains invested in traditional culture. The philosophical climax of the novel is a dialogue that expounds on the unity of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thought. This trope is common throughout Chinese literature, but is presented in this text as a revelation. Despite its focus on traditional culture, it prefigures the more radical reaction against it seen in “Diary” and other works. Lu Xun notes about this text, “This story aims to show that a strict official could be worse than a corrupt one. This was an original approach and the author prided himself on it” (*History* 362). Liu E wrote after the aborted Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898, which saw the triumph of orthodoxy over change, so his innovation also has a historical basis.

This historical basis is much harder to trace in any objective manner. Whether a broad social shift, as in the case of vernacularization, or a specific event, like the Hundred Days Reform, they appear as the empty center around which epiphenomenal readings accrete. Liang Qichao mentions the Boxer Rebellion, but it is not a text that we can identify as a specific node in the network despite its influence on other texts because it is not a text. Historical events appear as such only when documented, even though the

material events do occur. This points to a chthonic element in global literary production. The network may lack a center, but it does not lack a ground. Recalling Adorno, texts are rooted to certain historical moments, even if those histories cannot express themselves without mediation. This is not a dodge or a deferral to the nebulous categories of “tradition” or “culture” that this method aims to overcome. Rather it is a recognition that discrete historical events do act on literary production even if they are not textual products themselves.

Whether it is possible to map the chthonic influences on literary production is unclear. The most immediate representations of chthonic influence, reportage for example, usually make the material circumstances of their production evident through a dateline. However, more mediated works often efface any intermediate texts between themselves and the event, as in the case of Hu and Chen’s essays.

From Global Literary Production to World Literature

What makes Lu Xun a participant in world literature, and his texts expressive of that participation is not just the fact that he read foreign texts. If the content of his library is any indication, he read far more widely than his texts indicate. He wrote no plays, no novels, no philosophical treatises, and no long works of criticism. He translated many of these genres – the task of which will be examined in the following chapter – but never produced any of his own. Assuming he read what he owned, Lu Xun certainly qualifies as a reader of foreign texts, but does this alone place him within the domain of world literature?

No. The global literary network reflects production, not consumption. Lu Xun emerges in World Literature because he, through his texts, becomes a site in which many

other texts come together. In “Diary” we find concretized a network of textual relationships that converge on Lu Xun’s text. This is not to say that texts whose creative agents lack access to foreign works are somehow excluded from world literature. First, the temporality of textual networks is not one-directional. “Diary” has many antecedents, but it has even more descendants. Even a text completely without influence, if such a thing existed, would still belong to world literature as part of global literary production.

What world literature is, or at least has the potential to be, is a way of looking at global literary production. As soon as we attempt to establish canons of world literature, or select texts based on fleeting political alliances, we inscribe on world literature all the shortcomings of disciplinary literary studies.

The very nature of its production grants literature a material existence. It is an institution, in Vico’s terms, whose history we can and do document. It is not enough, though, to catalog global literary production. That task tells us little more than the number of texts produced. A daunting task, to be sure, but one ill-suited to most research projects. Instead we can attempt to understand the relationships between texts, not as windows into local cultures but as a means of parsing how ideas move and change. More importantly, documenting these relationships could provide a comparative, objective framework for ideas that are all too often used to exclude based on spurious or non-existent reasoning: the modern, culture, civilization, etc.

To this end I propose the following axioms to ground the study of world literature.

1) The global literary network exists.

This is the fundamental claim about any comparative study of literature, for on it is predicated the possibility of documenting relationships on more than a speculative level. I find it unlikely that we could objectively or comprehensively map this network, but that remains the goal of World Literature. The network is impossibly complex. The textual relationships combined with the chthonic relation of texts to their historical moments would create a map of sublime intricacy. I envision it as something akin to a highway atlas or airline route map with cities corresponding to texts, only with a third dimension to express diachronic or polychronic relationships.

2) The text is the basic unit of the network.

What constitutes a text is open for question. Would a trilogy constitute one text or three? Does a translation count as its own text? These are debates worth having, but for my purposes, I intend to let texts stand in their most atomic forms: the *Oresteia* would be three texts and its translation another three. This is based on the belief that texts are linked as closely as we imagine a trilogy to be would draw on the same materials and thus appear very close together in a graphic representation of the network. Alternatively, a cartographic inquiry might reveal that the texts are not as closely linked as previously thought. Translations, too, have more influences bearing on them than their source texts. The possibility of calquing a proverb, for example, is evidence of this.

Bracketing questions about the self-identity of a text, the text is useful as a fundamental unit of inquiry because it is material and discrete. We can point to a text much more easily than we can a culture or a literary tradition. Works like “Diary”

confound these categories because they actively reject them. Whether this prompts us to expand the category or to declare the text to be liminal is irrelevant to the material inquiry. The borders of a text are less fluid than those of a tradition. Incorporating Lu Xun into the category of Chinese literature conventionally occurs with the caveat that “Diary” marks the beginning of “the modern” in Chinese literature. This in turn demands the creation of a category for “the premodern” in Chinese literature. “Diary’s” complex relationship to the latter category problematizes the distinction. Though these categories may be heuristically and pedagogically useful, they are antithetical to a project with the name world literature. Similarly a text is neither its author nor its place of production. These are historical facts that enable texts to exist – the chthonic references – but they are not the text itself. Nor are the intertextual references.

3) Texts are both constitutive of the network and constituted by it.

Put differently, no text exists in isolation. “Diary” cannot exist as it does without its antecedents. By the same token the section of the network that converges on “Diary” only does so because “Diary” exists. If it did not exist, its references would not blink out of existence, but the connections between them would. The rather malicious removal of a node from a spider’s web collapses all the threads that rely on it for structural support. The global literary network is the same.

From a broader perspective, each new text has the potential to radically reshape the network. Moreover, as the network grows, more potential texts are possible, since there is more material on which to draw. “A Madman’s Diary” is only possible after the global literary network has reached a certain level of complexity: namely one that

includes Nietzsche, evolutionary thought, the whole of Chinese literature, a broad swath political and literary criticism, and the necessary intermediate texts to ensure that all of the above are available to the young Lu Xun. In this literature resembles contemporary approaches to evolution in which certain mutations are only possible after certain other mutations have occurred. This also means that the traditional disciplinary divisions of literature are not off base. Without ongoing translation projects, any given creative agent is limited in the references physically available and accessible. This being said, “tradition” here defines nothing more than a semi-arbitrary grouping of texts rather than a characteristic inherent to the texts.

On the other hand, this perspective shows that literary traditions really do have porous boundaries. We can point to the fertile cross-pollination of texts in Mesopotamia and around the Mediterranean, most prominent among them *Gilgamesh* and *The Odyssey* or the “Hymn to Aten” and “Psalm 104.” On a larger and more institutional scale we find the systematic importation and translation of South Asian Buddhist texts into China and Chinese during the seventh century. This chthonic historical event not only introduced many texts into the literary network through translation, but it also established new links in the network between the translated texts and their source texts. Beyond these links, the event itself serves as a chthonic reference point in the literary network. The Chinese monk who actually went to South Asia to retrieve the Buddhist scriptures, in addition to his work as a translator, wrote a record of his journey, which in turn is one of the many references for the Ming dynasty novel *Journey to the West*. The geographical and temporal diversity of links to most nodes in the network underscore its utility in visualizing global literary production.

4) The global literary network can be mapped.

The cartographic method is of course not completely objective, since we can never eliminate all hermeneutic biases when reading a text. Nevertheless, if we set out with the *intent* to faithfully document the intertextual links in a text, perhaps we can overcome some of these biases. The goal of the cartographic project is to realize the extent of the global literary network and ground our understanding of culture and cultural exchange on material bases. Judging from this chapter's cursory cartographic reading of "A Madman's Diary," the project is destined to be perpetually incomplete. A finer level of detail or additional historical regression will likely always be available. Still, the relationships described here illustrate in miniature the potential for a semi-objective theorization of both inter and intracultural interaction.

* * *

What world literature calls for most is commentary, and this is what literary cartography aims to supply. When discussing his translation of *Eugene Onegin*, Vladimir Nabokov envisions "footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity" (Nabokov 127). He calls for the expansion and explication of all that is sedimented and concretized in the text. In this the relationships to other texts emerge as the bulk of the text. Traditional Chinese hermeneutics follows a similar method. In scholarly books of classical Chinese literature, comparatively few columns of characters constituted the actual text. The rest were explanations, interpretations, and speculations, all based on available reference materials. The actual text was usually printed larger than its

commentary, but the simultaneous presence of the two in the same volume, even printed in parallel reveals physically how much a text is constituted by intertextual reference, and how they are an integral part of it.

Lu Xun's complete works in Chinese feature meticulous footnotes describing, among other things, the staggering number of *explicit* intertextual references in his texts. The notes do not go into the level of detail attempted in the reading of "Diary" here; however, the sheer number of them is a testament not only to the remarkable diligence of the editors, but also to the need for this kind of reading. To read a text of Lu Xun, or of any writer, without an eye toward its position in the global literary network is to represent the text absolutely ahistorically. This is not a slight against immanent critique. Indeed it is that type of close reading that can best reveal the intertextual links. Instead it is a call for a return to the texts themselves. Rather than taking Lu Xun as an exponent of something, let us take his texts as potential points of entry into a much larger literary world.

Chapter 2

Lu Xun's Theory of Translation

Indeed, I not only admit, but freely proclaim that in translation from the Greek – except in the case of Sacred Scripture, where the very order of words is a mystery – I render not word for word, but sense for sense.

Jerome, “Letter to Pammachius”

Given Lu Xun's foundational status in modern Chinese literature, he wrote surprisingly little of it. Of course, his prolific critical and polemical writing dramatically expands the size of his work. Nevertheless, the single largest constitutive genre within his corpus is translation. Occupying a full ten volumes in their most recent collection, Lu Xun's translations are a monument to his lifelong engagement with foreign cultures. With over two hundred translated works to his name, Lu Xun covered a wide range of genres and languages in his translation practice. Due at least in part to the size and scope of this work, extracting a coherent and consistent theory from it has proven rather difficult. Most of the work done thus far on Lu Xun's translation has focused almost exclusively on linguistic issues, with occasional broad gestures toward more culturally grounded aspects of translation. However, advances in translation studies over the past twenty years have enabled more nuanced analyses of the cultural function of translation. When examined with these newer analytical methods, Lu Xun's translations emerge as a systematic effort both to reshape Chinese culture and to integrate China more equitably into global networks of culture.

The greatest source for information on Lu Xun's translation is, unsurprisingly, Lu Xun himself. He wrote prefaces and postfaces to many of the works he translated. In

addition, he engaged in debates with contemporaries over the nature of translation in general and of his translations in particular. These writings are of varying use to the student of linguistically oriented translation, because they often respond to specific political issues contemporary with their publication, but they provide a valuable glimpse into the cultural conception of translation at the time.

Besides Lu Xun's own writing and the criticism of his contemporaries, little available commentary on Lu Xun's translation work exists in the West. The primary study is Lennart Lundberg's 1989 work, *Lu Xun as a Translator: Lu Xun's Translation and Introduction of Literature and Literary Theory, 1903-1936*, which is mostly a comprehensive synthetic exposition of what Lu Xun translated. Mary Ann Farquhar and Tsau Shu-ying have written on particular aspects of Lu Xun's translation: children's literature and Japanese philosophy, respectively. Leo Tak-hung Chan's recent essay on the subject offers the most compelling framework for situating Lu Xun's translation practice. Chan argues that "Lu Xun's ideas must hence be related to the general concern with how Chinese linguistic modernity could be attained," showing the influence of the current "cultural turn" in translation studies (Chan 215). This focus on cultural as well as linguistic modernity provides a new avenue for examining Lu Xun's translation work within both the Chinese and global contexts.

Lu Xun was by no means the only translator with an eye toward linguistic or cultural reform, but he was often the most radical in his practice. At his most extreme he adopts a heavily foreignizing translation strategy. His reasons for this were threefold. First, and most basically, he wanted to bring new ideas to China. This is consistent with his lifelong interest in Western science, philosophy, and literature. Second, he wanted to

reform China. His legacy as a revolutionary and his explicit statements to this effect make it a seemingly obvious point, but the mechanism by which he sought to accomplish this reform is more complex than simply denouncing traditional culture, or translating works that contain “modern” ideas. His third goal for translation explains that mechanism; Lu Xun wanted to change the Chinese language. This is consistent with his radical claims about the need for linguistic reform, including the abandonment of characters to better serve the Chinese people (DeFrancis 249). Lu Xun’s interest in translation as means of linguistic reform suggests that he had an innate understanding of the role of translation in literary systems other than that of a pedagogical exercise or an imperfect image of the foreign. Instead he recognized the fundamental malleability of language and the interpenetrability of literary systems. This recognition finds resonances with the German tradition of translation theory elaborated by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Goethe, among others. For these reasons, Chan identifies Lu Xun as “the first modern translation theorist in China” (199).

However, Lu Xun never posits an explicit theory of translation. His thoughts on the subject appear either in practice, in debate, or in correspondence. Thus it is difficult to say what his theory of translation is. Rather than looking for a clear theoretical formulation of translation, examining the scope of his translation practice will better address the complexity of his method. This approach will show that translation for Lu Xun is not just a linguistic activity, but a cultural one as well.

Hard Translation and Cultural Change

How then does Lu Xun translate? He called the foreignizing approach for which he is best known “hard” (硬) translation. Hard here in Chinese is synonymous with stiff.

The term is apt; the translations are not hard simply because they are difficult to read (though they are), but because Lu Xun was inflexible in his fidelity to the source text. He preserves foreign grammatical structures, even when no corresponding structure exists in Chinese. Linguistic fidelity in this case comes at the expense of equivalency, in that Lu Xun does not use equivalent constructions and words in Chinese; he does not see equivalency as useful to his translation project. In his essay “‘Hard Translation’ and ‘The Class Character of Literature’” he rejects the notion that this hard translation is equivalent to literal translation (Lu Xun *Works* 3:76). Responding to the criticism of Liang Shiqiu, a liberal democrat, “Reading books like this is like reading a map – you have to trace your way through the syntax with your finger” (qtd. in Lu Xun *Works* 3:78), Lu Xun argues that “a map is not a literal representation. Thus if the same effort is needed for ‘hard translation,’ it too must differ slightly from literal translation” (*Works* 3:79). This indicates that Lu Xun does not produce cribs for scholars or students, but that his hard translations are the result of a calculated, complete methodology. That Liang Shiqiu can follow Lu Xun’s translations at all suggests that they are still comprehensible in Chinese. This is precisely Lu Xun’s point: “instead of translating on order to give people ‘pleasure,’ I often try to make them uncomfortable, or even exasperated, furious and bitter” (*Works* 3:78). Hard translation is not intended for passive consumption.

It instead forces readers to recognize that the translation is a translation, and the distance from natural Chinese inherent to it. This echoes the literary theory of the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky. Lu Xun and Shklovsky were contemporaries, though there is no record of Lu Xun ever reading the latter’s work. However, Shklovsky was a major figure in Russian literary criticism at the time, so it seems possible that Lu

Xun may have indirectly encountered his work in his reading and translation of Russian theoretical texts. Irrespective of influence, Shklovsky's Formalist approach to literature explains the effect of Lu Xun's hard translation. He argues that literature forces the reader to reflect on what is described in the text, and that this kind of reflection is only possible when the language used is not that of everyday speech. This is the Formalist concept of defamiliarization, which serves "to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (Shklovsky 12). Lu Xun makes a similar argument about "pleasurable" translations, because they do not motivate any reflection and hasten apprehension at understanding's expense: "And now that we are dealing with 'foreign languages' we may need many new forms of constructions – which, to put it strongly, have to be made by 'hard translation'" (Lu Xun *Works* 3:81). Simply put, hard translation helps the reader to see the "foreignness" of the foreign text. Furthermore, Lu Xun translates in this manner specifically to prevent the easy apprehension of foreign texts, which he sees as potential misapprehension. In this context he claims, "I translate for those proletarian critics who pass unduly hasty judgements, because they should not be afraid of trouble but should be willing to study these theories seriously" (*Works* 3:93). Translation, then, is not only a means for the importation of new ideas, proletarian literary theory in this case, but also a mechanism for shaping their reception.

Yet Lu Xun sees hard translation only as a stage in the development of the Chinese language. It is, to him, a necessary stage because it engenders the production of new constructions and the naturalization of foreign ones. He offers recent developments in the Japanese language as a model for language change in China:

Japanese is very different from all European languages, yet it is gradually acquiring new methods of expression, so that it is easier to translate now than classical Japanese without losing the flavour of the original. To begin with, of course, you have to “trace your way through the syntax,” which is far from “fun” for certain people. But once you are used to this, you assimilate these expressions into your own language. (*Works* 3:80-1)

He further notes that translation has served this function for the Chinese language in the past as well. With regard to Tang and Yuan Dynasty translations of Sanskrit and Mongolian, respectively, he argues, “At the time, much of the ‘grammar, syntax and vocabulary’ was new-fangled; but once men got used to it they could understand it without tracing the words with their fingers” (*Works* 3:81). What is at stake for Lu Xun in this translation method is the ability to translate accurately and faithfully when the target language does not easily admit the kind of source material under consideration.

In this, Lu Xun participates in the primary historical debates of translation, namely those over fidelity and equivalency. He comes down heavily on the side of the nineteenth century translation theorists, though it is unclear if he ever read any of their writings on the subject. In particular, his theory resembles those of Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Goethe due to its reliance on foreignizing translation for nationalist purposes. Lu Xun frequently references Goethe in his writings and was familiar with the general tenor of romantic thought in Europe. He even subscribed to it in his early criticism (“Mara”). Thus even if he did not read these German writers in their capacity as translation theorists, that he comes to similar

conclusions is not altogether surprising. Schleiermacher's support of foreignizing translation closely resembles Lu Xun's in aim:

Just as it is perhaps only through the cultivation of foreign plant life that our soil has become richer and more fertile, and our climate more pleasing and milder, so too do we feel that our language, since our Nordic lassitude prevents from exercising it sufficiently, can most vigorously flourish and develop its own strength only through extensive contact with the foreign. (Schleiermacher 62)

In this we see the same self-deprecating concern for the national character and the belief in the importation of the foreign as a means of cultural improvement that is present in Lu Xun. Although he does not name it as such, Lu Xun also echoes Schleiermacher's notion of moving the reader toward the original text, in which "the translator is endeavoring, in his work, to compensate for the reader's inability to understand the original language. He seeks to impart to the reader the same image, the same impression that he himself received thanks to his knowledge of the original language of the work as it was written, thus moving the reader to his own position, one in fact foreign to him" (Schleiermacher 49). Translation, for both, ought to privilege the source text.

Underlying this emphasis on the original is a tacit belief in the semantic capacity of the materiality of language; that is to say, grammar and syntax can convey meaning in addition to structuring language. Lu Xun may "absolutely refuse to make additions or cuts" when translating, but this does not in itself justify the necessity of foreignizing translation as he claims here (Lu Xun *Works* 3:94). Instead, hard translation relies on the idea that form must be translated as well as content. Goethe describes this as the "third epoch" of translation, in which "we are led, yes, compelled as it were, back to the source

text: the circle, within which the approximation of the foreign and the familiar, the known and the unknown constantly move, is finally complete” (Goethe 66). This focus on identity with the original is perhaps overly utopian, but it underscores the nature of this method of translating as an ongoing project, something that Lu Xun keenly perceived. His sentiments closely echo Goethe’s: “In the long run better translators are bound to appear, who will neither distort the meaning nor give ‘hard’ or ‘literal’ translations; and of course when that happens my translations will be weeded out. All I am trying to do is fill the gap between ‘having none’ and ‘having better’ translations” (Lu Xun *Works* 3:94). Lu Xun’s “intermediate” translations prepare the ground for the better translations to come by setting in motion the linguistic change necessary for them to be produced.

Given the apparent importance of form to Lu Xun’s method of translation, we might examine how it works on a technical level. In addition to its potential to produce reflection on the foreign as noted above, it also works to construct an overarching framework out of which a new Chinese language can emerge. Lundberg notes that “Lu Xun makes it clear that the main ‘deficiency’ he had in mind was the difficulty in rendering in Chinese the complex syntactic structures common in Western languages – the tendency of Chinese to use juxtapositions instead of subordinations and to allow the interrelations between clauses often to be implied by the context or only vaguely indicated” (224-5). Lu Xun’s practice of preserving Western-style subordination is likely a source of his critics’ complaints about his difficult syntax. Yet in addition to the radical fidelity afforded by directly rendering foreign syntactic constructions, this approach also allows the language to express ideas differently.

Erich Auerbach links the use of hypotaxis and parataxis, equivalent to subordination and juxtaposition respectively, to the construction of linguistically determined worldviews. The opposition of syntactic styles reflects the content they express. The paratactic, for Auerbach, represents the existence of the assumption of an extra-textual organizing force, which in the case of his examples is the god of Abraham. The reliance of the Chinese language on its rich stock of idioms and allusions, especially in the classical and classically inflected forms, evokes this extra-textual authority that interpolates what is left unsaid by juxtaposition. Indeed, the paratactically organized text only makes sense when this extra-textual authority is assumed:

The horizontal, that is the temporal and causal, connection of occurrences is dissolved; the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future [...] This conception of history is magnificent in its homogeneity, but it was completely alien to the mentality of classical antiquity, it annihilated that mentality down to the structure of its language, at least of its literary language, which – with all its ingenious and nicely shaded conjunctions, its wealth of devices for syntactic arrangement, its carefully elaborated system of tenses – became wholly superfluous as soon as earthly relations of place, time, and cause had ceased to matter, as soon as a vertical connection, ascending from all that happens, converging in God, alone became significant. (Auerbach 74)

Of course, Lu Xun was not a monotheist, and Chinese is not Latin. However, Lu Xun was a critic of this “vertical” orientation in Chinese in his fiction, with “Diary of a Madman,” “Kong Yiji,” and “The True Story of Ah Q” being prime examples of his

challenge to the primacy of the classical literary tradition as an organizing force in society.² The existence of this orientation is unsurprising, given the formally rigid canon of Chinese literature. Subordinating, explicative constructions are unnecessary when one's readers can be counted on to infer the appropriate classical reference. Thus translation emerges as a genre in which these new hypotactic constructions can emerge. The translated text need not be bound by the conventions of the target literature if one adopts a highly foreignizing approach as does Lu Xun.

The subordinating constructions in Lu Xun's translations serve two related ends. First, and perhaps most apparent, they set precedents for the use of such constructions in Chinese. In view of Lu Xun's broad goals of language reform, this is a crucial step toward a modern Chinese language. Second, the use of subordinating constructions forces the reader to actually read the text. The novelty and difficulty of the syntax undoubtedly accounts for much of the attention, but the horizontal organization produced by this translation method precludes the tendency – vertical – to interpret translated texts on a basis other than the texts themselves. Indeed, Lu Xun notes that his critics do not always read particularly carefully and rely instead on their preconceived notions: “I translate for those proletarian critics who pass unduly hasty judgements” (*Works* 3:93). Reading Lu Xun's hard translations force the reader to parse the internal logic of the text rather than submitting it to the organizing logic of tradition.

² Lu Xun's relationship to this tradition is not, however, one of antipathy or even distrust. He was well aware of his own status within it even as he attacked it. Auerbach's notions of “horizontal” and “vertical” societies may be a useful optic for examining Lu Xun's complex relationship to the reform of traditional society.

Lu Xun's approach to translation is at once exactly technical while maintaining a broad perspective of the literary system in which his work appears. His intuitive understanding of translation's potential function within that system guides the technical approach. However, his translations affect that system on more than the syntactic level described above. Beyond the mechanisms of foreignization and intratextuality at work in the translated text, Lu Xun's translation practice recognizes the complex relationship of translation to the rest of the literary system.

Translation for Lu Xun does not exist in a vacuum, nor would he have wanted it to be so. Apart from its ability to shape language, Lu Xun valued translation because it brought new ideas to China. However, not everyone appreciated the new ideas imported through translation. Translation in the May Fourth era thus emerges entwined with criticism, sometimes in competition, sometimes in collaboration. The exchange with Liang Shiqiu in "On 'Hard Translation'" represents the resistance to certain kinds of translation, both technically and ideologically. Liang attacked not only Lu Xun's method of translation, but also its content. Lu Xun translated a text of Soviet critic Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Art and Criticism*, as a salvo in the ongoing debate over proletarian literature in China. Unsurprisingly, the translation met with protest from opposing groups who found the call for a proletarian literature distasteful, though this was likely the point of his translation: "Lu Xun comments that the arguments are 'very clear and striking' and turns them against his adversaries: the Crescent Moon Society...and the 'revolutionary authors' who wanted to get rid of everyone but themselves" (Lundberg 126). The essay on hard translation, among similar pieces, is largely a response to this criticism. In addition to polemically defending his translation methodology, Lu Xun

systematically refutes the arguments of Liang Shiqiu and the Crescent Moon Society (*Works* 3:85-91). What is remarkable about this encounter is that Lu Xun does not make direct reference to the Lunacharsky work ostensibly under discussion. Nevertheless, Lunacharsky is instrumental in catalyzing the debate. Liang attacked Lu Xun's translation strategy and the political content of his material, whereas Lu Xun, rather than defend Lunacharsky directly, accuses Liang and his ilk within the Crescent Moon Society of not reading carefully and then presses the attack on their conception of proletarian literature.

Had Lu Xun translated a different work, a different debate would have taken place. And other debates did (Lu Xun *Works* 3:92). The translation of Lunacharsky's work, though, provoked a specific debate that it essentially fell out of. This validates Lu Xun's belief in the power of translation to shape not only language but also culture. Had Lu Xun's response to Liang concerned itself with defending Lunacharsky's text against misreading or misrepresentation, the essay would likely have been a pedantic discussion of *Art and Criticism*. No such discussion is present. Moreover, Lunacharsky's voice is silent in the essay; we hear only Lu Xun. Certainly he was influenced by Lunacharsky's work – he did take the time to translate it – but the ideas presented all appear as his own. Lu Xun not only believed in translation as a force for social change, but also practiced it. The debate on proletarian literature in the essay exists independently from the translation that produced it, which shows that Lu Xun was not content to simply import foreign ideas into Chinese. He instead actively set them in conversation with contemporary critical discourse.

Apart from the translator's ability to shape how a text appears in Chinese – ostensibly an implicit form of criticism as the debate with Liang Shiqiu shows – the translator fills a critical role through the production of prefaces and commentary. Returning to his discussion of “imperialist” authors, he notes that their works should be published, “but before these works there should definitely be detailed prefaces, along with careful analysis and correct criticism” (Lu Xun *Quanji* 5:313). Whether or not Lu Xun intended for the translator to provide this material in all cases, he certainly provided it for many of his own translations. This is not to say that he always followed his own prescriptions. In his 1920 translation of “Zarathustras Vorrede” from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Lu Xun gives an expository summary of the text “including meaningful nouns and obscure phrases,” which is quite useful for parsing a text such as this (Lu Xun *Quanji* 10:482). Thus he fulfills “careful analysis,” but not necessarily “correct criticism.” However, since this work predates Lu Xun's movement towards Marxism, what counts as “correct” may be different. The Nietzschean elements of his early stories suggest that any “correct” criticism would be favorable. Still, in defining key terms from a notoriously dense text, Lu Xun as the translator-critic exercises substantial power over the interpretation of the work. Not all of his prefaces go into as much detail, though. Even his beloved *Dead Souls* has little prefatory material.

He does give an extensive commentary to his translation of Lunacharsky's *Art and Criticism*. It contains, like the Nietzsche text, quite a few expository notes on the content of the work. However, unlike the Nietzsche text, the commentary positions the translation within the target context. This contrasts with Lu Xun's method in translating to promote the foreignness of the text. Yet these two projects are not necessarily

incompatible. If Lu Xun through his work as a critic places the text within a certain local discourse, his hard translation style can work to shape that discourse on a linguistic level. Since *Art and Criticism* had a rather limited audience, those debating literary theory, explaining its relevance to China works to move the *work* closer to its target audience even while the *text* moves the audience closer to the source language. In this the work refers to the totality of the translation including external commentary; the text refers to the translation exclusively.

This poses a particular problem for translation studies in that the translation appears to be subject to forces moving it in opposite directions. The apparent paradox resolves itself when examined in terms of voice. Lu Xun's voice is active in the commentary, whereas it effaces itself in the translated text, though it is still present in the fact that the text is a translation. This is not to say that we read a "Chinese Lunacharsky" in it, but instead Lunacharsky in Russian in Chinese, according to Lu Xun's foreignizing methodology. Lu Xun attempts a complex positioning of the translated text and its inherent voices. Gayatri Spivak describes this type of positioning as "a staging of the agent within a three-tiered notion of language (as rhetoric, logic, silence)" (Spivak "The Politics of Translation" 371). With regard to rhetoric and logic, Lu Xun cleaves to Lunacharsky very closely, but the question of silence looms over the translation. Lu Xun mobilizes Lunacharsky for local political purposes. The translation is a ventriloquism in which Lu Xun makes Lunacharsky's work speak to Chinese readers, yet Lunacharsky himself remains silent.

Who speaks in hard translation? The violence any translation inflicts on the source text is severe, for the translation simply cannot say what the original says. This is

not to say that all translations must silence the voice of the author, but the inattentive translator can unconsciously alter whose voice speaks in translation. Lu Xun is guilty of this alteration. Lunacharsky does not speak in the text because of its staging. By positioning the Lunacharsky's text within the discourse of Chinese literary theory, Lu Xun stages the work as speaking directly to China, which of course the text does not. Granted, Marxist literary theory is predicated on a belief in a certain universality of practice, because, "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature" (Marx and Engels 207-8). However, the conditions of individual nations and their respective literatures prior to the instantiation of this world literature should not be overlooked. Lunacharsky does not write about China; he writes about Russia and the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly some, like Lu Xun, might find his criticism relevant to China, but this does not mean his voice is unmediated when staged for this purpose. Lunacharsky's text undergoes a double mediation in this staging.

The first mediation is linguistic, and in this case, Lu Xun's hard translation serves the voice of the author by attempting to render what he said in Russian rather than what he might have said in Chinese. Although this might do a different violence to the text, depending on how accessible Lunacharsky is in Russian; an incomprehensible translation cannot be said to be in the voice of the original author if he or she is lucid in the original. The second, however, works to silence Lunacharsky. Readers of the translated work can

come to the text only through Lu Xun's staging, which makes the work say things it did not in the original – like that it is directly relevant to China. In this light, even the supposed fidelity of hard translation becomes suspect. If hard translation serves Lu Xun's intended purpose of reforming the language, then even the seemingly minor linguistic mediation becomes fraught with competing voices. Form carries semantic content, but the additional meta-linguistic content Lu Xun inscribes on the form cannot be in Lunacharsky's voice. In hard translation the work becomes a cacophony of voices, not necessarily in direct competition with each other, but not without a destructive, silencing interference as well.

What this interference produces is an autonomous text, and it is as a producer of autonomous texts that translation is most useful to Lu Xun, which is to say texts unmoored from their original contexts and motivations.³ He needs the translations to serve his aims in his era in a way that is impossible for the originals. Moreover, the truly faithful or non-autonomous translation, if possible, though it may allow the author to speak in his own voice, has no life in its new context. Were Lu Xun to translate Lunacharsky without providing a rationale for its integration into a specifically Chinese literary discourse, would anyone have read it given the tenor of that discourse? Perhaps, but if Lu Xun wanted to translate just for the fun of it, he would have.⁴ His translation practice relies on the autonomy of translated texts in order to reshape the Chinese linguistic, literary, and cultural systems.

³ Adorno's understanding of the term resonates here as well, but to invoke him explicitly would be inexact since the autonomy discussed here is not free from political influence, albeit in the new context..

⁴ This is somewhat of a moot point since Lu Xun opposed theories that promoted "art for art's sake."

Lu Xun did not intend for his translations to be representations of the foreign for domestic consumption, but integral if temporary parts of the domestic literature. Thus his foreignizing style actually conceals a domesticating staging. Nearly all aspects of his practice contribute to staging the autonomous text as part of Chinese literary discourse: notions of linguistic reform, prefaces and commentary targeted at Chinese readers, and participation in domestic debates with translation as their impetus. Polysystems theorist Itamar Even-Zohar notes, “Whether translated literature becomes central or peripheral, and whether this position is connected with innovatory (‘primary’) or conservatory (‘secondary’) repertoires, depends on the specific constellation of the polysystem under study” (200). Part of what enables Lu Xun to make this attempt to make translation central is that he works at a time “when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature” (Even-Zohar 201). The dramatic change in Chinese literature during and after the May Fourth period enabled Lu Xun to envision a literary polysystem with translation at the center. And within the scope of Lu Xun’s own work, he did just that. Whether or not others entirely accepted this constellation seems rather unlikely, given the genuine difficulty of Lu Xun’s translations (Chan 202). The fact that Lu Xun’s translations spurred debate on issues central to the literary polysystem does indicate that this constellation did, to an extent, come to pass.

Somewhat paradoxically, by imposing his own voice on his translations and appropriating them for Chinese use, he grants more power to the original text. This is particularly true of Lu Xun’s translations, because the autonomy of the translated texts along with his active role in positioning them within the Chinese polysystem allowed for more than just the (re)construction of local polysystems. What emerges instead is the

texts' participation in global literary exchange. Eschewing for a moment the pieties of disciplinary constructions like "Chinese" or "Russian" literatures, we can look at the translations as nodes within that network. Taking only the translation of *Art and Criticism*, we can trace several nodes one link away. The most obvious would be Lunacharsky's original text, followed by Liang Shiqiu's criticisms. At a second remove would be Lu Xun's reply to Liang Shiqiu, which could also tie back to his translation of Lunacharsky. We could rapidly populate this network with other nodes at various removes from the beginning text based on references within it. The autonomous, translated text redefines what the original text is: Lunacharsky becomes relevant to May Fourth era literary discourse, but would not have been so if Lu Xun had not translated him and promoted him as such. Moreover, this new collection of nodes reshapes the global literary network in part, allowing China a space that it did not occupy previously.

This is not to suggest that Lu Xun was uninterested in the idea of a specifically Chinese literature, or that his translations are unique in their ability to participate in this type of network. Quite the opposite. However, his idiosyncratic practice of intertwining both the Chinese language and its literature with foreign literary discourse reveals a particularly intuitive sense of the power of translation to shape both local polysystems and the links between polysystems. Lu Xun explicitly wanted to forge cultural links with Europe on both linguistic and literary levels. This is evident in his translations as well as in his own fiction.

Translation for Lu Xun is anything but simple. Even without tortuous theoretical exegeses of his work, he presents a multifaceted approach to translation that sets a great many tasks before the translator. The translator must be engaged with the conditions of

literary production at home and produce translations that reflect a program to change those conditions. Moreover, the translation project does not end with the translator, but demands the participation of critics to situate translated works in politically productive ways. Looking through the lens of contemporary theory, the situation becomes even more complex. Hard translation is not so foreign after all, and instead serves entirely local needs. However, this local project enters into conversation with global literary exchange through the translation process. Thus it is in part through translation that Lu Xun can attempt to reform culture at home while producing a space for China and its literature within global literary discourse.

Intellectual Ecology

Lu Xun did not see the translator as a heroic individual, selflessly going about his task, even though his own translation practice embodied that figure. Translation was the subject of much debate in Republican China, and though vocal, Lu Xun was only one of many competing voices. However, Lu Xun recognized that translation has many stakeholders, and sought to address them all in hopes of promoting translation as the center of the Chinese literary polysystem. In addition to the well-known essay on “Hard Translation” from 1930, in which he lays out his general translation strategy, Lu Xun penned in 1933 and 1934 a series of five essays on the political, social, and critical aspects of translation broadly conceived rather than in its technical details. In these pieces Lu Xun clashed with rival theorists of translation as well as the reading public. These essays, all written pseudonymously, were published in the “Free Speech” section of the Shanghai newspaper *Shen Bao*. The pieces speak to the vibrancy of translation discourse and its contentiousness. Though a major translator, Lu Xun was not the only

game in town, and often found his positions under attack in the pages of this and similar journals. These essays give us a better picture of Lu Xun's translation practice among the broader intellectual community at the time.

The first of these essays, the aptly titled "In Defense of Translation," speaks to what Lu Xun saw as translation's precarious position among the Chinese intelligentsia. He opens the piece by likening the attacks on translation to the brutal encirclement campaigns then being waged by the Guomindang against Communist strongholds in southeast China (Lu Xun *Quanji* 5:274). This links Lu Xun's translation scope to a subset of all translation activities then going on in China. The allusion to the ongoing civil war and implied sympathy with the Communists reflects the aims of his translation project. His focus on Russian realists was ideologically motivated, but it was not the only translation project in China. Thus what Lu Xun defends here is not necessarily all translation, but his translation. He confirms this by listing "hard translation" as one of the modes under attack.

Lu Xun responds to these criticisms with a critique of Chinese translation practices, establishing a tripartite division among translators, publishers, and readers. The translators, he argues, fall victim to what he calls the Chinese people's "striving to be first" (*Quanji* 5:274). Like "getting on and off streetcars, buying train tickets, and sending registered mail," translators also want to produce the first Chinese edition of a text (*Quanji* 5:274). Amidst his cultural criticism, Lu Xun subtly links translation to modernity by listing very modern activities as examples of a character flaw. He does not critique the trappings of modernity in this, but the engagement with that modernity. As a result of their "striving to be first," the translators have flooded the market to the point at

which “no bookstore would be willing to publish another translation of a work, if one already exists” (*Quanji* 5:274).

Compounding the problem of the glut of translations is the glut of bad translations. Lu Xun tended to favor some intellectual production over none in both translated and creative arenas. In a 1924 speech, “Waiting for a Genius,” he advocates the cultivation of an intellectual atmosphere and questions the possibility of spontaneous excellence: “Genius is not some freak of nature which grows of itself in deep forests or wildernesses, but something brought forth and nurtured by a certain type of public” (*Works* 95). Nevertheless, he recognizes here the limitations of overly casual translation. Given the reticence of publishers to release new editions, translators are in a bind between releasing the first Chinese edition of a work or waiting and working more carefully. He cites as an example Ma Junwu’s translation of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Ma’s translation was based on the earlier and inferior of two Japanese editions, so “there really is a need for another translation” (*Quanji* 5:274). Lu Xun reminds us of how unlikely that retranslation is to appear by rhetorically asking, “But where is the bookstore that will publish it?” (*Quanji* 5:274).

Yet translators and publishers are not entirely to blame in Lu Xun’s eyes. The meticulous translator, even if he manages to be the first to publish, faces yet another challenge: the capriciousness of the reading public. Lu Xun estimates the lifespan of “a new idea or artwork introduced to China” as lasting between “six months and a year, when it generally fades away” (*Quanji* 5:274). The public’s fickleness is a major obstacle for any lengthy or systematic translation project. Even a work like “Guo Moruo’s famous and lucky to be published translation of *War and Peace*” is “unlikely to

overcome the inertia of readers and publishers,” and “will ultimately go uncompleted” (*Quanji* 5:275). In this case, Lu Xun was right: only three fascicles of Guo’s translation ever appeared (*Quanji* 5:276n7).

This attack on intellectual fads points to a belief in translation’s ability to effect political change. Lu Xun’s translations during this period were mostly of Soviet literary theory and Russian realism; he worked on his translation of Gogol’s *Dead Souls* until his death. This call for a sustained public interest in a translation, combined with his perseverance opposes more fragmentary and unsystematic translations. His emphasis on systematic translation reflects his belief in the centrality of translation – some translations at least – to the Chinese literary polysystem.

Lu Xun heaps additional blame on literary critics, whom he identifies here as belonging to the worlds of readers and publishers, rather than that of the translators (*Quanji* 5:275). In his often-repeated formula, critics must “point out the bad, reward the good; if there is no good, then the relatively good will do” (*Quanji* 5:275). However, at present he does not see the critics as up to their task, for instead of being impartial evaluators of translation, they criticize according to the status of the translator. “This phenomenon,” Lu Xun writes, “causes critics to be nothing but ambiguous” (*Quanji* 5:275). Thus the reading and publishing worlds lose a major tool for weeding out bad translations and obviating the need for retranslation.

Finally, Lu Xun argues that not all works are alike either in the original or in translation. Escalating his rhetoric to the extreme, he naturally chooses Kant as his example. In response to readers who “still cannot understand [a translation] after reading a few dozen lines,” Lu Xun notes, “Even if a German reads a book like Kant’s *Critique of*

Pure Reason in the original, were he not a specialist, he would not understand it immediately either” (*Quanji* 5:275). This stresses Lu Xun’s view of translation as something more than diversion. If translation is to be an important part of Chinese literary culture, which Lu Xun certainly desires, readers must take it seriously, and recognize that not all texts are equally comprehensible. Moreover, when considered in conjunction with his theory of hard translation, this call for a slow, difficult apprehension of translated materials underscores his desire to force readers to learn how to read differently when reading translations. Thus his defense of translation is as much a defense of translation as it is of linguistic and cultural change.

A month later he was fighting the same battle again. In response to a critique of his “Defense” of translation and a recent translation of an anthology of European literature, Lu Xun published a short essay simply titled “On Translation.” Like “Defense,” the essay appeared in the “Free Speech” section of the *Shen Bao*, on September 14, 1933 (*Quanji* 5:317). The original draft of September 11 was not published, which Lu Xun notes in a postscript dated to the 15th of the month (*Quanji* 5:314). Instead a second draft, whose composition also dated to the 11th ran in the newspaper. In publication it included the first three lines of the original draft (*Quanji* 5:314n1). Both texts deal with a similar topic: the role of the critic in the translation process. Both versions present translation as a central activity for Chinese literary production. However, the unpublished first draft of the piece deals more with the question of what is to be translated, whereas the second focuses on defining what Lu Xun sees as the proper method of translation criticism.

The question of what to translate shows the flexibility of Lu Xun's thought even during his more explicitly political phase. Although his own translation practice reflected his leftist leanings, here he underscores the need for translations of all stripes, including those that are at odds with political orthodoxy. In response to Mu Mutian's argument that a revolutionary country such as the Soviet Union "cannot use imperialist authors as selected works" (qtd. in Lu Xun *Quanji* 5:312), Lu Xun becomes pragmatic. Acknowledging that revolutions must be nurtured, Lu Xun concedes, "Ten years ago, this would not have been possible. Not only were resources limited, but also for the protection of the children of the revolution, one cannot indiscriminately place before them nourishing, benign, and harmful foodstuffs" (*Quanji* 5:312). This resembles an apology for censorship, but given Lu Xun's own experience with creative restriction and the arguments that follow, this is likely a sop to those leftist critics who do not stray from orthodoxy. Moreover, Lu Xun does not advocate completely ignoring translations of "imperialist authors," only that they should not be mixed in "indiscriminately" with more politically correct fare. Here he intimates the need for someone to take on the task of discrimination: like a critic.

Indeed Lu Xun carves out a space for criticism, for "even if showing opium and morphine to them [the now grown children of the revolution] poses no great danger [...] there must be those who have already experienced [these things] to come explain them" and their grave social consequences (*Quanji* 5:312-3). For these "fore-knowing" people to exist, they must have some access to the otherwise contraband materials. Lu Xun's rhetorical move from a discussion of Soviet aesthetic practices to a symbolic invocation of opium and morphine reframes the debate on translation for a Chinese readership by

linking a rather trivial foreign political matter to a major factor in China's revolution.

That is to say, translation is not just translation. The historical force drawn upon by the invocation of "opium and morphine" again suggests that Lu Xun sees translation and its accompanying criticism as an integral part of cultural transformation in China. Though at the same time as he deploys one of the most doctrinaire elements from revolutionary Chinese history, Lu Xun rejects the primacy of received orthodoxy in favor of empiricism, or at least empirical hearsay. Rather than simply telling the revolutionary youth that imperialist literature is dangerous, Lu Xun wants knowledgeable, experienced people to explain why this is so.

In addition to arguing for the necessity of translations that flout dogma, Lu Xun downplays the danger they pose. Taking Louis Bertrand as an example, because the Soviet Academy's endorsement of him prompted Mu Mutian's initial complaint (qtd. in Lu Xun *Quanji* 5:312), he points out that "Bertrand is not only a Catholic propagandist, but also a spokesman for monarchism, but that compared with the literary giant Goethe, who emerged from the early nineteenth century German bourgeoisie, those works are unlikely to be any more harmful" (*Quanji* 5:313). The class backgrounds of most translated authors in early twentieth century China compromise them somewhat, so Lu Xun makes use of the hypocrisy in promoting someone like Goethe while rejecting Bertrand to further his argument for an unrestricted translation practice.

However, that practice is not to be completely without shepherding. Although Lu Xun allows for apparently any work to be translated, he calls for "detailed prefaces, careful analysis, and proper criticism" to appear "before the works" (*Quanji* 5:313). Lu Xun does not want to risk the possibility of Plato being correct and allowing an

imperialist muse to ensnare Chinese readers. Instead he recognizes the power of supplementary, paratextual materials to inflect how a translated text is read. Judging by his candid allusions to drug use earlier in the essay, Lu Xun does not likely want to obscure the literary constellations called into being by the original texts since they would at least be partly necessary for his quasi-empirical work of commentary. He rather emphasizes the new constellation called into being and centered on the translation. By stressing the importance of paratextual and critical materials like prefaces and analyses, he wants that constellation to be already populated by Chinese language texts. Thus the translated text will always already have sedimented in it instructions on how to read it. This also speaks to the centrality of translation to Lu Xun's cultural project. The various interpretative accompaniments to the text ostensibly draw on and are expressions of contemporary political and aesthetic discourse. By virtue of their indigenous critical context, translations can surge into the center of the Chinese literary polysystem.

But what is it that Lu Xun wants readers to glean from these unorthodox translations? He certainly wants cultural reform to come from them, and sees their position in the Chinese literary polysystem as a prerequisite for that reform, but he has not yet elucidated the mechanism by which that change is to occur on anything other than a linguistic level (cf. "Hard Translation"). Granted, Lu Xun sees language change as a fundamental step for cultural change, but this cannot entirely explain why he prosecutes this particular argument about translation; he is not translating imperialist authors, so the desired outcomes of "hard translation" do not necessarily apply. The emphasis on the actual experience of the dangerous translation also points to a more nuanced view of these texts than simple cautionary tales. Lu Xun does not disappoint and explains how

the dangerous texts can offer a complex benefit to their readers. Readers can learn from these works. Lu Xun may be guilty of instrumentalizing literature here, in that he reduces these dangerous works to the status of textbooks: “Even if these works generally cannot stir the hearts of the new youth (of course having the correct critical explanations), the youth can from high school on study descriptive ability and authorial effort” (*Quanji* 5:313). Goethe as creative writing primer. Another chemical analogy follows in which arsenic, with its “lethal power and crystalline structure” can teach people about “pharmacology and mineralogy” (*Quanji* 5:313). However, these works have a salutary effect beyond their instructional capacities. Lu Xun suggests that an awareness of what is politically dangerous can aid one in guarding against it, particularly from unexpected source. As examples he identifies “falsely named ‘revolutionary literature’ and the faux-ferocity of so-called ‘historical materialist criticism’” (*Quanji* 5:313). Undoubtedly these are digs at his intellectual opponents who are blind to everything except their radical jargon.

Lu Xun concludes this piece by reaching into Chinese literary history. Beyond the bluntly didactic benefits described above, he shows his commitment to his own brand of revolutionary aesthetics: “I have proposed that the youth can read the works of ‘imperialist authors.’ This is what in the classical language was called, ‘Know yourself to know your enemy’” (*Quanji* 5:313). The quoted phrase is from Sunzi’s *Art of War*, one of China’s ancient works on military strategy. That Lu Xun chooses a profoundly classical idiom to justify his argument about translation gestures to the complexity of his thought on the matter. Like the works of the “imperialists” under discussion in this piece, China’s classical tradition is a source of anxiety for revolutionary intellectuals like Lu

Xun, who famously warned China's youth away from Chinese books. The classical texts are those condemned by Lu Xun early on in his literary career as promoting a sort of cultural cannibalism, likely more dangerous than the "imperialist" works that may or may not be translated. Yet here Lu Xun sees in both textual categories a redeeming call to reflection. Just as he is unwilling to discard certain Western works for their nominal political allegiances, so too does he keep the classics in the literary polysystem. These types of works, if we are to take his quotation of Sunzi as earnest and not as ironic circular argument, challenge the reader to clarify his or her own beliefs when reading. For if readers were not certain in their political commitments, how could they recognize that these dangerous texts were so?

Of course, this creates a problem for Lu Xun. If the only way to galvanize one's commitment is to know the enemy, and the only way to do that is to galvanize one's commitment, then a paradox presents itself. Fortunately, Lu Xun is ready to resolve it. As pointed to earlier in the essay with reference to drugs and their discussion, Lu Xun does not envision readers grappling with these dangerous works alone. Instead he argues that the task of the critic is to serve as an "iron fence" between the "wolves and tigers" of dangerous literature, thus protecting naïve readers from overexposure and ensuring that all but the "laughably stupid" will feel safe enough to engage the dangerous works (*Quanji* 5:313-4).

This move is at odds with his strategy of hard translation, because it domesticates translation not in terms of form or content, but presentation. If hard translation was intended to give readers a new, challenging engagement with the foreign, then this type of criticism stages that experience of the foreign within a domestic frame. The heavy-

handed criticism advocated here not only forces texts into arbitrary categories, but also freights them with the local discussion of those categories. The critic who stages a text as an imperialist work, according to Lu Xun's view, robs it of internal consistency by reducing it to a series of pedagogical parts and metatextual imperatives; the text can never be just a text.

Still, Lu Xun attempts here to carve out a space in the Chinese literary polysystem for a type of translation that otherwise might not find a home. He tries to reconcile the demands of revolutionary politics with the perceived need for both broader and more fundamental reforms. Despite his concessions to those who would limit what gets translated, he ultimately comes down on the side of free, if annotated, trade in translation. Even his proposal for a type of political criticism may be toothless, because he never describes what such criticism would look like.

This essay was not even published until December 1934, when collected in the volume entitled *Zhunfeng Yue Tan*, thus removing it from the intellectual discourse that occasioned it. Whether Lu Xun was unconvinced of its claims or other, more technical causes prevented its publication is unclear.

What is clear, however, is that the essay Lu Xun did publish under the same title moves in a different direction. In it he defines his theory of translation criticism, but it bears no immediate resemblance to the political criticism suggested in the first draft. Instead he returns to the three instructions from "Defense." Rather than taking up Mu Mutian on the point of what to translate, Lu Xun criticizes him for only following the first instruction and uses Mu's apparent shortcomings as a critic as an opportunity to refine his theory of translation criticism. (*Quanji* 5:316). "If there isn't even the

relatively good,” Lu Xun writes, “then after pointing out the bad, one moreover should indicate those places in the text from which readers might profit” (*Quanji* 5:316).

Whether this profit is political, pedagogical, or merely technical remains unsaid.

But before defining translation criticism, Lu Xun takes a moment to sympathize with his fellow translators. The status of the intellectual in the new China is a source of anxiety for those intellectuals, particularly those leftists of the older generation. Lu Xun’s story “Kong Yiji” captures his own feelings on the matter: a failed, destitute scholar’s only diversions are drinking and trying to teach children who do not want to learn. On top of social deracination, these intellectuals have to eat. As Lu Xun astutely observes, as a result of the country being in dire straits, readership has decreased dramatically, forcing both publishers and otherwise unimpeachably honest translators to become “opportunistic” and so “churn out work without regard for quality” (*Quanji* 5:316). No doubt painfully aware of the declining market for translations, being a translator himself, Lu Xun fingers market conditions as the driving force behind slipshod translations, rather than the inadequacies of the translators themselves. This is a departure from the broader cultural criticism of “Defense,” which pinned the blame on his perception of the Chinese character and its encounter with modernity. The two approaches are not incompatible, as both assume an underlying opportunism.

Like he does in “Defense,” he also singles out readers for their unrealistic expectations. To do so he integrates a subtle commentary on China’s semi-colonial status with a critique of local reading habits. Although many Chinese intellectuals studied abroad during the Republican period and learned foreign languages, not all learned the same languages, and some languages were more prevalent than others. Hence the need

for translation. Lu Xun likens this linguistic isolation to the political and cultural isolation China faced on the world stage:

Walking past a road near the residential district of the International Settlement, there were three fruit stores. Inside of the crystal-clear sparkling glass windows were fresh red apples, yellow bananas, and tropical fruits I did not recognize. On standing and looking for a moment, I realized there are very few Chinese people going into these shops, and they cannot afford anything. We generally have to go to fruit stands run by our countrymen and spend a few coins for a rotten apple.

(Quanji 5:316)

The fruit metaphor is oblique, but it underscores what Lu Xun sees as a national problem. Despite the dominant powers living literally on Chinese soil, albeit extraterritorially, the Chinese can do little more than gaze upon the fruits of Western culture. They are unattainable in both a geopolitical sense, in that China cannot compete with the West under the imperialist arrangements, as well as a more literary sense: they are inaccessible in their original form. Thus the Chinese vendor sets up shop peddling pale imitations of the desired product. He casts translations as no more than rotten versions of the delicious originals.

As unpleasant a picture as Lu Xun paints of the Chinese translation scene, it is not without hope. Regarding creative works in China, he responded to critics challenging their inferiority with the argument, “To be the soil we must become more broad-minded. In other words we must accept new ideas and free ourselves of the old fetters, so as to be able to accept and appreciate any future genius” (*Works* 98). He makes a similar move here with translation. Again, the readers are the problem: “A rotten apple is unsavory

when compared to other fruits, but people buy them anyway; however, we have a contrary nature: jewelry must be ‘solid gold,’ characters must be ‘complete people.’ If one part has a defect then sometimes the whole thing is no longer desirable” (*Quanji* 5:316-7). Lu Xun sees this desire for the superior product manifest in ways that undermine the whole translation enterprise. Many of the flaws, or rotten apples, he adduces have little if anything to do with the quality of translation: “Shaw traveled in a large boat – no good; Barbusse isn’t considered the best – also no good; the translator is ‘a university professor or petty bureaucrat’ – even worse” (*Quanji* 5:317). These criticisms of the translation enterprise point to a completely extratextual discourse of cultural capital, which Lu Xun rejects in this essay as the unproductive caprice of the reading public. He takes the readers to task for asking too much of a system in which they are participating, without offering any useful criticism by dwelling only on the bad while willingly consuming it. To combat this, Lu Xun proposes a new mode of criticism.

His proposed method of translation criticism is hardly radical, but it points to his desire both to improve the quality of Chinese translations and to increase their quantity. Recalling that the aim of Lu Xun’s translation project is always a cultural translation, or at least a cultural reform based upon translated examples, this focus on both having more translations as well as criticism that guides readers to salient points constitutes an essential part of the overall project. Following his fruit metaphor, he declares the task of the translation critic not to be that of the naysayer, who rejects texts outright, but that of the constructive communicator: “This apple has rotten parts, but these few spots are free of rot, and so can be eaten” (*Quanji* 5:317). Here he does not explain what these edible parts are or why they should be sought out, but when read in conjunction with the earlier

draft of this piece, the positive targets of this criticism are the technically and politically instructive elements of the translated text.

To Lu Xun, though, China does not yet have this kind of criticism. Citing recent criticisms of translation published in the same newspaper section as the present essay, he dismisses them as doing nothing but “pointing out a few defects” (*Quanji* 5:317). He defends one of the criticized works, a biography of Gorky, according to the grounds he established just before: “I feel that apart from what the critic points out as shortcomings, there are many accounts of the author’s brave struggle, the despicable schemes of minor officials, which are quite beneficial for young writers” (*Quanji* 5:317). In this Lu Xun offers an unguarded, non-metaphorical, albeit simplistic example of what this new criticism looks like. He directs readers to parts of political or technical profit. This particular case primarily highlights the political, offering it as fodder for writers of the Chinese literature to come. Of special interest here is Lu Xun’s emphasis on content, given the heavy formal project of hard translation. Just as he sees translation proper as capable of making structural changes to the Chinese language, and by extension Chinese culture, so too can translation criticism focus attention on examples of what that new culture should look like.

The task of the translation critic is thus not so much of a gourmand as it is that of a surgeon. Rather than discard the rotten apples of translation, Lu Xun “hopes that hardworking translators will come and do the work of scooping out the rotten apples” (*Quanji* 5:317). Through this type of criticism Lu Xun aims to rescue the Chinese translation scene from both its fickle readers and itself. By emphasizing what is “beneficial” in translation, he circumvents challenges to a translated work’s overall

quality. He backs down somewhat from his bolder claims of the first draft regarding the translation of “dangerous” works. The example of Gorky is one of heroic struggle rather than the inoculating effects of “imperialist” literature mentioned in the first draft. Nevertheless, Lu Xun preserves a space for translations, even bad translations, in his model of the Chinese literary polysystem.

Yet bad translations cannot be saved by criticism alone. As alluded to in “Defense,” the desire for works in translation led to early, inferior versions followed by more careful retranslations. The following year, Lu Xun wrote two essays on retranslation. The term is ambiguous in these pieces because it refers to both subsequent translations of an already translated work, and indirect translation: translation based not on an original text, but on a translation from a third language like Japanese. About the former, Lu Xun cleaves to the position he established in earlier pieces. However, the latter represents a new facet of his approach to translation and another battle in the debate over Chinese translation. The issue of retranslation is not unique to China, nor is indirect translation necessarily so; however, the latter method of translation was used extensively by Lu Xun and was the subject of some debate in intellectual circles. During the summer of 1934 Lu Xun wrote two essays responding to critics of both retranslation and indirect translation, citing both as useful practices while hoping for the better translations of the future. The first, “On Retranslation,” is a response to Mu Mutian’s claim that indirect translation “is a ridiculous method,” and to use it “to avoid difficulty for ease is unacceptable” (qtd. in Lu Xun *Quanji* 5:532-3n3). The second, “More on Retranslation,” continues the debate with Mu. Lu Xun concedes that retranslation is inferior to and easier than direct translation, but defends the practice anyway (*Quanji* 5:531). His

defense rests on an argument about the fundamental impossibility of translation. In a practical but shockingly anti-nationalist move, he adduces the incompatibilities among the various Chinese languages: “Even to translate from Cantonese to Mandarin, or from Mandarin to Shanghainese is very difficult to approximate” (*Quanji* 5:531). This implies that if direct translation is difficult even among the closely related Chinese languages, then what is necessarily gained by pursuing it between unrelated languages. The indirect translator might even be at an advantage because he is able to build on the work of his predecessor(s): “For difficult spots, the faithful translator often makes annotations, which can be apprehended at a glance, and which might not be present in the original. For this reason, there are often errors in direct translations that are not present when indirectly translated” (*Quanji* 5:531).

Lu Xun recognizes that the translated text is not the original, and he does not suggest that it should strive to be so. Although his view of the translated text is not as radical as that proposed in this dissertation, he does indirectly acknowledge that translations have a function of their own that is contingent upon, but independent of the original text. By stressing the difficulty of all translation and rejecting the possibility of an immediate translated experience of an original text, Lu Xun defines the purpose of translation: to communicate. On the surface this seems a rather obvious claim, but it too often goes unstated in the face of more ambitious definitions of translation, which concern themselves with reproducing the original text in the target language. The distinction is subtle. Following contemporary and classic definitions of translation, a reader might conclude that she or he is reading the original text through a lens of varying opacity depending on how one defines the quality of the translation. Ideally, under these

frameworks, this lens would be wholly transparent, so that the brushstrokes of the translator would be imperceptible. Lu Xun does not make these claims. From the beginning of his translation practice, when he translated Jules Verne in a somewhat misguided attempt to promote scientific ideas, to the end, when he died finishing Part II of Gogol's *Dead Souls* to encourage realist literature, he never sought simply to make a text available. The commissions he received either from himself or from the leftist discourses in which he participated placed rather tight boundaries on his *skopos*. The translated works a supposed to communicate something other than just themselves, even if that something has to be recovered or excavated by the critic.

The ultimate purpose of indirect translation for Lu Xun is to make more texts available for readers. This is in keeping with his earlier defense of “imperialist” literature. Always looking to reshape Chinese culture, Lu Xun avers, “To understand a national culture, it is most important to translate its national literature” (*Quanji* 5:531). As he wants Chinese culture to embrace what he perceives to be the strengths of the West, advocating the centrality of translation to that process is in line with his desired Chinese literary polysystem. Yet were the Chinese to rely exclusively on direct translation, the number of texts available would be small. Given the patterns of study abroad and foreign language learning, Lu Xun cautions, “We will only be able to read English, American, and Japanese works of literature. However, we won't have Ibsen, Ibáñez, even the most common of Andersen's children's stories, or Cervantes' *Don Quixote*: none are accessible” (*Quanji* 5:531-2). Of course, when this piece was published, many of these works were available in Chinese translation, confirming the utility of indirect translation.

As is evident from his repeated discussions of the role of criticism in translation, what matters to him is the quality or at least the pedagogical utility of a translation, not an arbitrary emphasis on proximity to the source text. Similarly, Lu Xun is less concerned about the priority of translations and subsequent retranslations, as long as the quality is good: “The retranslations of those who follow the fashion of poring over the original texts can sometimes be better than the direct translations of those who don’t really understand the original text” (*Quanji* 5:532). “Retranslation” is ambiguous here, because though it contrasts with “direct translation,” in the sentence, the broader context suggests repeat translation. The ambiguity is likely intentional, since the criticism is against “opportunistic” translators who rush their work to print. The approaches of those careful but late to market direct translators or those indirect translators who compare their intermediaries with the original seem equally valid here. Published priority in translation is no more of a benefit for Lu Xun than is direct translation.

This is not to say that Lu Xun would not like to see more direct translations. Nevertheless, he visualizes that prospect in the future anterior: “If we wait until the future for famous masterpieces to have direct translations, then retranslations ought to be eliminated” (*Quanji* 5:532). Though the future may have no need for retranslation, that he posits it as a point when “retranslations ought to be eliminated” shows that Lu Xun does not believe we should wait for that glorious moment and instead retranslate as is profitable. Indeed, “those [new] translations must be better than the old ones” to warrant the latter’s discard (*Quanji* 5:532). The virtue of direct translation is not enough for Lu Xun to proclaim its superiority. Critical evaluation remains the partner of translation of all kinds in his project.

Lu Xun continued his comments on the subject with “Again on Retranslation.” Against Mu Mutian’s notions of an ageless translation, Lu Xun reiterated his support for good, if imperfect efforts at translation, as well as criticism. He takes a new tack by describing unique difficulties faced by the critics of translation. His complaints against overly hasty translations aside, here Lu Xun recognizes that criticizing translation requires a different skill from that of original creation. If the critic of translation knew nothing of the original text, he would not be much of a critic. Moreover, to understand just the original text and one translation of it is not enough: “As Mr. Mutian said, retranslation has many kinds of translated works to serve as references. This is extremely convenient for the translator, because if the first translation is suspect, he can look at the second version” (*Quanji* 5:534-5). Lu Xun demands that the critic of translation adopt an historical perspective, taking into account not only the present translation of a work, but also its relationship to the original and prior translations. This call for comparative research into translation by its critics reveals Lu Xun’s belief that a translator and his translation is shaped not only by his reading of the original, but also by his participation in the discourse of its reception. By defending the difficulty of not only the translator’s task, but also the critic’s task, particularly the critic of retranslation, he challenges his interlocutors to treat translation not as an idle exercise but as an ongoing project that requires its participants to acknowledge the influence of discursive formation – textual constellations – on the translation and reception of a work.

In this definition of the critic’s task and its emphasis on comparison with an original work, Lu Xun inadvertently sees to privilege the source text as somehow better than its translation. This thread has perhaps been lurking throughout his discussion of

translation criticism, but his earlier admonitions for critics to address what is good and bad in a work often operated on the translation itself. In the debate over “imperialist authors,” Lu Xun asks the critics to investigate the content of the translation in order to point out useful or dangerous ideas. True, in “Defense” his three points for critics of translation suggest a focus on technical proficiency, which would entail comparison with an original work; however, there he does not ask the critic to go deeper into the original text than the translator for purposes of evaluation. What is unclear here is of which text the critic is supposed to have a greater understanding than that of the translator. Unlike the call to do more work, which explicitly mentions “the original text” (原文), the call for greater understanding simply references “the work” (作品). Whether this refers to the original or to the translation is unclear. The latter would be in keeping with his previous definitions of the critic as scout and guardian, whereas the former would be syntagmatically appropriate. Moreover, later in the essay Lu Xun notes that in one of Mu Mutian’s own retranslations, Mu mistakenly thought that he had translated an abridgement, since his retranslation source in French was only half as thick as a German version he encountered later. Lu Xun corrects this by pointing out that the German version was actually two novels bound together (*Quanji* 5:535). Even though this particular example does not address the original text, Neverov’s *Tashkent: City of Bread*, which was in Russian, only its first generation translations, it still stresses the importance of understanding one’s sources in translation.

Understanding is not the same as privileging. These essays, particularly when examined with the earlier piece on “Hard Translation,” complicate the received categories of Western translation studies. These are usually dichotomous – word-for-

word vs. sense-for-sense, foreignizing vs. domesticating, faithful to source vs. target language – and as such, are inadequate to fully describe Lu Xun’s work on translation, in that he explicitly calls for foreignizing, largely word-for-word translations in “Hard Translation,” and sense-for-sense translations, or at least criticism that privileges sense-for-sense readings, in “On Translation.” Although these pieces were written three years apart, Lu Xun did not abandon his hard translation style, so the paradox cannot be written off as a change of heart. Furthermore, his comments on translation are not the solipsistic musings of a pedant, but arguments forged in the crucible of public debate. The semi-popular and occasional character of these pieces might explain some of their antinomian properties; however, the consistency with which Lu Xun deploys these arguments suggests that he either saw no paradox between his “hard” translation practice and his general advocacy of translation, or that the paradox was a productive one. That we see any paradox at all, again is a category error predicated on a faulty epistemology of translation.

Were we to look at Lu Xun’s paradoxes of translation as opposed dialectically rather than diametrically, we might apprehend the underlying logic of his project. Recalling that China’s last major project of translation had taken place over a millennium prior, which only dealt with a single language, Sanskrit, the desire to inaugurate a new, ameliorative project of translation was on the minds of Chinese intellectuals of all stripes. For Lu Xun, the ameliorative effects of translation are not limited to its readers, and by extension their culture, but to translation itself. His defenses of indirect translation and retranslation point to the dual priorities of getting translations into the hands of readers while improving their quality over time. Similarly, the call for “hard translation” as a

mechanism to move Chinese language and culture closer to its European interlocutors' is not incompatible with his demand that critics explain the gist of a translation for the readers' benefit. Indeed Lu Xun's comments on retranslators as being able to benefit from the footnotes of their predecessors indicates that translation is an ongoing process that can to a certain extent pull itself up by its bootstraps (*Quanji* 5:531).

The key to unlocking the paradox is that Lu Xun makes the radical claim that translations are not and need not be perfect. Even his "hard translation" theory is only an intermediate step. Throughout his writing on translation, Lu Xun recognizes that China has little experience with the languages and literatures of Europe, and with translation more generally. As the cultural hegemon of East Asia for some two thousand years, with its classical language being the regional lingua franca, the necessity of translation simply did not exist as it did among the squabbling principalities of Europe, with their mutually unintelligible languages. Yet just as the collapse of Europe's classical hegemony of Catholicism (ironically contemporary with the rediscovery of another classical legacy) led to great translation projects – nationally inflected – so too did China's. Luther did not complete his *Bible* overnight, and both Chapman and Pope managed to make a splash with Homer. The idea of translation as an ongoing process is certainly not foreign to the West, but it seems to be forgotten in much of translation studies. I suspect this is the result of both the legacy of *Bible* translation, with its incumbent hermeneutic mysticism, and the impact of Romanticism, with its notions of artistic genius. These speculations aside, the origin of translation studies' preference for neat categories merits further inquiry.

No longer bound by these epistemological shackles, we can look at Lu Xun's theory of translation as a dialectic project. Starting from the premise that translations will be flawed, Lu Xun demands that critics aid readers in domesticating their texts. At the same time, he asks translators to adopt foreignizing strategies – and does so himself – in order to reform Chinese culture. That he calls for both does not signify paradox, but progress. Simply because he wants critics to offer readers guideposts to difficult translations does not mean that he does not still want readers to grapple with the material; he condemns those readers who expect to “open to the first line and then understand” in the same essay in which he first calls for translation criticism (*Quanji* 5:275). Both the foreignizing and domesticating aspects of translation and translation criticism serve the same purpose here: bringing new information to readers in the hopes of changing their cultural consciousness. Retranslation and indirect translation find themselves checked by critics who confer with the originals, but this is not in service of translational transparency. Instead it speeds the availability of translated material while raising its overall quality, ensuring that the translations actually do communicate something.

Lu Xun envisions, if somewhat by piecemeal, an intellectual ecology of translation. Readers, publishers, critics, and translators all have specific roles to play in his schema. Without any individual component, translation as an enterprise fails. Translators cannot work in a vacuum, for utility in terms of cultural reform always determines Lu Xun's *skopos*. Critics must both highlight what is useful for the reform project as well as reform translation itself. Publishers must look beyond the merely mercenary when commissioning (or not) translations. The task incumbent upon readers

is to grapple with translations, so that the desired communication of information can occur in the proper method and effect the subsequent change in consciousness.

That Lu Xun's model community of translation features such antagonistic forces reflects the world that produced it. All of Lu Xun's essays on translation appear in response to other salvos not only in the war over translation, but also over cultural reform generally. These essays to which Lu Xun responds are themselves often occasioned by still other works: sometimes translations, sometimes criticisms. Mu Mutian and Lu Xun volleyed for nearly a year on the issues discussed above. Lu Xun was not merely describing an ideal translation method in these essays, he was practicing it. Although he never names it as such, Lu Xun's theory of translation is dialectical. The product of his theory is not the translation itself but the whole intellectual ecology surrounding translation. Through the conflicts that sweep that ecosystem, he believes, the ultimate goal of cultural reform will be achieved.

Life, Afterlife, and Translation

Walter Benjamin thought small. By focusing on translation as the translation, he forecloses the discussion of translation as a community project. However, the genius of his insight into the effects of translation transcends the limited definition he ascribes to it. His recognition of translation as the afterlife of texts allows for a discussion of the broader implications of the intellectual ecology that coalesced around Lu Xun's practice of translation and criticism. Bracketing out Benjamin's mystical but utterly compelling forays into the philosophy of language, the notion of an afterlife of texts allows us to ask what the relationship is between the work as it appears in the original and the work as it appears in the translation community of interwar Shanghai.

The translation, for Benjamin, is the site at which the original text is reborn.

Yet this does not sufficiently account for the roles of others invested in the translation community. Benjamin describes this textual afterlife, stating,

Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when a work, in the course of its survival, had reached the age of its fame.

Contrary, therefore, to the claims of bad translators, such translations do not so much as serve the works as owe their existence to it. In them the life of the originals attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding.

(255)

The dearth of examples complicates Benjamin's definition of the afterlife, which itself rests on the definition of fame. Most unhelpfully, Benjamin circularly defines fame in the preceding sentences as the afterlife of a text (255). The famous texts he adduces, Sophocles and scripture, are not particularly relevant to the Chinese situation. Their fame was long secured both with and without translation; this is Benjamin's point. However, the texts that Lu Xun and his interlocutors debate, translate, and criticize do not possess the local fame of Benjamin's Mediterranean examples. Is it possible for there to be a global fame that can ferry texts into a more universal afterlife?

Yes and no. Christianity's global success is perhaps the strongest indicator of this fame, but Christianity does not exist as a monolithic entity. It is subject to innumerable local variations. Discursive interpretation allows for the excitement of local fame. Such was the case when Jesuit Matteo Ricci sold Catholicism to the Chinese as being compatible with the dominant Confucian orthodoxy, much to the Pope's chagrin, or when the Gospels appeared as syncretic Buddhist texts along the Silk Road. But this is

translation before translation. Benjamin's view of translation is overly romantic, as his focus on Hölderlin's Sophocles suggests. With the deteriorating Hölderlin being the exception that proves the rule, there are no more private translators than there are private languages. Translators participate in a discourse just as speakers do. The motivation to translate is not inherent to the text – Benjamin unfortunately gives scarcely any explanation of his tantalizing counterclaim: “Translatability is an essential quality of certain works” (254). Without the motivation to translate, can a work ever reach the “age of its fame?”

What is missing from Benjamin's explication is amply supplemented by Lu Xun's comments on translation. His focus on Russian writers in his own translation practice should not be compared to Sophocles or the *Bible*, for though the latter examples had long histories in European letters, the former were relatively new in the Chinese context. Lu Xun's motivation to translate these works is contingent on there being a local demand for them. This is not the demand of a consumer; like Benjamin, Lu Xun is wary of the reader. This demand is the potentiality for fame. That Lu Xun translates works long forgotten in Europe is not the product of his antiquarian nature, but of a belief in the perceived revolutionary import these texts had in their native contexts and their potential applicability to the Chinese situation. The potential fame of these texts is always local, but is conditioned by circumstances that can establish that potential in surprising places. Thus the arguments put forth by Lu Xun and his antagonists in the pages of the *Shen Bao* and other venues act as Charon, ferrying texts to their afterlives so they can await rebirth in Chinese translation.

Although Benjamin may have elided a crucial intermediate step in his explanation of the textual afterlife, he elucidates the necessary relationship between texts engendered by translation. He flouts convention by arguing that “such translations do not so much serve the works as owe their existence to it” (255). The original is the necessary predicate of the translation. As much as the possibility of translations depends on the development of discursive motivations, what the translation does is forge a new link in the global literary network, rather multiple links. Lu Xun’s translations of Lunacharsky of course rest on the existence of the original, but also call into being a constellation that includes elements of the discourses on Chinese Marxism, leftist aesthetics, and cultural reform. Translation is not just the afterlife of one text, but of many.

The heated debates over what and how to translate, not to mention how to criticize translation, are equally a part of the afterlife of texts. The intellectual ecology of Lu Xun and his interlocutors is as necessary for the production of physical translations as it is for producing Benjamin’s metaphysical effects of translation. Yet the necessity of this ecology ensures that the afterlives of texts will always be local. Their fame, barring the emergence of a truly universal discourse, remains contingent on local intellectual ecologies to prepare for its coming. A pleasant corollary to the locality of afterlives is that they are many. Lu Xun’s Nietzsche is not Kaufmann’s. To compare them would be pointless since they are the products of fundamentally different ecologies.

As Benjamin notes, these afterlives are not just the afterlives of the original, but are also new lives in their new contexts. The afterlife of the original work is a new birth for the target language: “Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission

of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own” (256). The link forged between original and translation is not an idle epistemological abstraction. The ability of translation to renew languages that Benjamin identifies here is both what reifies the global literary network, and what Lu Xun hopes to accomplish through his translation practice.

Again, Benjamin leans too heavily on the metaphysics here without acknowledging the role of local discourses on translation. On the most metaphysical levels, Benjamin’s idea of translations being the vehicles of linguistic connection is useful for describing the mechanisms by which translation helps construct the global literary network, in that sedimented within a translation is the original text as well as any other referenced nodes. However, for translation to achieve the results Benjamin foresees, it cannot simply exist as translation. This is why the debate of translation was so important to Lu Xun. Many texts were translated into Chinese during the Republican era, but simply translating a text does not practically cause the linguistic or cultural shifts described by Benjamin and desired by Lu Xun. For these shifts to occur, translation must be taken seriously as a medium.

Polysystems theory was still decades away when Lu Xun wrote the five essays discussed above, but in writing them he demonstrated an innate understanding of the textual ecology polysystems theory describes. Lu Xun’s commitment to translation dates to his years in Japan, but as he learned then, translation cannot be only a personal pursuit if it is to have any effect. By the 1930s finding readers no longer seems to be Lu Xun’s problem; defending the relevance of translation is. What underlies the five essays from 1933 and 34 is a fear that translation somehow lacks or is in danger of losing its utility as

a means for cultural reform. Whether the threats to translation's relevance come from the quality of the translations themselves, the tastes of the reading public, or the arguments of the intelligentsia, Lu Xun responded to them all by asserting the continuing importance of translation as a communicative medium. He saw translation as central to the emerging modern Chinese literary polysystem. His polemics on translation were designed to ensure that centrality.

Without the actions designed to create a space for translation within a literary polysystem, it will likely remain a peripheral mode of literary production. If there is no intellectual discourse surrounding translation as a practice, translations are unlikely to be at the center of any discourses themselves. The life a translation brings to a target language can appear only if the conditions there are favorable to its development. Lu Xun's work on translation sought to establish those conditions.

As both a translator and a theorist of translation, Lu Xun was influential and prolific, but measuring the extent of his influence presents a significant challenge, as does the overall impact of translation on China. Chinese literature did change dramatically during Lu Xun's lifetime. Some major changes can definitively be attributed to translation's influence, such as the development of a feminine third-person pronoun. Historically, Chinese orthography only had a single third-person pronoun: 他. In the large-scale translation of Western works into Chinese during the early twentieth century brought with it the development of a new character to translate the feminine form: 她. The syntactic severity of his translations notwithstanding, Lu Xun was not the only person working to foreignize Chinese. Mark Gamsa notes that Lu Xun did not adopt the new feminine pronoun in either his translations or stories until 1924 (Gamsa 145). That

he did adopt it is evidence that foreignizing translation did have an impact on the Chinese language during the Republican Era. The new vernacular literature in China certainly owes some debt to translation, but to what extent is unclear. Like Lu Xun, many writers and translators studied abroad and learned foreign languages, which suggests that they may have been influenced by original works as much as by translations. In translation's defense, writers like Lu Xun who did know foreign languages, did not know all foreign languages; of Lu Xun's own translations, many were retranslations of Japanese translations, so even when he read in the "original," he still read in translation. Finally, there were a lot of translations. Not just on the left either. More conservative journals like *Xiandai* published many translations of American authors. Recalling Lu Xun's comments about the opportunism of translators and publishers due to economic demands, someone must have been reading these translations for their publishing venues to stay afloat – not all of which did, however.

Irrespective of the precise efficacy of translations and especially of Lu Xun's translations in achieving his stated goals of linguistic and cultural reform, his theory of translation reflects the investment of the Chinese literati in a global exchange of ideas and points to the mechanisms by which that investment took place. Lu Xun envisions translation as the means to make China more cosmopolitan. His unyielding approach underscores his rejection of traditional models as a basis for the new Chinese literature, while illuminating the role of translation in the global literary network. The new life of texts in translation enabled by the local discursive appropriation of translation by Lu Xun and his compatriots shows that translations are not merely extensions of their sources, but are their own nodes in the global literary network. Lu Xun may not have been the most

successful Chinese translator of his day, but the sheer volume of his translations and his commentary on translations greatly expand the global literary network, blazing new trails between China and the West for those who would come to look for them. These hundreds of textual rebirths for which Lu Xun served as midwife represent his efforts to bring China closer to the West. In an ironic twist of fate, the afterlives of Lu Xun's texts in the West will push China further away.

Part II – World Literature Reading Lu Xun

Chapter 3

Early Representations of Lu Xun:

Translations 1926-1942

Lu Xun's literary production calls into being a diverse constellation of texts that reflects both his personal consumption of and contribution to global literary production. However, the very construction of these constellations renders them nothing more than palimpsests. Though Lu Xun's project is impossible without his literary antecedents, both European and Chinese, we see his texts as his texts, not as the sediment of several thousand years of literary history. The assumed integrity of the text appears as the greatest obstacle to an inquiry into world literature, thus the task of the cartographic method is to shatter the text's monadic shell to reveal its fundamental heterogeneity.

Unfortunately for scholars of world literature, extant texts are not immune from the forces of later literary production. Scholarship, as a form of literary production, has the ability to reshape textual constellations: after *Mimesis*, Homer and Moses are forever linked through their distant interlocutor. Like the quantum physicists with their particles, literary critics can only get so close to their texts without affecting them. Lu Xun and his texts are not exceptional in this regard. As discussed in the previous chapter, his work on translation as both a critic and a producer gestures toward the fundamental mutability of the global literary network.

Yet the recursion brought about by criticism is not the real challenge facing the study of the global literary network; translation is. Usually written off as little more than pale imitation, translation finds itself marginalized by upstanding literary scholars who

champion work in the original tongues – a proposition that, as a comparatist, I cannot fault. Nevertheless, translation is a reality of global literary production; in fact it may be an overwhelming reality when considering the economic power of Anglophone readers alone. The consumption of global literary production happens in translation. Not exclusively, but significantly. Many texts will never be read in the original; still fewer will be translated. Those that are translated, and especially those that are retranslated, often circulate widely in contexts alien to their own. The alienation of a text from its origin is not unique to translation. A Chinese reader today can no more read Lu Xun in his original context than I can read Shakespeare in his. Even the positing of an original context is suspect, for no two readers bring the same foreknowledge to any text. Criticism, republication, even rereading alter one's experience of a text, yet these practices proceed unchallenged by those who would disparage translation. The effect of these activities – recrystallizations of the global literary network – is the same: they produce new texts in which the old are sedimented. Perhaps this sedimentation happens in different ways for each practice, but this smacks of Scholasticism. A translation is an act of criticism and vice-versa. In examining Lu Xun in translation, the staging of the texts, either through prefatory and other supplementary material or through the words of the translations themselves, serves to represent Lu Xun and the translated text according to the constellation of texts called into being by the translation. Consciously or not, translators are critics.

Translation therefore places the global literary network under a double erasure. Not only does translation build on the palimpsest that is the substrate for the original text, but it also effaces those texts required to make the translation. As translation produces a

new text, that text too calls into being a constellation to serve as its palimpsest. Not least among those texts sedimented in translation is the original. Given the enormous variance in the translations of a single text, translators must draw on something other than the original text to produce a translation. Languages change over time, as do methods of learning languages. Any serious translator has at his or her disposal a host of references: dictionaries, thesauri, atlases, encyclopedias, etc. Yet these texts are not neutral, and have perhaps the most insidious effect on translation because we rarely consider them as texts. Yet within any translation's constellation one can find primers, dictionaries, and likely the words of many teachers. Beyond these reference texts lie the perhaps more visible but no less insidious influence of discourses in the target language. Tracing the texts that inform these discourses may be a fool's errand given the complexity of political and literary discourses, but exemplary texts can be found.

The United States and the European imperial powers had substantial interests in China, and thus had many organic intellectuals attached to their various state, commercial, and religious apparatuses. Academic Sinology is one of the more egregious examples of a complicit intellectual discourse, but texts like Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, Richard McKenna's *The Sand Pebbles*, and the screeds of the John Birch Society all stand out as pseudo-authoritative works on China that affect discourses on it. Buck was the child of missionaries; McKenna was a Navy sailor enforcing the United States' gunboat diplomacy; and John Birch was ostensibly the first casualty of the Cold War, an American soldier, and a missionary – hat trick. The left had a China discourse as well. Agnes Smedley, an American journalist and friend of Lu Xun, published sympathetic pieces about Chinese leftism, including those by Lu Xun (*Lu Xun Works* 3:122). The

Soviets had advisors with the Chinese Communists as well, prior to the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960. Translators are not naïve, innocent interpreters of the foreign; they are subject to indigenous discourses as much as anyone else.

In addition to these more abstract influences, translators respond to specific calls for translation. No one likely translates just for the fun of it. Translators respond to a commission: “the instruction, given by oneself or by someone else, to carry out a given action – here: to translate” (Vermeer 235). This in turn determines the translator’s *skopos*, which is “the aim or purpose of a translation” (Vermeer 227). This is not to say that these commissions cannot come from the abstract discourses named above. In the period under discussion they all do, in that the commissions respond to a specific discursive exigency perceived by an editor or the translator himself. Given their influence on a translator’s *skopos*, these commissions and thus their motivating discourses have a decisive impact on how a text is translated.

The five English translations of Lu Xun discussed below demonstrate the role of commission in determining the manner of translation. These translations respond to commissions from Old Left, Orientalist, imperialist, and even rightist discourses. The variety in both the framing materials and the translations themselves testifies to the emergence of multiple Lu Xuns in the West during the interwar (and early WWII) period. These Lu Xuns have tenuous relationships to the Lu Xuns that appeared in China during the same period, and are even further removed from the texts they claim to translate. My goal here is not to posit a real Lu Xun against which we can measure the authenticity of the translations. No such figure exists. Even if Lu Xun were totally consistent in his positions, any discussion of authenticity would be misguided. For world literature, the

evaluation of translation should lie not in judgments of accuracy or fidelity, but in uncovering the discursive and textual constellations sedimented in translation, undoing the double erasure of the global literary network.

These early translations of Lu Xun show a thriving cultural exchange between China and the West that defies easy classification. Representations of China as an Oriental other are common, but the appearance in translation of modern writers like Lu Xun challenges these representations. They do not go away, and some try to fit Lu Xun into an Orientalist mold, but alongside of these we find representation serving other constituencies. By analyzing these translations, we can not only see the variety of China discourses active within the West, but also identify how those discourses manipulate their textual foundations to make their claims.

Ah Q Against the World

Lu Xun's first appearance in English was already a global English, freighted with the weight of British and American colonial ambitions. The 1926 translation of "The True Story of Ah Q" appeared not in New York or London, but in Shanghai. George Kin Leung (梁社乾), the translator, introduced Lu Xun to readers whose very access to the text encroached on Chinese sovereignty through the extraterritorial concessions in which they lived. Leung portrays the text and its author less as representatives of their age and more as expressions of some suppressed spirit of Chinese democracy. This frame avoids pandering to its audience by exoticizing the text, but it strips the story of its context in favor of a narrative more palatable to imperial English readers than Lu Xun's trenchant self-criticism.

The translation begins not with an introduction to the author or the text itself, but a discussion of the original's language. This is certainly relevant given Lu Xun's instrumental role in the transition to a vernacular literature, but Leung gives little indication of the relative novelty of this change. Instead he distinguishes the classical language from the vernacular, whose "easy flow and natural expression are in marked contrast to the old classical style, Wên-li" (Leung "Preface" v). The classical and vernacular thus appear as two living literary traditions, which though not entirely false, is not reflective of actual practice: vernacular literature prior to Lu Xun was largely marginalized and classical language literary production was moribund by the translation's publication.

Leung overstates the universality of the vernacular in order to link Lu Xun to a spurious populism. By noting that the vernacular "is very nearly an exact representation of Mandarin, the language spoken in Peking and throughout much of China," Leung indicates, accurately, that it is a part of daily life in China, but in so doing further silences the narrative of literary development that now follows Lu Xun. Leung does note that "the colloquial Pai-hua is more easily learned by the masses," but still makes no reference to the then recent debate over the vernacular (Leung "Preface" v). Furthermore, the claim that "much" of China speaks Mandarin depends heavily on how one defines the term. Much of China actually did not speak Mandarin but one of China's many other languages (often incorrectly termed dialects of Chinese). Mandarin speakers did exist throughout the country, for Mandarin was the lingua franca of government, but they did not all belong to China's toiling masses that Leung evokes by his reference to the colloquial.

Leung's citation of the story as being from Lu Xun's first short story collection, *Nahan* (Appendix 94), compounds the effacement of the debate over the new literature. Of course "Ah Q" did appear in that collection, but it was not the venue of first publication. The story first appeared serially in a weekly newspaper supplement from 1921-2. *Nahan* and "Ah Q" were not isolated publications, but part of a thriving discourse on literature taking place in contemporary periodicals.

Leung also elides the relative difficulty of Lu Xun's works, vernacular or otherwise. Learning Mandarin does not give one immediate access to "Ah Q." Much of Lu Xun's writing, and "Ah Q" is no exception, relies on an erudite, even virtuosic knowledge of the Chinese language and its literature. The first part of "Ah Q" is an extended satire of the myriad varieties of Chinese biography, none of which suits the eponymous Ah Q. Word play and allusion abound, and remain out of reach to those uninitiated in the classical cultural tradition.

Yet the presentation of the story as a vernacular text serves Leung's aim of staging the text as a beacon of democratic thought in an otherwise savage and feudal China. To the translator, *baihua* "is more democratic in spirit than the old style, which demands so much time in the learning that it seems to be meant only for the chosen few" (Leung "Preface" v). As a student of both modern and classical Chinese I can say unreservedly that this is true; however, the "democratic spirit" attributed to written Mandarin existed then only as a potential: most Chinese were illiterate. I have been unable to find any reliable statistics regarding Chinese literacy in the 1920s. However, the Chinese Communist Party recognized the country's widespread illiteracy as a problem, and undertook campaigns to educate the peasants. By noting the relative

difficulty of the two written styles, Leung acknowledges the problem of mass illiteracy, and thus gives some indication of the literary vernacular as a contemporary invention. However, in so doing he claims that “Ah Q” is not only written for the peasants, but also from them: “If the colloquial Pai-hua is meant to help emancipate the illiterate millions, then this ‘True Story of Ah Q’ is meant to give voice to one of them, indeed an example of the millions of plain folk who for more than four thousand years have been almost neglected in what is considered the best of recognized Chinese literature” (Leung "Preface" v-vi). If Ah Q is the representative of the peasantry, then Lu Xun must have really hated the peasants, because the character of Ah Q is both physically and socially abject. In Leung’s presentation this abjection is a gesture toward the dire conditions of the peasantry, but this reading ignores any possible symbolic or allegorical resonances. Doubly problematic is Ah Q’s vocation, since he was a roustabout and not a peasant.

Although most readings of the story see Ah Q as an allegorical representative of China or at least of a China, Leung’s staging of Ah Q as a genuine peasant would likely have fit in with his audience’s prejudices about the Chinese. Moreover, making the abject peasant the story’s hero rather than the anti-hero fits into Leung’s narrative of the democratization of literature and from literature represented by the text. English readers in the semi-colonial concessions likely had no access to much of the traditional culture that Lu Xun attacks in “Ah Q,” so its revolutionary import would have gone unnoticed. By casting Ah Q as a hero in spite of his flaws, the text becomes less of a criticism of traditional Chinese culture and more of a liberatory work, wherein “beneath every word one may hear down from the ages the cry of the poor oppressed rustic and the author’s

protest against all sham and petty meanness” (Leung "Preface" vi). Leung transforms “Ah Q” into a human-interest piece, invoking a rhetoric of human rights that prefigures not only Pearl Buck’s Nobel Prize winning novel, *The Good Earth*, but also the continuing discourse of human rights in China, all of which repeat a certain imperial distance from their object. The translation’s success indicates that this approach was palatable to Westerners in China; it went through at least four printings in 1926, 1927, 1929, and 1933 (Lu Xun *Quanji* 17:561; Lu-Hsün i). Moreover, the idea that China’s peasantry really was as wretched as Ah Q likely resonated with one of the largest Western – and particularly American – constituencies in China at the time: Christian missionaries. Leung’s portrayal of Ah Q as an authentic peasant voice plays right into the belief that China needed to be saved from itself.

In the translation’s appendix a biographical sketch of Lu Xun places him within this framework of empowering the masses. Leung bases his account on the autobiographical preface to *Nahan*. However, the tenor of the preface changes dramatically in Leung’s paraphrase and translation. No longer does the death of Lu Xun’s father galvanize the future writer against traditional Chinese medicine. Instead Leung mobilizes it to align Lu Xun with the peasantry:

Although the forty or fifty mow of farming land owned by the family kept them in comfortable circumstances, there came, when he was thirteen years of age, a bitter reverse, which swept away nearly all the family possessed. The boy was sent to live with relatives, who often called him a beggar, and it was not long before he decided to return home. He did return, only to find that his father was seriously ill. Three years later his father died. (Leung "Appendix" 94)

Gone are the striking images of the young Lu Xun pawning his family's possessions in order to buy quack medicines for his father, who was a drunk and an opium addict to boot. Nor does the cause of the family's downfall appear: Lu Xun's grandfather, a government official, was sentenced to death for his role in a plot to rig the civil service exams. Hardly the sympathetic picture painted by Leung. Also, Lu Xun's time with his relatives was not the entirely negative experience depicted here. In his short story "Village Opera" Lu Xun recounts a pleasant experience from this period.

Even the viewing of the execution that catalyzes Lu Xun's desire to become a writer loses its nationalist significance. Rather than attributing Lu Xun's change to the apathy of the Chinese onlookers in the execution scene, Leung has Lu Xun become so depressed over the matter that he wished to do something for the masses at once. Although the author says very briefly that this convinced him the more that there should be established a school of modern literature in China, the full meaning of his pregnant words was that he wanted to give voice to the masses, who, for some four thousand years, had been sadly neglected in what was considered good and recognized literature. (Leung "Appendix" 95)

Lu Xun's first major foray into the literary field was a series of translations, or at least an attempt at one. Not only did the series fail miserably after two volumes, the translated foreign texts did little to speak either to or for the Chinese masses. Similarly, Lu Xun's first short story, the classical language "Nostalgia," muses on the failure of the 1911 Revolution to bring about meaningful change – not exactly accessible to the masses. And Lu Xun's near-decade of seclusion while studying classical works is conspicuously absent from Leung's sketch. Lu Xun did eventually advocate a mass literature, but this

came in the late 1920s, after he had stopped writing new fiction. His stories, more than anything else, reflect the peculiar position of the classically trained yet progressively minded intellectual. The autobiographical reminiscences documented by Lu Xun's brother Zhou Zuoren and his friends attest to this interpretation.

The text of the translation itself does not pander concessions to the tastes of the Western imperial reader. In fact, Leung "has followed the Chinese text as carefully as the differences of the two languages permit, realizing that many people would wish to compare the English with the original Chinese" (Leung "Preface" v). Reading the two texts in tandem does reveal the translator's linguistic fidelity to the original. A few terms are left in the Chinese and explained in endnotes, but Leung limits these to culturally specific terms that would otherwise require an infelicitous calque or an unwieldy circumlocution.

The translation, despite its linguistic fidelity and freedom from gratuitous exoticism or "local color," is marred by its framing narrative. Even after having read "Ah Q" many times under the influence of the orthodox Communist interpretation and that of more contemporary critiques, I could not help being swayed by the translation's frame. Ah Q's character appeared less as an allegory for the feudal past or the shortcomings of a certain China and more as a pathetic representative of the peasantry. By staging the translation between the translator's preface and the biographical appendix, Leung extends the "Ah Q" narrative to include his frame of human rights rhetoric. Were someone to read the translation alone without the frame, perhaps he or she would reach a more orthodox conclusion about the text's thematic import. However, as a cohesive text, Leung's translation writes a new story of Ah Q. It is not simply a reflection of the

original, but a new node in the global literary network. It connects to Lu Xun's original, to be sure, but to contemporary imperialist discussions of China as well.

Lu Xun did give this text his blessing. The translator marks this in his preface (Leung "Preface" vi), and Lu Xun confirms it in his diary, noting that he provided Leung with copies of "Ah Q" in the original (Lu Xun *Quanji* 15:569). Lu Xun received copies of the translation from the translator and the publisher (Lu Xun *Quanji* 15:647, 49), but he does not say much about them. Given that he had little English, this is not surprising. However, he does mention in a letter to Xu Guangping, his common-law wife, that "the translation seems pretty good, but it also has a small fault," but whether that fault was in the translation or presentation is unstated (Lu Xun *Quanji* 11:642). In the biographical "Appendix," Leung mistakenly claims that Lu Xun was in Japan in 1918, so perhaps the letter refers to this error. Lu Xun passed the translation on to several correspondents, most notably Lin Yutang, who would become another translator and promoter of Lu Xun in English (Lu Xun *Quanji* 15:647).

Leung's "Ah Q" is not Lu Xun's. This is not the result of its contextual infidelity, merely the reality of translation. Promoting ideas of reform among Chinese intellectuals differs significantly from presenting China to the English-reading residents of Shanghai. Leung's reframing of the work indicates a fidelity to his constituency rather than to the work's original context, even as, on the linguistic level, the translation remains quite faithful to the Chinese. The Ah Q who appears between the covers of the translation may not be the one dwelling in *Nahan*, but he is an Ah Q nonetheless.

Despite their differences, the various political causes for which Lu Xun's name and work have been mobilized tend to agree on the meaning of "The True Story of Ah Q"

as a critique of Chinese society. Given the diversity of these causes, envisioning Lu Xun as a spokesman for China's oppressed masses through the mouthpiece of Ah Q is not beyond the realm of possibility. Moreover, for readers of this translation, no other Ah Q existed, or would exist for another four years. That Leung's staging of the text runs counter to orthodox interpretations matters little when readers have no access to those interpretation, or, as was the case, those interpretations had not been written yet.

We will never know if Leung believed what he wrote about "Ah Q," but that is not important: the text exists as such regardless of his feelings. That the translation differs from the vast majority of interpretations shows not the inadequacy of the translation, but the reality of literary production, since the translation was "Ah Q" to a certain constituency, the relationship of that Ah Q to the Chinese original is irrelevant. Though we can criticize Leung for bending to imperial tastes, such criticisms do not negate the existence of the text. World literature, as an academic program, may reject this translation as racist, imperialist, or simply misinformed, yet the text remains. And though this translation does not seem to have inspired much – if any – commentary, it is still part of the global literary network. Any attempt to evaluate the network, particularly when examining it in part by looking at Lu Xun, would be remiss in not accounting for this translation. Its difference from other interpretations demonstrates the range possible in the reproduction of even a single text. This, however, is disruptive only when examined while ascribing an a priori thematic unity to Lu Xun's work. Examined through the lens of textual production, this translation simply indicates that "Ah Q" traveled a bit more widely than previously thought, ideologically if not geographically.

Just because it is unpopular does not mean it did not happen. The dead ends of the global literary network may be more interesting than the facile connections.

Lu Xun and The Mysterious East

Lu Xun's first appearance in a Western language, and his first in the geographic West is the most regrettable. Not initially, but the movement and reproduction of this translation generates several independent versions of the text, each drawing on different nodes in the global literary network. Kyn Yn Yu's (敬隱漁) translation appears, retranslated, in English in 1930, but its retranslated nature is not readily apparent. Routledge's British edition acknowledges an E.H.F. Mills as the translator, but Mac Veagh's American version has no credit. Kyn's introduction is given, but there are few clues to suggest that the English translation is not the first. Only Kyn's "byline" and a brief "Editor's Note" indicate the French intermediary. Kyn gives "Lyons. January, 1929" as the place of translation (Kyn Yn Yu "Introduction" xi); the anonymous editor makes a cryptic comment about the romanizations used in the volume, noting, "If it had been practicable to secure the Chinese originals of the stories included, the Wade transcription, invariably adopted by English scholars would have been used, but unfortunately, this was not so, and the French romanisation has been retained" (*Ah Qui* vii). The volume's retranslated character appears only obliquely, and apparently only manifests itself through some supposedly odd transliterations.

This testifies not only to a belief in the overall transparency of translation, especially in the American edition with its uncredited translator, but also to a subtle nationalism and general indifference to the problems of romanization. To a trained English speaker, the Wade-Giles system is indeed a clearer representation of Chinese

than the French method employed by Kyn. However, to the non-specialist, the Wade-Giles method is rather opaque. To the French speaker, Kyn's romanizations actually give a decent phonetic approximation of Mandarin. In contrast to the tacit assertion of the editor, no transcription of Chinese is perfectly pellucid, especially for the untrained reader.

The collection targets such readers as its audience. It appears in Routledge's execrably titled "Golden Dragon Library." Companion volumes include *The Wiles of Women: Turkish Stories*, *The Shoji or Sliding Screen*, and *The Book of the Marvels of India: Arabian Travellers' Tales (Ah Qui ii)*. Exotic and potentially titillating, this grouping contextualizes Lu Xun, already made to represent China, among texts utterly foreign to his work. The only uniting theme among this collection is its constituents' ostensible geographic origin in Asia. To see Lu Xun's work mobilized as a metaphor for China is mundane, but to see his heavily Western-influenced works appear as representatives of the mysterious Orient is truly novel.

Even the French collection, from which the English volume is retranslated, was not the first appearance of "Ah Q" in the West. Prior to its anthologization, Kyn published his "Ah Q" as "La Vie de Ah-Qui" in the Parisian journal *Europe: Revue mensuelle*, founded by Romain Rolland. The story appeared serially in the May and June issues of 1926. *Europe* is a far different context than "The Golden Dragon Library" of its English appearance. In it Lu Xun appeared alongside contemporary French authors rather than other "Orientals." Indeed, the appearance of Lu Xun in a Parisian journal led to tittering among the Chinese literati that "Rolland's praise set it on a trajectory of legitimization that would make it a work of 'world literature'" (Foster 256). Paul Foster

meticulously details the circulation of Rolland's comments on "Ah Q" throughout the Chinese intelligentsia and then the international media (258-61). Whether or not Rolland ever made the laudatory comments variously cited in Chinese and Western media is another question (Foster 253). Nevertheless, Lu Xun did gain a fair amount of cultural capital both at home and abroad from Rolland's alleged comments, which illustrates the intricacies of the global literary network. "Ah Q" in Chinese, appears in French, which generates the apocryphal praise of Romain Rolland, which then informs Chinese writers (Foster 259), and Western writers (Foster 260; Snow "Bio" 23). Edgar Snow, who "cites" Rolland, goes on to translate Lu Xun in 1936, thus drawing the Chinese "Ah Q" and all of the intervening nodes into his translation's textual constellation. Complicated. Foster convincingly links the commotion over Rolland's supposed praise to a push for a Chinese Nobel Prize:

In 1927, Tai Jingnong approached Lu Xun about the idea of being considered for the Nobel Prize in literature at the request of Liu Bannong and Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish explorer and academy member who was visiting China at the time. Lu Xun wrote to Tai rejecting the idea out of hand, saying that "there are a lot of better writers than me in the world and they can't get it," and that "China still has no person who should receive the Nobel Prize." (Foster 261; Lu Xun *Quanji* 12:73-4)

These comments on Lu Xun's work would not be possible without the existence of Rolland's text. That the text might not have existed is no problem. It constitutes the empty center of a textual constellation, a black hole in the global literary network, but a node nonetheless. Maybe Pascale Casanova was right.

Supposed praise aside, Kyn's translation diverges significantly from the Chinese text to the point that its theme is markedly different. Comparing the Chinese and the translation, the omission of the story's first section stands out. Without this preface, the work loses much of its critical distance. One of the tale's great ironies is that this prefatory section declares that Ah Q the character cannot be written about, because the Chinese literary tradition does not have a genre suitable to him. Thus the author must tell the "true story" (□□, correct biography), which is not one of the classical forms. Moreover, this section contains a discussion of Ah Q's name, or lack thereof. Ah Q (□Q) combines the roman Q with the Chinese character indicating a nickname. Ah Q has no apparent surname, which deracinates him from the Chinese cultural tradition. Whether this renders Ah Q an everyman that has been ignored by Chinese literature or an unreal composite that Lu Xun names as not Chinese, or both, the question disappears from the translation. To the unsuspecting reader, Ah Q is just that abject, without any irony. Further underscoring the work's pathos at the expense of its irony is a small change at the end. After Ah Q's execution, the local magistrate, who "would rather resign than kill a man whose guilt was not proved" (Lu Siun 91), "resigned his post, and remained ever after useless, relegated to the old society which is mouldering away," and whose wife "could not help weeping over this unjust condemnation" (94). However, a more faithful rendering has the magistrate expressing no opinion about Ah Q's fate, but worrying instead over the goods Ah Q allegedly stole, with his wife playing no role (Lu Xun *Works* 1:151-4). Kyn and his English translator make Ah Q the victim of a barbaric, backwards society. Lu Xun makes a similar claim, but inflected differently. When read with the preface and the unaltered ending, the story's critique rests on a condemnation of

the old society for its apathy and opportunism. Ah Q's death is not unjust as much as it is pointless. The change undermines Lu Xun's critical position on China and instead casts China as wholly other, as a place where such injustices occur.

In its original appearance in *Europe*, Kyn's preface does some justice to Lu Xun, but also serves up an image of China that panders to notions of the white man's burden. Kin begins with a brief biography of Lu Xun up to 1926, citing from the preface of *Nahan*. Like many commentators on Lu Xun, both Chinese and Western, Kyn locates the source of the work in Lu Xun's upbringing, noting, "M. Lou Siun passa son enfance dans un petit village du Tchechiang, parmi les gens, peu cultivés, du 'bon vieux temps.' Il en a tiré le héros de ce roman" (Lou-tun 56). Though Kyn names Lu Xun as "un de nos auteurs le plus renommés," he mobilizes that renown as evidence for claims of China's backwardness (56). He first identifies the text as "une attaque mordante contre tous les vices: lâcheté, hypocrisie, ignorance..., des désœuvrés, des bourgeois, des lettrés, en un mot, de toute la vieille société chinoise" (56). In itself this does no injustice to Lu Xun or his view of China: the "old Chinese society" named here. However, Kyn follows this immediately with the assertion that "ses descriptions rendent exactement notre couleur locale" (57). No longer is the attack limited to the old society; in reading this "Ah Q" one sees China as it actually is! Coupled with the absence of the story's ironic frame to distance "Ah Q" from any possible reality, China appears as a nation of dopes ready for imperial guidance.

Kyn heightens the drama of Lu Xun's personal experience of China's dire national situation by relating the famous viewing of the execution not as a mediated experience, but as a live event: "Il vit fusiller sous ses yeux par le gouvernement japonais

quelques-uns de ses compatriotes pris pour espions” (Lou-tun 56). This is a deliberate misrepresentation, because the preface to *Nahan*, from which the account is drawn, is clear that he saw the event on a screen, and that only one was shot. Following this is an actual citation of that preface, explaining Lu Xun’s shift from medicine to literature, but eliding his most trenchant critique of the execution. What was damning was not that the Chinese “seraient bons qu’à être exhibés en spectacle” (56), but that the Chinese – including Lu Xun himself – were willing witnesses to the spectacle.

This introduction was not retained for Kyn’s retranslated anthology. For its flaws, it still provides some background to Lu Xun, and only mildly orientalizes China. Not so in the anthology. Kyn’s presentation of China could function as a textbook description of the Oriental other:

But China is so mysterious and so simple! There are men in this world who are calm, silent, and yet profound. The Chinese are like that. The good in them is not exposed to the light of day. They hide it conscientiously, modestly. They think intuitively. Their logic is primitive. Unexpected, rapid, unrelated to each other, their intuitive truths must be seized on the wing, on pain of escaping one for ever. They are also difficult to express. How much more so, then, to submit them to translation! ("Introduction" ix)

Kyn follows this with some references to Daoism for good, mystical measure. Like any good Orientalist, he draws a distinction between the valuable tradition and the transient works of contemporary writers. After commending to his reader the works of Zhuangzi ("Introduction" x-xi), Kyn gives the anthologized writers a backhanded compliment:

“The modern story writers, most of them too young to have penetrated the labyrinth of

the Tao, generally follow the currents of Europe and thus give evidence of an appreciable effort to widen their horizon” (“Introduction” xi). Since they cannot understand the meaningful literature of China, they have some redeeming qualities because they are learning from the white men. Even Lu Xun cannot escape his patrimony, because, “He is an enemy of the Tao. But he understands it perhaps better than a great many Confucianists or Taoists. Whence comes this bitter hatred for the old Chinese way of thought (the unfavourable aspects of it) if not from the passionate interest which attaches him to the beloved one for whose perfection he longs?” (“Introduction” xi). Kyn’s explanation of Lu Xun’s contempt for Chinese tradition is correct in that it is rooted in the serious study of that tradition, though the overall thrust of the passage suggests that this might be coincidence.

Then again, maybe not. The parenthetical aside made by Kyn denoting the real target of Lu Xun’s ire is on the mark. Furthermore, Kyn was writing in France, and even contributed a story to his collection. These are clues that suggest Kyn was wearing a mask for his European audience. Yet to write so dismissively of the modern writers in the vernacular, who “are not writers, in the European sense of the word,” then seems disingenuous (“Introduction” x). This frame places the volume squarely in Orientalist discourses on China, but why? Either Kyn hoped to sell more books, or he had a false consciousness regarding China’s contemporary cultural situation.

Technically, the English translation is almost a word-for-word translation of the French, as much as the syntax will allow. The only remarkable changes are some slight emendations of the text: the English version omits slightly more than the French does. A brief explanation of Ah Q’s “spiritual victories” is present in the French but not in the

English (Lou-tun 59). A number of Chinese words are altered slightly, not for any apparent fidelity to the Chinese, but to domesticate the text for English readers. “Tchao” in the French (Lou-tun 64) becomes “Chao” in the English (Lu Siun 60). French’s use of the T before voiceless post-alveolar affricates is not limited to the transcription of Chinese; the former French colony of Chad is Tchad in French. These changes are minor compared to those discussed above, but they indicate that the volume was prepared with some editorial oversight. That Kyn’s introduction passed without comment from the editors, other than the remark about transliteration, demonstrates that they were all too willing to accept his orientalized view of China.

This translation marks Lu Xun’s entrance into a world of literature not limited to the Chinese language. From the Chinese original, to its French translation, to its French anthologization, to its English retranslation, to its American republication marks five individual nodes in the global literary network, each with its own constellations and erasures. In the final node, even the retranslation is effaced, leaving readers with a false image of immediacy. For world literature, such glosses demand explication. This collection, if intended to be a window on to modern Chinese thought, is useless. However, if intended to show what forces shaped Sino-Western relations, given the necessary reading, the text is quite valuable indeed.

Sanitation for the Nation

Five years after his death, Lu Xun appeared in his first English collection. In 1941, only months before the United States entered the Second World War, Columbia University Press brought out Chi-Chen Wang’s selected translations of Lu Xun, *Ah Q and Others*. Wang positions Lu Xun as a revolutionary, but a sanitized one. However, in

his zeal to present Lu Xun as a representative of a China not bound by contemporary Euro-American stereotypes, Wang glosses over many of the complexities and paradoxes that characterize Lu Xun's thought.

Wang prefaces his translations with a polemical historical and biographical introduction. On the attack from the start, he addresses the work "To the average American who gets his ideas about China from the movies and detective stories," for whom "China means Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu and other nameless but equally familiar figures, it means chop suey, and Chinatown shop fronts covered with picturesque but meaningless hieroglyphics" (Wang vii). In fact, Wang dismisses these readers "to whom China represents an idea and a perfection either because they happen to be enchanted with the grandeur and symmetry of the palace architecture of Peiking or because they so thoroughly enjoyed what to them was the Chinese way of life during their stay in that land of idle and yet happy masters and of toiling and even happier coolies and servants" (Wang ix). He rejects the representations of Pearl Buck and her ilk who depict China as a land "where peace and tradition reign, where every earth-turning peasant is unobtrusively a philosopher" (Wang vii). The imperial distance seen in Leung's staging of "Ah Q" is Wang's target. Just as he criticizes literary representations of this distance, so too does he target the well-intentioned but clueless imperialists from "the Bertrand Russell school of visitors [...] who, impressed by the apparent good humor of their sweating ricksha coolies and sedan bearers, call China an 'artist nation' and attribute to the Chinese people that quality of 'instinctive happiness' which makes it possible for them to lead a 'life full of enjoyment' in spite of their squalor and misery" (Wang xix). He notes that representations of China that reify the imperial distance are false: "sympathetic and

flattering as this picture is, it has brought China no nearer to the American people and made China no more real” (Wang vii). A delicious jab at Dale Carnegie underscores Wang’s critique of reductive representations of China: “there is no short cut to mutual respect and understanding between peoples any more than there is between individuals, the claims of the experts in how to perpetuate the honeymoon and how to win friends to the contrary notwithstanding” (Wang vii). Apparently the Royal Road does not lead to China either.

Lu Xun appears here as the cure for this misapprehension of China. Wang adduces Lu Xun’s work not as *a* view of modern China, but as *the* view:

One of the best ways of arriving at a real understanding of a country is undoubtedly through its literature, the richest, the most revealing and the most imperishable of national heritages. In these stories of Lusin, acclaimed the greatest of modern Chinese writers in his own country, the reader will be able to get glimpses of China through the eyes of one of its keenest and most original minds. (vii)

The eulogy of Lu Xun is kind, but in it Wang creates a paradox for his readers. Immediately after taking earlier representations of Lu Xun to task for being inaccurate, he champions a view of China limited to the eyes of Lu Xun. How one idiosyncratic view of China can produce “a real understanding” of the country any more than many imperialist views remains unexplained. He notes that in Lu Xun, the reader “will find none of the considered sympathetic treatment at the bottom of which often lies condescension,” but this claim relies on a highly selective reading of Lu Xun’s corpus (Wang vii). Lu Xun could be extremely condescending and express sympathy, both

cloying and genuine, but the texts in which those feelings appear are conveniently absent from this volume.

Any image of Lu Xun that portrays the complexity of his attitude toward his cultural patrimony disappears in favor of a stalwart, Europeanized revolutionary – safe from Communist influence. Similar to Leung, Wang stages Lu Xun within a rhetoric of freedom, although unlike Leung, Wang makes Lu Xun himself the mouthpiece of freedom rather than Ah Q. Wang makes Lu Xun appear as the heir to a European tradition of satire by pronouncing him the author of “some of the very plainest speaking anywhere since Swift himself hurled upon us the epithet of Yahoo and pronounced us the most despicable and unteachable of all God’s creatures” (Wang viii). The comparison with Swift is troublesome because it casts Lu Xun exclusively as a satirist with a sharp wit and an impish smile. No doubt Lu Xun smiled impishly at times, but much of his work goes far beyond Swift’s wry comedy. Lu Xun’s satire could be mordant to the point of viciousness, and he would not back down from a brutal ad hominem attack if it suited him. Furthermore, much of Lu Xun’s work is shot through with a melancholy that is alien to Swift. Both writers did, however, write about cannibalizing their landsmen, so the comparison is not totally inapt.

I suspect that Wang was aware of the distance his simile had to cover, and posits it as a shrewd maneuver to rehabilitate China in the eyes of American readers. Given the amount of vitriol here over American misperceptions of China, his invention of another is not to deracinate Lu Xun, but to make him palatable without resorting to the imperialist tropes found in Leung’s presentation. Thus Lu Xun becomes a long-lost relation of the Enlightenment thinkers: “Above all, we find in Lusin, *for the first time in all Chinese*

history, a full embodiment of that quality of indignation and that spirit of revolt which we usually associate with the European temperament and without which it is impossible to achieve freedom and progress” (Wang viii). Cue “Yankee Doodle” on the *qin*. This argument ignores the long tradition of political protest in China, dating back to Qu Yuan in the third century BCE, but that history would be unknown to Wang’s audience.

Wang explicitly sanitizes more radical aspects of Lu Xun’s work to avoid any stain on his reputation. The United States was, and remains, allied with the Nationalists, much to the chagrin of Joseph Stilwell and other Americans in China, so Lu Xun could not appear as a Communist or a fellow traveler. Wang acknowledges that Lu Xun “joined the League of Left Wing Writers and soon came to be known as the foremost revolutionary writer of China in leftist circles in both Europe and America,” (Wang xxiii) but carefully avoids any discussion of Lu Xun’s congratulatory telegram to Mao after the Long March or his commitment to various Marxist positions, most notably the role of class in history. True, Lu Xun never joined the Communist party, and his politics defy easy, or even any consistent description. Still, Lu Xun was more than just a leftist. Even Lu Xun’s commitment to leftism appears in service of a more noble aim, “he joined the ranks of the leftist writers himself when the only hope of progress and national salvation seemed to lie in that direction” (Wang xvii). This ignores that Lu Xun was actually the leader of the League of Left Wing Writers, and joined in 1930, a year before the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. Left unstated is the Nationalist’s promotion of values that Lu Xun saw as life denying. Faced with the threat of Nationalist repression, his movement to the left could hardly be the move of last resort that Wang describes here (Wang xxiii). Wang notes the bulk of Lu Xun’s corpus consists of translations, and even identifies several by

name, but they are “European authors” or “Russian” (Wang xxv). The authors listed do fit these descriptions, but among them Wang lists Lunacharsky and Plekhanov. These descriptions conveniently elide that the latter was a Marxist, though he died shortly after the October Revolution, and that the former was Soviet in addition to Russian. Lu Xun’s distance from such dangerous ideas was apparently so great that “he has been, ironically, deified by the Communist literati as their patron saint” (Wang xxiii). Wang conveniently homogenizes these “literati” as Lu Xun’s enemies whose affection could only come “ironically.” Just to assuage any remaining fears readers may have of Lu Xun’s hostility to capitalism and the American way of life, Wang offers this anodyne: “But Lusin was a revolutionary only in the sense that all great writers of the past of any vitality and influence were revolutionaries. No one familiar with his writings – even though the extent of his familiarity does not go beyond the present collection – could conceive of him as a revolutionary in the orthodox Stalinist, or even the Marxist sense” (Wang xxiii). What a relief.

Of course for many if not most of readers, Wang’s translation will be the limit of their familiarity with Lu Xun. The texts therein reflect little of his complexity and none of his Marxist polemics. The eleven selections in Wang’s volume come exclusively from Lu Xun’s first two collections, *Nahan* and *Panghuang*. Only “Reunion in a Restaurant” in this collection broaches Lu Xun’s conflicted relationship to the tradition he ostensibly repudiates. The organization of this volume follows no obvious logic, for stories from the later collection are mixed in with the former. Lu Xun’s first vernacular story, “Diary of a Madman,” appears last here, perhaps to confirm Wang’s claim that the tale “may be regarded as the overture and finale of all his writings” (Wang xv). Apart from this

mention in the introduction, none of the other stories are given any context. They reflect Lu Xun's more self-evidently revolutionary works, in which traditional cultural practices appear as detrimental to national progress. Fitting, as Wang declares Lu Xun to be "the first real break from traditionalism that any Chinese has been able to achieve" (Wang ix). Wang tacitly acknowledges that Lu Xun did write other texts, through unattributed citations in the introduction. However, none of these citations deviate from Wang's representation.

In a "Bibliographic Note" Wang summarizes Lu Xun's corpus, but gives little indication of its contents. Lu Xun's creative output gets short shrift, "consisting of the two collections from which the present selections are made, one volume of old legends in modern dress, one of reminiscences and one of 'prose poems' and other miscellaneous material" (xxv). The variety of work contained in these five volumes defies the grouping given here. Even ignoring the development of Lu Xun's style between the two short story collections, the prose poems express a wholly different side of Lu Xun: not so much revolutionary as metaphysical. The volume of reminiscences, too, resists comparison to the story collections, since it reinforces links to the classical culture rather than his divergences. By limiting his selections to the two short story collections, and collapsing their specific identities into a single category, Wang allows the selected stories to stand in for Lu Xun's entire creative output. Whether readers are to take the translated texts as being broadly representative or the untranslated works to be inferior is unclear. However, any possible textual challenges to Wang's sanitized revolutionary Lu Xun remain opaque to English reader.

In addition to effacing the variety of Lu Xun's creative work, Wang renders Lu Xun's pointed, often vitriolic *zawen* essays inert through a rapid gloss. These short essays make up almost the entirety of Lu Xun's written output from 1926 until his death, but here they merit only a single line: "The second group contains fourteen volumes consisting mostly of his notes and comments, and two volumes of his letters" (xxv). This gesture, or lack thereof, is a major step in Wang's sanitization of Lu Xun. Many of the *zawen* essays are clearly more than just leftist. His discussions of "the class character of literature" are haunted by the specter of Communism. Moreover, many of these essays belie Wang's image of Lu Xun as nothing more than a patriotic literary warrior committed to a modern China. In the *zawen* we occasionally see Lu Xun at his worst, prosecuting personal grudges in public forums with virulent ad hominem attacks. Naming the *zawen* as merely "notes and comments" in the same category as his letters also defangs them. Much of what constitutes Lu Xun's explicit attack on classical Chinese culture exists in these essays. The stories, despite their presentation here, are far more ambivalent.

Like his essays, Lu Xun's classical studies are only briefly present, and they are not read as such. Instead Wang refers to them as Lu Xun's "studies in Chinese literature, consisting of seven titles, including his *History of Chinese Fiction*" (xxv). This description is accurate, but it obscures what those studies actually entail. Lu Xun's commitment to the classical tradition passes unmentioned here. This forecloses Orientalist approaches to Lu Xun, and thus renders him more useful for Wang's political project. However, Lu Xun was a scholar of the classics and a product of the old culture. To integrate his classical studies background into a picture of a revolutionary Lu Xun –

red, white, or blue – is an ongoing challenge for the Lu Xun scholar. For someone who already resists systematic definition, his work on the classics derails the interpretive enterprise. The apolitical scholar, whom Lu Xun attacks, and who is of no use to revolutionaries of any stripe, becomes problematic when he is Lu Xun. Therefore Wang must gloss Lu Xun's complexity not only for its redder shades, but for its whiter hues too.

The Fellow Traveler

Not all translators from this period sought to make him into an inscrutable Oriental or crypto-American. Journalist Edgar Snow, known for his account of Chinese Communism, *Red Star over China*, presents in 1936 an unabashedly leftist Lu Xun. The Lu Xun who appears in Snow's anthology *Living China* is not the sanitized leftist portrayed by Wang Chi-chen in his 1942 collection. Snow's Lu Xun is a radical revolutionary; the fact that in most ways he was not presents no obstacle. Out of respect for reality, perhaps, Snow never names Lu Xun explicitly as a Communist, but Snow's sympathies are clear: he notes Lu Xun's emergence on the Chinese Left as "an outstanding champion of the proletarian cause" ("Bio" 24). He adduces the writer's charge, "Mere *bourgeois* revolution without a thoroughgoing socialist change' [...] 'is utterly lacking in meaning for the masses'" ("Bio" 24), as evidence for Lu Xun's radicalism. Snow's assertion that Lu Xun "remains essentially an individualist" reflects the latter's unwillingness to endorse any political movement ("Bio" 26). However, Snow tempers this concession to reality with the charge that Lu Xun's "belief in the socialist state is based on deep personal realizations of the economic and spiritual needs of the masses, rather than on any academic concern with dialectical materialism" ("Bio" 26).

Unlike the erudite Lukács, for example, Snow's Lu Xun has an innate sensitivity to the need for socialism, and has no need for Marxism's more metaphysical miens.

This emphasis on emotion as a catalyzing force in Lu Xun's life is nothing new, yet Snow mobilizes different evidence to support it. Lu Xun is the first to note his visceral reaction as a motivator in the execution from the preface to *Nahan*, which galvanized him to abandon medicine for literature. Snow, apparently willfully, misreads this. In his general introduction to the collection he notes that he "explored" *Nahan* with a member of Lu Xun's circle (Snow "Intro" 14), but in his biographical sketch of the author, he claims that Lu Xun "completed his course" in medicine before returning home ("Bio" 21). Lu Xun's radicalization appears here not as the result of nationalist concerns, but of partisan shock at the horrors of Guomintang purges. Snow mentions both the white terror of 1927 when Jiang Jieshi violently expelled the Communists from the erstwhile united front of the Guomintang ("Bio" 23), as well as the execution of "half a dozen talented left writers at Shanghai, on February 7, 1932 [sic]"⁵ ("Bio" 24), mentioning. "All of these and other victims of the harsh intellectual repression were friends of Lu Hsün, and he lived in constant fear of arrest or assassination" ("Bio" 25). The misrepresentation of Lu Xun's experience in Japan notwithstanding, Snow's vision of Lu Xun's leftist politics as a direct consequence of his shock at China's white terror finds support in his corpus. Lu Xun famously wrote a eulogistic essay for the February 7th victims, "The Revolutionary Literature of the Chinese Proletariat and the Blood of the Pioneers," and a response to the 1926 execution of Liu Hezhen, a student and protestor from the Beijing Women's Normal College, "In Memory of Miss Liu Hezhen." Both

⁵ Snow is off by a year. The executions occurred on February 7, 1931.

pieces express Lu Xun's outrage at the precarious position of China's young, critical intellectuals.

Despite the overtly political thrust of Snow's presentation, his hardcore leftist Lu Xun is no fabrication. Aside from these eulogies, Lu Xun wrote many other essays in support of proletarian literature and against rightist cultural movements. Snow offers additional support for his representation by referencing his personal acquaintance with the writer, going so far as to credit their meeting as the inspiration for this volume: "Lu Hsün as a personality so impressed me with his breadth of humanity, his warmth of sympathy, and his keen perceptivity of the life around him that I felt sure his writing would provide interpretations of interest" ("Intro" 13-4). Snow plays up this humanist aspect through reference to Lu Xun's translations. Unlike other commentators who either ignore or gloss Lu Xun's work as a translator, Snow acknowledges the cosmopolitanism of the translation project, arguing that "China is indebted to him for introducing much of the world's best literature, now available in the new language, and he has led a whole movement to invigorate Chinese thought by bringing it into contact with the modern intellects of the West." ("Bio" 27).

Although Lu Xun's work occupies only about a quarter of the collection, the tone of the comments on Lu Xun is pervasive. In the introduction, Snow asks, "What intellectual imprint has China's violent contact with Japan and the Western world left upon the artist, and how does he express it?" ("Intro" 12). Put differently, how do Chinese intellectuals respond to the ongoing project of imperialism? Absent – thankfully – are paeans to China's suppressed democratic spirit or its mystical culture. All of the writers present in *Living China* are leftists, though some more than others. Snow

wonders what Chinese literature looks like when written “exclusively for Chinese eyes and appreciation, and not with the notion of pleasing foreign readers, or of catering to foreign prejudices, or of feeding the Western avidity for the ‘exotic,’ the ‘quaint,’ and the ‘picturesque?’” (“Intro” 12). I suspect that the Western audience for Chinese literature qua Chinese literature was exceedingly small in 1935, given how few Westerners knew Chinese, so Snow likely has a different target in mind here. He cites the dearth of contemporary fiction in translation, and attacks the emphasis on China’s past. He singles out academic Sinology as the root of this emphasis and condemns it – proleptically – as a form of Orientalism:

The hundreds of “interpretive” books on China written by Occidentals, and even those by Chinese for Western readers did not satisfy. Their emphasis was nearly all on the past, and concerned with problems and culture-patterns already interred. Alien writers know very little about the mind of China, and the Sinologue, generally encrusted with the conservatism and horror of all pulsations indicative of change, scrupulously avoided investigating it. (“Intro” 12)

Snow thus offers the aptly named *Living China* as a corrective.

Of course, by invoking “the mind of China” as a single entity, Snow inadvertently places himself in the same category as those who would reduce China to Confucius and Laozi. Little of China actually lives in this anthology, and, conveniently, the part that does is – or is represented to be – overtly sympathetic to Snow’s politics. Faulting Snow for his good intentions seems petty, but his project in this collection is not so different from that of the Sinologists he criticizes. That he lets modern Chinese speak for modern China is admirable, as is his more or less faithful representations of the constituent

authors and their texts. However, sins of omission are as damning as those of commission, and in this regard Snow is quite the sinner. Chinese literature of this era was not limited to heroic warriors of the pen battling against the crypto-fascism of the Guomindang government. Many of the authors in this collection did in fact seethe in the face of the Nationalist's resurgent cultural conservatism, but they did not go unopposed. The Nationalists had writers shilling for their cultural apparatus too. Moreover, many writers distanced themselves from the politicized literature of the era altogether, pursuing instead aestheticism, humanist universalism, and formal experimentation. Snow includes a short essay by Nym Wales – pseudonym of Snow's then-wife, Helen Foster Snow – "The Modern Chinese Literary Movement," as an appendix discusses both the internecine battles among centrist and leftist writers of the period, and the government repression of those writers. However, this essay's shrill tone renders it little more than a screed in support of the same literary politics found in Snow's more measured presentation. And this is just the situation of high literature. To let these few authors stand in for the whole of Chinese literature during the 1920s and 30s would be like speaking of the American modernists while ignoring Horatio Alger and Zane Grey. China had a thriving literary establishment, in which Lu Xun and his ilk constituted only a part. For example, writers of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School wrote light fiction on popular themes. *Living China* may represent the cream of the crop, at least according to its own standards, but it ignores the rest of what is a very large field.

The bias toward high literature in Snow's volume reflects a larger problem for the representation of China, or any other country, in foreign contexts. Readers of translations almost always have a skewed view of the translated tradition. Most literary production is

intentionally disposable, and as such is rarely translated. Lu Xun is an outstanding writer, despite his protestations to the contrary, and therefore cannot be representative of Chinese literature in any meaningful sense. Furthermore, despite the popularity of Lu Xun as a translated author, he and the others in *Living China* were writing for themselves more than for the teeming masses. The masses were illiterate, and vernacular or not, Lu Xun is hard to read in Chinese. Qu Qiubai, a contemporary critic, criticizes the work of these literary heroes as writing “in a so-called vernacular language that in fact cannot be understood by the listener,” and defines the “so-called vernacular” as “new-style classical writing” (421). Nevertheless, actual readership and influence are separate subjects. Similarly, influence at home and influence abroad are also distinct. In all of these categories Lu Xun ranks highly, but each category is subject to different formations of the global literary network.

Odi et Amo

A few years ago, not long after beginning my study of Lu Xun in earnest, I encountered what I had at the time thought to be the first translation of Lu Xun into English. Having spoken with my father some weeks earlier about my research project, he had mentioned vaguely recalling coming across Lu Xun or a similar figure as a student. On our next meeting he showed me one of his college textbooks, asking if a writer discussed therein was the same as my object of study. The textbook featured a slim section on “The Epigrams of Lusin,” which were indeed derived from the writings of Lu Xun. At the time the text was little more than a curiosity, but as I learned more about the circulation of Lu Xun in the West, these “Epigrams” emerged as the last of a series of

translations that present him as an idiosyncratic thinker grounded in the Old China that he repudiates.

Lu Xun's appearance in this volume seems improbable given its content. The 1942 text, *The Wisdom of China and India*, is an anthology consisting primarily of religious and philosophical texts from China and South Asia. The main exceptions are poems or short prose works that reflect the text's main metaphysical content: the "Bhagavad-Gita" and *Ramayana* for India, Li Po and Qu Yuan for China, for example (and these probably still count as religious and philosophical). Yet after over one thousand pages of the most canonical texts from both traditions we find Lu Xun, followed only by some proverbs and the back matter. Lu Xun's inclusion defies any organizational logic, since without other exception the anthology contains only premodern works, with the vast majority dating from antiquity.

The inclusion becomes less surprising on learning that the volume's editor and translator of many of the Chinese selections is none other than Lin Yutang. Lin had been a friend of Lu Xun's during the latter's lifetime, though they had a falling out in the late 20s. Lin found work for Lu Xun at Xiamen University when he left Beijing in 1926. Lu Xun's tenure at Xiamen was short, and the two men diverged politically, but Lin could not ignore Lu Xun's profound impact on Chinese culture. In framing the epigrams Lin places Lu Xun in his Chinese context without resorting to Orientalist simplifications or political glosses. He opens the section by noting, "It is difficult to discuss or evaluate a contemporary writer who died only in 1936. But it is still more difficult to talk of God, and Lusin is God to the leftist writers of China today" (Lin Yutang "Epigrams" 1083). Lu Xun was not just a Chinese writer; he was the Chinese writer. Moreover, Lin

Yutang's Lu Xun is not just a leftist, but unabashedly Marxist, who believes "all that belongs to China's ancient culture is putrid and poisonous, and all that Lunacharsky says about literature is perfect" ("Epigrams" 1083). Comments like these oversimplify Lu Xun's relationships with both Chinese culture and Communism, but they are not wholly disingenuous.

Lin's introduction even allows Lu Xun to speak for himself, choosing citations that portray him in all his cantankerous glory. However, Lin acknowledges the folly of summing up Lu Xun in five or so pages: "I suppose it is quite harmless to discuss a Chinese god in the English language which he does not understand" ("Epigrams" 1083). Lu Xun would likely agree, but this admission reveals Lin's understanding of the power of representation inherent to translation and the staging of translation. Unlike the other translators of this period, Lin casts Lu Xun less as a hero or speaker for some segment of the Chinese population than as an idiosyncratic cultural critic, who "is a warrior more than a 'literary man.' It always seems to me that he was happiest when he saw or imagined his face bruised and groggy. And it is his uncompromising, challenging, fighting spirit that so charms his readers, for the public always loves a good fighter" ("Epigrams" 1084). This glosses the vagaries of Lu Xun's fortunes during the last decade – or any decade for the matter – of his life, but death was good for the image of Lu Xun presented here. Now Lin does overplay Lu Xun's critique of Chinese culture, claiming, "He advocates the abolition of Chinese writing, believes in the 'Europeanization of Chinese syntax' and is for imitation of foreign grammar. He urges the young men to worship Darwin and Ibsen rather than Confucius and Kuan Yü, and sacrifice to Apollo rather than to the God of Pestilence" ("Epigrams" 1085). Lu Xun did make all these

claims in one form or another, but his frequently contradictory and usually inconsistent arguments do not justify Lin's conclusion: "These ideas are incredibly naïve and hardly show a sense of discernment either of the East or the West" ("Epigrams" 1085). This is petty, and reflects Lin's conservative streak more than Lu Xun's understanding of cross-cultural engagement. Besides, Lin knew Lu Xun had an investment in Chinese culture since Lin, in his capacity as dean at Xiamen University, hired Lu Xun to teach Chinese Literature. Personal politics aside, Lin ultimately redeems Lu Xun, claiming, "China needed a man like Lusin to wake the millions up from the self-complacency and lethargy and accumulated inertia of four thousand years" ("Epigrams" 1085-6). However, this apology for Lu Xun's polemics ends on a note distressingly sympathetic to imperialism: "But the young China that listens to Lusin and accepts his ideas is a China no longer self-complacent, but humble and anxious to learn from the West, and humility is the beginning of wisdom" ("Epigrams" 1086). Humility is not a word I would associate with Lu Xun or the Chinese self-determination movements. Although given Lin's audience in the volume and his investment in both classical Chinese culture and Western thought, his fawning tone may be less an apology for imperialism and more a result of his internalization of Western attitudes about China. This false consciousness was not foreign to Lu Xun either.

More puzzling about this invocation of humility is its position at the end of nearly three thousand years of Chinese texts. If Lu Xun speaks to this young, humble China, then why must we go through so much of the old China to get to him? Of course, Lin's audience was curious (or compelled) Americans and not would-be Chinese revolutionaries. But in this case, the inclusion of Lu Xun at all seems profoundly out of

place, marginalized as an exemplar of “Chinese Wit and Wisdom.” Lin gives no frame to Lu Xun other than the ambivalent comments discussed above. No mention is made of the literary revolution, the May Fourth movement, or the contemporary literary and political situations in China. Lin has a political stake in this, as he argues presciently, “Somehow after the breaking-up of the nineteenth-century political world, a new world must be forged out of the elements of Anglo-Saxon, Russian, and Oriental cultures” (*Wisdom* 587). Despite the relative simplicity of his worldview – perhaps understandable given its formulation at the height of the Second World War – the notion that “after the war, we are sure that the East and West will be living closely together, and dependent on each other” is a welcome anodyne to discussions of civilizations declining or clashing. Lin, however, has a stake in this new world other than its promise of global cooperation; he seeks to define “the Orient” for American readers. That he marginalizes Lu Xun is likely the result of Lin’s shrewd understanding of his American audience. Including a fellow traveler like Lu Xun at all, and especially in an unsanitized form, is a bolder statement than the relegation of Lu Xun to a minor role in the text. Lin Yutang was a conservative compared to Lu Xun; his “Introduction” to the Chinese section of the volume extols China’s mystical and humanistic traditions while excoriating what he sees as the instrumentalized philosophy of the West (*Wisdom* 567-76). In so doing he portrays China and Chinese thought as an alternative to the hyper-rationalism of the West and attempts to position China as an intellectual leader in the world to come. Lu Xun, despite his leftism, serves Lin as a useful bridge to the West, showing that the intellectual integration is already well underway. With guidance from pro-American Sinologists, like Lin Yutang, China will certainly be ready to take its place on the post-war world stage.

Any political opportunism aside, the placement of Lu Xun at the end of an account of traditional Chinese intellectual history is fitting. For all his bluster, Lu Xun was more than anything a native son. On the most basic level, Lu Xun's critique of Chinese tradition is predicated first on the existence of that tradition, and second on a supreme mastery of it. Moreover, Lu Xun's repudiation of the old China is often cached in ambiguity: the madman in "Diary of a Madman" is potentially an unreliable narrator, and the narrator of "The True Story of Ah Q" goes to great lengths to dissociate Ah Q from any Chinese identity. Even the titular Kong Yiji appears as pathetic rather than malicious. In stories where Lu Xun satirizes or exposes the follies of traditional culture, he attacks the inflexible or superstitious application of the classical canon, if he attacks the canon at all. Even in his most vituperative *zawen* essays he tackles specific contemporary issues, again often stemming from the inflexible or just inhumane application of traditional morality. As a classical-style poet and scholar of traditional literature, Lu Xun's investment in the old China, at least in its textual forms, is unassailable.

Beyond Lu Xun's personal commitment, however grudging, to the Chinese canon, his placement in the volume as the terminus of that canon's development reshapes it. The idea of the ongoing development of Chinese intellectual life was not new to Lin Yutang; Hu Shi describes it in his "Modest Proposal," and Lu Xun's *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* also points to change over time. Unfortunately, Lin's volume does not do the best job of emphasizing this development, since the vast majority of his texts are classical (all in the Indian section). Nevertheless, the inclusion and framing of Lu Xun as the catalyst for an engagement with the West signifies that China is not an intellectually

static “Oriental” other as the Sinologists might contend. Instead it is a country on the move, in command of a rich cultural heritage but not bound by it.

Aside from fudging the details of China’s political reality, Lin faces one overwhelming problem: Lu Xun never wrote any epigrams. This is not to say that Lin’s selections are spurious – they are not – but they are incomplete. Epigram suggests a pithy, perhaps witty bit of sagacity, such as one might find in Martial’s aptly titled *Epigrams*. The placement of these texts under the heading of “Chinese Wit and Wisdom,” and following them with “One Hundred Proverbs” suggests that the classical genre is exactly what Lin wants to associate with Lu Xun. All of the “epigrams” included here are short, pointed, and occasionally witty comments, in line with classical models be they Latin quips or Chinese proverbs. This is no accident, for Lu Xun dipped his brush in vitriol. Yet the epigram or proverb, as a genre, is complete in itself; what Lin presents here are sound bites lifted from larger works.

To Lin’s credit, these selections do capture Lu Xun’s style and opinions, but in so doing they completely dehistoricize him. Apart from Lin’s positioning of Lu Xun as part of China’s classical tradition, as discussed above, the distillation of these “epigrams” from larger works strips them of their historical context. In selecting and organizing the thirty-five epigrams, Lin follows no obvious logic. They do not follow chronology; they have no thematic unity other than a broad sense of discontent; they are not even stylistically consistent. Nor should they be, since they came from diverse sources. The sources are not so diverse in terms of genre, but their content is determined almost entirely by historical exigency.

After his translations, the largest part of Lu Xun's corpus belongs to his *zawen* essays. The *zawen*, literally miscellaneous writing, is a genre Lu Xun invented almost entirely out of whole cloth. Finding the strictures of traditional Chinese prose genres inadequate to the task of hurling invective – something he satirizes in the opening of “Ah Q” – Lu Xun molded the *zawen* into a vehicle for social commentary. The majority of his *zawen* pieces are brief polemics on cultural practices, current events, even personal enemies. Usually published in major newspapers, and occasionally given as speeches, Lu Xun's *zawen* constitute his main contribution to public, intellectual discourse in the late 1920s and 30s. Furthermore, they establish Lu Xun as a public intellectual. His virulent attacks on the cultural projects of the Nationalist government or his intellectual rivals earned him the ire of the authorities and the conservative literati while making him a hero of the younger leftists. As a result Lu Xun wrote under a host of pseudonyms (that is, other than Lu Xun) to avoid attracting too much attention to himself and subsequent arrest and execution. At great potential cost to himself, Lu Xun in his *zawen*, does what Edward Said later calls speaking truth to power, “to project a better state of affairs and one that corresponds more closely to a set of moral principles – peace, reconciliation, abatement of suffering – applied to the known facts” (Said *Representations of the Intellectual* 99-100).

Lin's selection and presentation changes Lu Xun from a public intellectual into a bitter sage, dispensing oracular tidbits of leftist propaganda. Lu Xun was not Nietzsche (and Nietzsche was no leftist). These citations do not reflect, like Nietzsche's aphorisms, a protest against a weighty tradition of systematic philosophy. Lu Xun's style, like Nietzsche's, relies on a staggering mastery of classical models, but unlike Nietzsche he

does not cache his critiques in coruscating aphorisms that are both mystical and opaque. He instead prefers razor-sharp salvos written in pellucid, if erudite prose. One knows whom Nietzsche dislikes, but his rationale (irrationale?) often defies easy apprehension; no one need wonder about Lu Xun's argumentation. Although many of these "epigrams" contain self-evident claims, the lack of their original context renders them inappropriately mystical and aphoristic.

"Epigram" Thirty-two exemplifies Lin's mystifications, though it is not unique among the selections. It reads, "We have hereafter only two roads to choose: one is to embrace the ancient literature and die, the other is to forsake the ancient literature and live" (Lusin 1090). Weighty words, but meaningless to Western readers unfamiliar with the distinction between ancient and modern Chinese literature. Lin offers no clarification to his audience on this point. The passage confirms Lin's claim "that 'leftist professors' advise China's young men not to read Chinese ancient works," but elides any discussion of the rise of modern vernacular literature in China ("Epigrams" 1085). Indeed even what constitutes "ancient" or "literature" is unclear. To the uninitiated Lu Xun appears simply as an iconoclast. He was, but this passage reveals as much about the nature of his iconoclasm as would the deracinated subtitle of *Götzendammerung*. This apparent repudiation of ancient literature gives no indication of Lu Xun's ongoing engagement with that literature. Lin Yutang notes that Lu Xun taught at Xiamen University ("Epigrams" 1084), but fails to mention that he was there, at Lin's request, to teach Chinese literature.

When restored to its proper context, the passage's tone shifts from that of the strident iconoclast to that of the desperate patriot. Most broadly, Lu Xun was a

participant in the cultural revolution that swept China (at least urban China) during the interwar years. His contribution, in addition to his polemical *zawen*, was of course his role in the development of the modern vernacular literature as opposed to the received literary tradition and its associated orthodoxies, both as a creative writer and a translator. This goes unmentioned by Lin. Furthermore, this piece was presented as a speech, “Silent China,” in 1927 that responds to retrenchments on the cultural front. At this point, the fervor of the May Fourth movement has died down, and many erstwhile revolutionaries lost their zeal. He obliquely references the censorship imposed by the government by invoking the Manchu suppression of critical public discourse, and indicting the literati as complicit in their turn back to the classics:

But when the alien Manchus invaded our country they killed all who talked about history – especially late Song history – and those, of course, who talked about current events. Thus by the reign of Qian Long, men no longer dared express themselves in writing. So-called scholars took refuge in studying the classics, collating and reprinting old books, and writing a little in the ancient style on subjects quite unrelated to their own time. (Lu Xun *Works* 2:329)

The condemnation of the ancient literature from the epigram is not an attack on the ancient literature qua itself, but as a politically evasive maneuver. Lu Xun indicts himself as well in this critique, for he spent much of the 1910s buried in the classics. The ancient literature is not itself a problem, the problem is instead the intentional inaccessibility of ancient literature.

Lu Xun then rehearses the history of the literary revolution spearheaded by Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, and himself in order to show the failure of that revolution. He

summarizes the current debates over the vernacular to show that the classical language is inadequate to the task of cultural reform:

Because we use the language of the ancients, which the people cannot understand and do not hear, we are like a dish of loose sand – oblivious to each other's suffering. The first necessity, if we want to come to life, is for our young people to stop speaking the language of Confucius and Mencius, Han Yu, and Liu Zongyuan. This is a different era and times have changed [...] We must speak our own language, the language of today, using the living vernacular to give clear expression to our thoughts and feelings. (Lu Xun *Works* 332-3)

The root of Lu Xun's apparent iconoclasm in Lin's citation is rooted in nationalist concerns rather than an obsession with all things Western. By noting that very few understood the classical language, he argues that it cannot work as a national medium of expression. His emphasis on the archaic nature of both the classical language and its literature indicates a belief that the language used limits the ideas expressed: an indigenous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Linguistics repudiates his conclusion, since any human language by definition can express any idea either through circumlocution or coinage, but semiotics will vindicate him. Moreover, whether or not classical Chinese constitutes human language in the modern era is a fair question.

The aesthetic standards of classical Chinese demand formal elements that work against innovation in either language or content. Citation and imitation of ancient texts govern the classical style, which limits the ability to introduce new ideas. Although translators made classical language editions of Western works, the privileging of ornate forms limited the accessibility of the texts, and raises serious questions about the fidelity

of the translations. Lin Shu produced his translations of Western novels in tandem with a polyglot interpreter: the latter would orally translate the novels into vernacular Chinese, then the former would translate the vernacular intermediary into the classical language. The popular prose of Dickens appears in wrought classical couplets. Semiotically, the literary language's demand for erudition privileges the connotative readings of words. When reading classical texts, one must be alert to near constant allusive diction. Always keen to show off their learning, writers in the literary language select character for prosody, history, and – most frustratingly for the student – obscurity. Of course, a writer could potentially write in the classical style while eschewing citation and allusion, but would this still be classical Chinese?

That Lu Xun needs to reiterate arguments made ten years earlier points to a perceived failure on the part of the literary revolutionaries. Lu Xun's story "In the Wine Shop" references this sea change already in early 1924. In the tale the narrator's friend recounts his retreat from cultural agitation to the teaching of classical literature. The story, like almost all others written during the 20s and beyond, is written in the vernacular. However, fiction is not Lu Xun's target. In his speech he calls for a critical public discourse, in which the Chinese "Speak out boldly, advance fearlessly, with no thought of personal gain, brushing aside the ancients, and expressing [their] true thoughts" (*Works* 2:333). Lu Xun calls for public intellectuals. This is not to say that he was alone in his public cultural criticism, but many of his erstwhile revolutionary contemporaries, not unlike the friend from "In the Wine Shop," had retreated from critical public discourse and turned to classical scholarship. Prominent among these backsliders were Hu Shi, Gu Jiegang, and, unsurprisingly, Lin Yutang. These writers did

not lapse into classical Chinese, but did turn to the classical tradition instead of engaging contemporary political issues.

In addition to Lu Xun's concerns over the emergence of a modern Chinese political discourse, his attack on the classical language also has anti-imperialist resonances. The title of the talk, "Silent China," refers to the lack of an organized and accessible political discourse. Lu Xun likens the national consequences of this silence to China's foreign domination not only because of the danger in writing about the contemporary political situation, but also because China was in fact occupied by foreign powers. China never faced the outright colonial domination experienced by India or Vietnam, but from the extortion by multiple imperial powers of extraterritorial concessions beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, China existed in what Shu-mei Shih names as the semicolonial: "a term meant to encapsulate multiple and multilayered colonial domination as well as the fragmentary and incomplete nature of such domination, which contributed to a discursive formation that bifurcated the metropolitan and the colonial" (36). Part of the impetus that launched the May Fourth movement was outrage at the assignment at Versailles of Germany's concessions in China to the Japanese. However, with the exceptions of occasional bouts of anti-Japanese sentiment, China did not protest its semi-colonial exploitation too loudly. Moreover, the various warlords and the Guomindang did not actively oppose the imperial powers. Lu Xun links the persistence of China's classical tradition to the lack of public discourse on China's semi-colonial state. He asks, "It may be amusing to treat writing as a curio – the fewer who understand it the better. But what is the result?" Answer: "Already we are unable to express our feelings. Injured or insulted, we cannot retort as we should. Consider, for

instance, such recent happenings in China as the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion, and the 1911 Revolution” – two of the three being major events in the imperial domination of China – “All these were major events, yet so far not one good work on them has appeared. Nor has anyone spoken out since the Republic was founded. Abroad, on the other hand, references are constantly being made to China – but by foreigners, not by Chinese” (*Works* 2:329). This ominous ending presages Michel Foucault’s work on epistemology and Edward Said’s articulation of Orientalism. Foreigners control the discourse on China and China itself because few Chinese are willing to create a counter-narrative.

The invocation of the classical tradition as a “curio” underscores China’s status as an object to be enjoyed rather than a sovereign state. Lu Xun goes so far as to indict some of his contemporaries for internalizing and reifying China’s object status in the eyes of imperial subjects: “Yet others urge that since foreigners have translated our classics, thus proving their worth, we ought to read them ourselves [...] They do so from ulterior motives, and to be translated by them is no great honor” (*Works* 2:322). The investment in the classical tradition only further engenders false consciousness of national value among the Chinese because it grants the imperial nations the power to authorize what China is. The apolitical classicist becomes the instrument of his exploitation. Lu Xun predicts a dire, fully colonized future for China in the absence of a discourse on contemporary politics, gesturing toward other imperial possessions: “Let us think which are the nations today which are silent. Can we hear the voice of the Egyptian people? Can we hear the Annamese or the Koreans? Is there any voice raised in India but that of

Tagore?" (*Works* 2:333). Ironically, Lu Xun died in Shanghai living near the foreign concessions for his protection, and was a scholar of the classical tradition.

Only at the conclusion of his speech does Lu Xun utter the lines selected by Lin Yutang as an epigram. The other thirty-four selections come from similarly pointed pieces. Lu Xun is useful for Lin, but only in very small doses. These he can control by effacing their more virulent sources. Yet to achieve this control, Lin must silence the Chinese texts almost entirely. He has no use for Lu Xun's critique of imperialism. To include it might alienate his audience. The double erasure inherent to translation may not always be conscious to the translator, but it is always violent. For Lin, the double erasure is intentional; Lu Xun must be a bridge to the West, not a bulwark against it. That Lu Xun is already this on his own matters little to Lin. He freely admits Lu Xun's Europhilia, but does not let Lu Xun admit it. To present Lu Xun as a fan of Nietzsche or Marxism in 1942 would be politically suspect, especially while arguing for China as a new Great Power. Thus he delineates the generically pro-Western Lu Xun from the Lu Xun who uses the thought of the West against itself.

* * *

These are just translations, coupled with sparse commentary from their translators. Yet they reveal much about their producers, and about the discourses that called for their production. These translations point toward the diversity of Western constituencies invested in China. To read these translations as texts in their own right tells us little about China, but much about how the West viewed China. World literature might fail in its project to show us the world, but it can tell us how we perceive the world. To look at translation as genuine literary production grants it a place in the global literary

network, which in turn allows us to map out the textual constellations called into being by translation, and the reasons for the call.

Today these translations are all but forgotten. All long out of print, they only resurface occasionally in scholarly commentaries on Lu Xun to round out a bibliography or to show the errors of previous translators. The diverse readings of China crystallized in these translations have also largely given way. Once the Communists took over, all bets were off for most of the Western constituencies represented in these translations. They were superseded by a new breed of translations, to be discussed in the following chapter, backed by the weight of government institutions and monolithic views of the other. However, these translations show that the West's approach to China has not always been and need not always be hostile, Orientalist, or wholly patronizing. To claim otherwise is to ignore global literary production, particularly the work of translation.

Chapter 4

Lu Xun in Institutional Translation:

1942-Present

The end of the Second World War saw the Communists ascendant in China. Four years later the Nationalists had been driven from the mainland, and Mao inaugurated the People's Republic on October 1st. In the United States debates about who lost China raged; the subsequent Korean War and China's decisive intervention in late 1950 did little to encourage Sino-American relations. Given Taiwan's then-status as the Chinese government recognized by the United States and the United Nations, combined with the collaboration of the USSR and the People's Republic of China prior to the 1960 Sino-Soviet split, mainland China disappeared into a political fog from the American perspective. The Communist Chinese were undoubtedly the enemy, but an enemy whose political existence was not even recognized.

Against this background emerged the first postwar translations of Lu Xun. The legacy of the Cold War continues to inform American discourse on China, and the reception of Lu Xun has not been immune to its influence. This period, still ongoing, sees the rise of modern Chinese literature as a field of academic study. By nearly any metric Lu Xun was and remains China's foremost modern writer, so his literary fortunes are intimately tied to the growing academic discourse in addition to the political.

In this period we see the emergence of an institutional Lu Xun. The cultural organs of the People's Republic of China promoted Lu Xun as a great revolutionary and patron saint of modern Chinese literature. This presentation, though not incompatible with earlier discussions of Lu Xun in China or the West, trumps all others in the postwar

era. Even Western scholars hostile to Communist China generally and Lu Xun specifically cannot single-handedly reshape the discourse. Lu Xun, for good or ill, is and is set to remain a revolutionary; the inertia of institutional sponsorship is not easily overcome. What is amazing about this period is that the Anglophone West, despite its otherwise hostile attitude toward Communist China, accepts its representation without question. The reason for this acceptance is the manner of Lu Xun's postwar translation and presentation, which were controlled by large state-affiliated and academic institutions in both China and the West, institutions that, though potentially hostile to each other, worked from shared premises defined through canonization and translation.

Exsurge Domine

Lu Xun's institutional identity in China develops before the end of the war, before the declaration of the People's Republic. Although already a legend at the time of his death in 1936, his legacy was yet to be defined. A banner at his funeral read "Soul of the Nation," which is perhaps the least controversial way to define him; no one would deny Lu Xun's patriotism, as oddly expressed as it may occasionally be. Beyond this platitude, extracting any consistent position out of Lu Xun's work is impossible. This is not to say no one has tried: scholars have attempted to show the consistency of his Nietzschean, Darwinian, and Marxist thinking with limited success. Even so, these efforts long postdate the emergence of the first institutional Lu Xun.

None other than Chairman Mao himself inaugurated Lu Xun's institutional identity. This was not born out of a comprehensive hermeneutical exegesis of Lu Xun's corpus; it was done with a fist. During May 1942, the Communists in Yan'an, their stronghold in northwestern China, held a summit of art workers to determine the future of

Chinese revolutionary art. Mao opened and concluded the conference with his famous “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art.” The result of the nearly month-long conference was a program for Chinese artistic production that conformed mostly to a socialist realist paradigm. Although Mao was instrumental in shaping the artistic line, including the orthodoxy for the criticism of earlier luminaries like Lu Xun, at the meeting’s onset that orthodoxy had yet to be defined.

The need for the Yan’an Forum points to the fragmented state of the leftist intelligentsia in the early 1940s. Of course, this was not a new state of affairs. The competing literary societies of the 20s and 30s espoused different views on the purposes of art and literature. Some of these debates turned acrimonious: Lu Xun was known to denounce his intellectual opponents rather unkindly. During his lifetime, the “Battle of the Slogans” encapsulated the differing approaches to leftist artistic production. Zhou Yang (1908-1989), who would go on to become a commissar in the People’s Republic, advocated for “National Defense Literature.” His faction of leftist intellectuals “summons all writers, regardless of their social stratum or faction, to take their stand on the united national front and to join their efforts to create literary works relevant to national revolution” (Zhou Yang 413). Written in 1936, after Japan’s annexation of Manchuria and all-out war looming, combined with the imperialist exploitation of China, Zhou’s call for a literature that is broadly patriotic is a reasonable political expedient in the face of grave national circumstances, even if it is ideologically simplistic. Zhou admits as much: “National defense literature continues the revolutionary tradition of previous literature, while also being grounded in the realities of the high tide of the national revolution, and propels the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal role of literature into

the literature of the new era” (411). Lu Xun and his supporters disagreed. Having spent much of the past decade endorsing a mass literature, which is to say, works cognizant of the role of class and committed to increasing class-consciousness, Lu Xun’s faction promoted “Mass Literature of National Revolutionary Struggle.” His ally Hu Feng (1902-1985) defines this literature as that which “combines all *socially disruptive* issues” (416). In turn he defines these issues through three examples:

1. Feudal consciousness and the antiquarian movement may preserve or even reinforce among the masses the notion of “Asiatic passivity.”
2. The impediments and constraints on the aspirations of the laboring masses may diminish or even extinguish their fervor and strength.
3. Dissolute enjoyment of special privilege and abuse of power are poisons contaminating the movement to mobilize and unite the broad masses. (416-7)

Lu Xun’s knowledge of academic Marxism was weak, but here Hu Feng demonstrates his innate grasp of reification and class-consciousness, the abuse of which he names “the handmaids of imperialism” (417). Regardless of his grounding in Marxist philosophy, Lu Xun emphasized ideological purity over political expedience. Unfortunately for his faction, he died in the fall of that year, the united front League of Left Wing Writers collapsed, Zhou Yang became a commissar, and Hu Feng was eventually purged.

Despite Zhou Yang’s victory in the “Battle of the Slogans,” and perhaps because of it, no clear literary orthodoxy emerged. The inclusiveness inherent to National Defense Literature precluded the development of a party line. Similarly, Lu Xun’s legacy was still up for grabs. Ding Ling (1904-1986), perhaps the first feminist writer in China, whose martyred husband Hu Yepin Lu Xun eulogized in 1931 (Lu Xun *Works*

119-21), championed Lu Xun not so much as a revolutionary, literary or otherwise, but as a mordant cultural critic: “But today, Lu Xun’s essays have become China’s greatest ideological weapon, works so splendid they are intimidating” (Ding Ling 456). Hyperbole aside, Ding Ling understands what the great strength of Lu Xun’s *zawen* is. The actual content of any particular essay is not important for her; that Lu Xun publicly presented his critiques of society is. He spoke truth to power, as do all true critics, who “aren’t writing for fame or glory, but only for the sake of truth” (456). For Ding Ling, it is Lu Xun’s role as a critic that makes him a model for China’s writers: “When a person advocates an action or idea before it becomes widely understood, the first thing he is bound to encounter is criticism. Only someone who is persistent and unafraid of criticism can be successful. Lu Xun is the prime example” (456). Yet she does not just lionize Lu Xun as a great critic of past excesses. She instead calls for a return of his style of criticism by titling her piece “We Need the Zawen Essay.” This is a bold move, considering that she was in the Communist base of Yan’an at the time, and by stating the continuing need for such criticism, implies that Yan’an has not quite reached the end of history. She goes so far as to denounce the inclusive party line of Zhou Yang and chastise those who support it: “Yet all we can say is ‘This is the time for a united front!’ We don’t realize that we can build an even more solid united front through criticism. As a result, we are abdicating our responsibility” (456). Finally, she attacks the nascent socialist realism as a means of ignoring very real problems facing Communist society:

The so-called progressive regions themselves did not just drop out of the sky.

They have very close links to the old Chinese society. And yet in these

progressive regions we say it is inappropriate to write *zawen*, that here we ought to depict only the democratic life and glorious work of construction. (456-7)

Ding Ling does not follow academic Marxism here, but her critique of the party line is, in essence, that it is undialectical. She sees the same problems Hu Feng identified as “socially disruptive issues” – that he and Lu Xun proposed to address through an ideologically pure literature – repeated in the heroic socialist literature or united front works promoted by the Communists.

This is a problem for the Communists. Prominent intellectuals are subverting the party line by invoking the authority of China’s most famous modern writer. Mao Zedong responds by issuing the authorized interpretation of Lu Xun, thus undermining through appropriation the authority on which the challengers draw. In so doing Mao also invents the contemporary Lu Xun. This is a cagey move on Mao’s part, because it allows him to appropriate Lu Xun’s legacy for his own ends while denying it to others. By surveying the map of Chinese literature with an eye for the constellations called into being by Lu Xun’s work and its criticism, Mao can create his own constellation by mobilizing not only Lu Xun but also his heterodox supporters. He legitimates his interpretation by integrating it into the literary network, not by ignoring dissenting views. Were he to have chosen the latter path, the resulting text would still be part of the literary network, but it would be an outlier a dead-end, linked only to Lu Xun’s own texts – maybe. Instead he forces the reconfiguration of the literary network around his text. By invoking both supporters and detractors – having a conference on literature and art likely helped him with this – Mao calls into being a constellation of texts including Lu Xun’s, his critics’,

and Mao's critics' with the "Talks" at the center. Of course, having the army behind him probably helped too. Tempting though it may be to be flip about Mao's enforced orthodoxy, his text and its enduring influence suggests that he achieved more than literary thuggery with the Yan'an piece.

Mao's goal at the Yan'an Forum was to rally his culturally workers to the party line, and to define what that line was. His introductory remarks to the forum reveal his understanding of the importance of propaganda in struggle. He explicitly likens cultural work to military action, noting, "In our struggle for the liberation of the Chinese people there are various fronts, among which are the fronts of the pen and the gun, the cultural and military fronts" (459). The cultural front, however, is actually double, facing both Mao's adversaries and his allies: "we must also have a cultural army, which is absolutely indispensable for uniting our own ranks and defeating the enemy" (459). One might cynically read the charge of the internal cultural front to "unite our ranks" as a call for censorship and propaganda. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution and earlier Communist-era purges color Mao's legacy with regard to cultural authoritarianism, but the situation at Yan'an was qualitatively different. Westerners often forget that the bulk of the Japanese army during World War Two was in China, so both the Nationalists and the Communists faced a very real threat.

Perhaps more relevant on the cultural front is the Chinese Civil War between those two factions that had been going on, depending on how one counts, for fifteen years, and would rage on for another four years after the close of the World War. Although both the Nationalists and the Communists joined in a united front against the Japanese during the war, the truce was uneasy. Moreover, the temporary lull in physical

conflict between the Chinese belligerents did not mean that the civil war was over or that the opposing ideology was any less odious. Cultural production thus remained an important means for both self-definition and preparation for the inevitable resumption of internecine hostilities. To this end Mao defines the issues to be decided at the Yan'an Forum as "the problems of the class stand of the writers and artists, their attitude, their audience, their work, and their study" (459). He then elaborates briefly on each of these problems, giving them predictably Marxist readings. However, these elaborations do not constitute his complete answer to the problems. He instead charges the gathered cultural workers to investigate the issues over the course of the Forum (463).

Mao's main argument appears in his concluding remarks to the Forum, in which he lays out the party line and admonishes those who would deviate from it. Yet Mao cannot do this alone. He was hardly an authority on either cultural production or Marxist theories of art. Although Mao was an accomplished classical-style poet and a remarkably dramatic calligrapher, most of his published works to this point were on martial matters – and an essay on the benefits of swimming. Thus Mao argued from authority, and that authority was Lu Xun, who was conveniently dead and unable to argue back. This is not to say that Lu Xun would have argued back were he able. Despite his apathy toward direct political involvement, Lu Xun was by no means unsympathetic to the Communists. With Mao Dun he sent Mao a congratulatory telegram upon the latter's arrival in Yan'an following the Long March. Furthermore, the party line espoused by Mao, under the assumed aegis of Lu Xun, is not incompatible with the latter's views on the proper role of literature, particularly in terms of audience.

Nevertheless, Mao's invocation of Lu Xun was not as his faithful exegete, but as his anointed disciple, and in this role Mao creates the institutional Lu Xun. Mao first calls on Lu Xun to validate his claim that cultural productions ought to serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers (465). Specifically, Mao uses Lu Xun to dismiss the notion of a classless literature: "People like Liang Shiqiu, whom Lu Xun criticized, talk about literature and art as transcending classes, but in fact they uphold bourgeois literature and art and oppose proletarian literature and art" (465). This is not an empty reference. In a 1930 essay, "Hard Translation and the Class Character of Literature," Lu Xun argues against Liang Shiqiu's bourgeois humanism. Of course, Lu Xun's essay treats the topic in considerable detail. Mao's comment is not a simple shorthand for Lu Xun's argument; it elides the bulk of the essay's complexity, especially those parts that critique the kind of cultural vanguardism Mao is promoting at Yan'an. However, Mao's reference is neither idle nor spurious. He mobilizes not only a text of Lu Xun's, but also its context: Lu Xun's essay was prompted by an earlier piece by Liang Shiqiu. This is not a deracinated reference. Definitely cherry-picked and redacted, but not beyond the text.

Mao further argues for an art for the workers, peasants, and soldiers with a direct quotation from Lu Xun. He offers a legitimately sourced reference to Lu Xun. In addition to demonstrating Lu Xun's revolutionary bona fides by emphasizing his commitment to a genuinely popular literature, which Lu Xun never wrote himself, Mao unknowingly highlights a different part of Lu Xun's legacy. Having a commitment to popular literature means writing texts that can be read by the masses. The question of whether or not Lu Xun's stories were particularly accessible to the masses of his day aside, his adoption of the vernacular as an artistic medium reemerges in light of the

emphasis on mass literature. By presenting Lu Xun as a formal revolutionary, Mao calls attention to Lu Xun's role in the literary revolution.

Central to Mao's aesthetic project was the promotion of an indigenous socialist realism. In this, too, he deploys Lu Xun as an intellectual support. Never mind that nothing Lu Xun wrote would likely be considered socialist realism, or even plain realism in any conventional sense – maybe a lyrical realism could describe the stories in *Wandering*. However, Mao does not cite Lu Xun's literary endeavors here. Instead he targets a *sui generis* text entitled "Death." Written in 1936, as the author was dying of tuberculosis, the piece is a musing on his mortality and the imminent consequences of it. Mao indirectly cites Lu Xun's admonition not to allow his young son to become a writer basking in his father's reflected glory. Mao's concern rests less with hackery – especially considering some of the weaker examples of Chinese socialist realism – than with orthodoxy. Invoking yet again his mantra of the workers, peasants, and soldiers, Mao exhorts China's art workers to

go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and wholeheartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source, in order to observe, experience, study, and analyze all the different kinds of people, all the classes, all the masses, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle, all the raw materials of literature and art. (470)

This injunction lays out the criteria for good, orthodox art as fidelity to life, with, naturally, an emphasis on class struggle. Mao's invocation of Lu Xun's "Death" here serves to foreclose other avenues of aesthetic exploration: "Otherwise, you will have

nothing to work with, and you will be nothing but a phony writer or artist, the kind that Lu Xun in his will so earnestly cautioned his son never to become” (470).

This is an extraordinarily sly rhetorical move on Mao’s part. Not only does he further solidify the authority of his text by drawing another Lu Xun text into its constellation, but he also position himself, through his text, as the interpreter and executor of Lu Xun’s “will.” He draws a parallel between China’s revolutionary art workers and Lu Xun’s offspring by referencing “Death,” but then threatens them with their literary inheritance if they do not follow the instructions of their father. Mao defines Lu Xun’s “phony” on his own terms by contrasting it with the definition of good, orthodox art cited above. In addition, by presenting this reference after having linked Lu Xun to revolutionary art, Mao presents his own definition as merely an expansion of what Lu Xun said, rather than a completely novel idea.

Just as Mao invoked Lu Xun to define his own position, so too did others at Yan’an. However, Mao would not allow competing interpretations of the latter’s aesthetic authority. Thus he drew the challengers into his textual constellation in order to dialectically refute them and bolster his own position. The aforementioned text of Ding Ling constitutes not only a challenge to Mao’s orthodox interpretation of Lu Xun, but also a threat to the very possibility of establishing any orthodoxy whatsoever. By championing Lu Xun’s *zawen* Ding Ling defies Mao’s not-too-veiled call for ideological harmony amongst the revolutionary intelligentsia. Mao cleverly acknowledges the utility of Lu Xun’s *zawen* in their own moment, which he describes as “under the rule of the dark forces and deprived of freedom of speech” (479). However, he opposes Ding Ling’s

argument for the continued need for the satirical critique embodied in the *zawen* because circumstances had changed:

We, too, must hold up to sharp ridicule the fascists, the Chinese reactionaries and everything that harms the people; but in the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region and the anti-Japanese base areas behind the enemy lines, where democracy and freedom are granted in full to the revolutionary writers and artists and withheld only from the counterrevolutionaries, the style of the essay should not simply be like Lu Xun's. Here we can shout at the top of our lungs and have no need for veiled and roundabout expressions, which are hard for the people to understand. (479-80)

Here Mao undercuts the thrust of Ding Ling's essay. She correctly identifies Lu Xun's *zawen* as a means for the public intellectual to speak truth to power, but fails to point out why the *zawen* specifically is necessary to do so. Mao exploits this by stressing the more liberal circumstances at Yan'an and elsewhere, and promotes instead a plain-speaking approach to critique, relying on the Lu Xun-approved rationale of doing it for the people. Moreover, this tacitly furthers Mao's link between Lu Xun's politics and vernacularization, even if Lu Xun's own work did not always reflect it. Of course, Mao's endorsement of open critique rings somewhat hollow when he is the power to whom the critic would speak truth.

Unsurprisingly, Mao immediately backpedals from an advocacy of open critique to one of appropriately targeted critique, all following Lu Xun's example. "When dealing with the people and not with their enemies," Mao reminds us, "Lu Xun never ridiculed or attacked the revolutionary people and the revolutionary Party in his 'satirical

essay period,' and these essays were entirely different in manner from those directed against the enemy" (480). Of all Mao's claims about Lu Xun, only this one rings completely hollow. Lu Xun may not have specifically attacked Mao's revolutionary party and people, which we are to gloss as *the* revolutionary elements, but that slices the onion rather thinly. Throughout his literary career – from his first short story – Lu Xun has been skeptical of revolutionary politics. Both "Nostalgia" and "The True Story of Ah Q" explicitly satirize the revolution of 1911. Moreover, he rejected the advances of the Chinese Trotskyites in 1936, satirizing them as idealists. In Mao's defense, however, Lu Xun makes his critique of one revolutionary group by supporting another: "Your 'theory' is certainly much loftier than that of Mao Zedong: yours is high in the sky, while his is simply on the ground. But admirable as is such loftiness, it will unfortunately be just the thing welcomed by the Japanese aggressors. Hence I fear that it will drop down from the sky, and when it does it may land on the filthiest place on earth" (Lu Xun *Works* 281-2). He mentions Mao by name twice more in this piece, making his sympathies clear. So Mao may have good textual evidence for his claims about Lu Xun's protection of the revolutionary party, but the people are a different story. Despite his support of proletarian literature, Lu Xun did not have many kind things to say about the people. The bulk of his creative work presents the peasantry as an unfortunate victim of its benighted worldview. Even when Lu Xun musters some sympathy for them, as in "My Old Home," it must first overcome the abyss that separates his world from theirs. Whether the figures in Lu Xun's stories count as revolutionary people for Mao I do not know. Lu Xun had a soft spot for student revolutionaries, but rarely were they of the people. Though he does not level his satirical fire at the people much in his essays, which given the context seems

like Mao's point, in criticizing certain cultural practices Lu Xun implicitly attacked those who practiced them: the people.

Even with these caveats, Mao has not strayed far from a textually supported position regarding Lu Xun's *zawen*. His closing of this section reflects the fine line he walks between abandoning the text and allowing unorthodox approaches in his interpretation of Lu Xun. Mao is pragmatic: "We are not opposed to satire in general; what we must abolish is the abuse of satire" (Mao Zedong 480). Ambiguity reigns, since "abuse" passes undefined here, but Mao legitimates himself as arbiter of that definition by placing it in opposition to Lu Xun's textual legacy.

Mao's final invocation of Lu Xun comes at the conclusion of his remarks, in which he exhorts the gathered intellectuals to serve the masses. Although Mao could have chosen from any number of Lu Xun's more overtly revolutionary pieces to make his point, he instead chooses a couplet from the classical-style poem "Zichao:" "Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers/Head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children" (qtd. in Mao Zedong 483). Mao then gives an exegesis of the poem, glossing key terms: "The 'thousand pointing fingers' are our enemies, and we will never yield to them, no matter how ferocious. The 'children' here symbolize the proletariat and the masses" (483). This is Mao's hermeneutic coup de grace. The ultimate appeal of the Yan'an Forum comes from Lu Xun himself, not Mao. However, Mao makes his interpolation into the hermeneutic process necessary by choosing not a vernacular short story or *zawen*, but an example of China's eremitic poetic tradition. Chinese poetry demands explication, the production of being one of the major tasks of traditional literati since at least the early imperial period. By using a profoundly elite text as the basis for a

mass movement in cultural production, Mao accomplishes three things. First he reaffirms Lu Xun's revolutionary character. Second, he calls for the loyalty of the intelligentsia. The thrust of the citation is to affirm the party line, by linking it with Lu Xun's poem forces the Communist writers to choose Lu Xun and the party dogma or else abandon their literary patrimony. Finally, Mao closes discussion on Lu Xun, cementing his position as the privileged interpreter. The medium of the citation, classical poetry, is proscribed by the orthodoxy Mao makes it ventriloquize. Lu Xun, despite his revolutionary outlook, belongs to another world. As with the discussion of the *zawen*, Lu Xun's methods are not appropriate for the new era. Mao instructs the loyal to "learn from the example of Lu Xun and be 'oxen' for the proletariat and the masses, bending their backs to the task until their dying day" (484). Learning from Lu Xun's example, however, is not the same as learning about Lu Xun, learning from his work, or even reading that work. Through a skillful combination of coercion and criticism, Mao constructs an authoritative simulacrum of Lu Xun to foreclose the possibility of heretics from appropriating his legacy for themselves.

Undoubtedly Mao's interpretation benefited from state support, but that alone is a weak explanation for its remarkable tenacity. Long after Mao's death and the decline of state-sponsorship of art in China, this image of Lu Xun as a revolutionary remains both in China and the West. By mobilizing both Lu Xun's texts and those of his interlocutors, Mao was able to reshape the global literary network so dramatically around his own text that it was able to emerge as the authoritative interpretation of Lu Xun, and continues to exert its influence over two generations now of Chinese writers and Western translators.



Figure 1. From the author's collection

Emblematic of the dominance of Mao's interpretation during the first few decades of the institutional period is the appearance of Lu Xun in a 1974 propaganda poster (Figure 1). Produced during the last years of the Cultural Revolution, the poster is obviously an expression of orthodoxy, but it so firmly cleaves to the interpretation prescribed in the Yan'an text that it testifies not only to the enduring influence of Mao's work, but also its efficacy in foreclosing any other discussion of Lu Xun. Again, state power is at play here especially given the era, but the work slavishly follows Mao's interpretation. The poster depicts Lu Xun, rendered in sepia tones, dominating the upper section. He gazes steely-eyed and resolute to the left. This is not the gaze of Che

Guevara toward an embattled horizon, but that of the general overseeing his troops in battle. The three figures in the foreground correspond, from left to right, to the revolutionary groups of the peasants, workers, and soldiers. The inscription exhorts the viewer to “Study Lu Xun’s revolutionary spirit; become a leader in criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius.” The paratactical linkage of the two phrases reinscribes Mao’s positioning of Lu Xun as the fount of revolutionary ferment while telling us nothing about his life or works. In the peasant’s hand is a booklet titled “Selections of Lu Xun Criticizing the Thought of Confucius and Mencius.” Again, Lu Xun wrote no such work – not explicitly at least. He has been reduced to a signifier of revolution by Mao’s patronage.

Institutional Foundations

As much as Mao Zedong did to establish the authoritative interpretation of Lu Xun, he could not single-handedly represent that interpretation to the world. That task fell to the many doctrinaire commentators within China, who constituted the domestic field of Lu Xun studies. These critics worked to create the texts that would reify Mao’s vision of Lu Xun. As a result, a great body of critical literature on Lu Xun exists in Chinese that calls into being constellations of texts that link the works of Lu Xun to Mao’s “Talks at Yan’an.” This critical enterprise places Mao at the center of Chinese Lu Xun studies.

Mao’s influence extended beyond the People’s Republic of China. Barring possibly the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Daodejing* of Laozi, Lu Xun is the most translated Chinese author, and without exception the most translated of China’s modern era. Unlike the variety of Lu Xun translations prior to and during World War II,

occasioned by the diverse constituencies to which those translations spoke, those of the postwar era exhibit far more ideological unity. This is due to their reliance on Mao's interpretive authority. However, given the hostility between the United States and Mainland China, these orthodox translations were unlikely to come from an American source.

And they did not. In 1952 Beijing's Foreign Languages Press was founded to bring the great works of Chinese literature to the world. As a quasi-state apparatus, Foreign Languages Press brought Mao's Lu Xun to a global readership. Four years after its inception, the Press began publishing its four-volume *Selected Works* of Lu Xun, translated by the prolific husband and wife team of Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang.

The project was quite an undertaking. The set contains eighteen short stories drawn from all three of Lu Xun's collections of fiction, nineteen prose poems from *Wild Grass*, nine reminiscences, and many *zawen*. This last item makes up the bulk of the selection, filling three of the four volumes. The set itself is an elaborate affair, slipcased with a ribbon marker and photographic plates in each volume. The Yangs' make no comment here about their translations. Each volume has an "Editor's Note" of indeterminate origin that identifies the original sources of the texts contained therein. This note is slightly larger in the first volume, as it introduces the scope of Lu Xun's oeuvre and explains the not-so-subtle mission of the set: "These four volumes, however, are representative of Lu Xun's writing during different periods of his career. From them the reader may gain a general picture of his role as the founder of modern Chinese literature, his ideological development from a revolutionary democrat to a Communist, and his great contribution to China and humanity" ("Editor's Note" 7). From the outset

Lu Xun's alleged Communism is inseparable from his literary endeavors on both the Chinese and global fronts. Surprisingly, no mention here is made of his translation work, and the anonymous editor dismisses Lu Xun's scholarly works, "as they are for specialists in the field" ("Editor's Note" 7). The absence of the classical-style poems is also noted here ("Editor's Note" 7). Although the omission of this material may be ideologically motivated, since it links Lu Xun to the pre-modern "feudal" tradition, it may be for more practical reasons: Lu Xun wrote a lot. Besides, the inclusion of the prose poems poses a challenge to any claim of an overly politicized selection process. Despite the relatively eclectic selection of literary works, the more tightly curated *zawen* leaves the question of political criteria for inclusion open.

The first volume does, however, contain a long biographical and critical introduction to Lu Xun written by his friend Feng Xuefeng (1903-76). Feng's introduction is largely hagiographic, and in its praise firmly establishes Lu Xun as the literary hero of the People's Republic, never deviating from the line Mao laid down at Yan'an. Its first part is biographical, taking special care to note events that prepared Lu Xun for the Communist turn named in the "Editor's Note." The youthful Lu Xun "was acquainted with the countryside and a number of his friends were the children of simple, honest peasants," who "served as the significant beginning of his spiritual ties with the working people" (Feng Xuefeng 10). This recalls his stories "My Old Home" and "Village Opera," in which he mentions his childhood friends, but is always conscious of a separation from them. Mao's interpretation demands Lu Xun's commitment to the peasantry, and Feng renders it so. He also makes the obligatory references to "an encroachment upon the country by foreign powers and the bankruptcy of Chinese

feudalism” that “impelled Lu Xun to take the path which led to revolution” (10). The biographical sketch charts the main works of Lu Xun, as well as his activities relating to leftist politics. Feng plots the course of Lu Xun’s life to correspond with his political radicalization, so his last creative efforts had to consummate his conversion to Communism, intellectually if not officially: “The last articles to come from Lu Xun’s pen were published during his illness in July and August 1936, and consisted of an open letter exposing the schemes of the Chinese Trotskyists to undermine the Communist Party’s policy of a rational united front against Japan, and an article accepting and advocating the policy of the Chinese Communist Party” (18). The sketch concludes, unsurprisingly, with Lu Xun’s death on October 19th of that year, mentioning, “till the last Lu Xun never spared himself” (18). Unfortunately, Feng does not tell us from what Lu Xun did not spare himself in the interim after penning the two pieces mentioned immediately above. Lu Xun did work until his death, notably on translating Gogol, and some of the products of this final period appear somewhat paradoxically in this collection. Historical quibbles aside, Feng’s sketch gives us a seemingly complete view of Lu Xun, but one that makes his leftism an inescapable destiny, given his biography. This is to be expected, since making him more complex would allow for heterodox interpretations of his work.

Even in its orthodoxy, and perhaps because of it, this biography highlights aspects of Lu Xun’s literary projects that had previously gone relatively unexamined. Most notable among these is the emphasis given to his work as a translator. Feng notes the extent of Lu Xun’s translation activity, accurately declaring its products to be “larger in bulk than his original writings” (15). However, Feng does not do justice to the broad scope of Lu Xun’s translations. From the sketch we see that Lu Xun translated a host of

Russian and Soviet authors, but non others. Furthermore, of Lu Xun's several essays on translation only one is included, "Hard Translation and the Class Character of Literature," in which he outlines his method and attacks those who disagree with his leftist literary politics. Another essay, "On Translation," in which he defends the translation of "imperialist authors" is conveniently absent from the collection. The editors explain the omission of his late essays on translation by emphasizing their difficulty for translators ("Editor's Note" 3:12). Difficult to be sure, but not impossible – see Chapter Two. With their absence the more eclectic Lu Xun vanishes, and only his hard line shadow remains. Other than translation, Feng notes Lu Xun's support of a woodcut movement in China, that is, "the new, revolutionary woodcut art in China" (17). His scholarly work and prose poems briefly appear here, and his classical-style poems go unmentioned. Of course, those are not particularly revolutionary. Lu Xun's life has meaning here only in its relation to Communism. This is not to say that Feng ever misrepresents Lu Xun, or that it matters if he had done so. Feng's piece simply frames the collection of translations by framing Lu Xun.

Framing Lu Xun is not enough, though, and the remainder of Feng's introduction circumscribes the texts themselves. Part II takes on the unpleasant task of reading the texts for the reader. Feng must present the texts in such a way that they conform to Mao's general interpretation laid down at Yan'an. In this Feng's work is little different from the hermeneutic introductions given in earlier translations of Lu Xun; they all create paratexts that accrete to and reshape the central text. Unlike the earlier commentators, Feng's *skopos* is far more limited. Though he was not the translator, he responds to commission by producing his introduction. His commission was to present Lu Xun's

texts as being compatible with the party line – a form of translation. Thus Feng can only see those aspects of Lu Xun’s work that meet the commission’s criteria, whether they actually exist or not. He looks at Lu Xun through the lens of Mao. The calls to write for and about the “workers, peasants, and soldiers” echo in the introduction’s exegeses. The peasants, in particular, are well represented here. In his commentary on “My Old Home” Feng holds up the peasant character Runtu as “typical of most Chinese peasants at that time,” and then declares, “Though still inarticulate, they were the foundation and chief moving force of the democratic revolution. This story depicts the increasing bankruptcy of the countryside during these years, and predicts the peasants’ awakening and the imminence of revolution” (21). Feng even supplies two citations from this story to bolster his claim.

He makes similar arguments about Lu Xun’s other major stories, but without much textual evidence. What the texts say is of little concern, since his commission laid out his conclusion in advance: “In all these stories, Lu Xun entirely rejects the old way of life and the old society. Readers are convinced that only a complete social revolution can put an end to these evils and the people’s agony” (22). We are never told who these readers are. If Lu Xun’s Chinese readers are implied, then the apodictic nature of the comment coerces Feng’s Anglophone readers to accept an argument from authority; if a wider readership is implied, an argument from the mob. Both fallacious, but both force the naïve English reader to make a false choice between the oracular pronouncement with its implied majority opinion and a heterodox, individualist position untenable in ostensibly better-informed discourses.

The introduction gives predictably short shrift to the reminiscences and prose poems. They pass with a brief mention of the former's "glowing descriptions of the charm, wisdom, and interests in life of peasants and the folk art they create," whereas the latter "reveal the courage of a revolutionary intellectual and his experiences in his fight against the powers of darkness" (24). These texts are difficult to reconcile with the rest of Lu Xun's corpus, and the prose poems doubly so because they are unprecedented in Chinese literary history. Rather than veering into potentially unorthodox analysis, Feng simply glosses them according to the party line.

The *zawen* also receive readings that similarly position them within the sphere of proto-revolutionary cultural work. That the *Selected Works* contain three volumes exclusive filled with *zawen* seems to confirm Feng's declaration that "Lu Xun's essays form the bulk and most important part of his literary work" (24). The first claim simply reflects the reality of Lu Xun's literary production, but the second gestures toward the institutional support behind the translation project more clearly than the hagiographic biography or doctrinaire interpretations of the short stories. For any project of anthologization, selection is key, and translation is no exception. By emphasizing the *zawen* in both the quantity selected and the quality ascribed, Foreign Languages Press can carefully control how Lu Xun appears to the English-speaking world. Of the hundreds of essays written by Lu Xun, only a couple hundred appear in the collection. Although the selection is varied, a great many of them conveniently express positions that fit into the arc of Lu Xun's political development as presented by Feng. Moreover, given their pointed nature, marshalling the essays in service of Feng's reading is easier than it is with the stories, which he readily admits: "The class struggle and revolutionary problems of

these years are also reflected more accurately in the essays than in the stories. In these essays, Lu Xun's artistic genius expanded more freely and characteristically in step with his activities and [mental] development as a revolutionary" (27). This promotion of the essays as the fullest expression of Lu Xun's revolutionary zeal implicitly acknowledges that his fiction is more difficult to reconcile with the party line. This explains why the creative works receive about twice as much commentary as do the essays, whereas they occupy only a quarter of the collection.

Granted, the collection would be rather short if it sought to balance its content between Lu Xun's creative and polemical styles (if we can even delineate them as such). Nevertheless, the essays are the focus of this collection, and are identified as the real source of Lu Xun's greatness: "It was as a great essayist with his own distinctive style that Lu Xun became an outstanding polemicist, and a giant in China's cultural revolution who dwarfed all his predecessors" (27). This identification is firmly rooted in Mao's "Talks," since, following Mao's imperative regarding the correct use of the satirical essay, Feng names the topics of the essays as appropriately revolutionary subjects: "The enemies of the people whom he satirizes here are too many to count. And he paints vivid and splendid pictures of the people's heroes" (27). Though he did frequently attack others, "enemies of the people" or not, Lu Xun did not go in much for encomia. He did infrequently commemorate those who had died, be they revolutionary martyr, friend, or chance acquaintance, but these pieces are comparatively few in number. However, all of them appear in this collection. Thus in addition to being the best of what Lu Xun has to offer, Feng tells us, they are also the most expressive of the official view of China.

The remainder of the introduction argues for Lu Xun's relevance to a global readership. To this end Feng presents Lu Xun's oeuvre less as a literary triumph and more as a historical document: "Lu Xun's brilliant works give us the most comprehensive and profound reflection of conditions from the time of the 1911 Revolution, through the May 4th Movement, to the First and Second Revolutionary Civil Wars" (28). Barring that Lu Xun was long dead by the time of the Second Revolutionary Civil War, Feng's relegation of the author to history again echoes Mao's move at Yan'an to foreclose future discussion of the writer. Lu Xun was a product of his era and as such can be useful for understanding that era, particularly its ills. However, the historical gesture denies Lu Xun's criticisms any contemporary relevance.

Indeed, only after closing the history book does Feng turn to Lu Xun's literary qualities. In keeping with the tacit prescription against applying Lu Xun to the present, Feng paints him as a midwife to the new revolutionary culture rather than part of that culture himself:

Throughout this period, Lu Xun remained the central figure and chief representative of the new literature. The realist approach and theory of art which he introduced to modern Chinese writers were a weapon to reject the old and affirm the new, a way to bring new aesthetic criteria into writing. His own work and his partisanship of socialist realist literature during his alter years marked a new stage of development in modern Chinese writing. (28)

A new stage that Lu Xun did not live to see. He was a "central figure" during the revolutionary period, but since that ended he has little to offer outside of a historical basis for the current, relevant literature.

Feng is at pains to express what appears to be genuine admiration for Lu Xun's talents without running afoul of the strictures of orthodoxy. He makes a few brief comments about Lu Xun's style, and spends two paragraphs positioning him as a consumer and interpreter of both domestic and foreign literary traditions. However, these moves require explanations grounded in dogma. Thus, "from Lu Xun's taste and style we can see the wisdom, taste, and style of the working people" (28). Despite his wide reading, Lu Xun does not appear here as a cosmopolitan writer. Feng stresses that "Lu Xun's style is distinctively and superbly his own, yet at the same time unmistakably Chinese" (28). Though I suspect this is a bit of cultural nationalism, it should not be discarded. Despite the heavy-handed if ingenious relegation of Lu Xun to history, I do not doubt that Mao, Feng, and other orthodox critics believed that Lu Xun did represent a particular flowering of Chinese literature. The occasional anachronistic or unsupported claims notwithstanding, arguments about Lu Xun's role in China's cultural change are neither disingenuous nor guided solely by dogma. China's semi-colonial state, the double imperial relationships with the West and Japan, and the traditional activities of the small literati class make the emergence of an artist like Lu Xun an event enabled by *sui generis* historical circumstances. When Feng concludes he is not being blindly nationalistic, but instead recognizes China's tortuous path through the first half of the twentieth century as the necessary precondition for Lu Xun's work: "Finally, as a figure in world literature, Lu Xun is distinguished by his close links with the working people of China, and the profoundly Chinese features of his writing" (31). As later, less restrained commentators would note, Lu Xun is distinguished by many things, but we should not

discount Feng for incompleteness here, nor should we even if he were being disingenuous; if we were his intended audience, we would not have known any better.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lu Xun was already well established in English translation by the time Foreign Languages Press' edition appeared. However, none of those translations seemed to make much of a splash and are virtually unknown today. Considering the basic nature of much of this edition's introductory material, the intended readership would not have known much if anything about Lu Xun. As it was published in English, we might assume that the majority of readers had little or no access to Chinese. Thus whatever the translated text and its accompanying paratexts said was how Lu Xun appeared in English. This is the power of translation. Feng's introduction is, like any other text, part of the global literary network. The most easily mapped adjoining nodes are Lu Xun's texts and Mao's "Talks." However, Feng never mentions the Great Helmsman in his introduction, so that link is rendered invisible to the reader of the translation, even though it remains sedimented in the text. To the untrained reader, Feng's commentary is legitimate because he or she has no access to the broader constellations called into being by Lu Xun's texts. Of course, the reader can reject Feng's commentary, or simply ignore it, but it is inseparable from Lu Xun's text by virtue of its presence. As English language Lu Xun studies take off, the textual ecology becomes more complex, but Feng's presentation remains influential because it helped produce the first institutionally sanctioned Lu Xun texts in English.

What makes Feng's introduction so potentially powerful is that though it gives readings of Lu Xun's texts, it never reads them. In this Feng is hardly alone. Outside of higher-end trade and scholarly editions, we rarely see any translator or commentator offer

detailed analysis in the front or back matter. Feng's strategy of giving biographical data, historical context, and common interpretations of the main text is not just the result of his institutional backing, but is fairly standard practice in translations or even new editions in the original language when any information is given at all. The content of the commentary certainly owes a great deal to its state sponsors, but the form, with its façade of erudition, is by no means unique to the Communists.

Feng is knowledgeable about his subject, but this knowledge, interesting though it may be for the reader, is a red herring that calls attention away from the project's *skopos*. Neither translations nor interpretations are ever neutral, though many of them may think they are. Feng's translation is no exception, nor would most readers take it to be so, Feng included. As brazenly doctrinaire as the piece appears to be, it still goes to great lengths to mesh its orthodoxy with Feng's pseudo-scholarly presentation. The commissioning authority could have limited Feng's *skopos* to just the party line. Were this the case, the introduction would have read something like this: "Lu Xun was a Chinese Communist; he was a great writer; therefore great writing is a product of Chinese Communism." The argument is fallacious and untrue in the first premise, but it is unconvincing. Syllogisms, faulty or otherwise, are explicit arguments. As atomic units, either alone or as part of larger arguments, they are always already external to the object they argue about. However, syllogisms need not appear as discrete entities. By rendering them as something other than just arguments, their atomic nature fades before the casual reader. This is likely why Aristotle considered the enthymeme the most effective form of argument because it relies on the audience to fill in part of the argument, which in turn requires the claimant to present the argument in such a way that the audience cannot but

arrive at the absent premise. Presentation is key; one must make an argument so that it does not appear as one. The ultimate argument of Feng's piece differs little from the fallacious example above, but it does not appear like that.

The argument is inseparable from the long introduction. The various historical tidbits, unanalyzed citations, and occasional pronouncements all serve to distract the reader from the fact that she or he is reading an argument, an advertisement really, for Chinese Communism. Moreover, by caching the argument in historical information and the performance of textual authority, Feng diminishes the opacity of the boundary between text and paratext. Were the introduction only to present an explicit argument, readers could easily dismiss it as external to the text. This is not to say that any reader mistakes Feng's introduction for being part of Lu Xun's corpus, but since the introduction is given as away to contextualize that corpus rather than as an argument about it, the claim will be less likely to be dismissed out of hand. Similarly, this need for transparency between the text and the paratext is why Feng never reads the texts, instead relying on his authority as an initiate into all things Lu Xun to produce oracular readings of them. For example, Feng characteristically asserts, "In 'Village Opera' above all, with deep feeling and a fine poetic touch, Lu Xun describes the goodness of country folk and the intelligence and spirit of their sons" (23). In a single sentence Feng presents the theme of the story, its characters, and its style. "Village Opera" is not a long story, but this rather cursory exegesis and critique is completed without any recourse to lengthy citations or discussions of aesthetic theory. Feng implies here that "Village Opera" is so transparent that no further analysis is necessary. Furthermore, by offering no analysis he asserts the transparency of his paratext. A long exegesis would undermine the desired

fusion of the text and paratext by reminding the reader that both text and commentary are opaque and discrete, in need of exposition. This move would reverse Mao's policy of leaving the analysis of Lu Xun to the past, which would, of course, be unacceptable.

I mention the hermeneutic circle of text and paratext here not because it is somehow less applicable to the earlier translations, but because the bluntness of the political rhetoric in Feng's piece makes it a better example. The Orientalizing and Americanizing tendencies of the earlier translations suffer from the same distracting facades of erudition. In most of the earlier cases, however, the underlying arguments are less explicit (excepting Snow's), and the translator/commentator is less aware of them (again excepting Snow and possibly Kyn). The explicitness of Feng's presentation is likely not even a result of its politics. As with any language, Chinese has varying registers of formality. The grandiose and effusive praise of Lu Xun in the introduction is at least as much a literal translation of Feng's text as it is the result of political orthodoxy.

The translation itself, a far more insidious participant in the hermeneutic circle than the paratext, tries to strike a balance between fidelity to the Chinese and readability in English. The Yangs domesticate little in their translation, and they do not exoticize either. Proper nouns are usually transliterated, and explanatory comments appear in occasional footnotes. Lu Xun's classically inflected passages are not marked either through a different register of English or through typography. This creates a smoother text in English, but effaces the linguistic play of the original. Whether this was done to render Lu Xun as a purely vernacular writer, which would confirm the populism ascribed to him by Feng, or to make the text easier for English readers is unclear. Given the amount of other historical background given in the footnotes and the general tendency to

preserve other linguistic features of Chinese, such as character-based wordplay, the omission of this important element of Lu Xun's writing is striking. His style is erudite in the extreme, even if it is vernacular. This emphasis on linguistic populism recurs in the translation's diction. Where Lin Yutang translated the closing of the essay "Silent China" as, "We have hereafter only two roads to choose: one is to embrace the ancient literature and die, the other is to forsake the ancient literature and live" (1090); the Yangs have it as, "There are only two paths open to us. One is to cling to our classical language and die; the other is to cast that language aside and live" (*Works* 2:333). Unlike Lin's, their English is terse and direct, as is Lu Xun's original. However, due to morphological differences between Chinese and English, the former will almost always win in contests of brevity. Although their translation captures much of Lu Xun's pointedness, it is often blunted, if more accessible to the English reader. Finally, the footnotes offer the greatest evidence of a politically motivated presentation. Most of the footnotes are purely explanatory, but they occasionally offer political commentary as well.

This first postwar translation into English defined Lu Xun for three generations of Anglophone readers and will likely continue to do so for a few more. A new edition of the *Selected Works* appeared in 2008, though it is difficult to find. The translation called into being a constellation of texts that included the original Chinese works, but also the accompanying paratexts and Mao's "Talks at Yan'an." Though Mao is never mentioned in the translation or its paratexts, his text is indissociably sedimented in them. The publication of the Yangs' translation dramatically reshaped the global literary network, not least of all because it produced English versions of so many texts that previously had

none, but also because it inescapably linked Anglophone Lu Xun reception to government-sponsored institutions from the People's Republic of China.

China was not the only institutional power shaping Lu Xun's texts in the global literary network. In 1961 C.T. Hsia published his enormously influential *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, which defined in nominally scholarly terms what Lu Xun's texts said. Conveniently for the Communists, Hsia agreed with their interpretation, though I doubt he would have characterized it thusly. Lu Xun is little more than a pinkish also-ran in his estimation: "Lu Hsün was, of course, a highly acclaimed writer even before the Communists made him their own hero; they could not have fabricated his myth without the foundation of his appeal and prestige" (Hsia 29). As fair as this sounds, it is the first kind thing Hsia says about the man after a page and a half of invective. He ultimately dismisses Lu Xun as "largely the victim of his age rather than its self-appointed teacher and satirist" (54). The intervening twenty-five pages see a rather dismal evaluation of his stories and several insinuations about his politics. Hsia's history was for years the only major survey of modern Chinese literature available in English, so its influence has been far reaching. Yet since Hsia reads Mao's Lu Xun as much as he does the actual stories, the Communist interpretation gains an institutional endorsement, albeit a negative one.

An "American" Lu Xun

Lu Xun was not an American. Moreover, his works are not American, nor could they be any more than F. Scott Fitzgerald's be Chinese. Like Fitzgerald, Lu Xun's life and work are intimately linked to the era that produced them. This connection is not so much formal as it is cultural. This is not to downplay the major formal developments of

Chinese prose that occur in Lu Xun's work, but to stress the substrate of those developments. Yet William Lyell, a recent English translator of Lu Xun, prefers to take a domesticating approach to his task. He emphasizes the necessity of translating linguistically, with little care for the cultural assumptions he makes about the Chinese language. His approach is not without reason, though, as his translation implicitly targets American readers who would be receptive to his assumptions.

Yet why he thinks these readers would need a new edition of Lu Xun is unclear. By his own admission, there are already "magnificent" editions in English, though he notes he is "entitled to the modest claim of being the first to translate all of Lu Xun's stories into the American branch of the language" (Lyell xlii). Still, the translations into the British idiom⁶ are not idiosyncratic as to dissuade would-be American readers. In fact, that edition has been the standard English language text for some fifty years, so Lyell might have a more specific audience in mind. The publisher of his translations, University of Hawai'i Press, suggests an academic audience, as does his belief that "a translator should provide enough documentation to ensure that the reader can achieve roughly the same understanding – or misunderstanding – of the text that he has himself" (Lyell xlii). However, he does not follow Vladimir Nabokov's zealously scholarly method of explaining "the modulations and rhymes of the text as well as all its associations and other special features" with "footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity" (Nabokov 127). Instead Lyell uses his "abundance" of footnotes to help "win as wide an audience for the translation as possible, expanding the

⁶ The Yangs' version.

circle of readers beyond that group who will read the story in any case because they already are familiar with Chinese history and culture” (Lyell xlii). It seems that Lyell has the general reading public in mind, but this would suggest that he finds some fault with the existing translations of Lu Xun.

If that is the case, he never reveals what that fault is; however, he does point to linguistic problems that he feels specially qualified to tackle. Given that he is an established scholar of Chinese literature, this seems reasonable, but his approach to translation reflects a popular rather than learned understanding of linguistics. With regard to fidelity in translation, he appeals to a supposed radical alterity between English and Chinese: “Chinese and English are very different languages and being *too* true to one...can mean being false to the other” (xl-xli). This claim is either tautological by stating that different languages are different and are necessarily impossible to completely reconcile, or it suggests that Chinese to English translation is a special case. The triviality of the former possibility and his note that Chinese and English are “very” different indicate that the latter possibility is more likely. Of course Chinese and English are different, perhaps more so than English and German or English and French, but this does not place Chinese in a qualitatively distinct realm of linguistic incommensurability.

Lyell’s justification for this supposed difference rests on prevailing Western notions of the Chinese language. He points to tense as “a problem that points up one characteristic of Lu Xun’s style as well as a certain peculiarity of the Chinese language” (xli). This is misleading. True, Chinese does negotiate time in a manner different from inflecting languages like English, but Lyell fetishizes this difference as emblematic of Lu Xun’s style: “many of Lu Xun’s stories are written in a prose so sparsely supplied with

the usual tense markers that their style approaches poetry” (xli). By invoking poetry in this fashion, he gestures toward the tired reading of Chinese poetry as quasi-mystical, stating, “Translate such a poem into English, add whatever inflections you deem appropriate, and though the translated poem may still reflect something of its original beauty, it will invariably lose the timelessness it had in Chinese” (xli). Again, he does nothing here to indicate explicitly why Chinese is qualitatively less equivalent to English than other grammatically distinct languages.

What Lyell poses as a unique problem in translating Chinese is in fact common to all translation. Roman Jakobson, in his semiotic analysis of translation, notes, “Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey” (141). He further explains the exact issue that Lyell discusses: “Each verb of a given language imperatively raises a set of specific yes-or-no questions, as for instance: is the narrated even conceived with or without reference to its completion? Is the narrated event presented as prior to the speech event or not?” (141). Lyell’s appeal to Chinese poetry’s “timelessness” in his explanation of the same phenomenon suggests that he relies on current, popular understandings of the Chinese language as being fundamentally other to the West. In this he owes more to Ezra Pound than he does to John DeFrancis.

These pseudo-linguistic digressions serve as the theoretical basis on which Lyell makes his translations. He “was particularly struck by the problem of establishing a tense in the course of editing [his] own translations,” suggesting that he believes linguistic equivalence, pseudo or otherwise, is the most faithful method of translation (Lyell xli). Yet, these ambiguities are only such in a strict literalist approach to translation. Unfortunately, Lyell’s method for overcoming them is not particularly rigorous, even if

he arrives at a compelling result. He relies on intuition to figure out why his draft translation and others' "failed to reflect the *kind* of experience [he] enjoyed when reading the stories in Chinese," ultimately realizing that "when [he] was reading the original text [he] did not feel that what [he] was reading was happening in the past" (xli). Affect becomes his means of overcoming pseudo-linguistic problems of equivalence.

What is largely lacking from his consideration of translation is an examination of the role of culture in translation. Lyell settles on the present tense for the stories, based of his emotional response, but he could have arrived at the same conclusion had he considered the culture in which Lu Xun worked (xli). Eugene Nida calls attention to the importance of cultural context in translation, arguing that "differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure" (Nida 157). In the case of Lu Xun, the use of the English present tense is an appropriate translation of Lu Xun's fiction, given that he was responding to contemporary discourses rather than critiquing events in the past.

To his credit, Lyell is not entirely insensitive to issues of cultural translation. In his discussion of Lu Xun's complicated use of vernacular and classical prose forms, he recognizes a problem of cultural translation, noting, "Since in English we do not have ready access to a classical register, such constraints are difficult to reflect in translation" (Lyell xl). He employs several methods to convey this difference: "by using an inflated style; by italicizing certain words and phrases; by rhyming certain lines that were not rhymed in the original text; or by using some combination of these devices" (xl). Although his attempt is admirable, and in "Diary of a Madman for example, far beyond that of other translators, the cultural and linguistic differences evident in Lu Xun's play

with the classical language go by largely untranslated in favor of a local, English “stilted idiom” (xln35).

In this we see Lyell’s domesticating efforts at work. He could have translated the classical sections into the English of Chaucer or even of *Beowulf*. Even if this method does not analogously capture the literary difference between literary and vernacular Chinese, it would provide for a similar cultural understanding of reading Lu Xun’s work.⁷ But cultural understanding is not Lyell’s primary goal. He intends instead, echoing Dryden, “to suggest something of Lu Xun’s style in English...often asking myself the question, ‘How would he have said this if his native language had been American English?’” (xl). This is domestication in the extreme.

In this light, all of Lyell’s translation strategies appear to work in concert. His footnotes, rather than explaining the historical structure of the work, provide cultural tidbits to whet the American reader’s cultural palate and ease the consumption of the translated text. Emotion governs his translation, as he wants his readers to feel as he does rather than apprehending any element of the foreign. Even Lu Xun’s celebrated play with language is reduced to simple language games in English. This is not to say that Lyell’s translation is in any way defective or unworthy – quite the contrary. Nevertheless, Lyell produces a representation of Lu Xun that is autonomous and responds to the needs of its readers at the expense of his identity within a complex cultural system.

⁷ Again, this is not entirely accurate. Perhaps the best way to translate the classical language in a non-domesticating fashion would be to rearrange the English syntax and carve words up into recognizable morphemes, but reassemble them in unconventional ways. Then again, Lu Xun’s early readers probably all knew the classical language, so such contrived translating strategies would not reflect their actual reading practices.

Myths Never Die

Until this year, Norton's 2003 edition of the *Selected Stories* was the most widely available translation in English. The relative cost of Lyell's version and the scarcity of other editions of the Yangs' translation allowed Norton to secure a place in what can only be considered a niche market. Or is it? The economics of publishing being what they are, Norton must have seen some profit in publishing a new edition of a collection that was already in print in a relatively recent translation, as well as circulating in a large, if deteriorating second-hand market. My suspicion is that Norton wanted to cash in on burgeoning public interest in China rather than making any substantial contribution to English language Lu Xun discourse.

What suggests this mercenary maneuver is the fact that the text is not new to English readers, but a reprint of an earlier edition. The type does not even appear to have been reset. Thus the Yangs' translation is maintained, as are the footnotes of both historical and political varieties. This in itself is hardly surprising, since the Yangs' translation was the standard in English. However, both the Yangs' 1980 revision to the *Selected Works* and Lyell's 1990 collection rendered Chinese names in the text according to the Hanyu Pinyin system. The 1972 Foreign Languages Press collection, itself based on the first volume of the 1956 *Selected Works*, employs the older Wade-Giles system of Romanization. Considering that Hanyu Pinyin appeared in 1958, we cannot fault the Yangs for using it in 1956. The United States took over forty years to adopt Pinyin in an official, archival capacity: the Library of Congress proposed the transition in 1998 and implemented it two years later (Congress). Academic use of Pinyin occurred earlier, but not universally. Although Norton's use of Wade-Giles Romanization three years after

the United States government's already rather tardy adoption is a result of its reuse of the earlier text, it points to more than just a desire for economy by not emending and resetting the text.

The continued use of Wade-Giles Romanization reveals a fundamental insensitivity to both the Chinese language and the sovereignty of the Chinese state. Doubly so if the decision was made unwittingly. As teachers use this text to represent not only Lu Xun, but also China, one might hope that its publisher would endeavor to reflect contemporary China discourse, which almost invariably occurs in Pinyin when Romanized. Even Taiwan, a long-time Wade-Giles holdout for political reasons – Hanyu Pinyin is a mainland invention – switched to Pinyin in 2008, and used a slightly modified indigenous form from 2002-08. Pinyin does not really represent Mandarin Chinese any better or worse than Wade-Giles. The language has phonemes that English does not, so any Romanization system either has to repurpose existing Roman characters or clusters (e.g. *xi* for [xi]) or coin new ones (*hsi* for the same).⁸ Persisting in the use of Wade-Giles can only serve to confuse non-specialist readers by presenting what appear to be texts competing for accuracy or different texts altogether; students probably would not mistake Lu Hsun for anyone other than Lu Xun, but the classic novel *Journey to the West* poses a greater challenge as *Hsi Yu Chi* or *Xi Youji*.

Trivial as these complaints may seem, they are symptomatic of a larger issue. Two British Sinologists under the auspices of the British Empire developed Wade-Giles; the Chinese in China developed Hanyu Pinyin. To offer, in 2003, as a representative of

⁸ The phoneme in question resembles “sh” in English, but occurs invariably before close front vowels.

China, a text whose very existence in English is contingent on reproducing the legacy of imperialism is an exercise in pathological obliviousness or exceptionally poor taste. The classroom use of this text has the added shortcoming of investing it with institutional authority, thus authorizing the imperialist rendering of Chinese and marginalizing the indigenous representation. Again, the non-specialist student probably will know that Lu Xun and Lu Hsun are the same, but after being taught from this volume, would likely conclude that the latter is somehow more correct.

If only a little linguistic imperialism were the limit of this edition's weak points. Ha Jin's introduction is, in a word, unfortunate. The prominent Chinese-American author does not appear to have carefully read the stories he introduces. Nor did his editor carefully read the piece: most glaring are the bizarre combination of Wade-Giles and Pinyin, as well as a number of idiosyncratic Romanization or typos, and historical gaffes. Lu Xun's name is consistently rendered in Wade-Giles, his legal wife's name, Zhu An, is always in Pinyin, and his student-turned-lover is a combination of both: Hsu Guangping (Ha Jin ix). The unfortunate protagonist of "New Year's Sacrifice," Xianglin's Wife, appears here as "Hsing Lin's Wife" (xiii), which is unorthodox at best. Beyond Romanization, Ha Jin flubs a couple of historical claims out of apparent carelessness. He identifies the journal to which Lu Xun contributed his first vernacular short story as "*New Life*, a major progressive journal at the time" immediately after stating that the source of this assertion was the "preface to *Call to Arms*" (x). Had he actually read that preface, conveniently included in the collection he introduces, he would have known that the magazine he meant was *New Youth*, Lu Xun's reference to which the editors even footnoted, naming it, "The most influential magazine in the cultural revolution of that

time” (Lu Hsun *Selected Stories* 4n2). *New Life*, by contrast, was the failed literary project from Lu Xun’s days in Tokyo (Lu Hsun *Selected Stories* 3). Finally, in his critique of the two stories culled from *Old Tales Retold*, Ha Jin demonstrates his ignorance of Lu Xun’s literary history. “Compared with his literary fiction,” Ha ventures, “I would hesitate to call these tales literature. They read like pieces written for newspaper supplements” (xii). Perhaps these stories are inferior to his earlier efforts, but the comparison is inept: some of Lu Xun’s earlier stories were first published in periodicals and newspaper supplements, including the famous “Ah Q.”

These errors are part of a larger scheme to marginalize Lu Xun as an author. As discussed above, the nonstandard Romanization invalidates China’s right to self-determination, be it political or aesthetic. The other errors compound this marginalization by tacitly asserting that Lu Xun and the China he is mobilized to represent are not worthy of serious consideration. Ha takes this much further by attacking at length Lu Xun’s style. He is prescriptive in the extreme. For him, Lu Xun fails because he is “didactic,” and that is “more that a short story writer should do – he speaks bluntly like a social critic and reformer” (xii-xiii). Of course, Ha never mentions what a short story writer should do, but being a feted writer of short fiction himself, he likely has some examples in mind. This suggests that Lu Xun’s work is under scrutiny here less so because of any stylistic problems and more because it fails to meet the tastes of a particular contemporary readership. Through his insinuations of aesthetic immaturity, Ha subtly bars Lu Xun from the ranks of the truly great authors. Even his statements of praise are laced with this kind of othering contempt: “Lu Hsun is the kind of writer whose greatness cannot be reduced by technical defects in his works” (xiii) or

“Technically many of Lu Hsun’s stories are flawed, though they are genuine literature by virtue of their depth, strength, and gravity” (xi). In other words, he is good, but not good enough. He even manages to tar the entirety of Chinese literary history with this brush by linking Lu Xun to the “traditional Chinese man of letters, who believes that techniques are trivial and that what is important is to cultivate a literary personality” (xi). Apparently unaware of the tremendous irony, he then notes how “Lu Hsun struck a contrast to the high modernists in the West, who at the same time were obsessed with technical innovation – exemplified by Ezra Pound, who insisted that techniques were ‘the cornerstone of the artist’s sincerity’” (xi). Deepening the irony, Ha claims in the next paragraph that “‘A Madman’s Diary’ has a unique position because it is one of the first masterpieces written in the vernacular,” which certainly sounds like a technical innovation (xi). The comparisons to the Western modernists, ignoring work like Tang Xiaobing’s arguing that some of Lu Xun’s work may be read as modernist (1232), make the hitherto implied hierarchy of global literary production explicit: Chinese literature, up to and including that of Lu Xun’s period, is inferior to that of the West. It also perpetuates the dreadfully stale saw that literature achieved perfection with Western modernism and that only those texts that imitate it are truly worth reading.

The roots of this modernist-supremacist position do not lie exclusively in a dispassionate realm of aesthetic contemplation. They never do. Instead, Ha’s hierarchical view of global literary production and condescending attitude toward Lu Xun is politically motivated. He only reaches the second sentence of his introduction before mentioning the Communists (vii). Ha all but names Lu Xun as a Communist, saying in response to a particularly pithy barb of the writer, “This unforgiving spirit is

indispensable to the Communists,” so even if not officially a bad guy, his feelings were appropriately in the wrong place (xiv). Charitably, Ha reminds us that “we should consider this [Lu Xun’s leftism] within the context of his time,” which was China’s semi-colonial period (xiii). This conciliatory tone quickly fades to glibness. Regarding Lu Xun’s congratulatory telegram to Mao and the Communists at Yan’an, “In you lies the hope of China and all of humanity” (qtd. in Ha Jin xiii), Ha responds, “With the advantage of hindsight we see that he was mistaken, but he genuinely believed that the Communists led by Mao Zedong would represent China’s future. His foresight was not completely groundless” (xiii). The Communists still run China, and China is rapidly asserting itself as a modern world power; what is groundless here is unclear. What is unmistakably clear, however, is that Ha Jin has little love for Communism, especially the Chinese variety.

Fretting about Communism in 2003 is almost laughable, though less so in Ha’s case, being a child of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, none of the stories collected here date from Lu Xun’s fellow-traveler period. Still, much of Ha’s introduction deals with Lu Xun’s politics. Even the aesthetic complaints over didacticism and characterization appear as thinly veiled attacks against the political positions taken in the stories. Ha’s object here is not Lu Xun but a certain image of Lu Xun, which he freely admits: “Now it’s necessary to see him as a man in order to appreciate him as a writer” (viii). Ha probably would have been better served by turning right to the stories, but the drive to see past the monumental image of a writer to apprehend the artistic is hardly unprecedented. The image that motivates Ha’s project is indeed monumental: a statue with inscription at the Japanese medical school Lu Xun attended. What is odd is that the

monumental image of Lu Xun that Ha attacks is not the one from this statue, which basically summarizes some biographical detail from the “Preface” to *Call to Arms*. The monumental image of Lu Xun as a crypto-Communist is the unstated predicate of which Ha bases his introduction.

Writing for an English language audience almost certainly unaware of Lu Xun as a political-cultural edifice in China, Ha could have safely dodged the whole issue and framed the texts however he chose. Why then does he force the issue of Communism upon his readers? Because it is sedimented in the texts and their English reception. Bracketing out questions of translation and footnoting within the stories proper, this translation in particular exists in a constellation of paratexts and criticism in English. This constellation, as discussed above, relies heavily on the establishment of Lu Xun as an institutional figure in China. Yet Ha gives us none of the history of textual reception. To the unwitting reader, the author of these texts, and by extension the texts themselves are self-evidently Communist. The introduction says so.

The naïve reader, stumbling across a single story torn from this collection will have no access to the sedimented layers of texts and paratexts, but this does not negate their existence. Even if this reader were unaware that the story had not originally been written in English, he or she could not escape the impact of the literary network, in which the text is always already situated. This is Mao’s great triumph as a literary critic. Sixty-one years after the Yan’an Forum, twenty-seven years after his death, readers still must contend with his framing of Lu Xun. The ongoing republication of translations produced to communicate Mao’s view of Lu Xun to the Anglophone world ensures the continued existence of that Lu Xun. The Yangs’ translation is the condition of possibility for many

readers to access Lu Xun's writing, and Mao's People's Republic of China via its Foreign Languages Press was the commissioning authority of that translation. Even a hostile reading like Ha Jin's cannot escape Mao's influence. As a paratext Ha's introduction simply assumes that the texts themselves are somehow inflected by the red taint; Feng Xuefeng celebrated the same assumption. After Mao, Lu Xun cannot be read without reading also, however unconsciously, the institutions that produce his texts for contemporary audiences. Returning to the Chinese texts – even the manuscripts – would not magically erase the histories of their production or reception. We can read ignorant of those histories, as if they were under erasure, but this is a cheap dodge. Worse, it raises the issue of originality, which is easily parlayed into authority while ignoring the lower strata undergirding the so-called original. Besides, if proximity to the ill-defined origins of the text lends one interpretive authority, Mao Zedong was much closer than any living critic. The only authentic text exists in conversation with others. Originality is a myth. That Mao happens to dominate, however indirectly, the conversation on Lu Xun's texts simply means that the institutions commissioning translations and commentaries remain invested in worldviews in which Chinese Communism remains a menacing force. Mao cannot be excised from the global literary network, but the conversation that obsesses over his legacy exists only because institutions keep commissioning people to participate in it.

To change the conversation on Lu Xun means changing the *skopoi* of those writing about him, which in turn means changing the institutions that commission them. This has largely been accomplished in the academic world, beginning in the late 1970s with the biographical approaches to Lu Xun's texts like William Lyell's *Lu Hsun's*

Vision of Reality, and continuing through the present with work like Paul Foster's literary history, Eva Shan Chou's reader-reception analyses, and Jeremy Tambling's high theory approach. China, too, has seen no shortage of non-doctrinaire scholarship. Even Taiwan has retreated from its institutional hyper-anti-Lu Xun position: one can purchase a locally produced, traditional character edition of the writer's collected works in the island's bookstores. In all of these cases the influence of the Communist interpretation remains, as it should, given its inextricability from historical interpretations of Lu Xun. Nevertheless, it no longer dominates the academic conversation.

More of the Same

The popular conversation remains intractably focused on the leftist political legacy of Lu Xun. Seven years after Norton's most recent rerelease of the Yangs' translation, Penguin published an entirely new translation. The 2009 volume is poised to directly compete with Norton's still in-print collection. Emblazoned on the cover is a sticker announcing the text as a new translation; the volume's subtitle is *The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*. Both advertisements announce the book's superiority of Norton's offering, with its decidedly old (but serviceable) translation and only a selection of stories. Penguin's main title reveals the purpose of the new edition. *The Real Story of Ah Q and Other Tales of China* is not just about introducing a new and improved Lu Xun to the Anglophone world, but exists to profit from China's rise to world power and the resulting anxiety and interest in the West. These mercenary ambitions are not without their consequences.

Handsome as always, the cover art of this Penguin Classic suggests what China the title denotes. We see a man in traditional Manchu-era garb, holding an East-Asian

style umbrella, sporting a queue. He stands on an ancient, crumbling bridge. It is an image of old China, the China in which many of Lu Xun's stories are set. Yet even in the stories, this setting is not static, but one in which cultural upheaval is ongoing.

Moreover, Lu Xun's China was also one of foreign occupation and international exchange. We see none of these elements in the cover photograph, by which the text demands to be judged. It claims to represent an unqualified China: not old China, not Lu Xun's China, not Republican China. The juxtaposition of the Oriental photograph with the claim to representative authority over China a monolithic entity is a mythological sign, after Roland Barthes' formulation: "*it is a second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second" (Barthes *Mythologies* 114). The cover not only tells us that book signifies China as it is, but also that China is not a threat, fixed in an eternal, almost fantastic historical moment. It is a place to which the book can transport us. Penguin capitalizes on Western anxiety over the narrative of runaway Chinese development to tell a different story of Orientalist fantasy, in which China is as the West imagined it prior to the Second World War: subservient, dominated, and Other. This is not the first time a British publisher marketed Lu Xun as Orientalist escapism. At least Routledge could have been expected not to have known better in 1930.

In the book proper, we find a far less brazenly Orientalist portrayal of China, though it remains somewhat other. Julia Lovell, the translator, begins her introduction to the stories with a mostly biographical sketch of Lu Xun's life filled with exotic local color. She needlessly freights otherwise straightforward exposition is freighted with gratuitous spice. For example, Lovell relates, "In 1871 his grandfather Zhou Fuqing had

– to the beating of six gongs – received the honour of appointment by the ruling Qing dynasty to the Imperial Academy in Beijing, the pinnacle of the civil service” (“Front Matter” xiii). The sentences musical flourish, and the typographic force with which she interjects it, shifts the focus from the narration to the trivial but tantalizingly different detail. This is not an isolated incident. She lists – correctly, if salaciously – the young Lu Xun’s influences as “the liberating extravagance of China’s popular folk traditions: his illiterate nurse’s stories of ghosts and demons lurking in the back garden; the phantasmagoria of local operas; the bizarre, monstrous illustrations of the mythological compilation *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*” (“Front Matter” xiii-xiv). Considering the exceptional idiomatic fluency of her English translation, these invocations of a mystical China seem out of place; her references are to ghost stories and folklore, but that is hardly exotic.

Despite the foreignizing aspects of her frame, Lovell offers a fair account of China’s geopolitical situation in Lu Xun’s day. She notes the role of internal conflict and external pressure on the Qing government as an important backdrop for Lu Xun’s development. However, this too veers into the exotic: “Lu Xun’s own family life seems to have been inflected by a certain *fin-de-siècle* melancholy: the clan compounds scattered with lonely elder wives neglected for younger concubines, and lethargic males – Lu Xun’s father included – stifled by failure in the fiercely competitive civil service examinations” (“Front Matter” xiv). Lovell has a point here, which most biographical accounts of Lu Xun will confirm, but she faces a challenging problem: how does she represent the genuine plight of Lu Xun’s family without reducing it to an Orientalist stereotype? In keeping with the theme established so far, she does not rise to the

occasion. Diction is key. A “*fin-de-siècle* melancholy” is a euphemism for decadent and decaying. The European *fin-de-siècle*, assuming she refers to the end of the nineteenth century, was hardly melancholic – at least not at the time. The imperial powers were at their zeniths, particularly with regard to the exploitation of China. The “end of an era” connotation ascribed to the term can only exist in hindsight. Thus by using the term to characterize Lu Xun’s family assumes a distance from and authority over it. This attitude is further confirmed by the inclusion of standard Orientalist tropes centering on the effeminacy and impotence of the Oriental male, here read as “lethargic,” and implied to be somewhat lecherous as well, for they are likely pursuing the “younger concubines.” Even this reference to polygamy, which is of little utility for establishing the circumstances of China broadly or of Lu Xun’s youth, serves to underscore China’s difference from Europe.

Moving beyond Lu Xun’s childhood formation, Lovell changes her tone somewhat. She offers a measured, but wholly positive account of Lu Xun’s failed early forays into literature followed by his success as a writer of vernacular fiction. She concludes the former section by venturing a theory about Lu Xun’s artistic core: “Patriotism battled against his disgust for a diseased China; an earlier belief in the power of the crusading literary genius was corroded by a self-mockery at the futility of his own demagogic impulse; and an evolutionary hope for the future remained in thrall to the ghosts of the past” (“Front Matter” xviii). Much of this is paraphrased from Lu Xun himself in the “Preface” to *Call to Arms* (rendered in this translation as *Outcry*). That she more or less allows Lu Xun to speak for himself is novel among the paratexts accompanying translations of Lu Xun. Lovell does not attempt to make Lu Xun into a

hero of the downtrodden or a champion of the proletariat as we have seen over and over again. Here we see Lu Xun presented at his most human, conflicted, and self-loathing while maintaining a spark of hope for the future.

Unlike Ha Jin's dismissive pseudo-technical criticism and Feng Xuefeng's promotion of Maoist doctrine, Lovell actually reads Lu Xun's texts. Pleasantly for this project, Lovell even acknowledges that "The traces of Lu Xun's cosmopolitan reading habits (in Chinese, Japanese, and German translation) are in evidence throughout: in a lofty command of satire picked up from the Polish Sienkiewicz; in an eerie symbolism refined by his translations of the Russian Andreiev" ("Front Matter" xxi). One might take issue with the privileging of foreign influences over the self-evidently local source material, but the opening discussion of Lu Xun's youth, however flawed, is a useful counterbalance. Of his other translators, only Lin Yutang really emphasized Lu Xun's engagement with foreign literature, and then only negatively. Ironically, the same quotation Lin gives as evidence of Lu Xun's misapprehension of Chinese culture, about reading no Chinese books, appears here as evidence of his cosmopolitanism ("Front Matter" xxi).

The most powerful evidence for her literary critical approach lies in her interpretation of the conclusion to "Ah Q." Lovell turns to the text: "In Lu Xun's grand finale, the reader himself – richly entertained over some fifty pages by Ah-Q's idiocies – is drawn guiltily into the execution's bestial audience: into its 'monstrous coalition of eyes, gnawing into his soul', ogling the horror of Ah-Q's ritual sacrifice (p.123)" ("Front Matter" xxiv). Whether this truly represents an appeal solely to the text or a reading shaped by the growth of less partisan Lu Xun scholarship in the past thirty-five years is

an open question. Lovell even cites a number of post-Cultural Revolution English language studies on Lu Xun as “Further Reading”, which indicates that she is at least aware of the complexity of the global literary network as it pertains to Lu Xun, if not conversant with it (“Front Matter” xl-xliii). On that level, this is a very contemporary and transparent paratext in that it acknowledges its contingency of prior work.

Not all of Lovell’s claims, though, are particularly contemporary. She appeals, rather opaquely, to C.T. Hsia by claiming that “many of the stories collected in *Outcry* and *Hesitation* are, on one level, straightforwardly obsessed with China’s predicament” (“Front Matter” xxi). Hsia’s dismissal of much of modern Chinese literature as “obsessed with China” recalls the hierarchical organization of literary movements, with realism and its social concerns being inferior to aesthetic modernism. Cold warrior that he was, Hsia’s presence in this paratext indicates that Lovell is not yet willing to abandon the institutional interpretation linking Lu Xun to Communism, consciously or not. I suspect, in this instance, it is the latter, since she frames Lu Xun’s political aims with claims of technical brilliance and personal conflict: “At the heart of the catechisms of *Outcry* and *Hesitation* lies a string of unreliable narrators who transform his stories into shrewdly crafted vehicles for casting doubt on literature’s ability to shoulder the political burdens it had taken on at the start of the century” (“Front Matter” xxii). That such a caveat is necessary testifies to the enduring, insidious power of Mao’s politically opportunistic interpretation.

Later Lovell takes on the Communist legacy more directly, again tacitly affirming its continued centrality to the reception of Lu Xun. Lovell goes to great lengths to explain away the author’s Communist sympathies. For her, they were born not out of

genuine conviction or the study of Marxist literary theory, but, “An ambivalent choice forced on him by circumstances,” and that,” Lu Xun’s conversion can also be read as the natural outcome of his earlier fiction’s undercurrent of intellectual guilt” (“Front Matter” xxix). Unlike the “Damascene moment – the most famous conversion in modern Chinese literature” that was Lu Xun’s decision to abandon medicine for literature while in Japan, Lovell makes his later leftism seem like an accident of history or the sad attempt of an old man to stay relevant. She strips Lu Xun of any agency here, and does so very opaquely in contrast with her analyses of the stories, she conveniently omits citations from his numerous pro-Communist polemics. She finally rationalizes his leftism as a benign personal failing, wondering, “Perhaps amid the disunity of the early 1930s, Lu Xun was unable to glimpse even the possibility of an absolutist Party line on literature” (“Front Matter” xxix). Apparently she missed the debates on literary orthodoxy from this period.

Finally, she takes on the Communist interpretation directly. Lu Xun may have been doddering about in his decline, but Mao appears here as a hermeneutic villain of monstrous proportions. Lovell writes off the Communist interpretation as an “oversimplification,” though one in which “lie seeds of biographical truth” (“Front Matter” xxxiii). This ludicrous claim asserts that there exists some wholly depoliticized and objective way of reading either Lu Xun the man or the corpus. Given how willing Lovell has been throughout much of her introduction to acknowledge the various texts informing Lu Xun discourse, this is a stunning reversal; a real Lu Xun can exist, as long as he is not a Communist. Mao’s rhetorical victory at Yan’an “ – the 1942 sermon that defined the principles of literary orthodoxy for the next three decades – ” was merely

taking Lu Xun “out of context” (“Front Matter” xxxiii). Lovell forgets that context is constructed, and that the context Mao constructed in 1942 remains viable nearly seventy years later, even if it is given as the eternal opposition.

To present Lu Xun’s contexts objectively would likely be co-extensive with the entire project of literary cartography discussed in Chapter One, which is probably not what Lovell intended. She stoops to reporting hearsay, as does almost every other Lu Xun critic; she ventriloquizes Mao, who “is said to have admitted, in one of his flashes of honesty, that Lu Xun would ‘either have gone silent, or gone to prison’ if he had lived on through the political violence that the Great Helmsman unleashed from the 1950s onwards” (“Front Matter” xxxv). The extent of the context Mao’s interpretation fabricated receives a gesture here, as does its often-ridiculous logic. For example: “Statistical sophistry neutralized *Wild Grass*’s nine undeniably dark poems with its eleven revolutionary ‘clarion-calls for battle’” (“Front Matter” xxxv). She concludes her diatribe against the Communist deployment of Lu Xun with a recent example. China scholar Arthur Waldron reported on the website of *Commentary* magazine that Lu Xun’s essay “In Memory of Miss Liu Hezhen” was being replaced in Beijing school textbooks with middlebrow martial arts fiction, with the upshot being that since the subject of the essay was killed while protesting in Beijing, the Communists decided it was too reminiscent of the 1989 Tiananmen Incident and thus removed it. Controversy erupted predictably, as it only can on the Internet, with some supporting Waldron’s suggestion of censorship, and others arguing that the change simply marked a reformulation of the canon (Waldron). Lovell minimizes the debate, which got rather heated over at least one email discussion group of China scholars, marginalizes the replacement pieces as

“escapist kung fu texts,” and emphasizes the potential link to Tiananmen Square (“Front Matter” xxxv). Puzzlingly, in the next paragraph, she gestures toward the indifference of young Chinese to Lu Xun, essentially validating the arguments of those claiming the textbook replacements were to modernize the canon.

Lovell closes by, unsurprisingly, asserting the continued relevance of Lu Xun. However, within her platitudes lies the same argument made by the cover: there is a real China, and it is not the dangerous China of current events, dominated by Communism or unbridled capitalism. The real China is nonthreatening and easily apprehended by Western paradigms: “Lu Xun’s life, work and afterlife are a testament to the creativity, cosmopolitanism and intellectual independence of twentieth-century Chinese culture, and the uncertainties and constraints imposed upon it” (“Front Matter” xxxvi-xxxvii). Of course, the positive elements expressed here are largely brought about by Europe, Japan, and America’s imperial designs on China – cosmopolitanism is not an organic process for the conquered. The negative elements “imposed” on China, Communism no doubt, are internal products. Lovell longs for a China uncomplicated by inconvenient calls for self-determination, especially when they are politically unpopular with the imperialists back home. When she concludes that Lu Xun “still has much to teach his contemporary counterparts,” we must ask to what Lu Xun does she refer, and what is it that he can teach (“Front Matter” xxxvii)? Unless she wants to engage in exactly the same kind of sermonizing of which she accuses Mao, Lu Xun will remain irretrievably adrift in the global literary network, growing more slippery as each critic tries to catch him.

* * *

Lovell's translation is very good and reads quite smoothly in English.

However, it reads like an English text, and goes to some length to efface the record of its translation. Lovell admits as much, stating, "A translation that, without compromising overall linguistic accuracy, avoids extensive interruption by footnotes and endnotes can, I feel, offer a more faithful recreation of the original reading experience than a version whose literal rendering of every point dictates frequent, disrupting consultation of extra references" (Lovell "Front Matter" xlv). Sense-for-sense is her method, and it pays off: this is the most accessible English version. Yet her motivation is not accessibility, rather an "original reading experience," and so rationalizes her very slight emendation to the text and aversion to explanatory notes ("Front Matter" xlv-xlv). Unfortunately, English readers cannot have an "original reading experience" for what I hope are obvious reasons by this point. Less obvious is the fact that Chinese readers cannot have such an experience either. Lu Xun's original readers accessed a markedly different configuration of the global literary network than readers today; the constellation of texts called into being by a work like "Diary of a Madman" was much simpler in 1918, lacking as it did any later commentary. After nearly a century of criticism, commentary, and translation, the constellation centered on "Diary" is exceptionally complex. To wit, it is not the same text today that it was when first published.

As in the introduction, Lovell privileges an idea of originality or authenticity that is impossible to achieve. Based on her lengthy polemic against the Communists, she likely wants to recover a version of Lu Xun that has not been co-opted by the politically unpopular. However, the very act of recovering that version and denouncing the co-opters tacitly acknowledges the complexity of the text's reception by reasserting, albeit in

a negative manner, the Maoist claim to the text. Moreover, Lovell wants “to explain – to readers beyond the specialist circle of Chinese studies – his canonical status within China, and make a case for regarding him as a creative stylist and thinker whose ideas about literature can transcend the socio-political circumstances in which he wrote” (“Front Matter” xlv). First, Lu Xun’s canonical status in China is the result of the “Yan’an Talks” and the institutional critical apparatus that grew out of them. Lovell certainly makes this clear in her introduction, but that likely was not what she intended by her jibes. Second, why should Lu Xun transcend his historical moment? Ha Jin dismissed Lu Xun’s essays for being irrelevant to uninformed readers, yet it is precisely because of their historical contingency that the texts are most valuable, either as historical documents or as transparent windows on the global literary network. If we promote Lu Xun, as Lovell desires, as beyond the confines of literary history, we render his texts opaque. All of the sedimented texts and constellated links vanish. Instead we receive a text that, rather than transcending history, has been made to serve another historical moment. Hence we have Mao’s institutional reading, and in spite of her polemics, Lovell has accomplished the same thing.

* * *

The Penguin collection features an afterword by Yiyun Li. The reason for its inclusion are unclear, since Li herself admits that she is not “a disciple of Lu Xun” (412). However, competitor Norton had a paratext by a prominent Asian-American writer, so perhaps Penguin wanted one as well. Like Ha Jin, Li denigrates Lu Xun’s writing as tainted by his political aims: “Lu Xun’s ambition to become a spiritual doctor, and his intention for his fiction to become cultural medicine for the nation’s diseased minds, in

the end, limited him as a storyteller” (413). No readings are given in support of this claim, but paratactically joined to it she offers the comment, “the long shadow he cast in Chinese history has allowed the proliferation of many mediocre works while ending the careers of some of the most brilliant writers” (413). The “long shadow” almost certainly refers to the Communist deployment of Lu Xun, for which Li appears to blame the author himself. She confirms her disdain for Lu Xun’s canonization at the expense of “Shen Congwen and Lin Yutang, for instance,” and then blames him again, saying, “when he set his mind to cure the nation’s spiritual disease with his writing, he had chosen an impossible role as a superhero and a god” (415). Li’s comments not only reveal her political commitments, but also show the extent to which the institutional Lu Xun created by Mao still has currency in English. The similarity of Li’s claims to Ha’s suggest some influence, and like Lovell, in the attempt to humanize Lu Xun by knocking holes in the institutional edifice only calls more attention to it. Li’s perpetuation of the institutional image, and not even antagonistically as did Ha and Lovell, is the proof.

Chapter 5

Lu Xun as World Literature

They cannot represent themselves and must be represented

Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”

Long a staple of Chinese literature and language courses on both sides of the Pacific, due not least to his institutional status forged during the Cold War, Lu Xun emerges in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as an anointed member of the burgeoning world canon. Yet even as he takes his well-deserved place among the literary titans of the world, his inclusion codes him with a certain provincialism. The legacy of his institutionalization in both China and translation indelibly marks him as a Chinese writer. Given that he is a Chinese writer in all the usual definitions of the term, the signification is neither surprising nor intentionally malicious. However, the strength of Lu Xun’s identification with the Chinese writer is precisely what makes him an attractive candidate for inclusion into a world literary canon.

Theorizing World Literature

To determine Lu Xun’s current fate in his American reception, we must interrogate its medium. By drawing on writers like Lu Xun, who have pre-determined ties to a place or discipline, the architects of the new world literature can claim both geographic diversity and institutional interdisciplinarity: watchwords of contemporary academe. World literature, then, does not offer students and scholars a more productive, accurate, or egalitarian view of the world, but weaves an illusion as if it did, all while foreclosing criticism of that illusion.

Interdisciplinarity is a euphemism for self-congratulation. The development of new institutional constructs to address the very real shortcomings of traditional humanistic disciplines certainly derives from the good intentions of their developers. The recent rise of world literature as an academic entity has its roots in a desire to address these issues, yet it presents a new set of issues while only glossing over the old. These new constructs reinscribe old, divisive categories at least as much as they inaugurate new modes of inquiry. The inter of interdisciplinary suggests a crossing of boundaries, a breaking of traditional categories, but in practice, the inter emphasizes the existence of the boundaries rather than their transgression. Given that equitable representation is a major drive behind interdisciplinary initiatives in the humanities, the tacit resurgence of traditional disciplinary logics under the aegis of interdisciplinarity seems counterproductive. Why does an ostensibly interdisciplinary field like world literature assume as a matter of blind faith the integrity of categories prescribed by its disciplinary antecedents?

World literature's central problematics are those of definition: whom does it serve, how is it constituted, where is it sited? In sum, the question of what it is, despite several erudite expositions, remains unanswered. The problem is not new. From Goethe's inauguration of the concept in 1827, to Marx and Engels' exceptionally prescient formulation of it as a byproduct of global capitalism, to the canonical impulses of Charles Eliot, Robert Hutchins, and Mortimer Adler, world literature has endured considerable definitional distress, with each commentator conceiving of the subject in ways fundamentally opposed to his would-be interlocutors. As a result the emergence of

a coherent world literature discourse has been continually deferred. Even today it belongs to the future anterior.

If, however, we grant the yet inchoate discipline a proleptic discursive cohesion, we can discern a common axis along which appear the various world literatures, past and present. This spectrum of world literature theories runs from the prescriptive to the descriptive. The former end is by far the more populous. Along with Harvard's "Five Foot Shelf of Knowledge" and Chicago's "Great Books" we find the contemporary anthologies of world literature. Although they have a far more critical eye for the role of canon than did their predecessors in prescription, they are nonetheless engaged in the establishment of canons. The intended use of these anthologies in classrooms confirms their prescriptive identity regardless of their undoubtedly well-meaning editors.

Near the middle of the spectrum we find David Damrosch. In his aptly titled *What Is World Literature?* he outlines a theory of the field that strives for description, but is constantly waylaid by the forces of prescription. His premise, a not uncritical definition of literary worldliness, rests on the evaluation of a given work's travel and its intelligibility – the making intelligible of the work – in its new surroundings: "works become world literature by being received *into* the space of a foreign culture, a space defined in many ways by the host culture's national tradition and the present needs of its writers" (Damrosch *What?* 283). His account of world literature was a major impetus for this project; Damrosch is a compelling storyteller, and his presentation of literary odysseys as a definition of worldly literature resonates powerfully with those concerned with translation. The selection of his stories, however, limits the applicability of his theory. Not all texts have swashbuckling histories or take the field in battles of the

culture wars. To his credit, Damrosch never claims that his argument is infinitely extensible. Even so, he offers much to be admired. For this project, his assertion that a text, even a text in translation may have a fascinating history sedimented in it has been quite instructive.

However, he looks for these histories in largely prescriptive places. One of his initial examples, the poetry of Bei Dao, is freighted with the baggage of the United States' all-too-simple approach to China and its politics. Bracketing out his summary of a melee between two China scholars, which really says more about that gradations of China scholarship in the academy than it does about the poetry itself, Damrosch seizes on Bei Dao's nominal status as a threat to a perceived Communist authoritarianism. Bei Dao is not simply a poet, but a "prominent dissident poet" (Damrosch *What?* 19). His poetry does speak out against authoritarianism, so the epithet is apt, but the invocation of a Chinese dissident conjures up images of government slaughter and men in front of tanks. This identification positions Bei Dao within the already existing American discourse on China. Damrosch pushes this political reading by citing "two versions of the opening stanza of his most famous poem, 'The Answer,' which became a rallying cry for the Tiananmen protestors" (Damrosch *What?* 22). The reference to Tiananmen Square is gratuitous and has no bearing on Damrosch's argument, but he cannot resist inscribing American China discourse on to Bei Dao. The poem in question actually dates from the 1976 Tiananmen protests, but the undated Tiananmen protestors coupled with the introduction of Bei Dao as a dissident poet evokes the 1989 Tiananmen incident for the American reader. Bei Dao is interesting to Damrosch because he easily fits into an American view of China, not because of any inherent quality to his work. Similarly,

Rigoberta Menchú was a cause célèbre of the culture wars. Goethe, Gilgamesh, and Kafka are fairly predictable inclusions, albeit rivetingly presented. Damrosch's account of Mayan texts moves further from the prescriptive center, but is firmly rooted in debates on postcolonialism. His chapters on Egyptian poetry and the *Dictionary of the Khazars* are unexpected and engaging. The great diversity of work he presents as world literature shores up his theoretical project, but he never pursues it as such. World literature here is a new formulation of prescription, with tantalizing possibilities for description, but the reliance on conventional debates in the American academy keeps Damrosch among the prescriptive.

The descriptive end of the axis is lonely indeed. This is perhaps due to our collective unwillingness to cast off our once sacred roles as the interpreters and gatekeepers of knowledge. The only scholar doing mostly descriptive work on world literature is Franco Moretti, and much of his work would be unrecognizable at best to an open-minded comparatist. As a case in point, a recent article on his research appeared not in *PMLA* or the *New York Review of Books*, but in *Wired* (McGray). Researchers like Pascale Casanova and Gayatri Spivak offer semi-descriptive theories of world literature, but they remain subtly prescriptive in their presentations. For Casanova this appears in her geographical specificity; for Spivak, in her advocacy of the region as a disciplinary logic. Casanova takes Paris to be the capital of her *World Republic of Letters* because “the exceptional concentration of literary resources that occurred in Paris over the course of several centuries gradually led to its recognition as the center of the literary world” (46-7). In her eulogy to Comparative Literature, Spivak sees the embrace of Area Studies as the cure for the former's ills (*Death of a Discipline* 9). Goethe, Marx, and Engels rest

close to the descriptive end, to be sure, but their comments on the topic are brief and rather speculative.

Their speculation, however, does not make them wrong. Goethe probably did not envision the likes of *Harry Potter* and Oprah's Book Club when he declares, "National literature means little these days; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everybody must endeavor to hasten its coming" (Eckermann 94), but Marx and Engels certainly did: "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature" (Marx and Engels 208). The globalization of literature as a commodity cannot be overlooked in any discussion of world literature, but it would be wrong to take global sales figures as an indicator that one text is more "worldly" than another. As any journeyman author will dejectedly admit, the vast majority of texts are not international bestsellers. Moreover, given the economic power of the Anglophone world, any work that is not written in English or easily translated into it is doubly damned to obscurity. I would wager that works exist in Malayalam, Thai, and Zulu, but they do not seem to arrive on the shelves of Borders or Barnes and Noble. Francesca Orsini, regarding the circulation of South Asian texts both locally and internationally, notes,

Literary production in English is triply privileged within this field, drawing on the language's American-based global ascendancy, on the subcontinental legacy of British colonialism and, relatedly, on Indian class divisions: this is the preferred language of the urban middle classes – in the case of the elite, sometimes the only language. Despite official emphasis on Sanskritized Hindi, in practice the ruling

BJP has shown no signs of abandoning English as a status symbol and lingua franca of the global market. (327)

The world of globalized bestsellers is a small one indeed.

Globalization need not be a process linked only to movement in bulk. The term's association with international business may conjure up images of Wal-Mart and McDonalds, comparable perhaps to the *Harry Potters* of world literature, with Whole Foods corresponding to the connoisseur's bookshelf of Nobel or Booker Prize winners. Alongside these narrow, if deep conduits of global cultural exchange we can find nearly an infinite number of miniscule but non-negligible channels carrying minor texts, repurposed major texts, translations, and commentaries. Any serious attempt to produce a descriptive theory of world literature would need to take into account the multitudinous character of global cultural exchange and do so on the terms of the texts exchanged rather than subsuming them under a convenient Western category.

Herein lies a major obstacle for world literature's development. The categorizing drive of world literature theorists robs texts of their specificity and domesticates them for local consumption. Even Goethe, in his invention of the field, engages in this kind of cultural appropriation. He describes his inaugural text of world literature as a Chinese novel comparable to his "*Hermann und Dorothea* as well as to the English novels of Richardson" (Eckermann 92). The study of the Chinese and European novels is an active and exciting project in comparative literature scholarship, but even in the most generous estimates, the Chinese novel develops very differently from its European counterpart. Considering Goethe wrote a novel simply titled *Novel*, he likely had some opinions on

the genre's form, so to claim that the Chinese text is a novel is an act of cultural appropriation through categorization.

Of course, the most insidious category infecting contemporary theories of world literature is central to its mission of giving voice to previously underrepresented traditions. That category is literary tradition itself, or more precisely, national literary tradition. The persistence of the nation as a category within an ostensibly supranational category such as world literature is unsurprising given that the nation remains the primary organizing logic for academic literary study. Even the comparative in comparative literature has roots in examining national literary traditions. Although our field exams may no longer be in English, French, and German, the continued dominance of European literary and theoretical constellations renders many of our claims to inclusiveness and interdisciplinarity rather hollow.

World literature, in any of its current theoretical manifestations, is far from the panacea intended by its more hopeful proponents. Instead it reproduces the ailing categories of national and comparative literary study. Worse yet, world literature's deluded belief that it can rise above those categories simply because its theorists lived through the culture wars compounds its implication in the very traditions it seeks to surpass. Absent from much of world literature is the self-flagellation that permeates established literary disciplines. Instead world literature – and I target the anthologies here – presents a view of global literary production in which all texts and traditions appear equally and harmoniously. The juxtaposition of European high modernism and postcolonial texts, mixed with some East Asian works in a single volume – as does Norton's anthology – is both pedagogically irresponsible and obscene when considering

the fraught relationships between metropolitan literatures and their colonial others. No cursory introduction could hope to explain the significance of Derek Walcott, Aimé Césaire, and Chinua Achebe as postcolonial writers, let alone meaningfully define what postcoloniality is for each writer (without even raising thornier questions of Irish or African-American postcoloniality). The concatenation of authors in this manner suggests that, like the nation, the postcolonial exists as an a priori category while effacing the specificity of each text's historical situation. World literature, and indeed any field of literary study that relies on nebulously defined categories, constructs its object as a flattened, ahistorical simulacrum of the richly textured relief map that is global literary history.

Reading Anthologies

Contemporary world literature in practice, such as the anthologies, is a photograph of that map, and this is its greatest shortcoming. Whether prescriptive or semi-descriptive, the reliance on categories forecloses the possibility of an encounter with global literary production as it exists. Again, the nation remains the most salient example of this kind of ahistoricism, though movement and period are also strong contenders. These latter two categories have more meaning within an already defined category because it affords much greater resolution and is likely more culturally appropriate. To speak of nineteenth century or Victorian literature inside of British literature makes use of established, if occasionally contentious, cultural and historical constructs. However, in the supercategory of world literature, the Victorian means little outside of the British Empire, and even within it, what the Victorian means to Tagore may differ substantially from what it means to Kipling. The seemingly more neutral nineteenth century has

limited applicability in non-Western contexts. To lump the late Tokugawa period with the Meiji in Japan just because both occurred in the nineteenth century seems absurd given the dramatic cultural upheaval experienced as a result of the United States' forced opening of Japan in the 1850s. China, on the other hand, had a rather unremarkable nineteenth century on the literary front, so this periodization could be and has been used to argue for a Chinese cultural inferiority. This argument conveniently forgets that China had other problems at the time, like combating European imperialism.

Even if we do eschew period as a category, we still have the nation to contend with. The national language disciplines have made great strides in recognizing that their respective traditions are not monolithic but polyvocal. The conservative punditry in this country may decry the proliferation of hyphen-American literatures, but the increasing acknowledgment of America's variegated literary landscape provides a more textured relief of its historical map. World literature, in its current form, does not have the same luxury, if only due to practical limitations of the publishing industry. Taking again Norton's six-volume *Anthology of World Literature* – alternatively Longman or Bedford's comparable anthologies – the nation remains a fundamental unit of representation. On one hand this is admirable, because it places texts from less commonly taught traditions on equal footing with those from the metropolitan literatures. On the other hand, this assumes that national literary traditions can be represented by a handful of texts.

The violence of representation here is twofold. First, the anthologies tacitly claim that national traditions are a priori constructions and so can serve as an organizing logic. Defining characteristics such as language or place become less so when we consider the

number of major American writers who were expatriates who supposedly belong to their home country's canon. In terms of language, few consider Conrad to be a Polish author because he wrote in English, but most consider Beckett to be an Irish writer even though he wrote in French. (How a mongrel work like *Finnegans Wake* gets classified as anything is beyond me, and yet it does). As the belated and ongoing acknowledgment of hyphen-American literatures shows, if national literary traditions exist at all, they do so as a constantly evolving network of texts in conversation with each other. Ultimately much of national attribution comes down to prescription, since the purely descriptive approach would have to account for all possible categories rather than settling on a static national identity. As a result, the national traditions supposedly represented in the anthologies cannot be anything other than a hyper-prescriptive abstraction of national literary production, as much as it can exist. Standing in for twentieth century China in Norton are Lu Xun and Zhang Ailing. Literary titans, to be sure, but would anyone agree that William Faulkner and Gertrude Stein adequately represent twentieth century American letters?

The second crisis of representation is the belief that a handful of texts can or should represent a literary tradition. This goes far beyond the abbreviated canons described above. Once the anthology assumes that it can represent literary traditions, though actually conjuring them out of a few texts, it then goes on to represent those texts *as* the tradition. Likely no reader will think that twentieth century China produced only two authors, but those two must have been among the most important because they were in the anthology. Suddenly the complexity of Chinese literary production disappears in favor of a conveniently packaged literary morsel, ready for consumption. The

representation of national literary traditions as such is perhaps forgivable considering that it undergirds almost all literary scholarship; however, the gastronomic presentation of those traditions echoes the sensationalist racisms of the Orientalists, except this is done in the name of pluralism and tolerance.

Both of these representations are prescriptive in the extreme. Using the category of the nation circumscribes literary study as the study of traditions that may or may not exist. Interdisciplinary, multicultural, pluralistic, or world literatures cannot exist as long as literary scholarship subordinates texts to the nation. Moreover, as long as scholars constitute those nations through prescribed canons, world literature will remain nothing more than an expedient for cultural consumers and university administrators. Looking at the anthologies in detail, we find that this violence of representation is not accidental or even avoidable. It is the condition of possibility for their existence.

If I have been hard on the anthologies of world literature, it is not due to their lack of effort. All three of the major anthologies represent serious attempts to offer teachers and students useful compendia of texts versatile enough to serve any number of potential pedagogical frameworks. That the editors proceed in their tasks not with resignation but enthusiasm speaks to the persistence of a utopian hope for world literature. That the anthologies really are far more inclusive than at any previous date testifies to the measurable progress that has been made toward that hope. Responsibility for the great failure of this project lies not with the efforts of the anthologists, but with their beliefs.

They have proposed for themselves an unattainable telos. No anthology – no library – could ever aspire to universal inclusivity, bracketing out for a moment electronic projects like Google Books. Of course, no anthologist explicitly states that as his or her

goal; to be superior to earlier or competing editions is enough. Nevertheless, even the implicit positing of a continuum of inclusivity or global reach rests on the assumption that a collection could always be more inclusive. Since a universal or even increasing inclusivity rapidly becomes unwieldy, particularly on a physical level, after a certain point, anthologists must adopt methodological shortcuts that signify inclusivity without actually practicing it. The very first sentences of the preface to the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* express both the belief in an ameliorative spectrum of inclusivity as well as its methodological shortcuts:

The first edition of the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* to appear in the twenty-first century offers many new works from around the world and a fresh new format that responds to contemporary needs. The global reach of this anthology encompasses important works from Asia and Africa, central Asia and India, the Near East, Europe, and North and South America – all presented in the light of their own literary traditions, as a shared heritage of generations of readers in many countries, and as part of a network of cultural and literary relationships whose scope is still being discovered. ("Preface" xv)

The preface begins by telling us how shiny and new this edition is, declaring itself to be more inclusive than its (soon to be named) predecessors by featuring “many new works from around the world.” More works from more places is self-evidently preferably to whatever Norton left behind in the dark ages of the twentieth century. Ponderous as the anthology may be – about eleven pounds – it is not all-inclusive, and thus resorts to the familiar shorthand of place. Its listing of places is almost fully global, Australia and Oceania being conspicuously absent, but the divisions among the regions reinscribe

historical, colonial boundaries, undermining the already suspect claims to a genuine inclusivity. The simple comma dividing a list seems innocuous enough, and perhaps would be if the list's contents were presented in parallel. But they are not. "Asia" broadly paired with "Africa" suggests something of the exotic; "central Asia and India," a very British imperial grouping; "the Near East" is the Orient; "Europe," of course, stands alone; and "North and South America" bring in the New World. Even if this reading is uncharitable, to claim that constituent texts are "all presented in the light of their own literary traditions" suggests that the regions named above have cohesive literary traditions at the named level of geographic abstraction. That some arguably do is not an excuse for forcing one on those that do not. Geopolitical categories inevitably surface with the invocation of "a shared heritage of generations of readers in many countries," thereby reasserting the supremacy of the nation as the fundamental division of literary studies. The most interesting and original claim, that these texts are "part of a network of cultural and literary relationships," lets the editors off the hook for not exploring it, since its "scope is still being discovered." Then again, had that network already been fully theorized and mapped, this dissertation would be even more superfluous.

Having played its breathtakingly predictable hand in its first two sentences, *Norton's* preface amplifies these assumptions in mundane ways. Mundane as they are, they continue to showcase the persistence of prescriptive Western aesthetic categories as the criteria for inclusion in the anthology, apparently to assuage readers upset over the title change (from *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*) and its more global focus:

In altering the current title to *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, we do not abandon the anthology's focus on major works of literature or a belief that

these works especially repay close study. It is their consummate artistry, their ability to express complex signifying structures, that gives access to multiple dimensions of meaning, meanings that are always rooted in a specific setting and cultural tradition, but further constitute, upon comparison, a thought-provoking set of perspectives on the varieties of human experience. ("Preface" xv)

This is the clearest answer to David Damrosch's question about the nature of world literature. Unfortunately, it firmly centers the world of world literature not only in the West, but also in the twentieth century. This reads like an encomium of high modernism, with basic concessions to the local color of non-Western texts. The allusion to William James suggests either that human experience is universal but modulated through local lenses, or that its "varieties" are qualitatively different from each other. Neither option is particularly appealing. The first is an existentialism-lite, or worse, a warmed over utopianism. The second is frightening in its resemblance to the excesses of Darwin's misinterpreters. More charitably, the reference to "human experience" here indicates the sort of depoliticized approach to literature found in undergraduate course catalogs and hawked to readers seeking confirmation of their suburban cosmopolitanism. "Human experience," so generally put, otherwise has no utility as an aesthetic criterion. Far more challenging than finding a work expressing a variety of "human experience" would be finding one that does not. Some animals can be coaxed into painting, but research is still pending on non-human literatures. Ask the eco-critics.

Just as all human-produced works implicitly make some comment on "human experience," so too are all works on some level "rooted in a specific setting and cultural tradition." Language alone grounds a text in a tradition, though the extent to which a

particular text participates in that tradition is open to debate. Lu Xun's work is a classic example, as explored in Chapter One. Yet the emphasis on this "rootedness" may be a red herring. As Timothy Brennan argues, the international literary prizes force texts into categories based on Western models while ignoring local specificities:

Instead of confirming the victory of reform, the awarding of the Nobel Prize in literature to authors from Colombia, Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico, Saint Lucia, and Afro-America in an almost unbroken succession in the 1980s and early 1990s gave ongoing lessons in the varieties of containment, and it is here that sublimation and cosmopolitanism have been largely identical. (200)

Few of the works in this anthology date from a time when such a discussion would be relevant, but those in the final, modern volume certainly do. That the Chinese selections appear juxtaposed with European high modernism suggests some of the ignorant cosmopolitanism that Brennan adduces.

Nevertheless, we might take the anthology at its word and ask what is the standard for this cultural localization. How are Lu Xun and Zhang Ailing more emblematic of China than Mao Dun and Ding Ling? Considering that Lu Xun's relationship to "Chineseness" was anything but uncomplicated, and that Zhang Ailing's name was really Eileen Chang and she spent the last four decades of her life in the United States, the criteria for cultural rootedness is entirely unclear. More troubling is that such criteria would be posited in the first place. Again, it presupposes that fixed cultural identity not only exists, but also is somehow quantifiable.

The remaining criteria, drawing on vaguely defined aesthetic categories like "artistry" are almost entirely contingent on the assumption that Western literature from

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represent the gold standard for literary analysis. The artist, with his or her incumbent “artistry,” is a product of European romanticism. Apart from indicating that a work is the product of a singular genius, “artistry” tells us nothing. To define a given work’s artistry often requires a bit of artistry of its own: compare the distressingly banal Nobel Prize citations with Benjamin’s “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire.” None of this is to say that literary criticism does not exist outside the West. The Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai has long been recognized as a supreme master of the Chinese lyric (*shi*), but to apply the term “artistry” to his work without qualification is both anachronistic and ignorant of thirteen centuries of Chinese commentary. With non-Western writers like Lu Xun, who was keenly aware of romanticism’s legacy (cf. “Mara” “Mara”), unqualified attributions of “artistry” may be more appropriate, but they still subsume the Chinese writer under the Western category without accounting for any mediating effects of its reception in China.

“Complex signifying structures” and “multiple dimensions of meaning” are either sopas to poststructuralists or fetishists of modernism. Yes, Joyce is complex. But if a professional reader or properly motivated student cannot find these things in any text, he or she is not looking hard enough.

Although ill-advised and signifying far more than what the editors intended, this declaration of criteria assures the reader that the works selected for inclusion are good, according to a culturally imperialist aesthetic, but good nonetheless. Whence the great drive for quality? For every reader of James Joyce there were probably ten of Zane Grey; the erudite stories of Lu Xun and Zhang Ailing competed with the popular fiction of the derisively named Mandarin Duck and Butterfly school. If the anthology really aims to

represent culturally specific human experiences, popular works seem far more useful than works of great “artistry.” In his 1938 response to Ernst Bloch’s defense of expressionism, Georg Lukács argued, “Similarly, the fact that a literary work or a literary trend is greatly in vogue does not in itself guarantee that it is genuinely popular. Retrograde traditionalisms, such as regional art [*Heimatkunst*], and bad modern works, such as thrillers, have achieved mass circulation without being popular in any true sense of the word” (53). Quality, it seems, is a poor indicator of the cultural rootedness the anthology seeks to communicate. Many of the works in the anthology are representatives of popular traditions, although they are juxtaposed rather haphazardly with examples of authorized or high literature. Whether this is done to lend authenticity to the high literature or to legitimate the popular literature is unclear. Judging from the specified aesthetic criteria, the latter seems more likely. Doggerel, pamphlets, even pornography can all be instructive for readers in search of the local color, but since these forms do not lend themselves to determinations of “artistry,” they remain absent from Norton’s collection.

The self-congratulation over the collection’s increased inclusivity betrays how spurious that inclusivity is. Later in the preface, the editors proudly claim,

To increase our understanding of individual authors’ achievements, we join to the Indian Rabindranath Tagore’s story *Punishment* a selection of the Bengali poems with which he revolutionized literary style in his homeland, and to the Chinese Lu Xun’s two tales, examples of his poetry from *Wild Grass*. (“Preface” xviii)

I cannot comment on Tagore as I can on Lu Xun, but the parallel presentation of the authors is telling of the editors’ intentions. Both Tagore and Lu Xun are identified by

national epithets; Chinese may be a linguistic tradition, but Indian certainly is not, at least not in the same way as Chinese. Moreover, Indian as a national identifier is entirely proleptic when applied to Tagore: he lived and died as a subject of the British crown (1861-1941). Ironically, his local identity, Bengali, is explicitly mentioned as his “homeland,” making the anachronistic national identifier even more puzzling, other than to reinscribe the national as the constituent unit of world literature. We should not argue with the impulse to better represent the included authors, but this presentation of Lu Xun is misleading. The poems from *Wild Grass* deserve greater recognition, in both the West and China. However, they are not poems; they are prose poems. A quibble, perhaps, but few would formally confuse *Les Fleurs du mal* with *Le Spleen de Paris*. Furthermore, Lu Xun wrote lyric poetry throughout his life, so the misidentification of the texts in *Wild Grass* is confusing as well. The prose poems represent Lu Xun at his closest to Western modernism. They concern his alienation from modern life and mark an aesthetic milestone in Chinese literature as the inauguration of the prose poem as a genre. In addition, they are avant-garde for reasons other than their novelty. Were they published contemporarily in Europe they would likely be classed as surrealist. In the Chinese literary tradition they may share something with the shamanic *sao* poems, but no such link has been conclusively established. This second resonance was probably not on the editors’ minds; successively following the selections from Lu Xun are a story from *Dubliners*, extracts from *A Room of One’s Own*, and “The Metamorphosis.” Granted, the organization of this volume does not follow any obvious pattern, but when taken with the editors’ stated intention to promote a better understanding of writers like Lu Xun, the selections from *Wild Grass* and their location in the anthology place Lu Xun within a

discourse of European high modernism. No contemporary examples from the Chinese avant-garde appear, like Shi Zhecun or the *Lun Yu* group, thus making Lu Xun's aesthetic novelty in the prose poems legible only through the lens of Western modernism.

Wild Grass does represent an aesthetic achievement by Lu Xun, but it does not tell much about his later aesthetic development. Interesting as that work is it is an aporetic move for Lu Xun. After its 1927 publication, he published no more creative works until 1935's *Old Tales Retold*. His essays from this period show a markedly different figure from the aestheticism of *Wild Grass*. In them emerge Lu Xun's commitments to proletarian literature and translation. These say far more about the general thrust of his development than do a couple selections from an exceptional but ultimately aberrant work. Furthermore, the inclusion of some essays would have the added benefit of illustrating the contentious intellectual milieu of Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s, which surely would be of interest to an anthology of world literature, particularly one that seeks to link authors with their national circumstances. Besides, given that an essay from Freud appears in this collection, a couple three-page essays from Lu Xun would not be out of place. That those essays are not present indicates all the more strongly that the anthology seeks to subsume texts from the Other under Western categories rather than allowing them to stand in their own discursive structures.

The actual presentation of Lu Xun is misleadingly innocuous. Evacuated from the author and his texts are his ties to classical Chinese culture, his leftism, and his multifaceted approach to cosmopolitanism. We see instead a reductive gloss painted over his life and works: "Lu was a controlled ironist and a craftsman whose narrative skill far exceeded that of most of his contemporaries; yet underneath his mastery the reader senses

the depth of his anger at traditional culture” (“Lu Xun” 1918). The affirmation of his literary talent is a pleasant change after reading Ha Jin and Julia Lovell’s disparaging remarks, but it is not well supported by the included texts. The irony, perhaps, but regarding narrative, “Diary of a Madman,” one of Norton’s selections, is experimental, as are the two pieces from *Wild Grass*. “Upstairs in a Wineshop” has a complex but clear narrative and features several moving, lyrical passages, but it too does not necessarily merit the superlative ascribed to it. Even if we accept the claim that Lu Xun was so much better than his contemporaries, we might ask for more evidence than the citation of his “narrative skill.” In its hyperbolic context this seems less like an evaluation of narrativity in his writing and more a dressed-up assertion that he was a good writer, echoing the comments about “artistry” from the collection’s preface.

Such an assertion is necessary when the reductive presentation undercuts a more complex claim to fame. Rather than adducing the full scope of his work, the editors tell us, “Few writers of fiction have gained so much fame for such a small oeuvre. His reputation rests entirely on twenty-five stories published between 1918 and 1926, gathered into two collections: *Cheering from the Sidelines* and *Wondering Where to Turn*” (“Lu Xun” 1918). *Wild Grass*, his lyric poems, his scholarly works, and his essays all find mention in passing; his translations go unreported, as does the collection *Old Tales Retold*. To the editors, Lu Xun is primarily a writer of fiction, and should be evaluated as such. This has the effect of further domesticating Lu Xun into a context of Western modernism. By ignoring the elements of his oeuvre that ground him in a particular local discourse, namely the essays and the translations, this introduction forces Lu Xun into the artificial realm of world literature as a writer of fiction. The emphasis on

his fiction obscures the constellations of both local and global texts sedimented in his works, including in the stories.

The simplistic rendering of these texts as an ironic attack on Chinese tradition, though not untrue, denies their intimate connection with that tradition. All the better to construe them as decisively modern works and to place them in the pantheon of other, similarly modern works. Sportingly, this introduction mentions Lu Xun's classical education, but only to paint it as fodder for his later criticism: "Sometimes he displays this learning in his fiction, but there it is always undercut by irony" ("Lu Xun" 1918). This is true in "Diary," but the editors would have a much more difficult time arguing that claim about "Kong Yiji" or any of the *Old Tales Retold* – conveniently absent from the anthology.

The rest of the introduction gives some biographical detail about Lu Xun and some rudimentary criticism of the included stories. Most of the former comes from the "Preface" to his first collection of stories. We see the execution that motivates his change from the study of medicine to that of literature, but not the allegory of the iron house. This rather conspicuous absence seems intentional. To include it would be to present Lu Xun as something other than a committed critic of tradition. The comparative lack of comment on the selections from *Wild Grass* also raises suspicions of the editors' desired portrayal of Lu Xun. After five paragraphs explaining how the two stories attack traditional culture, the prose poems get a single meager sentence: "The final selection is from Lu Xun's collection of prose poems, *Wild Grass*, published in 1927" (F:1920). All this tells the reader is that those works fell outside the stated creative period of 1918-1926 ("Lu Xun" 1918, twice), thus marginalizing them further. Since *Wild Grass* represents

Lu Xun at his most introspective and least self-assured, integrating it into the simple portrayal given of Lu Xun would be quite the challenge. One might wonder why those two pieces were included at all, but the anthology's preface explicitly said that they provided some nebulous scope to the "authors' achievements" ("Preface" xvii). That scope appears to be less important than when it challenges the overall representation of the author. Thus the selections from *Wild Grass* become little more than signifiers of comprehensiveness rather than substantial texts in their own right or even an important part of Lu Xun's corpus.

Similarly, Lu Xun's political complexity appears as subordinate to his essence as a satirical writer. Though this introduction never identifies what his initial political commitments were, other than anti-traditionalist, it informs the reader of their late development: "During the last decade of his life, he became a political activist and put his satirical talents at the service of the Left, becoming one of the favorite writers of the Communist leader Mao Zedong" ("Lu Xun" 1919). Apparently, Lu Xun was politically uncommitted prior to this, which marginalizes the political content of his earlier works. "Political activist" is defined quite narrowly here, as it excludes the earlier Lu Xun. However, since he never joined a political party, the definition may not be that narrow after all. The gratuitous references to "the Left" and Chairman Mao shed some light on the situation. Lu Xun's political engagements prior to his Marxist turn were all rather local, dealing as they did with issues of Chinese sovereignty and women's rights. Only when he participates in a more broadly recognizable movement, even though the Chinese left was far from the monolithic entity implied here, do his political commitments register as such on the world literary scale. And yet no texts from this period appear in the

anthology, forcing the reader to accept the paratextual introduction as authoritative.

The invocation of Mao only confirms that authority: Lu Xun only gains a political identity by his association with a world-historical figure. This is the legacy for world literature of the Cold War and its attendant institutional translation. The world literary Lu Xun is squeaky clean and can be guilty of unpopular politics only by association.

The translation of the stories is William Lyell's. Ng Mau-sang translated the prose poems. Both translations are serviceable, the previous chapter's comments on Lyell's notwithstanding. However, the editors give no account of the history of Lu Xun in translation. As we have seen, Lyell is not without his motivations. The presentation of these texts in translation, whether intentional or not, has the effect of sanctioning those translations as authoritative, at least for the purposes of the anthology. Admirably, the editors do give readers a brief bibliography for further reading, consisting of Lyell's *Hsün's Vision of Reality*, Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Voices from the Iron House*, and the collection *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, edited by Lee ("Lu Xun" 1920). That all three volumes are English language works is to be expected, given the intended audience of the anthology. Actually, these texts feature frequent citation of Chinese language sources and are useful studies of Lu Xun; however, they represent a somewhat limited view of the author, arriving as they do within an eleven-year span of each other. Those eleven years were crucial for American Lu Xun scholarship, since following the death of Mao in 1976, they saw the rehabilitation of the writer from the dismissive Cold War interpretation of C.T. Hsia and the propaganda machine of the People's Republic of China in venues like the Beijing-backed journal *Chinese Literature*. Yet these recuperative efforts respond to those earlier critiques, just as Lyell's "American" translation responds to the Yangs'

“Communist” translation. In both translation and contextualization, the editors have sanitized Lu Xun. Rather than presenting him as a complex figure through his texts or his contested legacy, the anthology renders him and his work inert by omitting any serious discussion of their respective histories. For Norton, the global literary network does not exist outside of what the anthology culls from it. Instead of the dense network of textual constellations sedimented in each work, we see only its simulacrum.

Lu Xun’s only contemporary Chinese context in the anthology is Zhang Ailing’s novella *Love in a Fallen City*. The anthology presents that text much like it does those of Lu Xun: basic biography and light criticism, veering into summary. Unlike the presentation of Lu Xun, that of Zhang attempts to show her work in a more complex textual context. In this effort, though, it falls back on the same obscurantist moves it made with Lu Xun. C.T. Hsia, as Zhang’s great American champion, is the major informant here, whom the editors deploy to paint Zhang as a transnational writer:

In many ways the case of Zhang Ailing embodies the complexities and strange historical twists of a national literature finding its place in a global community – in this case, the literature of a nation with an immense and intellectually vibrant diaspora. Often acclaimed as the best Chinese writer of the mid-twentieth century, Zhang Ailing’s reputation was established by a member of that diaspora:

C.T. Hsia, a Chinese professor with a doctorate in British history from Yale University teaching Chinese literature at Columbia University. (“Zhang” 2735)

Under the barrage of Hsia’s credentials, apparently intended to make Zhang’s text cosmopolitan by proximity, several important elements go unstated. Hsia was a notorious cold warrior, and Zhang was very conservative compared to most of her literary

contemporaries. Her own political commitments are glossed over: “Her marriage, albeit brief, to the collaborator Hu Lancheng and her own passive acceptance of Japanese rule made her suspect after the war, and her family background placed her in an even more uncomfortable position when the Communists took Shanghai and the People’s Republic of China was established” (“Zhang” 2735). Zhang’s personal politics are ambiguous at best, but this presents her as a victim of circumstance, or at worst as having questionable judgment. Any political impact on her work or her celebration by Hsia conveniently disappears under this veneer. Just as with the presentation of Lu Xun, the contentious nature of modern Chinese literature, and more pressingly, the Western reception of Chinese literature is absent. In their places the anthology gives only artificially constructed textual constellations. Norton presents an ersatz totality of global literary production.

Curiously, the anthology does try to account for the effects of translation. Maynard Mack’s “A Note on Translation” is appended to each of the volumes as the first item in the back matter. It begins promisingly enough, adopting a wholly appropriate Diltheyan hermeneutics to explain the influence of the producing world on four centuries of Homeric translations. The analysis is both technical and theoretical, recognizing both linguistic and cultural concerns, going so far as to elucidate in different words a version of *skopos* theory (M. Mack A4). Apart from a complete absence of these insights from the paratextual material in the body of the anthology, this “Note” offers a thoughtful response to the necessity of translation in the anthology.

Unfortunately, the piece goes on for seven more pages. The exclusive focus on poetry – on one poem – thus far raises the question of the impact of translation on prose.

Mack responds that there is none: “Since the prose of a treatise and of most fiction is preponderantly referential, we might rightly feel, when we have paid close attention to Cervantes or Montaigne or Machiavelli or Tolstoy in a good English translation, that we have had roughly the same experience as a [native] Spaniard, Frenchman, Italian, or Russian” (M. Mack A4). The outrageousness of this claim lies not in his belief in the translinguistic comprehensibility of fiction, which he qualifies, but in the transhistorical identity of fiction in translation. After explaining the role of contemporary context in the translation of the *Iliad*, to dismiss it entirely in fiction is irresponsible. Although, his focus on poetry was on the deployment of tropes in translation, so perhaps the influence of extra-textual historical elements went unconsidered there as well.

Mack redeems himself slightly by recognizing the ability of translation to create new works rather than just imitate their sources. However, this seems to be limited to the truly great translation, “like John Ciardi’s translation of the *Divine Comedy* for our time, the result will be not only a sensitive interpretation but also a work with intrinsic interest in its own right – at very best, a true work of art, a new poem” (M. Mack A4-5). The emphasis on aesthetic superiority limits the application of this concept of novelty in translation from the vast majority of translated texts in the anthology. We thus are to take them as pale imitations, and not ask after their origins. The presentation in the anthology remains authoritative.

Mack concludes the essay with a discussion of translating Chinese and Japanese lyric poetry. He repeats many of the execrable notions of the “Eastern counterpart” to the “Western impulse,” of which the less is said, the better (M. Mack A7).

A final issue with Norton's anthology, regarding its presentation of Chinese texts, is its inconsistent transliteration of Chinese. Given its stated interest in showing texts in the context of their literary traditions, the use of both Wade-Giles and Pinyin romanizations is both counter-productive and confusing. The anthology takes care with its transliterations of Sanskrit, marking all necessary diacritics, so the sloppy variation in systems for Chinese is unexpected. Furthermore, even though the selections come from existing translations, some of which used Wade-Giles, all the text in the anthology was set specially for its printing, so the various minor emendations to render Chinese consistently does not seem too difficult. The romanization systems shift in the final volume, excepting the eighteenth century author Cao Xueqin, whose name is inexplicably rendered in both systems. This suggests that the Wade-Giles system is used to indicate antiquity. Julia Lovell adopted this strategy (wrongly I believe) in her translation of Zhang Ailing's novella *Lust, Caution* (Lovell "A Note" xxi). Alternatively, the switch corresponds to a change in editors: classical Sinologist Stephen Owen edited the Chinese sections up to the twentieth century, at which point general editor Sarah Lawall stepped in to oversee the entirety of the final volume, in which the Pinyin romanizations appear. Whatever the reason, the presence of both Romanization systems typographically fragments the anthology's desired unity for the Chinese literary tradition it presents.

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Norton's anthology may hold a certain pride of place in discussions of world literature by dint of either the notoriety of its imprint or its being the first to market, but it is not alone. Bedford/St. Martin's and Longman have also released similar six-volume anthologies. Although these two more recent collections largely follow Norton's lead,

their particularities reveal more about the anthology project for world literature as a whole. The newcomers make explicit what lurks beneath the surface of Norton. Thus while the criticisms of Norton's anthology hold true for Bedford's and Longman's and do not need repeating, their differences, really varying degrees of forthrightness, are instructive as well.

Immediately striking about Bedford's text is how much it looks like a textbook. Of course, all of the anthologies, and indeed any assigned course text is a textbook, but Bedford's resembles an undergraduate mathematics or social science book. It features many sidebars, footnotes, and didactic excurses designed to supplement the primary readings. The sidebars consist mainly of factoids and tidbits in the form of quotations by other writers about a given text. The footnotes are generous and give glosses to figures or events not explicitly defined in the main body. The excurses, unlike the benign sidebars or helpful footnotes, impose thematic unities on disparate groups of texts. This is not to say that the implied unities do not exist, just that the intention in naming them is misguidedly utopian:

In the more than thirty *In the World* clusters, five to six in each book, writings around a single theme – such as the history of religions, science, love, human rights, women's rights, colonialism, the meeting of East and West, imperialism, and existentialism – and from different countries and cultural traditions are presented side by side, helping students understand that people of every culture have had their public gods, heroes, and revolutions, their private loves, lives, and losses. ("Bedford" ix).

Such a claim is both banal and orientalist. It is banal in the sense that articulating the vagaries of human experience as categorical structures tells the reader nothing unless she or he actually believed that the rest of humanity really has no “private loves, lives, and losses.” It is orientalist by imposing these categories on otherwise unrelated texts in the hope that it will lead readers to a belief in a warm and fuzzy universalism. That the universalism comes as the result of Western scholars deracinating texts to fit arbitrary thematic groupings is left unexplained. The impulse to link texts to show the extent of global cultural interaction is good, but that intention should be in the texts themselves rather than ascribed to them if the editors really want to reflect on cultural exchange.

This cloying attitude toward the nobility of their project runs throughout Bedford’s “Preface.” The self-congratulatory moment in the account of the anthology’s development belies its reactionary worldview. In describing the immediate predecessors to the current anthology, the editors let slip their profoundly Euro-American bias: “In that first edition of our anthology, our goal was to add works that truly represented *world* literature to the list of Western classics and to place great literary works in their historical and cultural contexts” (“Bedford” v). The italics are theirs and underscore the perceived divide between the literature of the West and that of everywhere else. The addition of the qualifier “truly” to the representation of “*world* literature” suggests that some texts are more worldly than others. No reference is given to Damrosch and his theory of textual travel and intelligibility or a similar articulation of worldliness, so the criteria for that property are obscure here.

Expectedly, the criteria appear elsewhere in the preface under national or regional frameworks. To organize what the editors call “An expanded canon for the twenty-first

century” (“Bedford” vii), ironically after stating, “we don’t claim to be presenting the definitive new canon of world literature or the last word on how to teach it” (“Bedford” vi), “five of the books are organized geographically, and then by author in order of birth date” (“Bedford” vii). Here nation is not the main criterion for inclusiveness, but region and chronology remain tyrannically restrictive. Granted, chronology has utility in establishing an independent reference for texts, even if the chronology appealed to is culturally specific. However, chronology tells us little about the relationships among texts, other than to foreclose those that would be temporally impossible. The regions are so finely graded that many of them are coextensive with one or a few nations: “[...] Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, India, Persia, China, Japan, Arab countries of the Middle East, Africa, native America, Latin America, and the Caribbean” (“Bedford” viii). The prescriptive categories of existing disciplines of literary studies inform this list of *world* literatures rather clearly. Africa, ex-Egypt, remains the undifferentiated dark continent, whereas East Asia breaks down into China and Japan, with Korea being apparently not worldly enough for inclusion, to say nothing of literatures that do not correspond to geopolitical entities.

“The exception to this rule,” the editors inform us, “is Book 6, which, reflecting our increasingly global identities, is organized by author without larger geographical groupings” (“Bedford” vii). Book 6 may not offer the same geographic groupings as the rest of the anthology, but that does not mean that it has abandoned the editors’ desire for inclusiveness on a national or regional level. Most of the texts in Book 6 are readily identifiable as belonging to a given nation or region, and the anthology’s atrociously designed companion website confirms this. It divides the authors included in Book 6 into

eight predictable regional and national categories – incidentally the same ones used throughout the other five volumes – suggesting that inclusiveness and not “global identities” is still the order of the day. Besides, a simply chronological arrangement of authors tells the reader little about their relationships that are implied by the concept of “global identities.” By not curating the volume more actively, the constituent texts appear to be in conversation with each other, without regard for argument and reaction. The lack of an obvious organizing logic does not magically erase the very real boundaries between many of the texts. Instead it privileges the insidious logic of the Western worldview. As Western academics assembled the collection, that their prescriptive categories persist even while ostensibly suspended should not be too surprising.

What is surprising is how cavalier the editors are with those categories. Like Norton, two authors represent all of twentieth-century China. Unlike Norton, Zhang Ailing has been replaced by Gao Xingjian, though Lu Xun remains.

Bedford also offers a general note on translation, though mercifully a much briefer note than Norton’s. The sentiments are similar: word-for-word translation opposes sense-for-sense, translating poetry is nigh impossible, and good translations take on their own lives (“Bedford” xxi). The editors offer nothing more about translation’s role in clarifying or obfuscating textual elements or its ability to reflect more than just the source text. Translation thus appears to be necessary, but should not be seen as evil, and certainly should not worry the reader. The footnotes offer additional, text-specific comments on translation, but these are almost entirely of a technical nature and do not offer any critical insight into the history of the text’s translation.

Alternative Approaches

If we acknowledge that world literature's persistent prescriptiveness is a problem for the overhaul of literary studies promised by the field, the solution is simple: turn to a radically descriptive theory of world literature. By this I do not mean the speculative descriptions of Goethe and Marx, useful as they may be on an abstract level, but a theory that examines literature as it exists in the world, prior to its subsumption by academic literary traditions. Moretti is a pioneer in this respect, although even his approach relies on national and generic categories. As high a resolution view of global literary production as Moretti's approach allows, its reliance on genre as an analytical category effaces the fundamental unit of literature: the text.

A text-focused perspective points to the production of literature instead of its interpretation or consumption. An emphasis on literary production is the prerequisite for a descriptive theory of world literature. Undoubtedly authors produce texts that consciously and unconsciously respond to various established categories (few poets accidentally write novels – maybe Pushkin), but trying to trace these motivations is the work of literary studies as it already exists and does not move us any closer to a descriptive theory of world literature. However, by looking at the totality of global literary production, we can bypass the categories that have stymied interdisciplinary conceptions of literary scholarship.

As a case study, I would like to examine the so-called genesis of modern Chinese literature. Literary history in both the West and China declares Lu Xun to be the father of modern Chinese literature for writing the first short story in vernacular Chinese. Already this definition is suspect, because vernacular literature had existed in China for some 500

years and much of it was far more vernacular than Lu Xun's erudite, allusive prose.

These issues notwithstanding, Lu Xun serves as a good test case because he dominates world literature's perception of China. Beloved of the anthologists, Lu Xun's work is an easy choice for inclusion given his prominence in disciplinary literary histories.

Lu Xun is not China. This cannot be understated. Though a lifelong patriot, Lu Xun's relationship to his nationality is unclear. He studied abroad in Japan and retained his Japanese friends even when it became politically unpopular to do so. He also wrote many scathing essays about contemporary Chinese culture, some of which implicated him as well, whereas others were written from the perspective of an outsider. Many of his stories, and especially his collection of prose poems underscore his outsider status. Yet his stories hardly described all of China. The most famous and frequently anthologized pieces, ostensibly realist vignettes of premodern culture, certainly reflect a China, but that China has only a tenuous relationship to China as it existed, either in the 1920s or today. Even further from any sort of representational utility are his introspective stories, remembrances, and above all, prose poems. They speak to the world of the individual, the intellectual caught between eras. This perspective would have been utterly foreign to all but a few of Lu Xun's generation. Still, these texts appear in world literature anthologies representing China – all of China. In the supposedly realist works, assuming they have some representational veracity – which they do not – the only China that appears is that of provincial Han Chinese.

China's population is currently about ninety-two percent Han, but in a country with 1.3 billion people, the remaining eight percent is not insignificant. Excluding contentious debates about the historical unity of the Han as an ethnic group, China

recognizes fifty-five other ethnic groups, ranging from the presently prominent Tibetans and now Uighurs to the virtually unknown central Asian and Korean communities. Lu Xun does not speak to them or for them. The only non-Han to appear in Lu Xun's corpus is a Miao, better known in the United States as Hmong, and then only in a negative light. Of course, Lu Xun should not be held personally responsible for the lack of proportional representation in his writing. His goal was not to portray China as it was or speak for all Chinese, but to expose the shortcomings of various cultural practices. That his stories feature Han Chinese protagonists reflects the links between the Han and the Confucian orthodoxy, which would not necessarily have applied to all of China's minority groups. The editors of world literature anthologies, however, ought to be held responsible. In defense of the anthologists, and others who would readily reduce China and Chinese literature to a few elite examples, much of the literature in Chinese is untranslated and therefore unavailable to those working in exclusively Anglophone environments. Moreover, little material from or about ethnic minorities exists in translation. In the sparsely populated sea of translated Chinese literature, Lu Xun is a big fish.

Despite his prominence, he need not be the sole representative of modern China, nor does his presence necessarily exclude that of minority works. The standard anthology of modern Chinese literature, Columbia's, has made significant changes for its second edition that move toward representing a more diverse China. Although the previously stated reservations about inclusiveness as an end in itself hold true for the nation as much as for the world, Columbia's editors do not fall victim to the sort of tokenism that characterizes much of the modern sections of world literature anthologies.

This is not to say that Columbia entirely avoids these issues, but they manifest in different ways. The most glaring omissions from the first edition of the anthology were works from Communist authors. Fiction from the period of 1949-76, the Mao years, consisted entirely of works from Taiwan, and precious few at that. In the second edition that period remains poorly evidenced, but a few Communist/mainland texts have been added. In contrast to this political tokenism, the addition of ethnically minor voices to the anthology is far from forced. Whereas the political tension that animates the token inclusion of certain mainland works remains ever present but unstated, the minority voices respond more or less directly to what the majority voices in the anthology represent. In these cases the paratextual materials downplay the otherness of the minority writers within the anthology instead of fetishizing them as minority writers; they appear instead as an integral and unsurprising part of a Chinese literary tradition. The texts here do not have headnotes, so each selection stands on equal footing with every other piece in the collection. The only paratextual materials appear in the biographical sketches of the selected authors. The Taiwanese aboriginal writer Syman Rapongan is marked as such, but not as an exoticized object:

Born on Taiwan's Lanyu Island as a member of the Tao tribe, he was previously known by his Chinese name, Shi Nulai. A graduate of the Department of French Literature at National Qinghua University, he became a schoolteacher and served as a member of the Taipei Municipal Aboriginal Affairs Committee. He began writing fiction and essays in 1992, for which he has received important literary prizes. ("Sketches" xxxvii-viii)

This does not differ much from the presentation of Lu Xun's data: in brief, "Lu Xun (Zhou Shuren) is the most famous and influential of modern Chinese writers [...] His first story, "The Diary of a Madman" (1918), was a landmark in modern Chinese fiction for its savage commentary on traditional Chinese culture and society. A prolific *zawen* (topical essay) writer, Lu Xun was also a pioneer scholar of traditional Chinese fiction" ("Sketches" xxxv-vi). Here if Lu Xun occupies a position of prestige, it is as a useful, discursively established if somewhat arbitrary jumping off point. Neither his presence, nor the presence of other Han majority writers replaces the polyvocality of modern Chinese literature, at least in this current institutional form.

Indiana's sadly long out of print anthology, *Literature of the People's Republic of China*, offers a different approach to Chinese polyvocality. As the title suggests, the collection's criterion for entry is some relationship to Communism. The anthology contains many works by minority authors, and though it denotes them as such, it heads off accusations of tokenism by making political commitment the basis for selection, rather than a nebulous idea of inclusivity. Moreover, the editor explicitly states that they are part of a broader literary tradition in modern Chinese: "Some of them have had their works translated into Chinese; others have learned the language well enough to write in it. In either case, the works convey a strong flavor of their geographic origins, as the following selections will reveal" (Hsu 734). Whether the production of these minority texts was motivated by a tokenist politics is possible, given the People's Republic of China's often patronizingly paternal approach to its minority populations, but this cannot be blamed on the editors of the anthology. Lu Xun and most other Chinese writers well traveled in translation are absent from this volume due to its chronological specificity.

Only Mao, who admittedly does reference Lu Xun, brings any global notoriety to the collection. The result is a politically determined image of China that is doubly invisible from world literature. The obscurity of most and minority of many of its constitutive authors already marginalize it, and its overt political content renders unsuitable for representing modern China to a general readership, recalling that many paratextual presentations of Lu Xun seek to recover him from or even ignore his leftism.

These anthologies can succeed in representing the complexity of modern Chinese literature where the world literature anthologies fail for the simple reason of their respective mandates. The anthologies of modern Chinese literature, even if defining what that is to everyone's satisfaction is unlikely, have reasonably clear boundaries in which to work. The chronological and political strictures of Indiana's volume make the task even clearer. The anthologies of world literature, on the other hand, face the totality of literary production. Even when limited chronologically, as are the final volumes of all three major anthologies, the potential selections are beyond the capacity of any editor. The desire for geographic comprehensiveness, combined with the practical physical limitations of book publishing prohibit the anthologies from engaging in the contextual explorations, limited as they may be, afforded by explicitly linguistically or nationally focused anthologies. However, the anthologies' reliance on national or regional expedients, as seen above, is diametrically opposed to their inclusive intentions.

The Failure of World Literature

Why world literature? The resurgence of the concept during the past decade has largely been, as academic trends are wont to be, played out amid much debate, as evidenced by the considerable difficulty in determining what exactly world literature is.

Despite its contentiousness, the concept itself remains relatively unchallenged. World literature must be a good thing. But why? The existing literary disciplines have greatly expanded their canons, and universities have at least paid lip service to instilling global perspectives in their students. World literature, in its dominant form of the anthology, is the resurgence not of a name or even the utopian project envisioned by Goethe – or more cynically by Marx and Engels. It does mark the reemergence of a utopian project, but it is the utopia of the gated community, not of the universal man.

Sarah Lawall, general editor of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, historicizes her work as an authority on world literature. In an impressively erudite essay, she recounts the history of the world literature anthology, operating under various names, from the late nineteenth century forward. With great care she explains how the goal of Norton's predecessor anthology to her own suffered from institutional restrictions rather than willful obliviousness:

The anthology does not include the literatures of the Far East because it would not be pedagogically possible, given the current curriculum: “the principal aim of a course in world literature” (presumably, the common-core literature or humanities course) is to “bring American students into living contact with their own Western tradition.” To include a different tradition – especially one requiring “extended treatment” to be comprehensible – would defeat that aim and confuse the student.

(Lawall 66; Mack et al I:ix)

Fair enough. Nevertheless, this does not answer the question of why the anthology format has persisted. The intended audience, American students, has persisted, even if the objective of teaching Western culture has not. Moreover, one cannot simply

substitute “world” for “Western” in this formulation. If such a thing as the “Western tradition” exists, it does so only discursively. The only comparable discourse for a “world” tradition exists in the anthologies of world literature themselves. Convenient as it may be for a textbook to inaugurate its own field of study, it is an exercise in tautology, not explanation.

Although the anthologies are rather cagey when explaining the need for their existence, Lawall steps up to the plate. She swings for the fences, but barely manages a base hit:

The very diversity of world literature materials raises issues of sameness and difference and of the relationship between different modes of understanding. Readers require new information – and categories of information – as they encounter unfamiliar settings and perspectives and pursue questions of social and personal identity. Taking advantage of that initial curiosity, editors can explore formats that will encourage inquiry, investigate the various uses of contextual information, and open up routes for speculation and critical analysis. (Lawall 48)

This is an apology for an obsolete epistemology and the existing form – the form itself – of anthologies. American students remain the core constituency of world literature. The diversity of the world can apparently only be explained to them in terms of identity and difference. This does not open up world literature as much as it marks a great part of that literature as the other. Lawall tries to recuperate the anthology as a form by gesturing to its potentially experimental character, but I am certain that the truly experimental teacher of world literature would not use an anthology predicated on bringing the Other closer to his or her students.

Even when that experimentation takes place within the anthology form, it is unable to escape this binaristic epistemology. David Damrosch, at the same time world literature's greatest critic while wholly complicit in its reactionary enterprise, argues that this binarism forecloses any real expansion of the canon or discussion of cross-cultural exchange. As long as the anthologies cleave to this approach, the new, "worldly," or non-Western will always be on some level exterior to the texts made central by virtue of a discursive similarity – a similarity that the anthologies perpetuate. Examining the uptake of *Gilgamesh* in the 1995 edition of Norton, on which the current edition is based, name change notwithstanding, he notes that through a dubious paratextual headnote, "the editors are freed from any necessity to set *Gilgamesh* into an active relation with its own cultural traditions or with the classical texts that follow in 'Ancient Greece and the Formation of the Western Mind.' Instead they head for the high ground of universal truth" (Damrosch "From" 43). The juxtaposition of *Gilgamesh* with Homer, even if not explained in their respective paratexts, weakens Damrosch's argument for editorial misconduct somewhat, even if doing so was unintentional by the editors. However, his later claim is far more damning. It also explains to great extent the often-baffling juxtapositions found in the modern volumes of these anthologies. All texts, by virtue of their being texts, can communicate something intelligible to the reader. The task of the editors, then, is to recover that kernel of ostensibly universal identity from a given text's otherwise irreconcilable difference.

Lu Xun's inexplicable juxtaposition with Western modernists becomes legible under this epistemology. Despite his difference, he can be explained in terms of a purported aesthetic similarity. Alternatively, the headnotes present his work within the

familiar category of satire. A legitimate claim, but highly simplistic. The absence of any of his *zawen* from the anthologies confirms their aversion to texts that cannot easily be subsumed under a convenient Western category. Although they may pride themselves on their inclusiveness, literary tourism is only a secondary effect of the major anthologies – and for this they are to be commended. However, they have instead sewed the world up – already a very limited world – as material to sustain unquestioningly an epistemology grounded in Western categories. In reading the anthologies, we are always looking out over a constructed world, being reminded of the superiority and universality of our own values.

* * *

If world literature is what is to be found in these anthologies, or studied using the prescriptive methods developed by its contemporary proponents, then it is without practical purpose. The field will be dead on arrival as yet another discipline inextricably tied up with the nation. World literature's greatest sin is its unwillingness to articulate this bias as such. For all its flaws, the nation remains a viable analytical concept; nation-states still exist even if their identity is under assault from within. However, to posit the existence of a global conversation as world literature does, and especially in the modern sections of the anthologies, while surreptitiously and reductively mediating that conversation through the nation promotes the worst essentialisms. Doubly so because they are not recognized as such.

Assuming there is a global conversation, or at least a global literary network as I envisioned it in Chapter One, acknowledging the nation as a mediating structure or even a simplifying structure need not be seen as a negative. For example, to study Lu Xun

without contextualizing his work within the development of the Chinese nation-state would be irresponsible. Similarly, to read him in translation without understanding the impact of imperialism or the Cold War, with their attendant national projects, on those translations, would also be hopelessly naïve. Sticking to the materialist principles outlined earlier in this dissertation, the nation here is shorthand for the great number of documents concerning national identity in the face of various others. Expedient or not, the nation continues to be an important force in shaping texts.

What the nation is not is a shortcut to an accurate description of the global literary network, which is how the anthologies of world literature deploy it. By painting texts like those of Lu Xun as at least partly coextensive with the nation, the anthologies foreclose the possibility of allowing any global exchange to come to light. Rather than tracing actual material threads between texts instead of forcing them into arbitrary thematic groupings, the anthologies flatten their constituent texts into temporal-national signifiers. In each volume of each anthology, one could easily map its contents onto a globe divided with contemporary political borders. The inclusion of maps in the anthologies almost dares the reader to do so.

Billed as pedagogical supplements, these cartographic constructs testify to the supremacy of geopolitical place as an organizing logic. Bedford trumpets this as a feature of its anthology: “Maps included throughout the anthology show students where in the world various literatures came from” (“Bedford” xi). No one would likely argue with the utility of such extra-textual information as maps, timelines, or charts, but the emphasis on the geopolitical origin of texts in Bedford’s self-promotion calls into question the purpose of the project. As limiting and problematic as the designator

“world” is, it does imply a certain transnational scope. Yet the invitation for students to link these worldly texts with geographical places is the explicit motivation for the inclusion of the maps. Rather than allowing the texts to stand on their own as “world” texts, or contextualizing them with their discursive influences and respondents, the anthologies always already subsume their constituent texts under a totalizing logic of geography.

Perhaps even more fundamentally than their identification with the nation, the grounding of the texts in a place evacuates them of any developmental narrative. Lu Xun’s texts have their *origins* in China geographically and politically. Not only is such a claim entirely false, considering the multi-state journey many of Lu Xun’s influences took before they settled in the textual sediment of a work like “Diary,” but it also denies the texts any identity other than as Chinese texts. The very fact that one can read some of those texts in English in an American classroom, in – somewhat dubious – juxtaposition with other “world” texts makes the originary emphasis seem self-evidently ironic. But the editors of the anthologies have missed the joke.

With regard to translation alone, to present Lu Xun’s work as Chinese texts without qualification fundamentally misunderstands how translation works and how the translated text differs from the original. This is not the banal claim that Chinese is not English or the various platitudes about the difficulty of translation offered by the editors of the anthologies. As seen the two preceding chapters, translations of Lu Xun work say at least as much about their own development as they do of the original text’s. That some anthologies use the Yangs’ translation and some use Lyell’s means that the Lu Xun presented to readers of one anthology may be markedly different from that presented to

readers of another. Geographic or national origin as the constitutive feature of a text and its criterion for selection breaks down on all levels here. The Yangs' translation, although produced in China, was produced in a different nation-state (People's Republic of China) from Lu Xun's originals (Warlord-controlled Republic of China). Moreover, the emergence of Lu Xun as an institution in the People's Republic of China undergirds and is the very condition of possibility for the Yangs' translation. The existence of the Yangs' translation is the condition of possibility for Lyell's, which he recognizes in his introduction to the volume: he lauds the Yangs for their work, but asserts his "American" translation in tacit opposition to theirs (xlii). If we are to read for historical or national information in the anthologized Lu Xun, we can certainly find it, but whether it will tell us anything about a nebulous modern China is questionable.

Present in English translation since 1926 and holding preeminent status among modern Chinese authors, he is a predictable representative of Chinese literature. His repeated representation combined with the general lack of circulation of Chinese texts in English reifies Lu Xun as China in the eyes of Western readers. However, that same preeminence in English translation grants him an unchallenged supremacy over Chinese literature in translation that overshadows both his and others' contributions to that literature. His inclusion turns world literature into a popularity contest rather than a serious evaluation of "artistry" as Norton puts it. In addition, Lu Xun's extensive borrowing from the West would seem to undermine his representational capacity as a Chinese writer. What his selection indicates is that world literature, for all its bluster to the contrary, is incapable of thinking the world without first dividing it into received categories, no matter how inappropriate they may be for the task at hand.

His work was at the center of one of the most notorious debates in world literature: Fredric Jameson's "national allegory hypothesis." Jameson's essay reveals the extent of this reification. His reading of Lu Xun is astute if basic, and his promotion of Lu Xun to English speakers is commendable. The Lu Xun text in question, "The True Story of Ah Q," bears out Jameson's "national allegory hypothesis" quite well. Briefly, the story recounts the misadventures of the titular Ah Q, a shiftless roustabout on to whom Lu Xun projects many of China's perceived ills. Jameson's mistake lies not in seeing "Ah Q" as "allegorically, China itself" (Jameson 74), but in generalizing about Lu Xun from one story, about China from Lu Xun, and about the so-called third-world from China. "Ah Q," being the first Lu Xun story to be translated into English, as well as his longest, enjoys a certain prominence among his works and modern Chinese literature broadly. This combined with the relative dearth of translated Chinese literature in English at the time makes Jameson's focus on "Ah Q" reasonable, if predictable. Yet this same convergence of factors lets Jameson remain unaware of the conservative backlash against progressive writers like Lu Xun, to say nothing of the minority voices that are barely audible even in China. Aijaz Ahmad takes Jameson to task for the latter's invocation of a third-world, but takes no issue with the reification of a monolithic Chinese literature linked to a Chinese nation.

Lu Xun was a nationalist, but this does not make him representative of the nation. He certainly is a representative, but one among many. The Chinese state during Lu Xun's lifetime was fragmented at best and colonized at worst. Lu Xun argued for the vitality of the Chinese state through a critique of elements of the dominant culture. He has the distinction of bringing Chinese literature into the modern era, but this too relies

on tortuously circumscribed categories of Chinese, Chinese literature, and the modern. Jameson's invocation of Lu Xun as representative of China collapses all of these distinctions into the single category of modern Chinese.

Jameson's move in the essay is no different from, and likely a product of the organization of literary studies at the university. Using the so-called national languages as the administrative divisions of global literary production continues to reify the categorical constructs on which Jameson draws to speak of China or the third-world. Interdisciplinary programs like world literature, as the progeny of the canonically oriented national languages only serve to reinscribe the categories they are meant to supersede. Only in a world literature, the categories are no longer visible as such. To view global literary production as a flattened totality is egalitarian, if ahistorical, but this is not what world literature does. Instead it takes the highly contoured maps of the national languages, themselves arrived at through decades of prescriptive canonization, and slices off the mountaintops as representative of the plains below. The product looks homogeneous and egalitarian only because it violently effaces any heterogeneity. Prescription, unwittingly, continues to rule.

In its current form, world literature accomplishes little for the inclusive representation of minor texts. It instead offers a way for college administrators to consolidate national language departments in the name of a global paradigm, all while obscuring global literary production as it exists. For world literature to effect the change it seeks to accomplish, it should abandon all pretensions to inclusion and instead adopt a descriptive perspective: it should describe how global literary production actually occurs. This task complements rather than supplants traditional, categorical literary study, and in

fact relies upon it. The movement of texts through citation and translation reveals far more about the globalization of culture, and at a much higher resolution, than even the most comprehensive anthology.

The work common to all three major anthologies, “Diary of a Madman,” is a case in point. Norton uses Lyell’s translation, which immediately confronts the reader with his obsequious rendering of the story’s classical Chinese preface. This alerts the reader to the shift into the more vernacular style used in the body of the story – a hallmark of its modernity, which Lyell stresses in his rendition. The movement from the classical preface to the vernacular body is imperceptible in the Yangs’ version, thus distributing the emphasis more evenly throughout the text and letting its revolutionary content shine through rather than the form. Both translations are good, but they are not interchangeable with either each other or the original. They respond to their own commissions as translators, just as when Lu Xun responded to his commission as an author who “must naturally obey [his] general’s orders” (*Works* 38). To assume that all three versions of “Diary” say the same thing, or at least offer a pale imitation of the same thing violates the principle of textual signification of a nation or region.

Yet this is exactly what the anthologies do. The Yangs’ Communist-era translation and Lyell’s post-Cold War translation are supposed to be windows onto China in 1918 or, more broadly, modern China. Perhaps they are, but are they ever dirty. Lu Xun’s original text is in the constellation of each of the translations, as are many other texts. The omission of the latter in the anthologies is understandable to some extent, given how much space even a fraction of the constellation of “Diary” in any of its translations would occupy. However, the complete omission of any hint that the

translations might be more than imperfect recreations of the original denies even the possibility of readers using the texts for something other than the intended geographic-national purposes. Even if the plethora of paratextual materials from these two translations could not be included, at least a distillation of their respective arguments, *sub rosa* as they often are, might let readers explore the history of the text after its supposed origin: explore its multiple beginnings.

But no, the anthologies remain firmly in the realm of regional/national and historical signification. The very emphasis on original and historical place in the anthologies renders their constituent texts ahistorical. Certainly Lu Xun is a writer from Republican era China, with most of his anthologized work written in Beijing between 1918 and 1926. Yet to think that readers can have an unmediated experience of that narrow historical moment, in translation, nearly a century away and an ocean apart, all while letting that same narrow moment signify modern China broadly is the absolute pinnacle of folly. The world literature anthologies do not expand the canon or expose students to new cultures; they make the world smaller. By dividing history and geography into large chunks represented by comparatively specific texts, the great diversity of global literary production disappears. This is a necessary sacrifice brought on by the supposedly comprehensive scope of the anthologies. However, by stripping these overworked signifiers of their contexts – even and especially their translated contexts – the anthologies foreclose the possibility of exploring the transnational, interdisciplinary conversations in which these texts have participated. Instead the anthologies present themselves as jumping off points into an artificially imposed patchwork of thematic affinities and geopolitical identities. Even the suggestions for

further reading are solidly circumscribed by the anthologies' organizing logics. If world literature is supposed to reflect global cultural exchange, a new global community, or even alternative visions of the world, then it has failed.

Conclusion

World Enough

Were nothing else to be gleaned from this project, the sense that the authentic Lu Xun is something other than what any one reductive analysis can represent would likely be unavoidable. What makes Lu Xun interesting for this project, however, is the number of reductive analyses that have been carried out on him. We have seen him portrayed as a nationalist, a cosmopolite, a modernist, an antiquarian, a scholar, a polemicist, a translator, a Communist, a liberal democrat, a stereotype, and a maverick, among other things. Looking at the life of the man, with a bit of chronological myopia, we could prove any of these representations and offer a convincing amount of textual evidence in support of our claim.

Yet this project never aimed to question the veracity of the various Lu Xuns running around the academic and publishing worlds, nor to reconcile them with each other. To seek out a supposedly authentic or comprehensive representation of the author would require a rigorous definition of those qualifiers. Given the variety of his work, that enterprise would likely be less than objective. However, we can find meaning in the manifold. The existence of so many competing representations points to different motivating forces behind them. Thus the question asked here is not who is Lu Xun, but why are there so many, and by what means are they produced?

The answers uncovered point far beyond biography and literary criticism, even if these were the beginnings of the inquiry. Most interested parties accept the basic details of Lu Xun's life, and their interpretations of his texts tend not to vary much. What differs among representations of the author and his work are the contexts in which those details

and interpretations are mobilized. After examining those contexts, we can see that though the material standing in for Lu Xun remains fairly constant, be it citation, description of life events, or even interpretation, the overall representation of the writer changes dramatically. A famous optical illusion places two circles of equal radius near each other on a page. Surrounding the first circle are a number of smaller, equidistant circles; around the second circle are another set of satellites, only these are slightly larger than the body they orbit. The effect is jarring: the two identical circles have become dissimilar. The first has seemingly grown larger, and the second smaller. At the heart of each representation of Lu Xun is more or less the same body of texts, but the contexts of these representations distort our perception of those otherwise identical texts.

This is not an indictment of those distortions, nor is it a call to attempt to overcome them. As I have argued throughout, no text is independent of its context. However, those who have represented Lu Xun over the past century are not entirely blameless, but in this, neither Lu Xun nor his representers – himself included – are unique. They engage in a representational legerdemain by placing their contexts under erasure. From Lu Xun publishing “Diary of a Madman,” to Chairman Mao invoking the author at Yan’an, to Julia Lovell’s recent translations of his fiction, sedimented within each of these representations are the textual constellations on which they are contingent. Of course, some representations are more opaque than others. Publishing for an audience increasingly familiar with Darwin, Nietzsche, and Western literature, “Madman’s” textual constellation was probably semi-visible to the readers of *New Youth*. Mao’s cagey games of endorsement and repudiation in the “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Art

and Literature” render his representation less transparent, but he still gestures to the texts that inform it.

Only in translation do the representations of Lu Xun become fully opaque. This is less the result of distortion on the part of the translator and more that of the demands of the translation process. Translators are commissioned to translate texts, not textual constellations. Of course, the constellation is always already sedimented within the text, but such metaphysical constituents have proven rather resilient to translation. As we have seen, the translator can attempt to restore intertextual resonances to the translated work through the addition of supplemental paratexts. The attempt must always fail. As much as a paratext may guide a reader to a text’s conditions of possibility, the direction of that guidance is never unmotivated. Like Schrödinger’s Cat, the text is resplendent with possibility only while unexamined. The translator qua critic of the paratext forecloses the possibility of apprehending the undisturbed sediment of the work. The many translations of Lu Xun show the enormous impact of the translator (or the critic) on the appearance of a text in a given context.

Nevertheless, we need not lament the effects of translation and interpretation on the global literary network. As the discipline of world literature grows, the study and teaching of works in translation will become more and more prevalent. To ignore translation’s impact would be irresponsible and naïve. Lu Xun in Lovell’s translation is not Lu Xun in the Yangs’ translation is not Lu Xun in a modern Chinese edition is not Lu Xun in the original Chinese edition. Authenticity is overrated. The inauthentic has at least as much to teach us. By embracing translation we can celebrate the inauthentic in literature and allow it to disclose a more fundamental perspective on literary exchange.

The great potential of world literature lies not in canon expansion or administrative efficiency, but the revelation of the networks of global literary exchange. That Lu Xun appears, however opaquely, in any given translation asks us to investigate the motivations for the translation's commissioning. The translations of Lu Xun just into English point to a range of reasons from assertions of Orientalist superiority to the dissemination of political propaganda. The paratextual information and even the linguistic choices made by translators offer clues to the international relations that enabled the translation. On a more textual front, translations point to the nature of global cultural exchange. What gets translated and what does not already reveals much about cultural globalization. It offers insight into how readers in the target language are able to see the world. For decades Lu Xun was one of few modern Chinese authors available to Anglophone readers, and primarily in propagandistic form at that. Reflective of China's rise as a world power, more and more literature is translated, offering a broader perspective on China. However, the popularity of tales of new consumer excess and Cultural Revolution horrors as objects of translation suggests that the cultural exchange between China and the Anglophone world remains simplistic, if increasingly frequent.

The manner in which translations are integrated into the target language's literary polysystem also affords material for study. Contextualizing Lu Xun with the European modernists, as the anthologists of world literature do, domesticates his work while asserting the superiority of the Western literary tradition. Incorporating Cold War era anti-Communist criticism into a paratextual commentary, as does Lovell, reinforces antiquated notions of Sino-American relations. One need only turn to any of the myriad vitriolic news sources to see how current such notions remain, reinforcing the idea that

translations are indicative of their political moment. Despite the apparent weaknesses of these presentations, we can glean much about how China appears to Anglophone readers and why, giving us valuable information about the potential sources of enduring anti-Chinese sentiment.

However, translation is not a unidirectional enterprise. Throughout Lu Xun's corpus we can see many instances of translation, both literal and metaphorical. The circuitous paths that some of his own translations took point to the simultaneously globalized yet insular nature of Chinese intellectual life in the early twentieth century. We do not need to turn to his obfuscatory Chinese translations to see this. The immense breadth of his reading of foreign texts, and of classical Chinese texts, is evident in almost all of his literary production – even in translation, questions of opacity aside. In his literary practice Lu Xun engages in intermodal translation. Reading his stories we see Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx, Zhuangzi, Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and many more. Although this might not be translation proper, the translation of these texts into Chinese, the availability of their contents is the condition of possibility for much of Lu Xun's writing. A careful reading of just one story or one essay, even in translation, can illuminate the text as the center of a textual constellation that serves as the gateway to the entire global literary network.

* * *

Lu Xun is extraordinary; he is not unique. A particular configuration of intellectual environment and personal interest enabled Lu Xun to become so invested in global literary exchange. The vicissitudes of local and international politics have kept him in the public eye long after his death. Fascinating though he is as both a man and a

writer, Lu Xun appears here as a limit case, not as an individual. The effects of translation in all its varieties that are central to the story of Lu Xun related here are no less present in the work of any other writer. I selected Lu Xun as my case study because the processes of translation, constellation, and sedimentation are so visible in his work. His exceptional contributions to global literary production are the results of his wide-ranging consumption of that production. His case calls attention to the mechanisms of global literary exchange.

This is not to say that Lu Xun is somehow worldlier than other writers. Nor is it an argument that one can quantify worldliness. No doubt someone armed with a sufficiently robust computer program could analyze and rank authors by the frequency and exoticness of the intertextual references in their corpuses, but this misses the point. All literature is world literature, or more appropriately, part of global literary production. Sorting out what is good among those works is a task for aesthetics, not a disciplinary world literature. By reorienting our focus in world literature from national representation to intertextual connection, we can trace flows of knowledge rather than the entrenchment of traditions. The great joke of academic literary study is that the recent rise of transnational job positions and conference calls as supplementary to the existing national and regional literary fields reverses the priority of actual literary production.

The transnational, the global, is the condition of possibility for all literary production. The consistency of the epic form from the Mediterranean to South Asia, the uncanny similarity between Egyptian and Hebrew lyric, and the presence of the Muslim other in European literature from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance all point to flourishing cultural exchange on a global scale from the very beginning of literature.

Though we can and do delimit certain areas and periods of global literary production as distinct and internally cohesive, we cannot ignore the underlying reality of global cultural exchange. At this moment of disciplinary definition, what world literature can do to free itself of the constraints and burdens of existing literary scholarship is to take the mechanisms of global exchange as its object. As in the case of Lu Xun, the way those mechanisms operate in and on any particular text can potentially reveal far more about the world(s) that produced it than simply taking it as representative of a given place or epoch.

What is more, global literary exchange offers an alternative to economic globalization as a means for envisioning a world system. This being said, I would speculate that economic and cultural exchange may be tightly linked in all historical periods. Even if such speculation were true, it would only add to the information coded in global literary exchange. By pursuing the global literary network as an object of study, we may be able to see with much greater resolution why global political, economic, and social configurations emerge rather than simply quantifying their emergence as a purely economic system might do.

The promise of world literature, if pursued as I have discussed above, is that of an entirely new set of objects for literary studies, or at least the same objects in an entirely new light. As such, it is no threat to the existing literary disciplines; in fact it cannot exist without them, as their ongoing scholarship points to the constellations sedimented within texts. What in Lu Xun is exceptional is simply normal in other writers; it does not call attention to itself and so must be discovered. Yet the rewards for its discovery are great. By examining how and why texts talk to each other, or just as importantly, how and why

they don't, we gain an incomparable, global view of the movement of peoples, texts, and ideas. We have a world to gain.

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