2017

Fusion and Reconstruction: the Politics of Translation and Reception in Late Twentieth Century Chinese Literature

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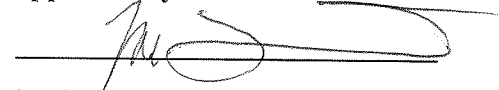
Fusion and Reconstruction: The Politics of Translation and Reception in Late Twentieth

Century Chinese Literature

by

Tong Tong

2017.5

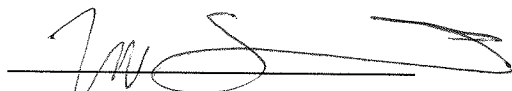Approved by:

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✳ PROF. FAULL CANNOT SIGN, A) SHE IS AWAY. — JmSHIELDS)

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Abstract

The main aim of my honor thesis is to examine the influence of the translated foreign literature in People's Republic of China in the 1980s. Specifically, this thesis will trace the impact of literary translation on contemporary Chinese literature by 1) analyzing the situation of literary translation into Chinese during that period with Digital Humanities approaches and 2) conducting philological researches on translation theories and Chinese contemporary literature after 1980. Digital Humanities (DH) refer to the humanistic studies that are assisted by digital tools on aspects such as computation and visualization.

Introduction

For Chinese readers, the decade of the 1980s was remarkable. While the end of the 1970s witnessed the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the following decade experienced the recovery of higher education, experiments of economic reform, and the importation of literary translations. Numerous writers emerged in the 1980s, including poets such as Bei Dao 北岛 (b. 1949) and novelists such as Mo Yan 莫言 (b. 1955), both of whom still represent the pinnacle of contemporary Chinese literature, and both confessing that they benefited from literary translations in the 1980s. Even though literature is never the product of an isolated individual, its relationship with translation requires a careful investigation. In particular, Chinese literature encountered a difficult period at that time when the traditions from the past were denied, the new literary "traditions" established in the Cultural Revolution were abandoned, the desire for modernity was strong, and yet knowledge of the world was limited. Therefore, a study of Chinese literature and literary translations in the 1980s draws attention to literary translation as an innovative force in the receiving culture, and, more specifically, how it functioned in shaping contemporary Chinese literature and in defining the "modernity" within Chinese "modernism."

Since the 1980s is widely acknowledged as the golden age of translation in China, there have been many studies about the intellectual fever at that time. However, not enough research has focused on the impact of translations on literary creation. Most existing studies tend to analyze translations and literature separately, without enough attention to the mutual influence and the complex relations between these two

overlapping systems. Hence, as a Chinese student interested in literature and translation, I was inspired to write my honors thesis about the influence of translation in contemporary Chinese literature with following research questions: Can we gain a broad sense of translation activities in China in the 1980s? Who were the participants? How do we understand the role and the ensuing discourse(s) of translation? In what way or ways did literary translations influence modern Chinese literature? How were modernity and modernism defined in regard to translation? These questions are approached and examined in three successive chapters, as follows.

Chapter one provides an overview of translation activities in China during the 1980s. Unlike the linear narratives or statistics that are frequently used in other studies, I employ Digital Humanities methods to demonstrate and analyze this wave of translations. The term "Digital Humanities" (DH) refers to the exploration of humanistic questions with the aid of computational tools. In this case, I have chosen the popular literary magazine *World Literature* (*Shijie wenxue* 世界文学), which flourished in the 1980s, as the source of my database. I have recorded all the literary translations published in this outlet during the 1980s, as well as the important foreign writers introduced in a feature section within the magazine entitled "Featured Author." In total, the database contains metadata associated with 752 published literary translations and 65 articles on featured authors. Although not necessarily representative of the entire picture of translation activities in China at that time, this data can provide valuable insights into what kind of literary translations were selected for publication in a journal with a regular circulation of more than 300,000. After conducting a comprehensive analysis of the source areas, I

combine the geospatial and temporal elements in order to generate three timelines for the top three countries that have the most literary works translated into China: the United States, the United Kingdom and France. By aligning political events, cultural events and literary translations on the same timeline platform, the reader can easily recognize the potential factors influencing the frequency and choices of translations. Finally, an interactive Sankey Diagram provides an intuitive demonstration of all the translators, authors and works that participated in the translation process. It also gives an overview of what genres were translated the most, and how many translators joined in the wave of translations—thus giving a sense of the intellectual fever for foreign literature.

Chapter two is about translation theories and the role of literary translation, with a focus on Latin American magical realism and European modernist literature. I mainly apply Itamar Even-Zohar's theory of polysystem and Clem Robyns's theory of discursive identities for my analysis of translation. By "polysystem," Even-Zohar proposed the idea of a socially and culturally multi-layered and dynamic system of translation. Translation actively interacts with the target culture and influences target literature; meanwhile, the diversity within translations also adds to the subtlety of the discourses raised by translations. While Even-Zohar introduces two roles of translation—the primary and the secondary—Robyns furthers the discussion on the identities of the target culture and introduces four possible "gestures" towards the "alien" translation. Acknolwedging the surge of translations of Latin American and European modernist literature, I trace the development of translations within each school, and by applying translation theories to

explore the factors that determine the selection of translation and the impact on Chinese identity in the face of specific translations.

The final chapter focuses on texts of modern Chinese literature after 1980 and how they are "modern" responses to the wave of literary translations. Specifically, I focus on two literary schools that emerged in the 1980s and remained influential into the 1990s: root-seeking literature (*xungen wenxue* 寻根文学) and avant-garde literature (*xianfeng wenxue* 先锋文学). These two literary movements were inspired by translated literature, but they were reactions that took opposing directions. The former, as its name suggests, aimed to express the "roots" of Chinese culture through literature. In his essay "Roots of Literature" (regarded as the manifesto of root-seeking literature), leading writer Han Shaogong 韩少功 (b. 1953) argues that "the roots of literature should be situated deep in the soil of national traditions and culture." Several writers in this group such as Mo Yan 莫言 (b. 1955) and Han Shaogong have confessed that they were influenced by William Faulkner (1897–1962) and Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014), and hold the belief that in order to construct a dialogue with world literature, Chinese literature should first understand the fundamentals of its own national culture.

Avant-garde literature, on the other hand, sought to break with tradition and experiment with different techniques of writing and possibilities of the Chinese language. It first gained attention in 1985 and soon spread in popularity; writers of this group include Ma Yuan 马原 (b. 1953) and Can Xue 残雪 (b. 1953). Many avant-garde writers have acknowledged the influence of Western modernist writers such as Franz Kafka (1883–1924) and Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), which is reflected in their writings

through fragmented characters, a refusal of social responsibility and attention to individual feelings. Based on specific texts—*Fabrication* by Ma Yuan and *Baotown* by Wang Anyi 王安忆 (b. 1954)—the last chapter explores the dialogue between translated literature and modern Chinese literature as well as the newly constructed identities that emerged from these two literary schools, and how they differ from the previous self-image projected from the status of translations discussed in Chapter Two.

Historical Background

The 1980s for China was a decade of turbulent changes. Shortly after Mao's death in September 1976, the Gang of Four was arrested and the Cultural Revolution came to an end. During the ten years of catastrophe from 1966 to 1976, political leaders were adorned as icons, authority was absolute, families betrayed each other to secure personal benefits and individual freedom was marginalized and minimized. The year of 1976 was marked as the beginning of the "new period," a term usually used in the post-Cultural-Revolution period to indicate the hopes for the fundamental changes to happen thereafter. In December 1977, the National Examination for Higher Education (*gao kao*), which was forced to stop during the Cultural Revolution, resumed. Universities and colleges opened up to prospective students without any limits on age or previous educational background. Many that had dropped out of school during the Cultural Revolution returned to campus, and the significance of knowledge was again emphasized and intellectuals regained some measure of respect. As a result, there was an urgent necessity of "learning," and the developed world—i.e., the West—unquestionably became the model to learn from.

Another outcome of these two events was the increase of translations. First of all, many writers and scholars who stayed silent during the Cultural Revolution began to make their voices heard through translation practice—which was a relatively "safe" media for them in which to test the limits of freedom of speech. In addition, universities provided opportunities for students to learn foreign languages, which enabled more people to read and translate foreign texts into Chinese. As such, the necessity for professionals in literary translation had already emerged by the end of 1970s, and both factors together laid the ground for the boom of literary translations in the 1980s.

On the other hand, in line with the economic reforms, from the end of the 1970s international exchanges between China and other major countries became more frequent. For example, the People's Republic of China and the United States formally established diplomatic relations in 1979, and in the 1980s there were at least five mutual visits by major political leaders from the US and the PRC. There were also frequent exchanges between China and Europe, with agreements covering education, scientific research, and economic cooperation. Exchange programs also brought writers, artists and scientists to China so that Chinese audiences were able to acquire forms of "advanced" knowledge directly from foreign experts. For example, well-known American poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997) lectured for two weeks after attending a conference in China in 1984. Contrary to common belief in Mao's era that capitalism stood in absolute opposition to communism, in the 1980s PRC leader Deng Xiaoping proposed to shift focus away from ideological differences, famously stating that "it doesn't matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice." Therefore, in the new period, while China carried on an

increasingly "open" policy and participated in global events, more people began to recognize the necessity of gaining knowledge from the modern West. The frequent visits and exchanges also encouraged translation practice, and the influence from socioeconomic factors over the selections and presentations of literary translations will be discussed in Chapter One.

Methodologies

One important feature of this thesis is the combination of scientific methods and humanistic approaches. Most studies in translation and literature adopt philological research methods based on close reading. The advantage of close reading lies in the detailed observation and analysis of the relationship between words in a given text, but at the same time it lacks the broad scope fulfilled by "distant reading," a DH concept coined by Franco Moretti. Distant reading is a technique that involves aggregating and analyzing literary data with the help of computational methods. It is invaluable for humanistic research in at least the following ways: 1) with the aggregation of data, the researcher is able to propose questions through the patterns or disorders that may not emerge from close readings; 2) with the data analysis, the researcher may acquire outcomes that cannot be "calculated" through traditional humanistic methods, or obtain results in a new perspective; and 3) with data visualizations the researcher can better demonstrate the results of his or her work. Digital Humanities can never replace philological studies but may inspire and assist in many aspects of humanistic research.

In this thesis, Chapter One contains mostly DH analyses. Since the objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the overall characteristics of translation activities in China in the 1980s and to open up discussion of some of the primary questions or problems related to such, DH is very useful in both gathering and analyzing data (such as the titles of translated works, genre, author and country). Furthermore, the results of the analysis lead to further questions, such as why there is a huge emphasis on modern and contemporary literature instead of the classics of the past, and these questions in turn lay the foundations for the research to follow in Chapters Two and Three. Again, the close connection between Chapter One and the rest of the thesis also suggests that DH is not a substitute for theory; instead, it is an effective way to initiate, analyze and demonstrate certain discourses in combination with philological research.

Chapter 1

An Overview of literary translations in China in the 1980s Based on *World*

Literature

      When one considers translation activities over the period of a decade, it is natural to envision consulting a database with a record of what was translated and available for readers. For translation studies, literary studies and cultural studies, it is common to dive into a text or set of texts in order to analyze specific word choices as well as the repetition of certain phrases. This is called close reading, and is the dominant method in humanistic inquiry. However, with close reading alone, one cannot effectively outline the broader context and will often miss characteristics of certain phenomena over a period of time. The wave of literary translations in 1980s China is frequently noted, but it is usually taken for granted as a simple fact. When it comes to the details — for example, what was the most popular genre and which school(s) the most influential — various assumptions are made without a clear idea of the distributions of translations. My interest lies in the questions that may seem obvious but lack concrete answers. I aim to collect and analyze data related to translation activities in the 1980s, in order to reveal the contextual factors that may affect the choices of translation, and to clarify the participants in the translation processes as well as the contemporary situation in China at that time.

      While it is impossible to collect information on every piece of literary translation published in China in the 1980s, I turned to the oldest surviving magazine focusing on

foreign literature, *World Literature* (*Shijie wenxue* 世界文学), and developed a database based on the translations in the journal from 1980 to 1989. *World Literature* is a periodical that had a regular circulation of 300,000. It began in 1953 and ceased publication temporarily during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In 1978, the journal resumed its publications and has been the leading voice in foreign literature and literary translations ever since. Therefore, even though the picture of translation activities in China is far from complete, analysis and visualizations based on *World Literature* are valuable in conveying certain trends and characteristics of literary translations in the 1980s.

Database and General Analysis

It is generally reckoned that the 1980s was the "golden age" of translation in China. Shouhua Qi in *Western Literature in China and the Translation of a Nation* points out that the translation projects from 1977 to present could be regarded as "the third wave" (the first wave being the translations of Buddhist scriptures from the 2nd century and the second from the late-Qing to early-20th century) (Qi 135), while Kenan Lin assigns the period from the late 1970s to the present as the fifth wave of translation (the two additional waves being the translations of scientific texts in the late Ming period and of Russian literature in mid-20th century) (Lin 168). Despite the differences in numbering the waves, the explosion of translations starting from the 1970s is widely acknowledged. However, there is no database available to allow us to picture what was translated and what people read. Though there are a few catalogues such as "A Catalogue

of Foreign Literary Works in Translation, 1980–1986," a database is different from a catalogue in the way that the former is more succinct but at the same time more detailed; in other words, it requires a careful consideration in selecting the most important pieces of information and thus leads to more sophisticated analyses.

Figure 1: A screenshot of the general database

Figure 1 is the screenshot of the database in a csv file. Most of the data were obtained through the online records of the journal, *World Literature* (http://210.14.121.5:8080/sjwx/CN/volumn/oldVolumn.htm), where readers can find the contents of most issues from 1980 to 2001, many of which can be downloaded as pdf files (though certain issues are lost and some articles are mis-linked).

In the database, most of the data seem to be facts. However, it is worth noting that the columns of "country" and "genre" are in fact more complex than they look. While countries are not only identified through geographic borders but also political ideologies, one has to consider the political chaos in the twentieth century. For example, there are

authors listed from West Germany, East Germany and Germany. These identifications are fine in the database, but they impose difficulties for future analyses, such as mapping the translations onto a contemporary world map. Also, genres are not stable. It was only while working on the database that it occurred to me that many genres were "invented" in the West and then introduced into China via translations. Thus the differences between genres can be obscure. For example, when Studs Terkel (1912–2008) was first translated in 1980, his works were labeled as "reports" (*baodao* 报道). Later in 1982, the excerpts from Terkel's *American Dreams: Lost and Found* were labeled as "non-fiction" (*jishi wenxue* 纪实文学). In addition, there is always overlap between genres; for example, memoirs are a subdivision of non-fiction. Sometimes, I also needed to retranslate the genres from Chinese to English, and when it came to ambiguous terms such as "*xiao shuo*" 小说 it was difficult to decide whether this should be "fiction" or a "novel." Therefore, in order to reduce subjective editing, I translated countries and genres in the most intuitive way, and translated all the "*xiao shuo*" as "novels."

Another problem I encountered in constructing the database was looking up the titles. It is not difficult to find the English title of a work if it is famous, but it takes a lot of effort to locate certain not-so-well-known short stories or poems in an English library. In such cases, I had to back translate the title from Chinese to English, which can be very misleading. In some rare occasions, there are works that are translated into Chinese but not English – for example, *Brejal dos Guajas* by José Sarney – and therefore I could only put the title in its original language or leave it blank.

There is also a separate database containing the metadata from the section of *World Literature* called "Featured Authors." Almost every issue of the journal from 1980 to 1989 contains at least one article in this section, which aims to introduce notable writers to its readers. Therefore, as shown in figure 2 below, I included the "year," "issue," "author," "nationality" and "key notes" in the database. It is worth noting that the key notes were chosen subjectively.

Figure 2: A screenshot of the "Featured Authors" database

The general database contains 752 metadata and the "Featured Authors" section contains 65 metadata. Though these are small numbers when compared to the total number of translations in China at that time, the two database are better than none. With this amount of data, I was able to conduct some general analysis on the countries, authors and genres that the editors of the magazine, the translators or the readers at that time cared most. The two databases also help to give a sense of the awareness of gender, as well as the prevailing ideologies and philosophies at that time.

	Soviet Union	United States	Germany	West Germany	East Germany	France	Japan	Russia	United Kingdom
1980	7	21	1	7	0	10	4	0	8
1981	3	13	1	0	0	14	3	1	7
1982	3	15	4	1	0	8	4	1	14
1983	7	3	1	4	4	14	4	3	5
1984	2	8	1	0	0	10	4	1	8
1985	10	10	3	0	1	13	3	0	11
1986	6	12	1	5	0	9	6	0	7
1987	4	15	0	4	0	3	1	1	2
1988	2	4	0	0	1	6	4	1	5
1989	4	9	0	5	0	8	1	0	1

Table 1: Top 10 source countries for translated literature
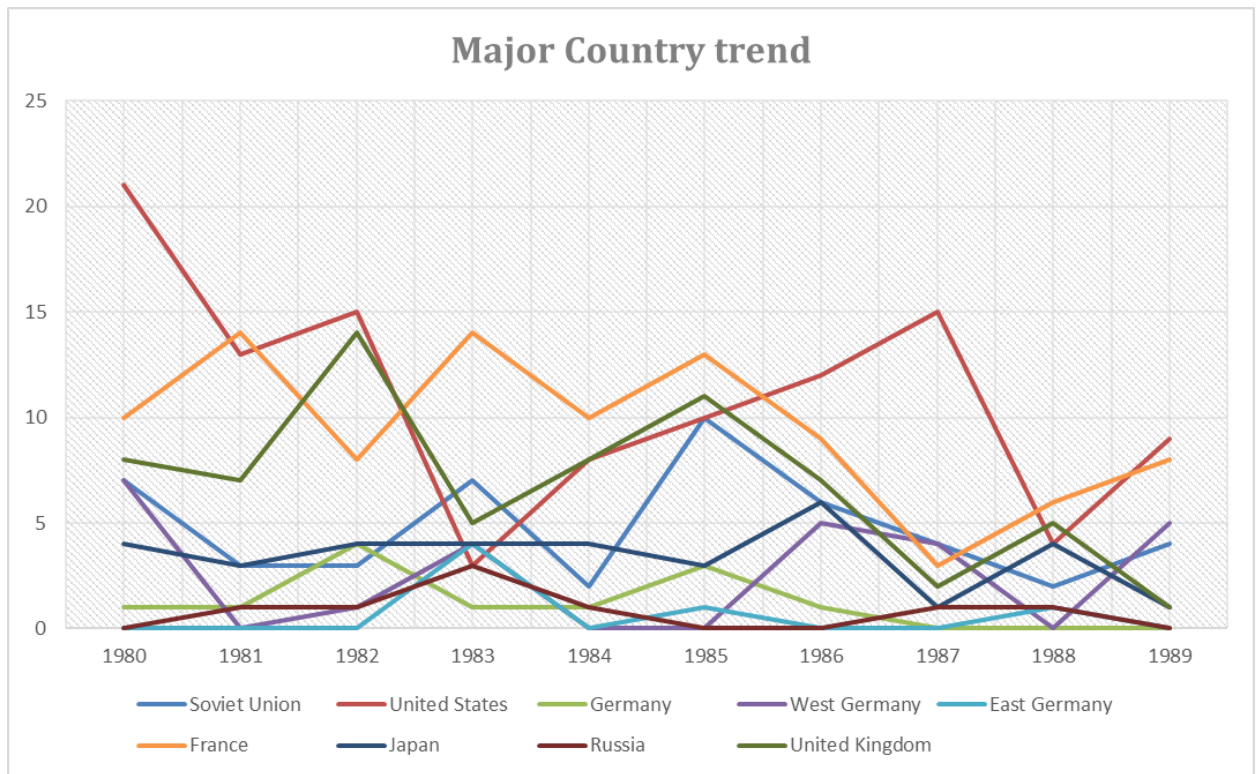
Figure 3: Major country trends

Figure 3 is the line chart of Major Country Trends in the decade of 1980–1989 based

on the numbers in Chart 1. The top three source countries for translated literary works are

the United States, France and the United Kingdom; these three countries and their

literature will be analyzed separately in the timeline section below. Among the ten

countries, there are some interesting findings. First of all, even though China was and still

is a communist country, eight out of the top ten source countries are capitalist. Political

difference seem to be less important in evaluating the value of foreign works, and one

could even argue that literature from capitalist societies was more welcomed. Such a

trend is also illustrated by the difference between the number of translations from East

and West Germany. While in the ten years there were 26 literary works translated from

West Germany and published in *World Literature*, there were only 6 from East Germany.

In fact, the embrace of works from capitalist countries is not surprising considering the

"reform and opening-up policy" starting from 1978. Curiosity towards the West was

encouraged rather than condemned. Though the focus in each source country's literature

might differ,there was without a doubt an increasing amount of Western literature

translated into China during this time.
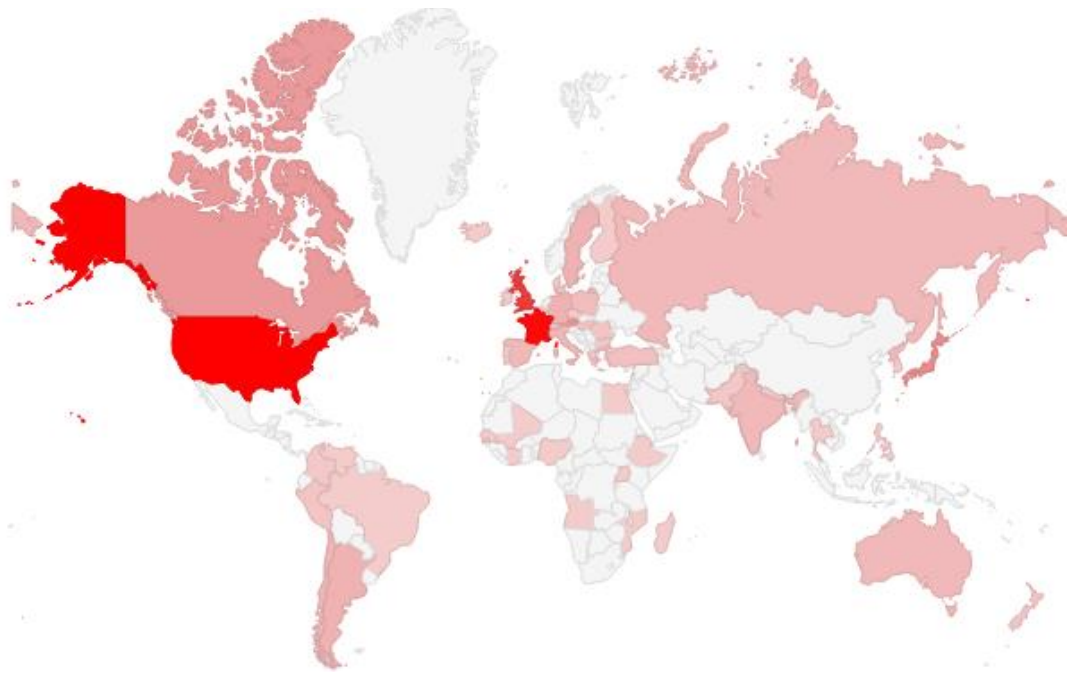
Figure 4: World map indicating source countries of translations

Figure 4 is a current world map that indicates where the translations in *World*

Literature came from. Unlike the line chart in Figure 3, the map better reflects the

"world" for writers and readers of *World Literature* in the 1980s. The map has been

implemented with Google Sheets. The darker the color is, the more literary works were

translated into the magazine during the decade of the 1980s. The map suggests that

"world literature" is not a concept involving mere geography; instead, for *World*

Literature, "world literature" was significantly influenced by politics and economics. In

other words, at that time, literary works from North America and western Europe

occupied a large proportion of translations, which helped to constitute the idea of "world

literature" for Chinese readers. Yet, there is an exception. While the countries of Latin

America were not on the whole as economically prosperous as other Western countries

(such as the United States), Latin American literature was almost as popular in China as

European literature. If the supposedly "global" scope of "world literature" is confined to

politics and economics, why did Latin American literature stand out for readers in

distant China? What did Chinese translators, editors and readers find in Latin American

literature and how did it reflect and modify the modern Chinese identity? These are

questions that I will explore in Chapter Two. Concerning the politics of translation, the

following timeline projects were helpful in indicating correlations between translations

and politics/economics as well as the unique characteristics celebrated in the literature

from the top three source countries in Chart 1: the United States, France and the United

Kingdom.

Timelines: The United States, France and the United Kingdom

The study of time is not new. Perhaps since the birth of human memory, there has

been an impulse for people to look back and record past events. However, the focus of

such editorial process and the representation of the record of the past is always changing.

From timetables in the Middle Ages to the genealogical trees and circles inspired by tree rings, and finally to the linear representation of the progression of time, the evolution of chronological expression not only reflects transformations in technology but also denotes changes in the ways people understand time and history.

In this project, I have used timelines to manifest the history of literary, political and cultural exchanges between China and other countries in the 1980s. Specifically, for each country I have three timelines respectively indicating the translations from the designated country to China, political events and cultural events between the countries. The countries studied are the ones that had the most literary works translated in *World Literature*: the United States, France and the United Kingdom.

The timelines are implemented via Timeline JS, a powerful Digital Humanities tool used to visualize chronological relations. There are three reasons that I chose this platform. First, it directly indicates the frequencies of exchange in all three fields. By observing the fields at the bottom of the screen, the reader can easily tell the period with the most active interactions. Secondly, it aligns different activities in parallel realms but at the same time projects them on the same timeline. In other words, it simultaneously represents the independent but also interconnected events in the way that is closest to history. Finally, the section above the timeline serves as a gallery with the author or the event's picture and the metadata, so readers can have an immersive experience of the past. However, there is also a drawback of this platform; it represents all the events in the same date as one dot in the timeline. For example, when I assign all the articles in the same issue with the same date, on the timeline multiple articles with the same date are

represented by the same dot. Even though the user can click the arrows in the gallery above to slide between events, this can become confusing. It is also important to note that I have combined multiple works by the same authors (published in the same issue) in one slide, but in the database they are separate articles. For example, figure 5 indicates that in April 1980, there were nine excerpts by Studs Terkel, even though in the timeline they are shown in the same page and represented by the same dot at the bottom.

Figure 5: Sample page of US-China Timeline (Studs Terkel)

The first timeline is entitled "Translations of Literature by Writers from the United States and US-China Political and Cultural Events in 1980s" (abbreviated as "China-US Timeline" below). Figure 6 is the title page for this timeline, and the bottom section suggests the intersections between different events. In the gallery area above, different types of event are marked by different background colors: literary translations have a

grey background (as shown in figure 5), political events have blue and cultural events yellow.

Figure 6: Title page of China-US Timeline

First of all, it was not coincidental that only one year after the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the PRC and the United States, translations of American literature in *World Literature* reached a peak for the decade (21 literary works were translated and published). As Zhu Hong pointed out in *American Literary Studies in New China: A Brief Report*, "serious study of major living authors… represent major efforts to throw off both the Soviet and the ultra-leftist literary and political jargon and to make a new start on a higher level" (Zhu 46). Zhu also suggested that the winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature (e.g., Saul Bellow in 1976, Isaac Bashevis Singer in 1978 and Czeslaw Milosz in 1980) might have also directed Chinese readers' interests to American

literature (Zhu 46). From the statistics, however, for authors like Bellow, Singer and Milosz, their Jewish and/or Polish background did not attract as much attention as their American identities. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that at least the establishment of diplomatic relations stimulated and encouraged Chinese readers' curiosity about the United States.

In addition, the frequency of political events also overlaps with that of cultural events, and in the case of American literature, there was a huge interest from academia. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the US, there were four major political events that occurred in 1984 and 1985: Premier Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳 visited the United States in January 1984, President Ronald Reagan visited China in April 1984, President Li Xiannian 李先念 visited the United States in July 1985 and then-Vice President George H. W. Bush visited China in October 1985. Unsurprisingly, there were frequent cultural exchanges in the mid-1980s accompanying the political visits, with a majority of the cultural events being conferences and lectures in universities. For example, as Zhao Yiheng 赵毅衡 notes, Allen Ginsberg attended the "Sino-American Writers Conference" in October 1984, and the poet believed that he has witnessed the "real China" (Zhao, *Shi Shen Yuan You*).

Another important feature of the US-PRC timeline is that most of the literary works published in *World Literature* were contemporary. While almost all the authors who appeared in *World Literature* were nineteenth-century writers, many of the American authors were from the twentieth century. This emphasis on contemporary American

literature is indicated in the comparison with the other two timelines. For example,

French authors included Jules Renard (1864),Guillaume Apollinaire (1880), Victor Hugo

(1802) and George Sand (1804). Among the British authors, there were early modern

poets and essayists such as Samuel Johnson (1709) and John Dryden (1631), as well as

modern writers such as Virginia Woolf (1882). One major reason for the difference in

periods among authors from the US, UK and France is the literary history of the different

countries. Compared to the UK and France, the US is a relatively young nation.

Therefore, there was less focus on the early American writers. Also, given that there are

more writers from the US than from other countries with diplomatic missions to visit

China during the 1980s, there might have been a mutual curiosity about contemporary

life in US and in the PRC.

Figure 7: France-PRC Timeline

Figure 7 shown above is the screenshot for China-France Timeline. In the decade of the 1980s, there were a total of 122 French literary works published in *World Literature*, and France seemed to be the second "familiar" country to Chinese readers in terms of literature. The background colors of the timeline are consistent with the China-US timeline in that the political slides have a blue background, cultural slides yellow and literary slides grey.

There are several features of the China-France Timeline that differentiate it from the previous one. First, France was the first major Western country to recognize the PRC and to establish diplomatic relations (in 1973). In 1975, before the economic reforms even started, then-Vice President Deng Xiaoping visited France. This initiated a series of political visits between leaders of the PRC and France—nine in total up to 1989. Comparing the four mutual visits by leaders of China and United States, it is reasonable to suggest that France and China have been friendly for a relatively longer time and were on more intimate terms than China was with other Western countries.

Yet, the frequent political visits in this period did not necessarily lead to an increase in cultural exchange. While many American writers and scholars came to China for lectures and conferences, few French authors or scholars visited China in the 1980s. Even though Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had been to China and had since been regarded as "old friends of Chinese people," that visit was in the 1950s, before the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, it seems that French artists and writers were much less interested in China than their American peers. On the other hand, the enthusiasm for

French literature in China was less intense than for American literature. There was only one conference on French literature within the record of *World Literature* (in 1987).

However, the literary works that were published in *World Literature* may explain how French literature remained popular in China while there were few cultural encounters between these two countries. When Ding Ling visited France in 1983, she recalled that many French writers (such as Jean d'Ormesson and Marguerite Yourcenar) had complained about the crisis in contemporary French literature. For example, according to Jean d'Ormesson, French literature was experiencing a decline because:

> There are no standards, lighthouses or centers. Nowadays young writers deny traditions and pay no respect to authorities; they laugh at great classic writers such as Balzac and Victor Hugo, but at the same time they are shallow without any good works. French readers are indeed interested in literature, but the most famous authors are passing away… For literary schools after the war, such as Existentialism, Absurdism and Nouveau roman, they were just born but have come to an end. Contemporary French literature has no directions nor vitality. (Ding 242)

The anxiety over a crisis of contemporary French literature was perceived by Chinese readers. While translators worked on translations of contemporary American literature by Studs Terkel, John Updike and Robert Bly, more attention was paid to the classics of modern French literature, such as the works by Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Emile Zola

(1840–1902) and Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). As Ding Ling confessed, she personally enjoyed reading the works of Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) and Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897) (240).

Another important feature of the translations of French literature into Chinese was the emphasis on politics and revolution, best exemplified by the section on the French Revolution in the third issue of the 1989 volume of *World Literature*. Within the issue published on 1 June, just three days prior to the events of Tiananmen Square, was a section called "Literature in the Time of French Revolution," with speeches by Georges Jacques Danton (1759–1794), Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) and Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) (see figure 8). Considering the influence of the works by Hugo and Balzac, it is reasonable to suggest that the idea of "France" for Chinese readers was mostly about freedom, the people and revolution.

Figure 8: France-PRC timeline – "Literature in the time of French Revolution"

Another factor to consider in regard to the revolutionary image of French literature is the Diligent Work-Frugal Study Movement of the 1910s and 1920s. As one participant in the movement, Wang Guangqi 王光祈 (1892–1936), noted in "Two Important Strands of Overseas Studies," students going to France were more concerned with practical knowledge and society, while students studying in United States were more interested in capital. Among the Chinese student-workers in France, there were a great number of future leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, including Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898–1976), Deng Xiaoping, and Chen Yi 陈毅 (1901–1972). While the impact of these future politicians experiences in France on perceptions of French literature in Chinese requires further research, the correlations are very likely.

Figure 9: UK-PRC Timeline

Figure 9 above is the UK-PRC timeline. It shares the same background scheme for each field as the other two timelines. However, there are far fewer political or cultural connections between the United Kingdom and China. In the 1980s, while American intellectuals paid frequent visits to China, and French and Chinese politicians showed mutual hospitality, there were only a few exchanges between the UK and the PRC. Meanwhile, British literature appeared in *World Literature* only occasionally. As explanation we can posit two hypotheses suggested by the timeline.

First, it is almost certain that political tensions played an important role in the number of cultural exchanges and literary translations. The 1980s was not an easy period for the UK and China, as intense negotiations in regard to Hong Kong were held throughout the decade. It was the central issue in the meetings of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Deng Xiaoping, and the significance of this problem determined that the conversations were often tough and the "Chinese" attitude towards the UK subtle. It is no wonder that literary translations of British literature reached a peak in 1985, the year after Sino-Britain Joint Declaration was signed (on 19 December 1984). Meanwhile, arguably due to the tension between these two countries, there were few visits by intellectuals from either country to the other. Other than a figures such as William Empson, who had taught in China for a long time before 1949 and had maintained a great relationship with his Chinese students and friends, few British intellectuals travelled to the PRC. And compared to the number of Chinese intellectuals who visited the United States, there were few who visited the United Kingdom during

this period. As a result, there likely existed a gap between theoretical and experiential

knowledge of the other for people in both countries.
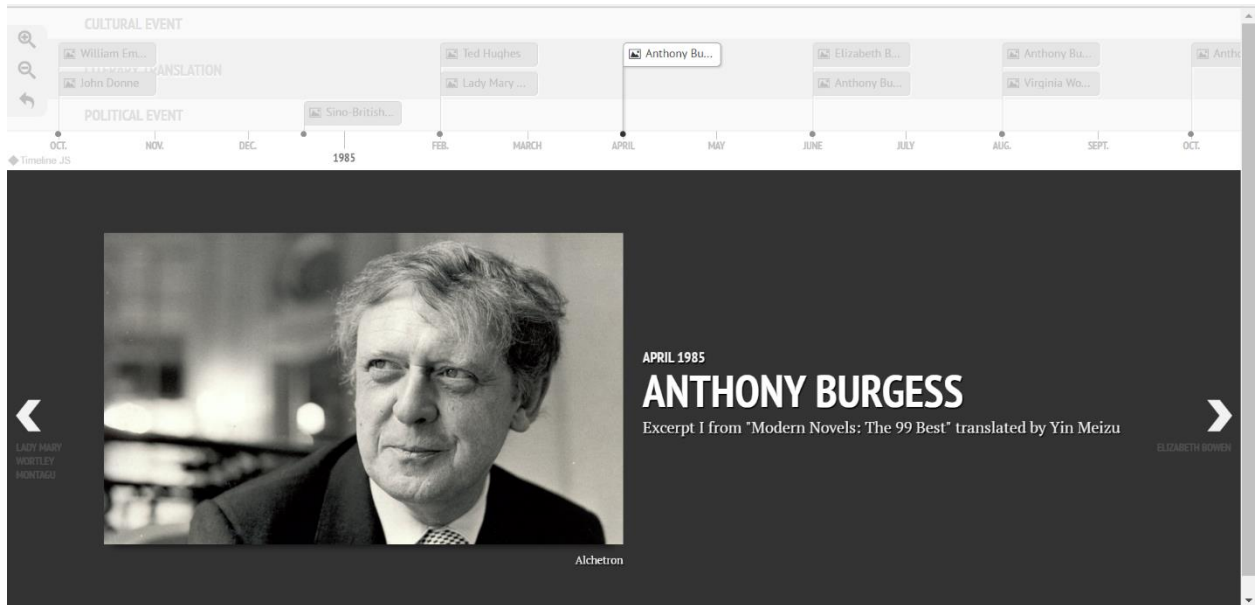
Figure 10: UK-PRC Timeline – Anthony Burgess

Second, when I investigated the works selected in *World Literature*, I was surprised

to see that there were many anthologies and "introductory essays" by British writers,

which were difficult to categorize under specific genres. For example, figure 10 shows

that in April 1985, an excerpt from Anthony Burgess's *Modern Novels: The 99 Best* was

translated and published. This was not the only incident. From 1985 to 1986, four

excerpts from this book were published in *World Literature*, aiming to introduce its

Chinese readers to the development of Western literature and the "best" of the era. In

1983, excerpts from Cyril Connolly's *The Modern Movement: 100 Books from England,*

France and America were also published in *World Literature*. In addition to these

anthologies, two of the three selected works by Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) were critical

essays on *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and biographical essays also by Woolf on

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1855) and Christina

Rossetti (1830–1894). These selections may suggest the editors' and/or translators'

understanding of British literature: it had a long tradition of literacy and was more

eligible than others as a guide for Chinese readers.

Sankey Diagram

A Sankey diagram is a flowchart indicating the participants and activities in a

certain process. It has two major elements: *nodes* and *links*. The nodes are the columns

that are usually used to label specific participants, and the links are the lines connecting

nodes in different columns, indicating the flow from the source node to the target node.

There may be multiple levels of connections, which result in several columns. Another

important element in the Sankey diagram is the weight, which is a measurement for the

significance of certain connection. In the diagram, the weight is indicated by the length of

the links.

Based on my database, my Sankey diagram visualizes the flows from the authors

to the translators. Figure 11 shows a thumbnail of the Sankey diagram. While the diagram

is too large to include in this chapter, readers can find the full view of the diagram via the

following link (http://www.eg.bucknell.edu/~jh054/Sanky/sankey.html). The three

columns in the diagram are authors, genres and translators (left to right), who are the

major direct participants in the translation activities. This is also an interactive diagram.

When the user hovers his/her mouse over certain link, it will show the weight from the

source node to the target node. The weight of each link is measured by the numbers of

certain connections. For example, as shown in figure 12, the link between Studs Terkel

and Non-Fiction is 24 (Studs Terkel -> Non-Fiction, Weight: 24), which means that there

were twenty-four non-fiction pieces by Studs Terkel published in *World Literature* in the

1980s. Likewise, the link between Non-Fiction to Dong Leshan is 9 (Non-Fiction ->

Dong Leshan, Weight: 9), which suggests that there are nine non-fiction proses translated

by Dong Leshan. As such, the diagram offers an intuitive image of the selections of

authors and genres as well as the distribution of translators in certain genres.
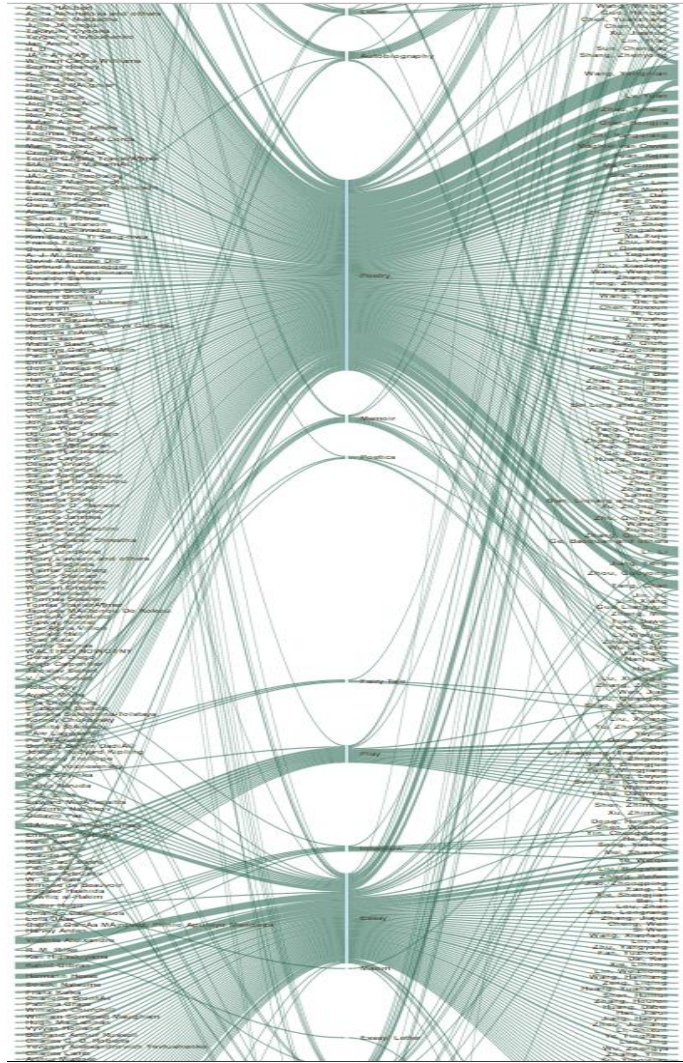
Figure 11: Thumbnail of the Sankey Diagram
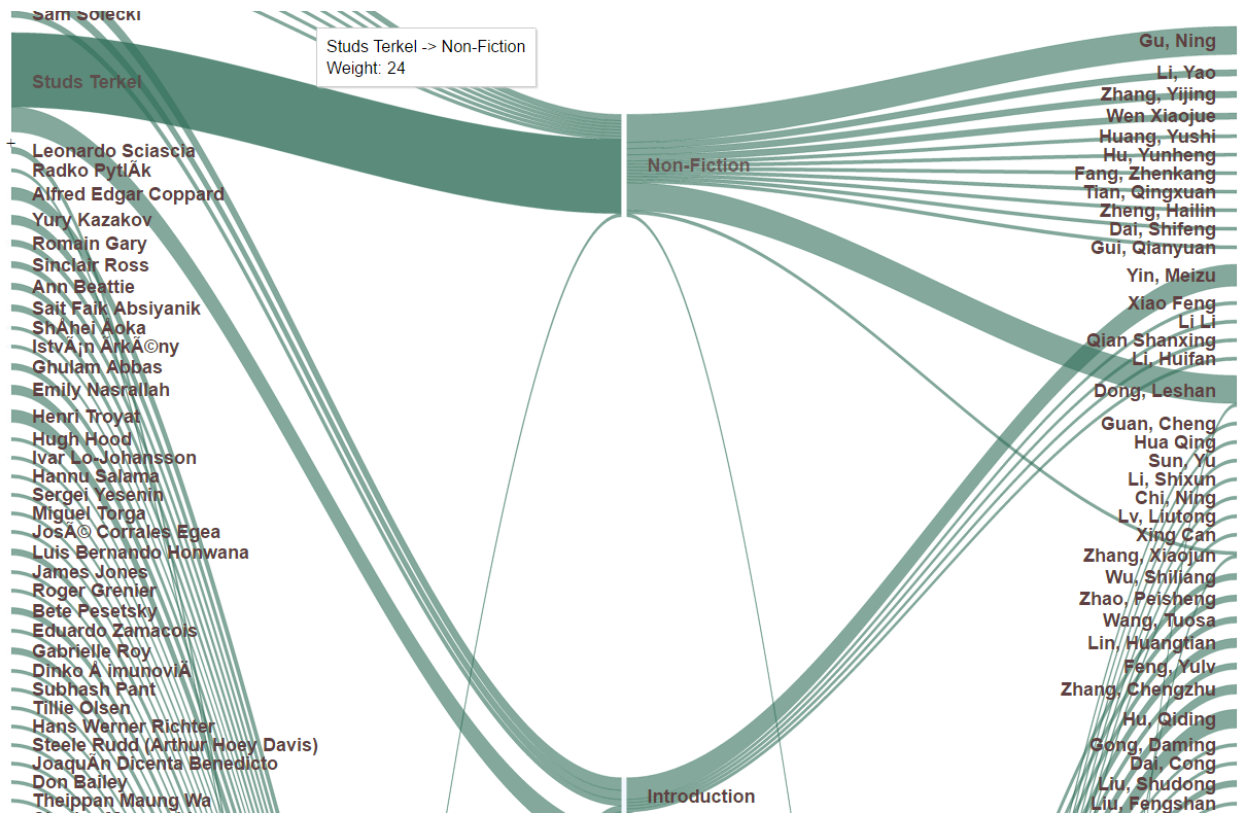
Figure 12: Part of the Sankey Diagram

An interesting phenomenon emerges from the diagram in regard to the translators, which implies that the boom of translations might be an early exemplary success of economic reforms as well as a product of the relative stability of the PRC's political environment. First, there are many Chinese translators in the 1980s who contributed to the growth of world literature in China. There are many thin links between translators and works, which suggests that many translators were not prolific professionals (at least in translating works for *World Literature*). It also suggests a high level of enthusiasm for "consuming" (reading) and "producing" (translating) foreign literature; the literary market was probably one of the earliest and most developed markets for the PRC after

China had initiated its economic reforms. On the other hand, the growth of translators is also a result of the development of higher education, and especially the growth of education in foreign languages and cultures. After the Cultural Revolution, the National Higher Education Examination restarted in 1977; this marked the beginning of the revival of education. During the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution, education was largely directed by politics and thus nearly forfeited. However, in the years of relative peace, college education revived and a group of intellectuals returned to campus to study, to teach and to conduct research. Therefore, the supply of translators also suggests progress in education, which is a direct result of the contemporary stable political environment.

In addition, translators of poetry stand out, in that there are several thick links between translators and poetry. As indicated in figure 13, for example, Wang Yongnian and Lu Yuan have respectively translated 16 and 10 poems. While poems are usually shorter than prose works, it is not necessarily easier to translate poetry. Still, poetry attracted a lot of attention in the 1980s, and there were major translators who concentrated on the translation of poetry. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the knowledge, taste and perspectives of these translators largely influenced the selection and translation of poetry. It is also worth noting that in the 1980s poetry was popular in China. For example, the most renowned contemporary Chinese poets Bei Dao 北岛 (b. 1949), Gu Cheng 顾城 (1956–1993) and Haizi 海子 (1964–1989) made their names in the 1980s, while the group of "Misty Poets" still has far-reaching influence today. Thus, while studying the formation of contemporary Chinese poetry, it is crucial to consider the

background and the influence of the translators who mainly focus on the translation of poetry.
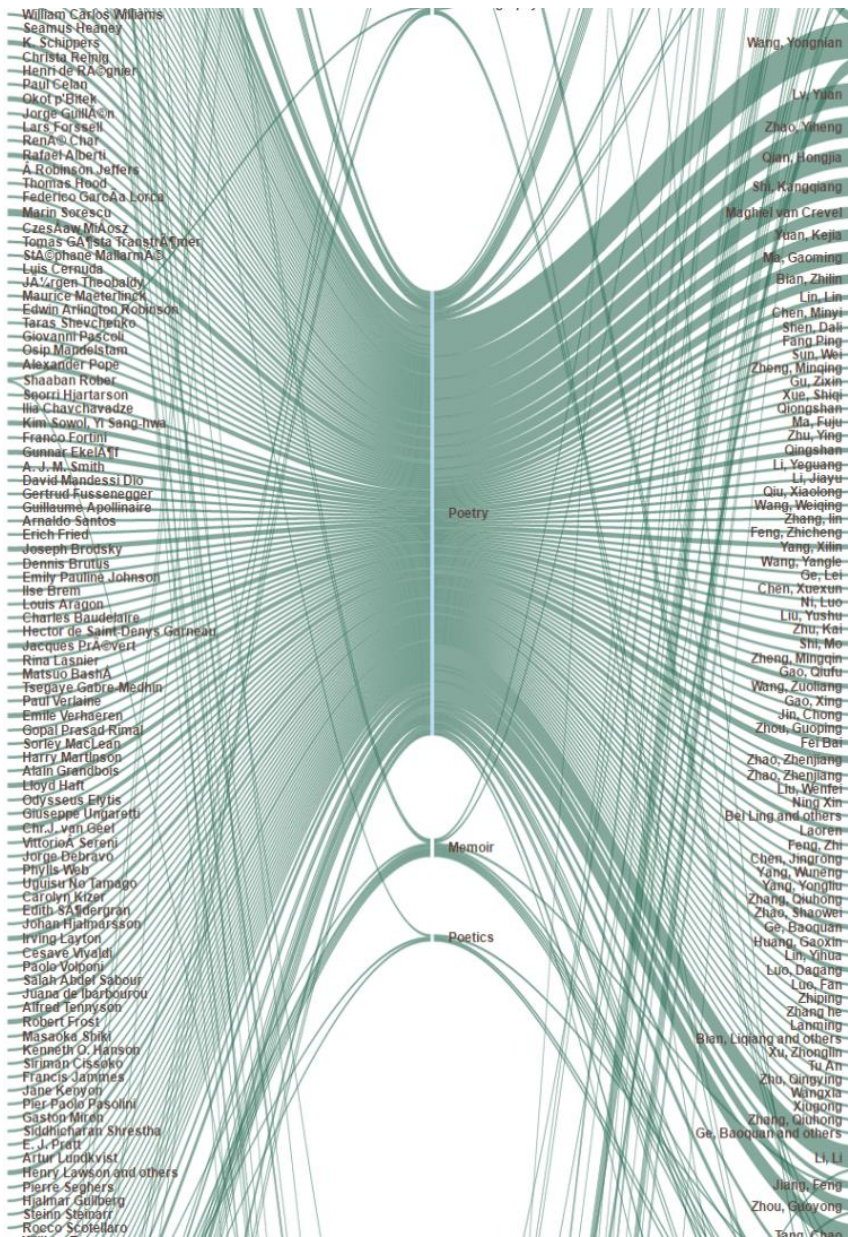
Figure 13: Sankey Diagram – Poetry Section

Overall, the Sankey diagram provides an overview of the participants in the translation activities and visualizes the selections in terms of the genres of the work. Its interactive features exhibit the flows from the source culture (represented by the authors) to the target culture (represented by the translators); in addition to the intuitive width of the links, the weight offers a precise number indicating how many works were "generated" by the translators and authors. It visualizes each unit in the translation process and the networks between works, authors and translators, which can provide significant analysis in the selection of works, distribution of translations, the economic and political context and any other factors influencing the reconstruction of modern Chinese literature.

Discussion

This is a very brief and rough analysis of the relations between translations and political and cultural events. However, what is most valuable about this project so far is to build a systematic database of translations published in *World Literature*, probably the most influential literary magazine in the 1980s China with a regular circulation of more than 300,000. Even though it does not cover all the translations of foreign literature in that period, the database can provide a glimpse of what Chinese readers enjoyed and what was selected and offered to them. Statistics can be meaningless if they are not analyzed fully. While my visualizations of maps, charts, timelines and diagrams are still drafts, they aim to indicate: a) how humanistic elements can be effectively transformed into

data, b) how such data can be analyzed with various approaches, and c) how the data can then be attractively presented.

There is also a great potential for future projects; for example, an analysis of the shifts in the selections of works and in the translators' comments within a single area. When I built the database, I downloaded almost every article published in *World Literature*. It was very often that a translator/editor would write an introductory paragraph before his/her translation/editing, and there seemed to be a trend to conceal the difference between classes and political ideologies. For example, in the first issue of 1980, the editor comments on the Russian-French writer Henri Troyat (1911–2001) that his short stories "reflect the social reality of capitalism from different perspectives" (*World Literature*, 160; 1980: 1). Yet, when Suzanne Prou's (1920–1995) "The Bernardini Terrace" was published in the fifth issue of 1987, the editor seemed to emphasize the humanism of the work and the depiction of complex but subtle human consciousness (*World Literature*, 118; 1987: 1). My current database is far from enough to answer the questions posed here, but the data may stimulate new perspectives and guide the way for further studies. In the next chapter, I will focus on the translations of Latin American literature and European modernist literature. As the previous world map suggests, Latin American literature stands out among the translations from the developed "Western countries" and built its popularity among Chinese readers. Meanwhile, with all the attention to modernist literature, European writers were widely-read. Therefore, I will investigate the discourses relating to the popularity of the two primary literary schools in China and devote Chapter Two to the study of perceptions of literary translations.

Chapter 2

Translation, Perception, and Discourses of Reception: Latin American and

European Modernist literature

Every step in the translation process, starting with the selection of a source text, including the development of a discursive strategy to translate it, and continuing with its circulation in a different language and culture, is mediated by values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving situation (Venuti, 180).

Though it may seem obvious that before the act of translation, source texts must go through a process of selection, the role of the target culture in the process is sometimes neglected. As Lawrence Venuti suggests in his essay "World Literature and Translation Studies," the selection and the transformation of the text are all "mediated" by the receiving culture. In other words, representations of "world literature" are likely to vary with diverse perspectives and criteria. The display of the source texts—the data—in Chapter One of this thesis is the result of the mediation of the contemporary Chinese culture (in the 1980s). However, the process of selection is never straightforward and the transformations of the source texts are not simple. The attitudes towards literature in distinct genres and from different areas might differ, and due to developments in the target culture, the attitude to the same source text is also subject to change.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the polysystem theory and discourses related to translation. Itamar Even-Zohar and Clem Robyns are both interested in the role of translations in the target culture, but they approach the relation between translation and target culture through different perspectives. Later, I would like to examine the popularity and perceptions of Latin American literature and Western modernist literature in China in the 1980s based on the magazine *World Literature*. How popular were these in China at that time in comparison to other literary schools? How were they perceived? What do the popularity and perceptions of these forms of literature suggest about the identity of the receiving culture? And what discourses are raised due to the "intrusion" of literary translations? Due to the small sample of translations published in the *World Literature* in comparison to the total number of books and articles presented to Chinese readers, this chapter is only a first attempt to analyze the perceptions and discourses manifested in the wave of translation in China in the 1980s. Though these questions cannot be fully answered within one chapter, it is necessary to start the conversation and to reflect upon the perceptions of and discourses about literary translations—particularly the translations of Western modernist literature and Latin American literature—that are imperative both to understanding and constructing modern Chinese identity

First, Even-Zohar raises the question of whether translation can be regarded as a "system" within the polysystem of literature. While the history of translations is often neglected in discussions of literary history, he points out that translated works are correlated rather than arbitrarily chosen, and their complexity and the relation to target literature together create a dynamic system within the target culture. He then proposes

two positions of translation: primary (central) and secondary (peripheral). In the first

stance, translation "participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem" and thus

has the agency of innovation. Even-Zohar also hypothesize three circumstances in which

translation takes the central position:

> (a) when a poly-system has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a
>
> literature is "young," in the process of being established; (b) when a literature is
>
> either "peripheral" (within a large group of correlated literatures) or "weak," or
>
> both; and (c) when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a
>
> literature. (Even-Zohar 47)

It is worth noting that these three stances are not necessarily mutually exclusive;

depending on the situation, they may all contribute to the central position of translated

works. On the other hand, when translated literature only occupies the secondary position

within the polysystem, it is usually an affirmation of already existing norms in the target

culture; although it is a form of "alien intrusion," translated literature paradoxically

becomes "a means to preserve traditional taste" (Even-Zohar 49).

Again, just as the stances in support of the primary position of translation may

overlap with each other, the two positions of translated literature are also likely to occur

at the same time. One reason for this is diversity within the target culture; there will never

be only one central voice in the midst of changes and crises. Also, by acknowledging

translated works as a dynamic system, one also reckons with diversity within the

translations. Therefore, the positions awarded and the attitudes encountered by literary

translations are dependent on various factors; the dynamics of the systems of the target

culture as well as of the translated literature determine the further complications within specific cases.

Clem Robyns goes further in specifying various attitudes towards translated literature and the status of translation. After acknowledging translations as "alien intrusions," Robyns proposes four prototypical stances of translation: *imperialist*, *defensive*, *trans-discursive*, and *defective*. Both the first two stances acknowledge the alien elements of translation, though the imperialist attitude tends to deny the "otherness" while the defective transforms it. The trans-discursive attitude remains neutral, and the defective one recognizes its own "weakness" and "turn[s] to 'alien' discourses and import[s] discursive elements from them" (Robyns 420). The result of the first two approaches is related to the "peripheral position" of translation discussed by Even Zohar, while the latter two encapsulate his "primary position." However, the slight differences among the attitudes indicate the significance of the self-acknowledged identity of the target culture. For example, the trans-discursive attitude is relatively inactive in comparison to the defective attitude; in the former stance, "both foreign discursive elements and those of 'local production' are seen as equal contributions to a common goal" (Robyns 418), while in the defective circumstance the alien discourses are important and even necessary in sustaining and renewing the local production. In other words, the hierarchy of the local and the alien varies, and developments within the target culture also change accordingly.

When it comes to the translations of modernist and Latin American literature in China, there are several questions to be raised. First of all, within Even-Zohar and

Robyns's models, what are the roles of translated literature? Who represents the "target culture" in the scenarios discussed above? Second, how are these translations perceived by different audiences, and are the perceptions consistent with the positions of translation? Finally, what kind of future identity is imagined and what current (or past) identity is perceived?

In general, translations occupied a central position in Chinese literature in the 1980s. It is without doubt that the overall stance towards translated literature was, in Robyns's terms, a "defective" one;the desperate need for knowledge of the world—of the foreign and alien—is expressed in several articles in the thirtieth anniversary edition of *World Literature*. For example, the well-known writer Ba Jin 巴金 (1905–2005) wrote in a letter to the magazine that:

> We have suffered enough from the isolation policies and the lack of vision
>
> and hearing…. People need to observe the world more often, to learn about
>
> the world, to know about every aspect of every country and every people in
>
> the world, and to step forward firmly through various comparisons and
>
> identifications. (Ba Jin 5)

In his letter, Ba Jin not only acknowledges the necessity of studying the world but also claims that it is only through the knowledge of and comparison with different cultures that Chinese literature can identify its future path. In other words, Ba Jin believes that there is an obvious defect within current Chinese culture, and Chinese literature can only renew itself through the enrichment of foreign discourses. Ba Jin was not the only one holding such opinions; in the second and the third issues, the established translator

and playwright Xia Yan 夏衍 (1900–1995),the writer Feng Zhi 冯至 (1905–1993) and

the editorial team of *World Literature* also expressed anxiety about lacking knowledge of

world culture, and the desire to translate (as well as to promote) world literature in order

to better Chinese literature. Though writers such as Bing Xin 冰心 (1900–1999) also

emphasize the importance of traditional literature and may hold a "trans-discursive"

attitude according to Robyns's categories, in Even-Zohar's theoretical frames, most of

them explicitly indicate the central position of translations. Among the three situations

mentioned by Even-Zohar that may lead to the primary position of translated literature,

China in the 1980s echoes with the literary vacuum created by the Cultural Revolution

(and, to a lesser extent, the May Fourth movement), which cut off traditional culture and

led to a predictable and routine "revolutionary literature" during the early decades of the

PRC. The crisis in self-identification and the necessity to recognize the specificity of

Chinese culture unsurprisingly led to the vibrant wave of translations. Also, since the

magazine also includes many reviews, papers, and even critical analyses of certain school

and authors, it is reasonable to suggest that the majority of the audience are intellectuals.

Considering the influence of the writers and translators listed above, it is not surprising

that at least based on the magazine *World Literature*, the main supporters of literary

translations are professionals in literature and the arts, students, scholars and intellectuals.

However, the roles and perceptions of specific literary schools vary with various

audiences. The two most notable schools are modernist literature from the West (Europe

and United States) and magical realist literature from Latin America.

Translations of Western Modernist Literature into China in the 1980s

The two terms "Western" and "Modernism" are vague and ambiguous. However, it is worthwhile to investigate the many references to these concepts, as well as the discourses surrounding them. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the category of so-called "world literature" in China is largely occupied by European and American literature. Even though there are also introductions to African, Middle East and Asian literature, these are almost negligible compared to European and American literature. Therefore, for convenience, in the following section "Western literature" connotes European and American literature.

Parallel to the problematic idea of the "West," "modernism" includes a broad range of literary schools and movements and occupies a significant spectrum in time. The earliest Chinese collection introducing modernism is a book series called *Waiguo xiandai pai zuopin xuan* 外国现代派作品选*,* which can be literarily translated as *Anthology of Foreign Modernist Works*. This was one of the most widely-read book series in foreign (mainly Western) modernist literature in China at the end of twentieth century. The first book in the series was published in 1981, and the last in 1985. However, the *xiandai pai* 现代派 in this title must be distinguished from another term, *xiandai zhuyi* 现代主义*.* While the former signifies the general style of modern literature, the latter more specifically refers to "modernism" as a self-conscious style. In tandem with the development of systematic study of literary theories, the generic *xiandai pai* was gradually abandoned and replaced by reference to specific schools or trends, such as modernism.

Therefore, despite the ambiguity inherent in the the concept of modernism, in early-1980s China it was understood even more broadly. Not only the literary works being translated, but also the very concept of "modernism" itself was imported as a foreign concept, and its reference in the Chinese context was gradually developed. Prior to that, all "modern" works were placed in the same general classification as *xiandai pai*. The literary schools covered in the four volumes of the *Anthology* include late symbolism, expressionism, futurism, stream of consciousness, surrealism, existentialism, absurdism, Nouveau Roman, the lost generation, black humor, "modernism" and postmodernism. In other words, from late-nineteenth century symbolism to late twentieth-century postmodernism, for Chinese readers of the 1980s all the major literary movements in the West were regarded as "modernist literature" (*xiandai pai wenxue* 现代派文学).

In the introduction to the *Anthology* series, one the editors, Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉 lists four reasons for reading and studying (Western) modernist literature. First of all, modernist literature is valuable for Chinese readers in helping them to learn about social conflicts and individual psychologies within Western societies (Yuan\ 24). This is the social function of translated literature. Though "distorted" through the lens of authors, literary texts expose both the good and bad aspects of Western society and may be helpful to Chinese readers in understanding and shaping Chinese society. Second, experiments in modernist writing are beneficial for Chinese authors and Chinese literature; if adopted properly, they can function as a great enrichment (Yuan 25). Third, modernist literature has a wide influence over other literary schools, including realistic literature (Yuan 25–26). Therefore, knowledge of modernist literature can further

readers' understanding of recent Western literature in general. Finally, translated
literature from the West has been shaping Chinese literature since the 1920s, and
modernist literature in particular inspired Chinese writers in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus,
knowledge of Western modernist literature is helpful for learning about Chinese authors
and their works in the beginning of the twentieth century (Yuan 26). However, even
while acknowledging the value of Western modernism, Yuan also cautiously warns
readers about the damages that Western modernism might bring:

> When facing Western modernist literature, we should acknowledge the
> dichotomy and insist on seeking truth from the facts. The dichotomy lies on
> both ideological and artistic levels: it exposes the phenomenon of conflicts in
> reality in a complicated way, but also covers the truth of such conflicts; it
> frequently magnifies the struggles under certain social institutions and obscures
> it as the common and eternal problem of human existence and humanity….
> While revealing the conflicts within a capitalist society, modernist literature
> also broadcasts wrong ideas such as nihilism, pessimism, individualism,
> pacifism and eroticism [a seemingly imported word to indicate the widespread
> attention to sexuality in literature]. When it comes to the artistic approach,
> modernist literature has its innovations and success, but it also brings damage
> and danger. (Yuan 26)

There are two contradictory attitudes within Yuan's approach to Western
modernism. First, in the literary realm, despite negative philosophies such as nihilism, the
influence of Western modernism is understood to be mostly positive in: a) providing

knowledge of the development of Western literature, b) enriching Chinese literature, and c) furthering understanding of works by early modern Chinese authors. Second, in its ideological and political aspect, Western modernism is only good for providing negative examples of social conflict, and fails to approach the truth of these problems—which as Yuan suggests, is attributable to the corrupt nature of capitalism of capitalism. Even-Zohar also anticipates such conflicts, when he writes: " the hypothesis that translated literature may be either a central or peripheral system does not imply that it is always wholly one or the other…. This means that while one section of translated literature may assume a central position, another may remain quite peripheral" (Even-Zohar 49). Such stratification not only exists within different translations but also within different parts of a particular translation. In this position, as Yuan implies in the above quote, Chinese culture recognizes its lack of literary innovation but still insists upon distinctions and hierarchy at the level of ideology. However, compared to the uncompromising political stance toward evaluating literature during the Cultural Revolution, the gesture presented in the *Anthology* series towards Western modernism indicates a fundamental change in Chinese attitude towards literature, ideological differences and the position of China in a global society.

Yuan's introductory essay on Western modernism was written in 1979, and the first book of the *Anthology of Foreign Modernist Works* series came out in 1981. Following this, there was a boom of translations and the ensuing studies of Western modernism, including Franz Kafka's *The Castle* (1981), James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1983), William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1984) and so on (Bi

56). The previous cautions and debates around ideologies and negative philosophies had by this time been overwhelmed by enthusiasm towards translations of Western modernism. For example, there was a section in *World Literature* called "Featured Modern Authors" (*xiandai zuojia xiaozhuan* 现代作家小传) that introduced several authors to Chinese readers in every issue. I extracted all the important words in the biographical texts and created a word cloud, which can effectively demonstrate the primary characteristics of the authors and their works.

Figure 14: Word cloud of keywords in the biographical essays within the "Featured (Modern) Authors" section of the journal *World Literature*

While communism and socialism are still mentioned, they are no longer the dominant focus in evaluating authors and literary works. At the same time, "capitalism" is rarely mentioned, which may suggest the acceptance of capitalist literature and the fading of the ideological binary. While modernism seems to be less dominant than

realism, one should not neglect the appearance of schools such as surrealism, humanism and the Nouveau Roman. These were all included in the category of "modernist literature" in China at that time. In addition, names such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Franz Kafka (1883–1924), Marcel Proust (1871–1922) and Gruppe 47 suggest an assumption on the part of the journal of their readers' knowledge of the representative figures of modernism. Finally, pessimism and absurdity as well as the focus on sexuality—i.e., the "negative" features of modernism—are also presented. Therefore, I argue that Western modernism as a broad category describing much of Western literature since the late-nineteenth century attained a central position within the system of translated literature in China in the 1980s. However, the word cloud graph also indicates that due to the puzzling inclusiveness of "modernism" in the Chinese context, the idea of modernism began to diffuse into specific subcategories, and the fuzzy idea of modernism indicated by the word graph also anticipated the debates on the definition of Western and Chinese modernism that began at the end of the 1980s and continued into the twenty-first century.

Translations of Magical Realist Literature into China in the 1980s

The first article introducing Latin American magical realism in *World Literature* was published in the second issue of 1982. Before that, there was only sporadic news about Latin American literature in the section of "Literary News." In addition, most of the news was about the deaths of certain authors as reported in Latin American newspapers, or the anniversary celebration of a famous author. In other words, there were no concrete and thorough introductions to magical realism, nor any systematic overview

of Latin American literature in *World Literature*. The two most eminent Latin American writers with the most translations in *World Literature* prior to 1982 are Pablo Neruda (1904–1973) and Jorge Luis Borges, though attention to these two writers remains fixed on their poetry (for example, three of Borges's short stories were published along with five of his poems in the sixth issue of 1981). Borges is also the "Featured Modern Author" in the sixth issue of 1981, though in the article he is linked with European and American figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Franz Kafka, Edgar Allen Poe (1809–1849) and William Faulkner (1897–1962). He Rong 何榕, the author of this article, suggests that Borges's writing shows traits of European Avant-garde writing and that his unique writing style is a localized form of surrealism in Latin America (He 33). Therefore, despite the influence of European and American modernism and surrealism on Borges, prior to 1982 the idea of "magical realism" had not yet been imported to China, and knowledge of Latin American literature was still lacking. Among all the literature translated into Chinese at that time, Latin American magical realist literature remained in a peripheral position compared to Western modernist literature.

Before seizing the central position, translations of Latin American literature have a brief period in which they were treated as if from a "defensive" stance. Lin Yi'An's 林一安 "Magical Realism in Latin America and its representative work *One Hundred Years of Solitude*," published in the sixth issue of the 1982 volume of *World Literature*, discussed for the first time the Latin American literary phenomenon in a systematic way. This essay both manifested and contributed to the rising influence of magical realist literature. The

author acknowledges the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist history of Latin American in literature, which has resonances with modern Chinese history. By demonstrating the locality of class struggles and social reality, Lin argues, magical realism "fulfills literature's function of manifesting and serving the social reality" (Lin 125). For Lin, literature has the responsibility to expose and clean the stains of a society. At least, he asserts, this is the major objective of Chinese literature, and it should not be compromised.

However, while affirming the value of class struggle in Latin American literature, Lin also claims that its drawbacks lie in its pessimism of content and ambiguity of form:

However, since most Latin American writers are bourgeoisie and represent the middle class's interests, their worldview is fundamentally capitalist, and their works must contain many drawbacks and limits. For example, they attack social malpractice but find no fundamental solutions, expose dictatorship but indicate no path out of the dilemma, show disappointment with the social reality but remain helpless. Therefore, their works inevitably display nihilistic attitudes and pessimistic emotions, lacking a positive influence to inspire the masses. In terms of writing style, they excessively pursue aesthetic and formalistic techniques, and sometimes even deliberately mystify the story, creating an ambiguous and vague atmosphere. Such works lead readers into a maze; they are not easy to read and thus confined to the circles of intellectuals. Distant from the Latin American people who are not fully literate, their capacities for propaganda are limited (Lin 125).

Both pessimism and ambiguity are "flaws" in literature because they fail to fulfill the "objective" of literature, so the criteria that indicates the "weakness" actually remains the same with the one that leads to the "strength" of Western modernism. Lin is consistent in evaluating the value of foreign literature based on the criteria of social realism, which was dominant in China after the 1949 Revolution. The differences in understanding, judging and writing literature become a "threat" and therefore, Lin emphasizes only the characteristics of Chinese literature at that time, praising what is consistent with such and blaming the different. This attitude falls into the "defensive" stance in Robyns's theory. Robyns claims that the sense of threat "is born out of a frustrated feeling of superiority" (Robyns 416), and that after feeling the threat, the defensive discourse "enhances its specificity by heavily emphasizing the otherness of the 'alien' discourse" (415). In other words, while Lin is aware of the increasing influence of Latin American literature and recognizes its literary value, when there is a conflict, he still insists on the ideology of the receiving culture, which in this case is the dominant understanding of literature in post-revolutionary China. This is a defensive gesture that not only indicates "confidence" in the target culture, but also some frustration towards the invasion of foreign discourse. Even though, at this time, Latin American magical realism was still in a peripheral position within translated literature in China, early attention towards it already anticipates its future popularity and the coming transformations of Chinese modern literature. In China, social reality was still at the core of literature in 1982, but the recognition of otherness—ambiguity in content and form—prepared the way for changes in the near future.

It is also worth noting that Lin's article appeared in the last issue of 1982, the year Gabriel García Márquez accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature. In addition to the introduction of Latin American magical realism in general, Lin also analyzes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the representative work of magical realism as suggested by the title of his essay. In the same issue, there is also an excerpt from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—the first translation of this work and one of the earliest translations of Márquez's writings in China. While the title of "Nobel Prize winning author" may not directly correlate with Márquez's popularity in China, the perception of Márquez and the discourse around magical realist literature are more or less framed and encouraged by Western attention to the Latin American boom.

Due to a lack of statistics, it is almost impossible to acquire the exact number of translations of Latin American literature to appear as books or in periodicals. However, from 1982 onwards, Latin American literature and related news and reviews appeared more frequently in *World Literature*. In the third issue of 1986, the magazine published three letters with the same topic "My favorite Contemporary Foreign Writers," and unsurprisingly two of them wrote about Latin American literature. One letter was written by Mo Yan 莫言, the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012, who confesses in the letter that his favorite writers are William Faulkner and Gabriel García Márquez. Unlike Lin's 1982 essay, Mo is impressed by the philosophical thoughts of these authors on fate and human history. He claims that both Faulkner and Márquez are "regionalists" (*diqu zhuyi* 地区主义), which he defines as those who investigate "limited space with infinite temporality" (Mo Yan 297). Such a literary approach requires the author to dig

into certain areas, knowing the history and culture, and expanding it in the infinite realm

of time. After reading the translations, Mo Yan concludes with his lesson for writing: "if

I can't create a region of my own, I will never have my own characteristics. If I can't go

into the singular soil that supports my life, my roots will never grow and stretch" (Mo

Yan 297).

Compared to Lin's 1982 essay, Mo Yan's letter indicates several differences in

attitude towards Latin American literature. First of all, while Lin insists on the political

ideologies manifested in literature and compares translations to the "right standard" of

previous Chinese literature, Mo Yan focuses on the humanistic and philosophical aspects

of translated literature. He does not focus on the element of anti-imperialist struggle that

was common to previous Chinese literature; instead, he is attracted by universal ideas of

history and life, and thus possesses what we might call a more humanistic view of

reading, understanding and creating literature. Second, while Lin disapproves of

unnecessary ambiguity of form, this is accepted by Mo as a supplement to the larger

philosophical themes. For example, from Mo Yan's perspective, the temporal narrative in

One Hundred Years of Solitude helps to illustrate the author's understanding of the

development of history and the back-and-forth waves of social progress. Finally, Mo Yan

establishes his philosophy of writing based on his reading experience and understanding

of Gabriel García Márquez as well as William Faulkner: "first, set up my understanding

of life; second, create a field of my own; third, design a system of characters; fourth,

establish a unique narrative style" (Mo Yan 297). These are the keys to the literary

success of Faulkner and Márquez, and they are also fundamental for Mo Yan in the development of his career.

Unlike the previous "defensive" attitude towards translations of Latin American literature, Chinese readers represented by Mo Yan in the mid-late 1980s adopted a "defective" approach to translation, as Latin American literature was becoming more central in the polysystem. As Robyns argues in his essay "Translation and Discursive Identity," the defective position "turns to 'alien' discourses and imports discursive elements from them" (Robyns 420). The specific influences of Latin American literature on Chinese modern literature will be discussed in Chapter Three, but as an innovating force within the Chinese literary polysystem, these translations have at least two functions: 1) to reveal what is praised by the "modern" West at a time that China is seeking rapid modernization; and 2) to provide an example of resistance to excessive "westernization." Thus, the defective stance indicates a decreasing confidence in social realist literary traditions, an eagerness to (re)create Chinese literature, and an increasing dependence on foreign translations (and in this case, translations of Latin American literature) as a means to transforming the target culture.

Aware of the complexity and the dynamics within translated literature, Even-Zohar proposes the polysystem theory and urges us to consider literary translations on the same level as literature; i.e., as vibrant and interrelated products. Furthermore, he argues for interrelations not only within the translations but also between translations and local literature as well as between literature and social developments. Clem Robyns proposes four gestures towards translated literature and discusses the potential identities of the

receiving culture that lead to each attitude. I argue that literary translations in general occupied a central position in Chinese culture in the 1980s and were seen by many writers and intellectuals as a means to innovating and renewing Chinese literature. The various roles and perceptions of translated literature are complicated, as we see when examining the specific literary schools introduced into China. The beginning of the 1980s already demonstrated a positive attitude towards Western modernism, though there were still come concerns about political ideology. Later, modernism became the primary literary school among literary translations in China. Its popularity indicates the diminishing influence of ideology on the perceptions of Chinese readers. In addition, readers' empathy towards the social conflicts presented in modernist literature demonstrates a universal experience that is not exclusive to any specific society. The influence of modernism—and Latin American magical realism more specifically—on Chinese modern literature was instrumental, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Transformation of Chinese Modernism under the Influence of Literary

Translations

A case study of *Baotown* by Wang Anyi and *Fabrication* by Ma Yuan

Chinese modern literature has gone through rapid changes since the beginning of
the twentieth century. The anxiety in seeking transformations is manifested through
social upheavals, scientific progress, ideological debates and literary breakthroughs.
While the emergence of "modernity" in China can be dated to the collapse of Qing
Dynasty (1912)—around the same time when Western modernist literature began to
thrive—"modern" Chinese literature takes on various forms in different periods.
Following Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, the period of 1966–1989 can be called
the "reassertion of modernity" (325). Unsurprisingly, in their emphasis on modernity and
modernism and their attempt to define such terms Chinese authors relied heavily on the
translation of foreign (mainly Western) literature. While the previous two chapters have
illustrated the registers in the choices of translation and reader receptions, this chapter
will focus on how Chinese authors "absorbed" literary translations and employed various
tropes from Western modernist literature to respond to the conditions of Chinese
modernity and to construct variations on Chinese modernism. I will first narrowly define
the ideas of modernism and modernity in the context of Chinese literature in the 1980s.
Writers' reflections upon these two concepts are momentous. Later, I will outline the

main trends of Chinese literature in the 1980s. Then, with attention to the development of

fiction, I will analyze Wang Anyi's *Baotown* and Ma Yuan's *Fabrication* as

representative works of the root-seeking school and experimental schools, respectively.

Both schools are influenced by the broad spectrum of "Western modernism" through

translations, but their reactions in transforming "Chinese modernism" are dramatically

different. Therefore, the case studies will reveal different understandings of Western

modernism (through literary translations) and alternative approaches to constructing

Chinese modernity in the new era.

The idea of the "modern" is controversial. Since the birth of "la modernite'"

pronounced by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), the word embodies a split with past

traditions and an embrace of novelty. In the essay "Modernity and Literary Tradition,"

Hans Robert Jauss states that,

> It [i.e., the definition of *modernus*] only begins to disclose itself in the
>
> historical transformation of the consciousness of modernity, becoming
>
> recognizable to us as a history-making force at those points where its
>
> necessary antithesis comes to light, in the self-understanding of a new present
>
> and its sloughing-off of some past. (Jauss 331)

Ambiguous as it might be, Jauss suggests that the definition of the modern incorporates

three necessary elements: 1) it illustrates a historical break from the "past"; 2) it cannot

exist solely without its antithesis being recognized; and 3) it is manifested through a self-

constructed and self-conscious understanding of the present and the past. Thus, "modern"

is not a static idea that reflects certain developments, discourses or aesthetic movements;

instead, it is a narrative constructed in relation to its antithesis—past and tradition—and thus may evolve different significances in distinctive eras. Then, when it comes to the "modern Chinese identity" in the 1980s, it is more crucial to examine what transformations occurred in this particular period and how they were articulated in contrast to specific images of the past. These are the key questions that not only give a particular identity to "modern" Chinese culture in the "modern" world, but also determine the directions for different modernist literary schools in 1980s China. It is also important to point out that due to the ambiguity of the idea of the "modern," the entirety of the twentieth century could be regarded as a succession of modern eras for China. However, in this thesis, I will concentrate solely on the modern literature of the 1980s.

Relating to the "modern," modernity and modernism can be practically identified as the context and the response respectively to the modern era. Zhang Xudong in the introduction of his book *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms* writes that modernity "must be seen as shaped by the concrete socioeconomic, political, as well as cultural conditions that produced the Chinese problematic itself" (Zhang 18), and then defines it as "an experience of the social-cultural spaces generated by the socioeconomic changes in the 1980s" (Zhang 18). Zhang also proposes that Chinese modernism should be read "not only as an institution but also as a social-cultural working out of a host of social changes and ideological conflicts that expose a national crisis as well as a collective utopia within its discourse" (Zhang 17). While Chinese *modernity* in the 1980s was manifested and reflected through various educational, political and economic reforms, Chinese *modernism* was explored through cultural discourses, ideological debates, and

literary experiments with "new" genres, forms and content. In short, while the conditions of modernity are inescapable, responses to these condition may vary.

The first significant literary school to emerge in the 1980s was so-called "scar literature" (*shanghen wenxue* 伤痕文学). The most prominent fiction genre of the early 1980s, these works reflect upon the savage experience of China's Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the social significance of literature and the value of realism. According to Hong Zicheng, popular fiction of the day was concerned with "'obsolete' topics that had been discussed in left wing literary circles during the 1950s and 1960s, and even earlier, or were extensions of these topics" (277). Therefore, these works can be classified as "modern" literature only in the sense that their antithesis—the past—was the more strictly censored decades of the Cultural Revolution; otherwise, the revolutionary transformations of Chinese modernism responding to the dramatic reforms in modern society had not yet arisen. The selections of literary translations before 1985 could also be a consequence of relatively conservative attitudes towards literature. For example, the majority of the works by Studs Terkel were published between 1980 and 1982 in *World Literature*, seventeen non-fiction pieces in total. Terkel's realistic depictions and emphasis on the social obligations of literature unsurprisingly echoed the main trends of Chinese literature at that time. Indeed, even though Studs Terkel appears to be the most frequently cited name in the magazine *World Literature* in the 1980s, he was truly popular only in the early 1980s.

The second half of the 1980s has witnessed the rise of more innovative literary groups, such as "root-seeking" literature (*xungen wenxue* 寻根文学) and "modernist"

(*xiandai wenxue* 现代文学) or experimental/avant-garde literature (*xianfeng wenxue* 先锋文学). These are also the two major literary schools that I will focus on in the later sections of this chapter. In the manifesto of the root-seeking school ("The Roots of Literature"), Han Shaogong claims that "literature has roots, the roots of literature should be situated deep in the soil of national traditions and culture, and if the roots are not deep, it's difficult for the leaves to flourish" (Hong 366). While there is diversity within this literary group, there is a shared insistence on the exploration of life in the isolated villages as well as the employment of "tradition" in either the form or content.

It is not surprising most root-seeking literature is set in the countryside, the classic habitat of "culture" and "tradition." However, the depiction of the countryside in root-seeking literature differs in several respects from prior "rural area literature" (*xiangtu wenxue* 乡土文学). While earlier works from the May Fourth movement (i.e., the 1920s) and the early PRC period (i.e., the 1950s to 1960s) make different political claims in their depiction of peasants life, both have conspicuous political standpoints and serve didactic purposes. In root-seeking literature, there is more ambiguity. In addition, the distinct features of the peasants (lower) class and contemporary class struggle were at the core of the earlier literary works; for example, in the works of Lu Xun (1881–1936), the author aims to characterize the ignorance and evoke pity for the lower class, which represented the majority of Chinese people at that time. By contrast, in root-seeking literature, characters become the main focus, but without a definite ideological purpose. Fan Xing points out that many writers who were "sent-down youth" (i.e., young people who from the 1950s opted to leave the urban areas and go "back to the land")—the majority of root-

seeking movement—chose to embrace mundane lives not guided by a grand objective (such as revolution). Fan proposes Wang Anyi as an exemplary figure, whose work *Baotown* will be discussed below in detail and who once said that "we are the generation without ideologies but with many strange opinions about life" (Fan 56). The influence of humanistic ideas is evident, and one can also find the traces of the individualism that is common in Western modernist works. Finally, the "modern-ness" of root-seeking literature also lies upon its curiosity in digging up cultural traditions (even elements of "superstition" and "mysticism"). While previous Chinese literature in the twentieth century was used to pursue "advanced" and "modern" Western ideas and to discard the "backward" indigenous traditions, root-seeking literature rebelliously promotes traditions and ancient culture as the foundation for the "dialogue with 'world literature'" (Hong 367). Interestingly, such attention towards tradition could be read as a gesture of denial against both the "Western" and the "modern," but at the same time it is also inspired by certain Western modern literary works and is a move away from earlier twentieth-century Chinese literature.

On the other hand, avant-garde literature places emphasis on narrative techniques and forms instead of themes. Other words used to describe this school are: "meta-narrative," "pure literature," "experimental fiction" and "new wave fiction." All these names suggest a certain intentionality in developing new narratives for mainstream Chinese fiction, while terms such as "meta" (*yuan* 元; also "original" or "fundamental") and "avant-garde" (*xianfeng* 先锋) further indicate its inheritance from foreign literature.

Huang Ziping compares avant-garde literature with root-seeking literature and concludes that:

> The early narrative innovations (such as that of the 'Search-for-Roots' writers)
> did not change the basic functions of fiction; distinction from traditional fiction
> was made only in terms of moral, historical and cultural allegories or narrative
> technique; in 'experimental fiction,' however, the goal is to obliterate fiction in
> a fundamental way, to destroy its general functions and endow this genre with a
> radically new nature. (Zhang 153)

In other words, Huang argues that experimental literature is innovative not only in the stories it tells but also in the way it tells these stories as well as the purpose behind the storytelling. While root-seeking literature had already overturned the didactic function of fiction, the "violence" experimental literature conducts to the traditional modes of fiction is more thorough and revolutionary.

Ambiguity is the most crucial (and modern) feature of experimental literature, and it is projected through different aspects. Just as Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), Franz Kafka (1883–1924) and James Joyce (1882–1941) experimented with writing in various ways, so too the Chinese experimental school explored the possibilities of fiction in relation to narrative and language. First of all, linear narratives rarely appear in experimental writing and thus ambiguity arises not only through the open-endedness of the story but also the sequence of events, the setting, and the temporality. By challenging readers with a deliberately unfamiliar and thus "foreign" narrative, experimental writers underline the subjectivity of the text and its independent existence. In addition, just as

with Joyce's neologisms, experimental writers innovate with unconventional combinations of Chinese characters and coin new expressions. Many of these writers were inspired by translations of foreign literature, and the "foreign-ness" of such expressions also self-consciously questions the "origins" of the text and culture. If one views root-seeking literature as a denial of Western modernist literature, experimental literature is a more direct descendant of Western modernism.

However, it is also worth noting that the two literary groups are not utterly opposed; while one places its emphasis on content and the other primarily on form, they share similar motifs and consider related issues. Both schools reveal Chinese intellectuals' contemplation of the construction of Chinese modernism after experiencing the fever of Western modernism, the shock brought by "world literature" and the attempt to absorb literary translations. In the following case studies of Wang Anyi's *Baotown* and Ma Yuan's *Fabrication*, I further examine the "modernist" features shared by both the root-seeking and experimental schools, as well as the differences in their respective attempts to construct a "modern" image of Chinese literature under the influence of world literature.

Case Study

Baotown (*Xiao bao zhuang* 小鲍庄) is a novel written in late 1984 and published in 1985. It is set in an isolated small village called Baotown. While there is no traceable history of this town, legends say that people in this town are descendants of Da Yu 大禹, the mythological hero that controls the flood. There is no one central character. Wang

Anyi tells the stories of men and women, the young and the old, the illiterate and the literate as well as those living in and outside the town. Distant from any political turmoil, life in Baotown remains intact, and traditions—good or bad—are well preserved.

Fabrication (*xugou* 虚构) is a novella published in 1986. Also distant from urban centers, the story takes place in a leper village in Tibet. In *Fabrication*, Ma adopts a circular narrative, unveiling the story with recounts, flashbacks and statements (of the present). The border between truth and fabrication is unrecognizable, and even the roles of "Ma Yuan"—the character and the author—are constantly shifting.

Both of these works are influenced by Latin American magical realism. In *Baotown*, the lack of temporal and spatial indications, the isolation of the environment and the emphasis on traditions seem to echo the setting of Macondo that appears in several of Gabriel García Márquez's works. The first scene of the novel is a flood. "Seven days and seven nights of rain, rain that turned the daytime into night. And then the flood, pounding over Bao Mountain, turning the dark into a stretching sheet of white" (Wang v). The memory of Baotown is always associated with flood, which in rural areas has the immense power not only to erase civilization but even ideas of time and place. A flood can invert day and night and conquer a solid mountain with fluid water: "the sky was gone, the earth was gone. The sparrows were silent. In time—a moment or a century—a tree floated to the surface, painting a line between heaven and earth" (Wang v). When a moment is no different from a century, and the border between the heaven and earth marked only by a floating tree, those ideas that are generally perceived as objective, such as time and place, are destabilized.

Another important feature of *Baotown* is the representation of the idealistic "hero" through folk songs and mythological and historical stories. While the search for heroism is one of the central themes of *Baotown*, the narratives of heroism and the exemplary heroes come directly from Chinese tradition. According to Han Shaogong, such stories are the "root" of Chinese culture. For example, Bao Bingyi 鲍秉义, an old man who lost his family in the war, sings traditional opera (*hua gu xi* 花鼓戏), which relates stories of legendary heroes of the past. He is not a respectable character in the village, but his songs are popular, and he is known as "voice of the past" (*chang gu* 唱古) . In his first appearance in the novel, he is singing of Xiang Yu 项羽, the failed King of Chu, the Queen Mother of the West 王母娘娘, and Qin Xianglian 秦香莲, a famous character in Beijing Opera (Wang, 14). They are the exemplary heroes within the traditional narrative. Here, the presence of the medium—opera—as well as the mythological, historical and literary stories, marks the singular color of "Chineseness." In addition, the search for heroism from the past to the present indicates a continuity of a certain "Chinese spirit," one that is both traditional and modern. As Fan Xing suggests in his speech on "root-seeking literature" and mysticism:

> Considering that the advent of "root-seeking literature" was influenced by the American writer Faulkner … and Latin American "magical realism," and that both Faulkner and Latin American "magical realism" contain the strong luminosity of local culture and mysticism, it is arguable that the mysticism of "root-seeking literature" is also modern; i.e., it is an indication of modern people's re-understanding of their own ethnic culture. (Fan 181–182)

While *Baotown* is not limited to the portrait of mysticism, it is still representative in its attention to the local tradition (in opposition to the focus of globalization), the history and literature of the past and even mythology, which in the earlier part of the twentieth century was considered superstitious and backward. There is no doubt that such self-exploration is not only a gesture rejecting excessive "modernism" in the Western sense, but also an approach "learned" from translated literature (mainly Latin American literature) for the purpose of redefining Chinese modernity.

The avant-garde novel *Fabrication* was also influenced by Latin American magic realism in another way. It emphasizes style more than content, and therefore concentrates on the fabrication of the labyrinth within fiction. In addition, it experiments with all kinds of narrative techniques to portray the fragmentary memory of the vague narrator. For example, as with many other works of Chinese modernist and avant-garde literature at the time, *Fabrication* favors "cyclic time" in storytelling, which is borrowed from magical realist works such as Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. While the repetition of events and names as well as the case of incest in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* suggest the inevitable yet stagnant progress of history, Chinese modernist writers, including both root-seeking writers and avant-garde writers, are more attracted to a form of narrative known as "in medias res." Though the idea of "in medias res" can be traced back to the Homeric epics, Chinese writers were struck by the beginning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice" (Márquez, 5). This famous beginning sentence drags its reader back to a distant memory and at the

same to looks to the future, and the paradoxical temporalities together indicate the complexity and ambiguity of time. In other words, it not only starts the narrative from the midst of historical progress but also embodies the past, present and future in one sentence. A parallel example can be found in chapter five of Ma Yuan's *Fabrication*: "Later, I repeated the same error of presumption. I forgot that people here had seen movies. Photography was by no means beyond their understanding. When she said she wasn't sure about photography, she had her own reasons. But more of that later" (Ma 110). Even though it might not be a deliberate imitation, the paragraph here suggests the influence of the translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, so prevalent that it was difficult for Chinese modernist writers to avoid.

While the "in medias res" narrative is common in both root-seeking literature and avant-garde literature, the latter goes further in innovating narrative styles. There is a strong dialogue between Ma Yuan's "narrative trap" (or narrative circle; *xushi quantao* 叙事圈套) and the "labyrinth" of Jorge Luis Borges's; in particular, the connection lies upon the shifting perspectives of narrative and the mystery of time. While Borges is one of the founders of magical realist literature, his works cannot be confined solely within the category of Latin American magical realism. In fact, he experiments in styles and forms are also connected to European modernism, and thus it is reasonable to suggest that Ma Yuan (and other Chinese avant-garde writers) also inherits narrative styles from European modernist writers. In *Fabrication*, there are at least three distinct narrative voices that lead the readers into the story. First, "I" is a writer—Ma Yuan, who is responsible for the creation of this novella. Second, "I" is a fictional character within the

story—a writer Ma Yuan, who adventures into Maqu village and spends several days there. Finally, and most obviously in chapter two, "I" is the old mute that the character Ma Yuan encounters in Maqu village. While there are no clear indications of who the narrator "I" is nor when the narrative shifts, the interwoven voices are like the forking paths, leading readers to a "fantastic truth" (*qiyide zhenshi* 奇异的真实), as Chen Xiaoming put it in "The Secret of 'Repeated Fabrication': Ma Yuan's Fabrication and the Genealogy of Borges' Fictions" (33). According to Chen, Borges constructs the fantastic and incredible truth through fragmentary and ancient scripts, Ma Yuan achieves the same goal through the adventure of the character Ma Yuan and the perspective of the "author" Ma Yuan in the lunatic asylum. In both cases, the unpredictable yet frequent shifts of narrative are essential in building the labyrinth of the fictional reality.

In addition, the contradictions and confusion of time in *Fabrication* exhibit a compelling similarity with the idea of time in Borges's short story *Secret Miracle*. In Ma Yuan's novella, the character "Ma Yuan" enters into Maqu village on May 1st and plans to stay for seven days. The following chapters indicate that he spends at least five days in Maqu village, even though the narrators constantly suggest that "time cannot be measured" (Ma 103). In the end, the narrator is told that the day he wakes up in a strange place is May 4th despite his vivid memory of at least five days in the village. In the *Secret Miracle*, the playwright Jaromir Hladík also has experienced the subjective time in which a year equals two minutes. Both works depict the mystery of time in the parallel realms, the subjective and dreamy world versus the objective and the "real" world, and it is very likely that Ma Yuan was influenced by the *Secret Miracle* when writing *Fabrication*. As

Chen points out in his journal, both works end with a seemingly definite mark of time. The confusion of time in Ma Yuan's work underscores the mysterious, fictional and even absurd characteristics of the story, which echoes the title and the theme "fabrication." While both the "objective" time and the authoritative narrative voice(s) could be fabricated, Ma Yuan seems to test the possibilities of storytelling through layers of fabrications. Furthermore, as indicated in his foreword, Ma believes the "repeated fabrication" is not only "the gods' one and the same method in creating their myths and acquiring their sense of mastery" (Ma 101), but also the one and the same approach to understand the seemingly objective and real world. While the purpose and philosophy might differ, Ma and Borges share similar approaches in creating the fictional yet true world

Carrying out the traditions of European modernism (even though the phrase "traditions of modernism" seems to be counter-intuitive), Ma Yuan and other experimental writers explore the limits, the function and the significations of language. Language is one of the most debated topics in twentieth century thought. In *Modernism and Magic*, Leigh Wilson delineates the obsessions and confusions of modern philosophers on the fundamental form of language. After noting Nietzsche's pessimism with regard to the gap between language and reality, and the fact that human beings are only able to hold onto metaphors, Wilson concludes that the dilemma of language lies mainly on "the relation between words and the things denoted by them" (Wilson 46). The anxiety of language comes from multiple aspects: the constant delay of language, the gap between the signified and the signifier, its function to describe the existent or to create the

non-existent, as well as its restrictions and silence when it fails to represent reality. While root-seeking literature also pays attention to the language of the text, it merely underlines the sense of "tradition" signified by the "indigenous Chinese language." On the contrary, Ma Yuan is not confined by the geographic significations of language. In *Fabrication*, he investigates the constant gaps and delays of language, and presents the similar anxiety in the scenario of Chinese writing through various failures.

There are several places that Ma expresses the failure of language. First of all, one of the prominent features of the text is the appearance of catalogues and parentheses. For example, in the first chapter the narrator lists the topics that occur frequently in his writing. "I wrote about brown eagles, bald eagles, kites; I wrote about bears, wolves, leopards and other ferocious animals like them. I wrote about small animals, scorpions (the vicious), lambs (the meek), foxes and marmots (neither vicious nor meek)" (Ma 102). The narrator wants to convey what he writes about, and thus gives a long list (more words) filled with parentheses (even more words). Instead of simply saying "I wrote about ferocious animals," the narrator chooses to give specific example (bears, wolves, leopards). Furthermore, he adds "(the vicious)" behind "scorpions" because the word "scorpions." fails to accurately convey the complete idea in the narrator's mind. In order to "complete" the idea and fill the gap, the narrator has to add a supplementary parenthesis to better convey the meaning. The lists and the supplementary words both indicate the anxiety the narrator has about mastering language in order to deliver the intended meaning.

Second, Ma is questioning the seemingly solid relation between language and identity. In *Fabrication*, the narrator has emphasized several times that he is a Han Chinese and speaks as well as writes in Chinese. The adventure takes place in Tibet, where people speak different languages. Hence, there is a constant feeling of isolation, and such isolation comes from the narrator's exclusive identity (as a Han Chinese) as well as his exclusive language (Chinese). In the very beginning, he notes that "I am the person known as Ma Yuan, a Han Chinese…. I tell the stories in Chinese" (Ma 101). In the village, no one knows Chinese except the woman he stays with, and the difference in language seems to echo with the difference in identity. However, he later learns that there are other "Chinese" in the village when he asks about the other six people downstairs:

> "'Are they all Tibetan?'
> 'Some are Han, some are Muslims, some are Lobas.'
> 'I thought you said that nobody here speaks Chinese?'
> 'The Han Chinese who were born and brought up here speak Tibetan. Nobody speaks Chinese'" (Ma 119).

While the relation between language and identity seems to be consistent, there is a gap damaging the perfect bridge between the signified (identity) and the signifier (language). This gap questions not only the relation between identity and language but also the constitution of identity and what language signifies. Moreover, it also raises the issue that whether the significations of the word "Chinese" vary respectively in Ma and the woman's contexts.

The inevitable delay of language is also discussed when the narrator tries to photograph the woman. She rejects his request to take pictures, saying: "I understand. I won't take pictures. I am not sure about this picture-taking" (Ma 110). At first, since the

syntax structure is confusing, the narrator does not know why she refuses to be photographed. Then by guessing, he thinks what the woman means is "she knew photograph existed, but she didn't understand how people could be moved onto the paper." Days later, he finally realizes that she does not want to have pictures taken of her because she is not beautiful. Ma Yuan uses this scene to depict the perfect example of the confusions and delays of language. There is no absolute meaning attached to a language, and there is always a delay in the delivery and acceptance of meanings. The narrator does not have a concrete answer to what the woman means even till the end, and the multiple layers of meaning constantly evolve along with time.

In an analysis of Ma Yuan and foreign literature, Chen Xiaoming raises a number of key questions in studying Chinese modern literature in relation to foreign literature: "To what extent are the most innovative works among Chinese contemporary fictions influenced by foreign literature? How is the influence manifested in the text? What do the changes and influence signify? Is there anything new within the metamorphosis?" (Chen 38).We must further these questions by asking: How and in what ways does Chinese modernist literature differ from Western modernism, even given the huge influence of the latter? In the case of *Baotown*, Wang Anyi seems to deliberately avoid any discussion of how literature may shape society, a theme that appears frequently in the manifestos of Western modernist literary movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism. Contrary to avant-garde literature, *Baotown* takes a more "conservative" path, one that returns to realism and romanticism. It is less radical in form as well as ideology, and in fact, shies away from social and political dialogue in order to focus on the characters.

However, I want to argue that this seemingly traditional return is in fact a significant movement towards a unique form of Chinese modernism.

First of all, it is necessary to have a close examination of the "past" in order to talk about the modern characteristics of *Baotown*'s "return." *Baotown* manifests its observation of the individuals living in the village, and human characters, instead of their classes or ideologies, are the core concern of the novel. It is a significant breakthrough from previous rural-area literature (dominant in the 1950s and 1960s), which was interested in the "deeper" class struggles and the author's political opinions. Characters in such literature are mostly puppets that either indicate the "disease" of the whole society or serve the author's didactic purpose (or both). Hong Zicheng describes the two trends in the early PRC era in the following way:

> [O]ne featured an emphasis on the 'current struggle' and required writers
> to concentrate on the struggles that show the 'profound changes' to the
> face of 'China's society'…. [In addition,] so that descriptions 'enter deep
> to the core,' the writer's class stand, opinions, and emotions had to be as
> one with those of their subject (the farmers). (Hong 104–105)

In either situation, the characters in early rural literature are not free; they are bound by their class significations, societal developments and even the author's perspectives. Characters are not individuated, and one can find only a collective shadow of certain ideologies beneath the foggy faces of the peasants.

Baotown is different. There is little suggestion of class differences, nor is there any indication of the "profound changes" in China. One can faintly procure some hints

here and there, but overall the dramatic transformations of the era recede to the backstage. In chapter one, there is a character with the title of *duizhang* 队长. In Martha Avery's translation, the title is literally translated as "troop captain," but in fact it is the title for the leader of a "production brigade." This organization existed between 1958 and 1984 and was disbanded after the establishment of market economics. Therefore, the title faintly indicates the time period of chapter one even though there is no discussion of outside political struggles nor any hints of the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution. The context generally remains silent and seems to cause little interruption in people's lives in Baotown. The transition from production brigade and people's commune to villages and townships is merely suggested in the discussion of Picked-Up's (*shilai* 拾来) "immoral" affair with Second Aunt (*ershen* 二婶), a widow. When Picked-Up was beaten by the villagers, "he paid a call on the troop leader, who was no longer troop leader but mayor. Now that the land had been redistributed, his title was different and his scope of jurisdiction had been reduced" (86). The influences of Mao, the Gang of Four and the economic reforms are dim, and the significant transformations of the society are only perceived through the change in a person's title in the context of an everyday dispute. While indifferent to the larger political changes, *Baotown* pays attention to each character and the mundane details of their life. Mark Leenhouts points out in his journal that "the roots writers' stress on 'culture' (*wenhua*) can also be seen as an alternative to, or a weapon against, 'politics,' which Mao had put in command of the arts" (534), but I think root-seeking writers such as Wang in fact employ an honest, empathetic, objective depiction of the individuals in their works, within which culture manifests itself and is

able to persist. In other words, the collapse of the forced ideology upon individuals leads to a more realistic depiction of the individual characters and the culture they transmit, and this shift is as significant factor that makes *Baotown* and root-seeking literature "modern."

In addition, Wang Anyi displays an ambivalent attitude towards the characters in *Baotown* and the characters are independent from any authoritative judgement. In other words, the author's authority purposefully fades behind the scenes, and there are no definite "role models" nor comments on contemporary China. In fact, the isolation of the village also reflects Wang's reluctance to use *Baotown* as a synopsis of contemporary China. In her article on Wang Anyi, Wang Lingzhen also suggests that the competing narratives in the story around the death of Dreg (*laozha* 捞渣)—the most likely "role model" of the novel—and the image of the confusing and problematic writer Bao Renwen together "destabilizes the act of representation and thus resists 'the rationalized interpretations of society promoted by modern ideologies defining nation-state' (Gunn 1991: 176)" (Wang Lingzhen, 593). On the one hand, Bao Renwen has never successfully found a hero in his life, and has never been a successful writer. His constantly failed search for heroes among the people in Baotown seems to question whether the ideal—or the root—actually exists. On the other hand, the honor Dreg receives after his death also challenges the claims and definitions of any modern ideologies: are they merely rhetorical narratives that are irrelevant to reality, or are they reflections of real anxieties, prospects and desires arising from the context? In *Baotown*, Wang gives no definite answer and appeals for no action. She retreats from her characters

and the events, holding off the authoritative voices, asking for no movements and giving no definite claims. However, such a move is modern in the way that it constrains the power of the author and gives liberty to the characters and the readers.

As Chen Xiaoming argues, "creations, especially the most challenging creations, are always generated from the dialogues with many masters. Without the intertextual dialogues, one cannot imagine how the art of a text comes to being" (Chen 38). The 1980s was a robust period for modern Chinese literature, and witnessed different literary approaches and experiments to discovering a "modern" way to express the "modern" Chinese identity. It is in this process that Chinese modernity was redefined and recorded, and Chinese modernism constructed and diversified. The dialogues with previous masters are made accessible only through the explosion of literary translations, and their influence over the image of Chinese modernism cannot be neglected. By examining *Baotown* by Wang Anyi and *Fabrication* by Ma Yuan, I have investigated some of the ways by which this transformation happens. Specifically, I have focused on the different elements borrowed from Latin American literature, the anxiety of language in the Chinese context, and the different path Chinese writers took to achieve Chinese modernism.

Conclusion

Linking the destruction of the Cultural Revolution and the full embrace of globalization in the 1990s, the decade of the 1980s was for many Chinese not only a period of transition but also a time of experiment and learning. In this process, literary translations were often pioneers for importing foreign ideas and histories into China, showing new expressions of "modernism" and understandings of "modernity." My interests lie in the politics of literary translations as well as the reception of foreign literature as projected through modern Chinese writings. Furthermore, behind the fervor of translations and writings, I am interested in the changes in the self-perceived identity of China implied by the choices of translations and by the responses to such within the modern Chinese literature in the 1980s.

Through analysis of the data from the literary magazine *World Literature* (*Shijie wenxue*), it is clear that in the 1980s the focus of "world literature" for Chinese translators, students and scholars alike was "Western modern literature." The top three countries that have the most literary works published in *World Literature* were the United States, France and the United Kingdom, and most of the translations were of modern and contemporary texts. Difference in political ideologies no longer played a central role in deciding literary merit, while curiosity towards the capitalist world grew rapidly in this period. At the same time, the frequent political visits and cultural exchanges also encouraged literary translations; they were different means of communication to bring China to the world and vice versa. The Sankey diagram also shows all the participants in translations that were published in *World Literature* in the 1980s, indicating not only the

initial success of the recovery of higher education but also the enthusiasm for translation and its central position at this time. However, while translations in general occupied a central position in Chinese cultural life, the roles and discourses of translations of specific schools were not always consistent. While European modernism was at first carefully examined for ideological purposes, it soon attracted a broader Chinese audience and became the central source among literary translations. Latin American literature was at the margins in the early 1980s, but by 1985 its imaginative contemplations of history and the future became hot topics and its influence increased dramatically. Both literary schools were inspiring to Chinese modern literature in the 1980s, in particular to two Chinese literary schools: root-seeking and avant-garde literature. With the case studies of Wang Anyi's *Baotown* and Ma Yuan's *Fabrication*, we see different layers of modernity presented, as well as how modern characteristics of Chinese literature responded to influences from outside China.

This thesis is an admittedly audacious attempt to bridge translation and literature and to study the politics and reception of translation with approaches from the digital humanities. It is commonly acknowledged in studies of modern Chinese literature that foreign literature is a significant influencing factor. For example, in *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature*, Hong Zicheng reckons that "the changes that occurred in 'new period literature' were directly related to the clashes and understandings produced by these influences from outside China" (Hong 262). However, the specific influences are seldom elaborated. It is the same for studies of translations in China during the 1980s; i.e., external influences seem to be ignored. Therefore, instead of focusing

solely on the two realms of literature and translation, this thesis is a first attempt to study the bridge that connects these two systems. In order to achieve this objective, Chapter One opened up a comprehensive view of Chinese translation activities in the 1980s, while Chapter Two investigated attitudes towards specific "alien" literary schools as well as the implied self-understandings of Chinese identity. Along with discussions of translation perceptions, Chapter Three examined the receptions projected by modern Chinese literature in the late twentieth century and the forms of Chinese modernism shaped and defined within such. Through this analysis, the close relationship between "imported" and local literature became evident, as did the the influence of translations not only on specific Chinese literary forms but on the very definition of what it means to be "Chinese.".

Furthermore, while Digital Humanities (DH) is widely applied to areas such as English literature and history, few studies have employed DH methods to study modern Chinese literature. Despite the records of periodicals, newspapers and books in libraries and publishing houses, there is no public database for these publications. Therefore, as a PUR research fellow during the summer of 2015, I developed a database for the magazine *World Literature* from 1980 to 1989 and began to analyze the data. While my visualizations of maps, charts, timelines and diagrams are still drafts, they provided a glimpse of what readers enjoyed reading and what was selected and offered for Chinese readers, and allowed me to explore the influencing factors behind the selections of translations.

However, there are also many limitations to this thesis. First of all, even though *World Literature* was one of the most influential literary magazines of the period, it cannot possibly represent the whole picture of literary translation in China, even in that single decade. There were in fact many new periodicals dedciated to foreign literature, including *Foreign Literary Arts* (*Waiguo wenyi*), *Foreign literatur*e (*Waiguo wenxue*), *Forest of Translations* (*Yi lin*), *Foreign Fiction* (*Waiguo xiaoshuo*), *Sea of Translations* (*Yi hai*), *Soviet Literature* (*Sulian wenxue*), *Russian & Soviet Literature* (*Su e wenxue*), *Japanese Literature* (*Riben wenxue*), *Foreign Literature Reports* (*Waiguo wenxue baogao*), and so on. This list does not even include books. Therefore, as I stated above, the data cannot represent the full distribution of translations in China during the 1980s, and some of the conclusions from Chapter One cannot be applied to the overall translation activities in that period.

Finally, I approached the influences of European literature and Latin American literature over Chinese writings through two short stories: Wang Anyi's *Baotown* and Ma Yuan's *Fabrication*. These two stories "belong to" root-seeking literature and avant-garde literature respectively, but they cannot represent their literary schools. They may convey some of the central characteristics of each literary school, yet it is unfair to equate them to the whole system of these two schools. Therefore, a fuller picture of the influence of translations over Chinese modern writings requires further study.

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Appendix - Online Projects:

Online Database: http://210.14.121.5:8080/sjwx/CN/volumn/oldVolumn.htm

Sankey Diagram: http://www.eg.bucknell.edu/~jh054/Sanky/sankey.html

Timeline Projects: http://fusionandreconstruction.blogs.bucknell.edu/work-in-progress/timeline/