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**'The Bridge': How The Penguin New Writing (1940-1950) shaped
twentieth-century responses to China**

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'The Bridge': How *The Penguin New Writing*
(1940-1950) shaped twentieth-century
responses to China

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This thesis examines the short stories about China by Chinese and British writers published in the journal *The Penguin New Writing* (1940-1950). The writers were responding to a traumatic period in history spanning part of the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II and its aftermath. *TPNW*, promoted contemporary writing from around the world and was open both to well-established and little-known writers. Penguin Books' founder, Allen Lane, backed the journal which had a circulation of 100,000 at its peak and established John Lehmann as one of the finest literary editors of wartime Britain. To date, there has been scant critical analysis of Lehmann's international venture, and none at all of his interest in modern Chinese literature. Yet his political, aesthetic and personal approach to China provides a fascinating study of the ways in which those on the British Left sought to increase sympathy for the country and its people and how Lehmann redrew representations of the country for his Anglophone readers. This thesis benefited significantly from a dissertation fellowship to visit Lehmann's editorial archive at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, where a wealth of previously unseen correspondence between the editor and his Chinese and British writers was discovered. These letters enabled the piecing together of a narrative about Sino-British literary crossings in the 1940s, as well as a reappraisal of neglected Chinese writers Ye Junjian and Kenneth Lo among others. During the decade of *TPNW*'s existence attitudes towards the Chinese in Britain, particularly on the British Left, became increasingly sympathetic and this thesis evaluates Lehmann's contribution to 'the vogue' for Chinese stories in the mid 1940s. In this heyday for Chinese writers, they sought to push against established Sinophobic stereotypes but as this thesis concludes, there remained limits to British interest in the plight of the Chinese people.

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Bibliography

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A great deal of the research for this thesis was conducted in archives around the world, most notably at The Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at the University of Texas in Austin. The HRC's generous award of a dissertation fellowship enabled me to visit the bountiful resource that is John Lehmann's editorial archive and unearth his correspondence with Chinese writers which became the backbone of this project. At the Penguin Books archive at the University of Bristol, where this project began, particular thanks is due to the archivist Hannah Lowery for her patience and for sharing her personal library of Penguin-related books with me during my multiple visits. I am also extremely grateful to Dr Vivienne Lo and her daughter, Ellie, for permitting me to access Kenneth Lo's archive, which has yet to be made public, at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). Equally, Richard Wiltshire at the LMA helped me to navigate multiple boxes of unsorted materials and correspondence. I look forward to working with the LMA and the Lo family on the task of preparing parts of the archive for the public. Thanks is also due to Patricia McGuire, the archivist at King's College Cambridge for tracking down papers relating to Ye Junjian in disparate corners of the archive. Furthermore, I wish to note the contribution of the archivists who I did not have the pleasure of meeting in person at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, the Firestone Library at Princeton University and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. who tracked down eagerly sought copies of documents and correspondence on my behalf.

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I declare that all the material contained in this thesis
is my own work.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The origins of the research

This research began in the archive of Penguin Books, held at Bristol University. Penguin Books was set up in 1935 with the aim of re-publishing works of fiction that its editors felt deserved a wider or more mainstream readership and whose original publisher would consent to a cheap paperback edition. My thesis originated as an investigation into Penguin's coverage of China, and how its publication list may have shaped twentieth-century readers' perceptions of the country and its people.¹ As a publisher whose business model was to provide good quality, affordable literature and which, based on sales, emphatically succeeded in this aim, Penguin clearly had a significant impact on British reading habits.

I began by compiling a list of 'China books' from the Penguin back catalogue. The evidence suggested that China and Chinese people, whether as backdrop or centre stage, as master villain or virtuous protagonist, had been ubiquitously presented via British or American writers. The list of authors whose works of fiction relating to China were 'Penguinised' in the first few decades after its launch included Ernest Bramah, Sax Rohmer, Ann Bridge, Edith Wherry, Samuel Merwin, Harold Acton, Somerset Maugham, Denton Welch, Keith West, Eric Linklater and in the 1960s also, Pearl Buck, André Malraux, and Robert Van Gulik.² Appendix A with full list attached. It appeared that the first time a Chinese writer featured in the main fiction list was not until February 1959, almost 25 years after Penguin Books was founded and a decade after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This was Han Suyin (pen name of Rosalie Matilda Chou, 周光瑚, 1917-2012) and the novel was *A Many Splendoured Thing*, which since its initial publication seven years earlier had enjoyed enormous

¹ Penguin quickly branched out into Pelicans (non-fiction), Penguin Specials (short polemical works on topical subjects), Penguin Classics and children's books under the Puffin imprint, as well as publishing new fiction titles.

²Beyond the fiction list were works by Lionel Davidson, Arthur Waley, Shih-I Hsiung, J. M. D Pringle, Edgar Ansel Mowrer and Dorothy Woodman.

worldwide sales and adapted into an equally successful and critically acclaimed Hollywood film, one of the first to be shot on location in Asia. The initial print run for the Penguin edition was 40,000 copies.³ Han's frank, impassioned, yet stylistically restrained account of her love affair in Hong Kong in the run up to October 1st 1949 as the Chinese Communist Party swept towards the inevitable takeover of China, was the first time a Chinese (or to be precise, a Eurasian) author had broken through into the mainstream of Penguin's publishing output. I broadened my search for Chinese writers beyond the fiction list and found that the writer and illustrator, Chiang Yee (Jiang Yi 蒋彝 1903-1977) had published two children's books under the Puffin imprint in 1942 and 1945 respectively and therefore significantly predated Suyin. It was at this juncture, as I began to research what had led to Chiang Yee's inclusion on the Puffin list, that I encountered *The Penguin New Writing* (1940-1950), the literary journal edited by John Lehmann and backed by Allen Lane, one of the founding brothers behind Penguin Books. The first issue of *TPNW* (November, 1940), the contents of which were boldly printed on the front cover, carried a story by Tchang T'ien-Yih (Zhang Tianyi, 张天翼, pen name of Zhang Yuanding, 1906-1985) entitled 'Hatred'. At the back of the journal, Zhang is introduced to readers as 'one of the best-known authors of the new China'.⁴ Almost twenty years before Penguin would publish a novel by a Chinese writer, the appearance of Zhang's short story appeared strikingly ahead of its time. A survey of the 40 volumes which comprise the complete *TPNW* series revealed that the editor published no less than ten stories from or about China in the journal. In his foreword to the very first issue, Lehmann declared his specific intention to find a 'wider public' not only for writers from English speaking lands (many already familiar to readers of Lehmann's other literary journals) but for the 'many brilliant writers from other countries, France, Spain, free Germany and free Italy, China and Russia'.⁵ According to its founding manifesto, *TPNW* had, I discovered, the publication of contemporary literature from China as a key tenet of its existence.

³ Penguin Books internal memo from Eunice Frost, 11 April 1957, Penguin Books archive, Bristol University (Author file (Han Suyin, *A Many Splendoured Thing*: A 1336).

⁴ *TPNW* 1, p. 156.

⁵ *TPNW* 1, p. viii.

The lifespan of the journal, throughout the 1940s, aroused my interest as it covered a period when the countries of China and Britain became allied and united against a common enemy. *TPNW* existed throughout the majority of WWII and a major part of the Second Sino-Japanese War (July 1937-September 1945) and for five years in post-war peacetime. These were years marked by a significant shift not only in Sino-British relations, but in attitudes to Chinese people within Britain itself. As writer Hsiao Ch'ien (Xiao Qian, 萧乾, birth name Xiao Bingqian, 1910-1999) recalled, attitudes towards Chinese people living in Britain shifted significantly during WWII, particularly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 when America and Britain declared war on Japan.⁶ Almost overnight, Chinese people became part of the 'grand alliance' rather than 'enemy aliens' and many found that the general public became more friendly towards them.⁷ This, then was an extraordinary time for a British editor to be publishing the works of living Chinese writers and finding a place for them in his journal alongside the most well respected writers publishing in Britain, among them: George Orwell, Christopher Isherwood, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Elizabeth Bowen, V.S Pritchett, Graham Greene, William Plomer, Julian Maclaren-Ross, Dylan Thomas, Henry Green, William Sansom, Alun Lewis and Denton Welch.

TPNW was one of the most successful (if not *the* most successful) literary journals to be published during WWII in Britain, and its editor the first to publish some of the finest short stories to emerge from the war or even, in some cases, 'the entire stretch of the twentieth century'.⁸ Nevertheless, the extent to which Lehmann was instrumental and active in promoting the careers of the writers whose works he published, particularly the Chinese writers, has been quite overlooked. His endorsement for an unknown writer could make the difference between obscurity and literary success. It was a position of influence that was immortalized in a Punch cartoon in 1954

⁶ Hsiao Ch'ien, Jeffrey C. Kinkley (tra.), *Traveller Without A Map*, (London, Sydney, Auckland: Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 75 - 76.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁸ Tessa Thorniley 'TPNW and the Wartime Short Story', in Elke D'hoker and Chris Mourant (eds.) *The Modern short Story and Magazine Culture 1880-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, estimated 2021). The chapter is an appraisal of the wartime short stories in *TPNW*.

(image in Appendix B) which lampooned the career trajectory of many an aspiring British novelist who before his downfall is 'tormented by his desire to be published in *New Writing*'.⁹ The journal (*TPNW*), its editor John Lehmann, and the fiction he published from China, thus became the focus for this thesis.

The research was greatly enhanced by materials discovered in the John Lehmann archive at the Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas, which holds a significant amount of correspondence between Lehmann and his network of Chinese sources. To my knowledge this correspondence has received no prior critical attention yet it sheds significant light on the nature of Sino-British literary friendships during the 1940s. Moreover, given the quantity of correspondence between Chinese writers and their literary contacts in Britain (and elsewhere) that was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the materials contained in Lehmann's archive are extremely valuable as evidence of the nature of unofficial, creatively driven, cross-cultural exchange between China and Britain in the decade before such East-West literary conversations became considerably harder to conduct.

1. 2 Research Questions

1.2 a) Where did Lehmann's interest in and understanding of China come from? What were his aims (stated and inferred) for *TPNW* and how did China fit into them?

In 1938 in an essay entitled 'The China Boom' published in the Anglophone Chinese journal *T'ien Hsia*, Emily Hahn catalogued the books about China that had shaped her own ideas about the country noting that they were largely by Western authors and often deeply flawed. She concludes with an impassioned call to writers and readers of the future: 'China is more than the old silk of a painting, faded ink brushed upon brittle paper. When will she find voice to roar across the seas, resounding with something

⁹ *Punch* magazine, 'The Rake's Progress: The Novelist', by Ronald Searle, 28 April 1954.

more than cries of anguish? When will Western brothers recognize her for a living sister, and not a dead ancestor?'.¹⁰

This thesis will argue that what Lehmann was attempting as the editor of *TPNW* during WWII was precisely what Hahn was calling for, namely to bring China to life for his Anglophone readers by publishing its contemporary fiction. When Hahn wrote 'The China Boom' she was living in occupied Shanghai, in the throes of the Second Sino-Japanese War, a time when the need to shift old and outmoded representations of China had become a matter of grave urgency. What Hahn identifies in her essay is a moment when the type of fiction that was being read about China became a matter, not of literary preference, but of national survival. Hahn's essay expressly sought to wake the West up and to dislodge readers' 'little warped romances' that are 'so dear to them' and that were so potentially harmful to China as it sought the support of potential allies beyond its borders.¹¹ In the same year (1940) that Lehmann launched the first issue of *TPNW* he confessed, in a letter sent to a literary contact in Hong Kong: 'I have never been to China but whenever I read anything about it I am deeply moved, though I often don't quite know why'.¹² Lehmann's interest in China and Chinese literature was characterised by an open-minded curiosity, which prompted a strong emotional response to a place of which he had no first-hand knowledge.

In order to answer the above question, Lehmann's political, personal and literary background during the period leading up to *TPNW* will be scrutinised and appraised. Lehmann had begun to publish short stories from China in the spring of 1936 in his earlier (pre-Penguin) journal, *New Writing (NW)*. He published several literary journals simultaneously throughout the 1930s and 1940s and many of the Chinese stories published in *TPNW* had previously appeared in these other journals.¹³

¹⁰ Hahn, Emily, 'The China Boom' in *T'ien Hsia Monthly* [c. 1937], at China Heritage Quarterly No.22 June 2010 <www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tien-hsia.php?searchterm=022_boom.inc&issue=022> (Accessed March 16 2016).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹² Typed letter from Lehmann to Donald Allen, 11 January, 1940 (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

¹³ Lehmann's *New Writing* venture as a whole includes: the five issues of the original *New Writing* (Spring 1936 - Spring 1938), the three issues of *New Writing, New Series*, (Autumn 1938 - Christmas 1939), the four issues of *Folios of New Writing* (Spring 1940 - Autumn 1941), the single (paperback) volume of

1.2 b) In what ways did the ten Chinese stories published in *TPNW* (in wartime and post-war by Chinese and British writers) shape ideas about China?

Hereafter referred to as ‘the Chinese stories’, these include eight short stories by: Zhang Tianyi, Bai Pingjie (Pai Ping-Chei, 白屏阶), S. M (better known as Ah Long, 阿垅, real name Chen Shoumei, 陈守梅, 1907-1967), Yao Xueyin (Yao Hsueh-Yin, 姚雪垠, 1910-1999), Ye Junjian (Chun-chan Yeh, 叶君健, 1914-1999), and Kenneth Lo (Lo Hsiao Chien, 羅孝建, 1913-1995).¹⁴ The stories also include one critical essay about Chinese fiction by Harold Acton and a short story set in Mongolia by Ralph Fox. The thesis will provide close readings of each short story and relevant biographical detail for the writers. In order to consider ‘responses’ to the stories, I consider those of readers, in particular the subscribers, of *TPNW* and relevant critical reviews of the magazine as well as evidence about its influence. This thesis also examines the ways in which Lehmann himself, as a highly autocratic editor of this material, shaped the ‘China’ he put before his readers.

1.2 c) What was Lehmann’s approach towards China, Chinese short fiction and Chinese writers in so far as it is possible to reconstruct this from his own writing, his correspondence with Chinese writers and his network of China sources? How does an understanding of his ‘China venture’ broaden or contradict existing critical analyses of Lehmann’s international approach in his literary magazines? In what ways was Lehmann’s approach to Chinese literature indicative of overall attitudes towards Chinese literature in Britain in the 1940s?

In order to consider these questions, the thesis will map Lehmann’s China network, and how this was formed. It will also consider Lehmann’s editorial approach to the stories

Daylight (1941), the seven issues of *New Writing and Daylight* (Summer 1942-1946) and the 40 issues of *The Penguin New Writing* (1940-1950). Appendix C with full list of publishers.

¹⁴ Zhang and Ye each contributed two stories to *TPNW*.

and the writers, in particular through an analysis of his personal correspondence. Many of Lehmann's letters suggest notions of brotherliness between China and Britain in the late 1930s and 1940s. This brotherliness extended to Lehmann's close association with several Chinese writers living in Britain during and before WWII and the thesis will also consider what Lehmann's association with these writers meant for their careers in Britain. Context will be provided by considering the publishing conditions for Chinese writers during the period as well as attitudes towards modern Chinese literature (in particular short stories).

1.2 d) To what extent does the example of *TPNW* expand existing critical analysis about the nature of Sino/British cultural crossings in the late Republican era (prior to 1949) and particularly the role of literary fiction in transcultural wartime and post-war dialogue?

This thesis will consider the motivating forces behind Lehman's publication of works by Chinese writers and the effect their publication had in Britain. However, Lehmann also had an influence in China, with his journals providing inspiration for a war of resistance magazine (in English) that was briefly published in Hong Kong and as not merely a model, but a provider of content for a mooted magazine attached to a publishing house which promoted some of China's finest modern writers.

Taking *TPNW*/Lehmann as a case study, I examine the exchange of ideas and the literary friendships which emerged in this period which were particularly sympathetic in wartime. As a result, this thesis rounds out recent critical works about Sino-British literary relations and representations of China in Western culture. Where this thesis expands on previous accounts (those by Jonathan Spence, Frances Wood, Anne Witchard, Robert Bickers, Robin Winks, Paul Bevan, and Patricia Laurence) is in its emphasis on representations of China by *Chinese* writers (both in and outside the West) in the country's modern literature, and those who sought to support its circulation. Da Zheng in his biography of Chiang Yee, comments that in the late 1930s, Chinese writers

who had lived in Britain - at least for a period - such as Lin Yutang (林語堂, 1895-1976) and Shih-I Hsiung (熊式一, 1902-1991 also Xiong Shiyi) started to gain recognition: 'Though few in number, they represented a fresh voice in the West and signaled an important shift in perspective - China would no longer only be interpreted by Western authors'.¹⁵ The voices of Ye Junjian and Kenneth Lo can now be restored to this list.

1.3 Theoretical Approaches to Reading *TPNW*

Broadly my analysis of this material takes a historicist approach which enables a reassessment of our understanding of this period in literary history in the light of Sino-British contexts that have been overlooked. By approaching the archival materials and the research in this way, the thesis is able to appraise and potentially counter, overarching narratives about, for example, the neglect of modern Chinese literature in Britain and its failure to gain a wide readership, while also considering the nature of Sino/British relations during and after World War II.

One reason that wartime fiction quickly loses its readership (particularly short stories and reportage written as a more immediate response to the times and providing often fragmentary visions rather than a complete picture such that a novel might offer) is because the literature is so closely bound up with the moment, that it can seem irrelevant once the fighting stops. A report by Mass Observation which surveyed *TPNW* subscribers between 1946 - 1947 noted, for example: a 'Mr H, who is 20 and in the R.A.F' objecting 'to the continuance of war stories so long after the war'.¹⁶ The period also suffers relative critical neglect. Marina MacKay is among the literary historians of the World War II period to note that 'little of war's literature has ever fully registered on the critical field of vision'.¹⁷

¹⁵ Da Zheng, *Chiang Yee, The Silent Traveller from the East* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 104.

¹⁶ 'A Report on Penguin World' by Mass Observation, November 1947. Penguin Books archive, Bristol University (File: DM1294/3/2/2), p. 127. Original report section IX, *The Penguin Fans*, pp. 119 - 132.

¹⁷ Marina Mackay, *Modernism and World War II*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 5.

The Chinese stories in *TPNW* were written at a time when Chinese writers sought to broadcast ideas about China and the Chinese people, to highlight the country's struggle against Japan and to seek international support for their plight. War coloured not merely the content of the stories but the need for translation, circulation and publication. The journal itself was part of Lehmann's personal war effort as he never engaged in active service (and was blocked from working for the intelligence services) and so can hardly be read without wartime conditions strongly in mind. War provided a specific kind of common ground for the writers/contributors to *TPNW* (and indeed propelled Lehmann to launch the magazine and was to a large extent behind its success). To read the magazine without this in mind would be a strange kind of folly. Equally as *TPNW* was a magazine, and not, for example, a novel, as an artifact it is particularly grounded in its contemporary moment, seeking to speak to readers directly, and with immediacy. As a magazine, *TPNW* operated with its own codes in its own time and these were strongly coloured by war.

1.3 a) An Approach to Global Literature: *The World Republic of Letters*

There are two key theoretical frameworks which have proved useful for this research. One is Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, a radical remapping of global literary space which examines the forces at work when major languages and literatures rub up against minor ones. Casanova's theory of world literature acknowledges and makes visible the power dynamics within global literary canon building, and foregrounds the mediating role of the translator in this process as well as the influence of critics and editors endowed with the power to consecrate texts written in 'the languages of the periphery'.¹⁸ *The World Republic of Letters* is helpful for how we might appraise the relations between Lehmann and the Chinese writers with whom he had direct contact as they were seeking to build their careers in Britain (Ye Junjian, Xiao Qian and Kenneth Lo especially).

¹⁸ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, (Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 20.

Casanova's ideas about the dynamics at play in world literary space are in evidence most strongly in Chapter 5 (about Lo), Chapter 7 (about Ye) and in Chapter 8 (about Lehmann and modern Chinese literature and its writers). Casanova identifies and maps an international literary space, her 'world republic of letters' which 'is relatively independent of the everyday world and its political divisions' and 'whose boundaries and operational laws are not reducible to those of ordinary political space'.¹⁹ Casanova posits that world literature is based on the market, which is to say a space in which the sole value recognised by all participants, literary value, circulates and is traded. It is a theory that understands 'global exchange (of literature) primarily along patterns introduced by Western capitalism' as Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl summate in their critique of Casanova's model.²⁰ In this relational space shaped by 'rivalry, struggle and inequality', nations and their national literatures battle for domination.²¹ Casanova argues that from the 16th century until the 1960s, Paris was the 'Greenwich meridian of literature'.²² Paris, making full use of its literary capital, defined a standard of modernity against which other peripheral literatures could be measured. Essentially Casanova describes a dynamic in which 'powerful world literatures have vied for visibility and dominance over deprived'.²³ By deprived, Casanova means literary texts emanating from the non-Western periphery.

In the early stages of outlining her model, Casanova notes the need to 'index or measure' literary authority 'that can account for the linguistic struggles in which all contestants in the game of literature take part without even knowing it, by virtue simply of belonging to such a linguistic area [her example here is Russia], and clarify the mediating role of texts and translations, the making and breaking of reputations and the process of literary consecration and excommunication'.²⁴

¹⁹ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, xii, preface.

²⁰ Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl, 'Anglophone World Literatures: Introduction', *Anglia* 2017, 135 (1), p. 6.

<<https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/angl.2017.135.issue-1/ang-2017-0001/ang-2017-0001.pdf>> (Accessed 10 June 2019).

²¹ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁴ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 20.

She concludes by suggesting that in order to measure the strictly literary power of a language, it may be helpful to conceive of the literary world in terms of a floral pattern, ideas she borrowed from political sociology and Abram de Swaan:

By ... conceiving the literary world in terms of a floral pattern, which is to say as a system in which the literatures of the periphery are linked to the center by polyglots and translators it becomes possible to measure the literariness (the power, the prestige, and volume of linguistic and literary capital) of a language, not in terms of the number of writers and readers it has, but in terms of the number of cosmopolitan intermediaries - publishers, editors, critics and especially translators - who assure the circulation of texts into the language or out of it.²⁵

She goes on, throughout her mapping of the republic, to stress the inequality of the system in which the 'huge power of being able to say what is literary and what is not ... belongs exclusively to those who reserve for themselves ... the right to legislate in literary matters'.²⁶ And she states explicitly that, 'critical recognition and translation are weapons in the struggle for literary capital'.²⁷

1.3 b) In what way is Casanova's Model Helpful as a Theoretical Approach to *TPNW/Lehmann*?

Casanova's theory expounds on ideas around dominant and dominated literatures (and writers operating under such conditions) and the system within which literary capital is conferred. As well as stressing rivalry and, at times, violent struggle as the forces at work in this space, Casanova asserts the role of critics, translators and publishers in 'consecrating' literature and bestowing value upon texts which may then be traded more (or in terms of literature which fails to gain consecration presumably, less) freely. The essence of Casanova's theory is therefore highly relevant to this thesis which examines

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 20 - 21.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁷ Ibid.

not only how, why and by whom Chinese literature (here short stories) came to be published in *TPNW* in Britain but also what their publication meant for the writers' careers and ongoing circulation of their work as well as for modern Chinese literature in Britain. These ideas are particularly relevant to understanding the trajectory of Ye and Lo's literary careers and their accumulation, or not, of literary capital. *TPNW* as a magazine is a fitting case study of such forces as it published Chinese writers (and a great many other 'foreign' writers) from the 'periphery' alongside some of the finest British authors, who were therefore positioned in a literary 'centre'. This thesis, then, looks at the ways in which Lehmann sought to stand the literature of diverse nations up for comparison against each other. Initially Lehmann published works by largely unknown Chinese writers in translation and later on, short fiction by Ye and Lo, in English. As a result, in the stories published in *TPNW*, we see an example of when Chinese writers switch to the 'dominant' language to further their recognition in the literary centre. They seek to move closer towards the centre (or dominant language) as they seek 'consecration' there. The extent to which Lehmann is in a position to confer (or in the case of Lo withhold) literary value, or to consecrate (and unhallow) works, is a particular focus of this thesis. Lehmann, with these ideas at the fore, may be described as a literary gatekeeper in the semi-periphery of England (English literature). Casanova does after all concede that London is 'the other great capital of world literature' in the world republic albeit not *the* literary centre.²⁸ Or perhaps a better description of London in Casanovian thinking is as a 'menacing predator' [to Paris] as Christopher Prendergast puts it.²⁹

1.3 c) The Limits of Casanova's Model

What is most problematic in Casanova's model for the purposes of this thesis, and an element of her theory which has attracted some criticism, is her foregrounding of rivalry and competition in the long history of exchange between literatures and languages.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁹ Christopher Prendergast (ed.), 'The World Republic of Letters' in *Debating World Literature* (London, New York: Verso, 2004), p. 9.

Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl are among those who concur with Prendergast, for example, in stating that 'Casanova's exclusive focus on rivalry and competition ignores the long histories of exchange between writers and therefore fails to do justice to the variety of possible relations between different literary cultures, fluctuating in processes of confluence and transformation'.³⁰

Given the centrality of East/West exchange and the flow of ideas between China and Britain and Lehmann's generally supportive approach to the Chinese writers he published, Casanova's model is of limited use in explaining these conditions although her stress on the unevenness and imbalance between literature and languages as writers move to accumulate literary credit in the world republic, is one that is explicitly noted by Lehmann and which is examined in Chapter 8 (8.6 a).

Another criticism of Casanova's theory is that her centre/periphery model and the related paradigm of global circulation, ultimately 'reduce the world of world literature to movement and circulation', in other words 'to global pathways that are largely circumscribed by Western hegemony'.³¹ However this is more of a problem for those seeking ways of understanding world literature today than for a thesis engaged with Chinese writers seeking publication in a 1940s British magazine, a time when fewer alternative routes to publication in the literary centers of the world were open to them. A further criticism of Casanova's model is the 'Euro-centric purview' of her theoretical frame of reference, in which China, for example 'is pretty well off the map'.³² Only at the point where China seeks recognition via Nobel prizes does Casanova look at the language and literature of the country as seeking to break through in to 'the Republic'.

For the purposes of this thesis, it should also be noted that when Casanova applies her model to specific writers (from the twentieth century onwards, the 'heroes of her tale' are writers she defines as 'revolutionaries'.³³ For Casanova the revolutionaries are writers in a position to 'besiege the citadels of the literary imperium, conquer not only for themselves but for the institution of literature a certain 'freedom' and autonomy'.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

³¹ Neumann and Rippl, 'Anglophone World Literatures', p. 8.

³² Prendergast, 'The World Republic of Letters', p. 9.

³³ Casanova, chapter 11 'The Revolutionaries', *The World Republic of Letters*, pp. 324 - 347.

³⁴ Samuel Beckett is her primary example (there are a great many others) of this kind of writer. These writers produce ‘a truly international form of literary capital in the capital’.³⁵ However, these revolutionaries or ‘rebels’ or ‘assimilated writers’ which together make up her three typologies of ‘ex-centric’ writers who were seeking to break into world literary capitals in the twentieth century are not, at the point at which we encounter them in *TPNW*, the kinds of writers that this thesis is largely concerned with.³⁶ The Chinese writers examined in this thesis, by comparison, might be better described as foot soldiers or at least travellers in the foothills of literature. They are mostly in the early stages of their careers, at the start of a climb, they hope, upwards, in search of consecration. They are not and never do sit atop the citadel and whatever aspirations they may have they never achieve the giddy heights of ‘freedom and autonomy’ that Casanova describes as being bestowed upon the likes of Beckett and others. Nevertheless, in *TPNW*, Casanova’s ideas about the role of translators, publishers, peripheral languages, the accumulation of capital (or the failure to accumulate it) and the instinct for writers to seek consecration in literary capitals outside of their own nations, provide a model for this thesis to consider the forces at play between Lehmann, his journal and his Chinese contributors.

1.3 d) Hua Hsu’s *A Floating Chinaman*: Literary Failure and Who Gets to Speak for China

The second framework, or approach, that has been invaluable to this thesis as it places a value on considering the work of the writers who did *not* succeed in getting their voices heard or their materials published, is Hua Hsu’s *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific*.³⁷ Hsu’s 2016 study (centered on fiction about China in

³⁴ Predergast, ‘The World Republic of Letters’, p. 10.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hua Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific* (Cambridge Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 2016)

1930s and 1940s America) provides a model for how to examine the significance of writers whose works were never published, or never popular because they ran counter to accepted ideas and interests about China. Hsu's approach is of particular value to the appraisal of Lo in chapter 5, his early striving for literary success in 1940s Britain and ultimately his failure to carve out a reputation as a writer. After examining reasons for the success or failure of Chinese fiction to find publishers or readers (in America) Hsu then moves to consider the 'acquisition and maintenance of authority' or who ultimately gets to speak for China and therefore the nature and role of the 'expert' and those who remain perpetual outliers.³⁸ This approach is illuminating for the appraisal of Lo's stories, sketches and poetry about the Chinese community (of seamen) in Britain which were only ever self-published, and for Harold Acton, in Chapter 6 of this thesis, who despite living and working in China, and the critical success of his co-translated works about Chinese poetry and drama and the publication of a great number of reviews and other materials relating to Chinese culture throughout his life, has been much overlooked as a China 'expert'.

Hua Hsu's study foregrounds the role of literature in shaping popular ideas about China, but it also considers how and why certain individuals were deemed experts (on the subject of China) while others, among them Chinese writers and academics, remained unable to publish their writing and ideas in the West. Hsu's inquiry into who spoke for China, in 1930s and 1940s America, and who did not and the reasons behind their success or failure to entice American publishers and find readers for their works, also considers mainstream and popular ideas (about China in America in the period) and the ways in which counter-narratives were easily silenced or drowned out. Hsu reveals the ways in which popular or accepted representations of China which derived from fictional accounts, predominated over more nuanced readings of the country and its people, at a time when direct knowledge of China, its modern literature and its people, remained relatively limited.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

Hsu's study is of particular value as the period he considers, is similar to the scope of this thesis albeit that his setting is America. Hsu's study contrasts the status of the foremost China 'experts' in America, Pearl Buck, Richard Walsh and Henry Luce with the little known and only ever self-published Chinese writer, H. T. Tsiang and the academic and Lu Xun translator Chi-chen Wang (王際真, Wang Jizhen 1899-2001), among others. By examining their respective cultural standing and contribution to public discourse about China, Hsu explores the ways in which 'expertise' was accumulated and sustained in the period. In particular, Hsu considers the influence of Pearl Buck's best-selling work of fiction, *The Good Earth*, which appeared so authentic a vision of China in 1930s America that readers felt that in her novel they had discovered the real China. Meanwhile the radical avant-garde works of Tsiang and the unsettling 'more sophisticated' translations of Lu Xun's short works which may have countered what became ubiquitous Buckian sentimentality were greeted with only limited success.³⁹

As Chapter 5 of this thesis considers, Lehmann was among those who repeatedly rejected Lo's attempts to publish his work in 1940s Britain. In his position as a literary gatekeeper, Lehmann shaped responses to China in *TPNW* as much by the works he rejected, or segments or ideas that he cut out, as by what he published. Overall, this thesis seeks then to demonstrate and understand the complexities of the process of representation by conferring weight as much to materials that never appeared in print as to published materials.

1.4 Methodologies in Periodical Studies: *TPNW* as an 'Autonomous Object of Study'

As *TPNW* is a periodical and was published throughout the 1940s, it benefits from methodological approaches that have emerged from scholarly discussions in the (relatively new) field of periodical studies. Particularly helpful is Sean Latham and

³⁹ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 171, paraphrasing Wang in the introduction to his translations of Lu Xun's short stories (Columbia University Press, 1941).

Robert Scholes' 2006 paper about the emergence of periodical studies as a 'field' and some of the pitfalls of the digitization of the archive.⁴⁰ Almost a decade later Patrick Collier in 'What is Modern Periodical Studies' (2015) made a survey of the field which took up and expanded upon Latham and Scholes' earlier work as well as suggesting fresh methodological approaches.⁴¹

What Latham and Scholes identify is the need for future researchers to continue to recognise 'the coherence [of a periodical] as a cultural object'.⁴² They stress in particular the need wherever possible to include advertising in studies of periodicals which contain signals to readers (and therefore researchers). But, more significantly for the purposes of this thesis, they urge researchers not to slice periodicals up (one of the pitfalls of operating in a digital archive which allows information to be cut and sliced up in multiple ways). By slicing up the archive of a periodical, Latham and Scholes argue, there is an acute danger of suppressing 'the fact that editors worked carefully to solicit, craft and organize the material ... Similarly, it tends to blind us to the ways in which individual contributors may have seen themselves as part of a larger enterprise, choosing to contribute to the *New Yorker* rather than, say, *McClure's*'.⁴³ It is very much the methodological approach of this thesis to foreground just such aspects of the production of *TPNW*, and Lehmann's editorial work (which is the subject of significant parts of Chapter 8) as well as to examine the implications for the Chinese writers of appearing in the journal (which is considered in Chapters 7, 5 and 3 of this thesis). However, this thesis goes beyond the approach that Latham and Scholes suggest, beyond only the raw materials of the magazine, thanks to access to Lehmann's vast editorial archive which has enabled an appraisal of what the editor thought, how he curated the magazine, which stories were cut and how he edited those he published.

⁴⁰ Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', *PMLA*, vol. 121, no. 2, 2006, pp. 517 – 531. <www.jstor.org/stable/25486329>. Last accessed 19 December 2019.

⁴¹ Patrick Collier, 'What is Modern Periodical Studies', the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*, Vol.6, No. 2, 2015, p. 92. Collier is co-editor of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*.

⁴² Latham and Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', p. 528.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

The essence of Collier's article, based on his assessment or 'stocktaking' of a selection of submissions to the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*, is a call to researchers to treat the modern periodical as 'an autonomous object of study' to the greatest degree possible' rather than 'containers of discrete information' while examining how this might (and might not) be achieved.⁴⁴ Collier here is following Latham and Scholes but where he diverges from them is in his urge to scholars to find ways to gain 'insights into how literature and print culture functioned outside the rubric of modernism'.⁴⁵ Collier's article instances the many ways that articles relating to modern periodical studies frequently remain framed by aesthetic modernism, either the ways in which a periodical does or does not conform to elements of this literary monolith - even while they lay claim to expanding the field. In order that future research may resist this, and in order to genuinely broaden the area of study, Collier suggests a shift of approach that requires:

at least as an ideal; and at least at the outset - starting out without having decided in advance where your periodicals' value lies. It will mean attempting, as a heuristic, at least, to withhold judgement and read the contents of a periodical, for as long as possible, in the fashion recommended by Margaret Cohen; as a strange object whose codes exceed the ones we are equipped to see, as a potential source of new critical inquiries and conversation rather than as a window onto pre-existing, valued critical categories. We might start with only one assumption; that the periodical is valuable simply because it exists - because it once performed some desirable functions for some number of people - and set as our first conceptual task reaching some hypotheses on what those functions were.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Collier, 'What is Modern Periodical Studies', p. 100, citing Lathan and Scholes, in 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', pp. 517 - 518.

⁴⁵ Collier, 'What is Modern Periodical Studies', p. 92.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p 109.

At a workshop I attended in Birmingham in 2018, researchers were invited to interpret Collier's ideas and consider what a Collier-inspired approach to periodicals might include and the following ideas were identified: to consider the magazine as a physical item, to consider how it was meant to be read, and by whom, to consider the layout, the text and any images and their juxtaposition, the types of stories and themes within an issue of the magazine, and to look at advertising.⁴⁷ Consensus agreed that what Collier's article urges scholars to do is to read a magazine without an agenda - or framework - already in mind and to embark on research without - or at the very least before - contemplating any secondary reading or critical materials that relate to it.

Collier's primary concern is that the 'imprimatur of modernist literary study is strong' in the study of modernist periodicals to the detriment of the subject.⁴⁸ Although *TPNW* was published throughout the 1940s by an editor with strong ties to a number of (what are now considered to be) canonical modernist writers and publishers, the magazine's varied and stylistically heterogenous wartime output contains works by modernist writers and plenty who would not consider their work modernist in any traditional sense. Ye is one such writer, who noted in his memoir that he did not want to send his stories to Lehmann at Hogarth Press (where he was general manager from 1938 to 1946) because he feared they were not modernist enough in style for him to consider publishing them. So, while *TPNW* published in a period associated with late-modernism it is not helpful to treat it as a modernist artifact. Equally, this thesis argues that the literature of the 1940s cannot be so readily classified. To cite Gill Plain, from her analysis of the literature of the 1940s, the decade 'brought ways of reading into unexpected new conjunctions, and left a legacy of fiction that cannot be squeezed into the ill-fitting categories of modernism, the middlebrow and the popular'.⁴⁹ In a forthcoming chapter about the wartime short stories in *TPNW*, I have made the point that it equally defies 'being squeezed too neatly into any one kind of journal (aspects of

⁴⁷ The workshop was hosted by Dr Emma West, at The University of Birmingham, 14th June 2018 and entitled: 'Ways of Reading: An Interactive Magazines Workshop'.

⁴⁸ Collier, 'What is Modern Periodical Studies', p. 99.

⁴⁹ Gill Plain, *Literature of the 1940s, War, Postwar and 'Peace'*, part of the Edinburgh History of Twentieth-Century Literature in Britain: Volume Five (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p. 26.

modernism, realism, symbolism and lyricism are among the array of writerly responses to war, found in *TPNW*) except that it sought to represent the breadth of wartime writing that met Lehman's benchmarks for quality'.⁵⁰

As a result, the imprimatur of modernism for this thesis has remained relatively slight. The principal framework, or approach to the *TPNW*, for the purposes of this thesis is its interest and approach to China and Chinese writing, particularly in relation to the wartime and postwar periods. However, because *TPNW* was published in a decade frequently defined as late-modernist and because the journal's international outlook presents a contrast to the writerly responses to Britain's diminution (after World War II and the final stages of the British Empire) by certain late-modernist writers in the same period, this is considered in the conclusion, chapter 9.

1. 5 Literature Review: The Gaps in the Field

In terms of critical analysis, almost all of the major subjects of study within this thesis John Lehmann, *TPNW*, the publication of (modern) Chinese stories and the writers behind them have suffered relative critical neglect. The proceeding subsections identify reasons for this.

1.5 a) John Lehmann

John Lehmann has been too much a footnote in the accounts of his contemporaries despite his formidable publishing career and the legacy of his *NW* venture as well as his more modest achievements as an author of fiction and poetry. In a biography of Lehmann's nearest rival, Cyril Connolly, for example, Lehmann's achievements are listed in a long footnote although his work as an editor is highly praised in the account (even more so than Connolly's).⁵¹ More recent literary histories have given him a fairer trial and accounts of his contribution to wartime writing frequently single him out as one

⁵⁰ Thorniley, '*TPNW and the Wartime Short Story*', forthcoming.

⁵¹ Jeremy Lewis, *Cyril Connolly: A Life* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 335. First published by Jonathan Cape, 1997

of the finest literary editors.⁵² It is notable that the demise of *TPNW* in 1950, and the loss of this platform for aspiring writers and for the short story genre itself, was still being lamented 20 years later.⁵³ Lehmann's contribution to and interest in foreign writing and writers has fared little better. Adrian Wright, Lehmann's biographer, proffered the question 'how will he be remembered?' in the preface to his somewhat ungenerous account of the editor's life, before confessing that, in his work, it will certainly not be for his efforts to bring Greek, French, Russian, Czechoslovakian (or presumably Chinese) literature to light and to life.⁵⁴ Wright admits that, 'for reasons of space', he largely left this out (although tellingly Wright signals that there was a wealth of information on this subject).⁵⁵ A recent appraisal of Lehmann's international venture in his *NW* magazines by Claire Battershill, focuses on the inter-war years, before *TPNW* existed (her paper is considered in Chapter 2). Although *TPNW* is included in the numerical tally Battershill makes of foreign contributors in Lehmann's magazines, her approach does not make room for any analysis of the details of Lehmann's international venture (the editorial work, the correspondence with writers, his literary networks or the impediments to publishing foreign works, or the implications for the writers themselves of appearing in his publications) as this thesis will do. In Battershill's account China is ranked 9th on a scale of the number of contributors to the *NW* magazines from different nations.⁵⁶ It is the purpose of this thesis then to open up this dimension of Lehmann's approach and contribution to literature.

⁵² Robert Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939 - 1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977). Julian Maclaren-Ross, *Memoir of the Forties* (London: Alan Ross, 1965). Dan Davin, *Short Stories from the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Rod Mengham and N.H. Reeve (eds) *The Fiction of the 1940s, Stories of Survival*, (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2001). Patrick Deer, *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire and Modern British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵³ Thorniley, 'TPNW and the Wartime Short Story', forthcoming.

⁵⁴ Adrian Wright, *John Lehmann A Pagan Adventure* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1998) preface, xi.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Claire Battershill, 'This Intimate Object: Imagining the World of John Lehmann's *New Writing*', *Modernist Cultures*, volume 13, issue 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 110. In Battershill's study, China ranks behind: England, France, Russia, Germany, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Spain and America.

Of particular value to my reappraisal of Lehmann, the genesis of his interest in China and his affiliation with Communist organisations (all aspects of his career which are considered in Chapter 2) has been a cache of Secret Intelligence Service files from the mid-1930s, which establish a connection with Lehmann's early affiliations with Communist organisations and his failure to secure intelligence work during the war.

While the three volumes of Lehman's memoir, as well as his own accounts of his publishing career have provided a helpful overview of his editorial work, his extensive and meticulously kept editorial archive, is an invaluable resource which establishes his connection with Chinese writers and his network of related contacts, and demonstrates his interest in modern Chinese literature. This is evidenced in correspondence with the writers themselves as well as memos, telegrams and letters to other publishers and figures in his wider network of contacts which, as Wright noted 'reached far beyond the confines of Bloomsbury and the gathered darlings of English writers'.⁵⁷

1.5 b) The Journal *TPNW*

And what of *TPNW*? There has been little sustained critical consideration of the editorial or other creative content of the journal, beyond its contribution to wartime literature, which tends to focus on British writers. It is probably that the journal's association with Penguin Books makes it appear to be a more commercial venture which somehow taints its value as a literary object or indeed, modernist object of study. That *TPNW* began life as an anthology, points to a possible lack of original material even though, after the initial few volumes, first time contributions quickly began to outnumber works being republished. The journal's perceived distance from literary modernism, particularly compared with Lehmann's other *NW* journals, talks to the heart of recent discussions (noted earlier in the introduction to this thesis) about modernist periodicals which tend to be approached for what they do or do not say about literary modernism. *TPNW*'s perceived distance from modernism (relative to Lehmann's other *NW* journals) could therefore explain its relative critical neglect. In Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker's

⁵⁷ Wright, *John Lehmann, A Pagan Adventure*, preface xi.

survey of the critical and cultural history of modernist magazines in Britain and Ireland (1880 - 1955), a chapter about John Lehmann's *New Writing* by Françoise Bort only spans the years 1936-1940 (although *TPNW* is mentioned with particular reference to its sales and cover price).⁵⁸ Battershill omits the journal from her overall narrative if not her figures in her account of *NW*'s internationalist project. However, *TPNW* is frequently cited in literary histories of the period and Lehmann is often compared favourably to Cyril Connolly, the editor of *Horizon* magazine, including in the recently published account of Connolly's social circle (with a particular focus on women) in the 2019 group biography *Lost Girls, Love, War and Literature 1939 - 1951*.⁵⁹ As this thesis will examine, where *TPNW* had the edge over *Horizon* was both in its circulation and breadth of contributors, the foreign writers being part of this dimension.

1.5 c) The Chinese and British Writers and the Chinese Stories

The approach of this thesis to uncover and foreground the behind-the-scenes editorial work of the magazine and the relations between the editor and individual contributors (in relation to China) has led to the recovery, from relative obscurity, of the literary strivings of several Chinese writers (particularly Ye and Lo) who were living in Britain during and shortly after WWII. Through archived correspondence this thesis has been able to identify Lehmann's hand in their success and failure, in the circulation of their translations or stories as well as his personal friendships, in particular with Ye. The careers of these Chinese writers in Britain, their relative success and failure and the reasons for this, is forgotten by literary history. Yet, in the case of Lo, for example, this literary history has wider implications for a period of Sino-British relations that is the subject of much official obfuscation, even today.

The English language sources relating to Ye, his biography, his writing and the period of time he spent in Britain (1944 - 1949) are rather scant but include his wife's

⁵⁸ Françoise Bort, 'A New Prose: John Lehmann and *New Writing* 1936 - 1940' in Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (eds.) *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Volume 1, Britain and Ireland, 1880-1955* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 669 - 687.

⁵⁹ D. J. Taylor, *Lost Girls, Love, War and Literature 1939 - 1951* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2019).

autobiography and a brief unpublished transcript of an account of Ye's life which he dictated before his death. These have been greatly enhanced by the translation of several sections of Ye's Chinese memoir, undertaken specifically for the benefit of this thesis. Archival sources relating to (and written by) Ye include correspondence in Lehmann's own archive and the archive of King's College at Cambridge University (where Ye studied English literature). He is occasionally named in the biographies of better-known Chinese writers who lived in Britain in the same period but he is mis-identified as 'a Chinese journalist', in for example, Da Zheng's biography of the Chinese writer, Chiang Yee.⁶⁰

Kenneth Lo's memoir in English makes little comment on his association with Lehmann. Yet Lehmann's archive provides a wealth of correspondence between the two over a number of years. Lo's own archive, as yet still uncatalogued, provides material on his early literary career.⁶¹ Xiao Qian, with whom Lehmann kept up a lively correspondence and who evidently (as Chapter 8 considers) greatly valued the editor's critical opinion, makes only one reference to Lehmann as a writer and part of the P.E.N writers club.⁶²

Harold Acton's time in China has been the subject of some recent critical inquiry, however his status as an authority on aspects of Chinese culture remains, this thesis will argue, much overlooked.⁶³ While Acton's memoir provides an excellent source on his approach to China, this thesis has equally relied on archived materials, particularly correspondence between Lehmann and Acton, to illuminate Acton's role as a 'bridge' to China or to understanding the Chinese people, for Lehmann. Acton was one of a number of such bridges, others included Ye and Donald Allen as well as Xiao Qian and

⁶⁰ Da Zheng, Chiang Yee, *The Silent Traveller from the East, A Cultural Biography*, p. 110.

⁶¹ Kenneth Lo's uncatalogued archive is at the London Metropolitan Archive. I am currently working with the Lo family to help them catalogue parts of this archive.

⁶² Xiao Qian, *Traveller Without A Map*, p. 111

⁶³ In a paper by Kirstin Mahoney 'A Solitary Flower': Bachelordom and Harold Acton's China: A Consideration of Harold Acton in China within a Framework of Queer Kinship and Cosmopolitanism, Online at <<https://lapietra.nyu.edu/event/a-solitary-flower-bachelordom-and-harold-actons-china/>>. Last accessed 27.6.20. Also in Allan Johnson, *Masculine Identity in Modernist Literature: Castration, Narration and a Sense of Beginning 1919-1945* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Kenneth Lo, whose China expertise proved invaluable to *TPNW* and enabled the two way flow of ideas between Britain and China which this thesis examines.

And, what of the Chinese stories themselves? While critical accounts have certainly noted the wealth of translation carried out in China during the Republican period, the majority of these accounts tend to focus on the number of Russian, English and American works translated into Chinese and far less on Chinese works translated into English (and even less on Chinese Anglophone works). Shuang Shen, for example, notes in *Cosmopolitan Publics; Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai* (2009), that there were 'few studies of English translations of modern Chinese literature published during the Republican era'.⁶⁴ There has been even less work considering whether such works found a readership, the publishing conditions under which they were produced or the individuals (both Chinese and Western) involved in their circulation around the world.

Literature which engages with the history of Sino-British literary encounters provides the most significant support to understanding the basis for this research project. A number of accounts about Sino-British cultural encounters between artists, intellectuals and writers in the early-twentieth century provide context for the personal, literary, aesthetic and political exchanges examined in this thesis. Such accounts include: Xu Zhimo's time in Britain and his influence after returning to China, the increasing circulation of (and enthusiasm for) ideas about China in Britain as a result of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art (held at Burlington House) 1935-1936, the cultural exchange between the members of the Bloomsbury Group and the Crescent Moon Society in China, and the influence of the play *Lady Precious Stream* in Britain. From the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War (July 1937), attitudes towards China and the Chinese people in Britain again began to shift, particularly after China's cause was taken up by the British Left and organisations that rallied to the country's aid. Overall, the twentieth century is a period when the British looked to China to create 'new

⁶⁴ Shuang Shen *Cosmopolitan Publics, Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 95.

mappings' in cultural but also 'political and aesthetic space'.⁶⁵ It was also a period when the country became increasingly international 'in spite of the self-contained character of China and the difficulty of communication and travel' which in wartime was particularly acute.⁶⁶ Most significantly, it was a time when 'Chinese writers and intellectuals reached out', to explore the West, 'and to absorb its humanism and liberalism through its literature'.⁶⁷ And, as this thesis argues, the West, via the example of *TPNW*, made efforts to do the same regarding China.

Of particular and invaluable contribution to this thesis have been the monographs and biographies of Chinese writers, artists and playwrights who lived in Britain from the late 1920s onwards, including: Anne Witchard's (*Lao She in London*), Patricia Laurence's (*Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes, Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*), Diana Ye's account of Shih-I Hsiung and Dymia Hsiung, (*The Happy Hsiungs, Performing China and the Struggle for Modernity*), Da Zheng's biography of the highly successful Chinese writer in Britain, Chiang Yee (*Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East, A Cultural Biography*), Paul Bevan, in his critical writing about the journalist and cartoonist Jack Chen (*A Modern Miscellany - Shanghai Cartoon Artists, Shao Xunmei's Circle and the Travels of Jack Chen, 1926-1938*), Xiao Qian's memoir (*Traveller Without A Map*), and Qian Suoqiao's *Liberal Cosmopolitan, Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity* which is based on previously unpublished correspondence between Yutang and his publisher Richard Walsh.⁶⁸

Patricia Laurence's study which combines the literary and personal histories of writers, artists and intellectuals in China and Britain and which 'historicizes' (she here

⁶⁵ Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes, Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*, (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Laurence is talking about the early part of the twentieth century but this applies so strongly to the war period as well that I have mentioned it here.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Anne Witchard, *Lao She in London* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012). Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*. Diana Yeh, *The Happy Hsiungs, Performing China and the Struggle for Modernity* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014). Da Zheng, *Chiang Yee, The Silent Traveller from The East*. Paul Bevan, *A Modern Miscellany - Shanghai Cartoon Artists, Shao Xunmei's Circle and the Travels of Jack Chen, 1926-1938* (Boston: Brill, 2016), Xiao Qian, (Jeffrey C. Kinkley tra.) *Traveller Without A Map* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1993). Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).

cites Jameson) the period from roughly 1919-1949, considers the trans-cultural flows that emerged from it, the national and fictional discourse of the time and thereby shares much with the enquiries within this thesis.⁶⁹ Taking a cue from Laurence, this thesis, attempts 'rather than a polarized sweep of "East" and "West" a closer reading of individuals'.⁷⁰ By shifting focus towards 'intimate spaces of community' this thesis, in a similar vein to Laurence's, provides an alternative narrative to official history or historical accounts.⁷¹

Where Laurence's study diverges strongly in approach to this thesis is in her framework, whereby she examines the implications for the developments of literary modernism in Britain and China from the personal and literary crossings that she describes. However, her foregrounding of personal ties and literary friendships to recreate a narrative history and to examine wider attitudes (towards China and Chinese people) within British society at the time, has been highly instructive. Laurence's work also mentions several literary figures who are key to this thesis including: Xiao, Ye, Julian Bell, Harold Acton and Lehmann, although Laurence makes no references to the Chinese stories in his *NW* journals or his friendships with Chinese writers.⁷² To an extent this thesis both rounds out certain of Laurence's enquiries as well as bringing new understanding about the aforementioned writers and bringing to light new writers who had not previously been connected with Sino-British literary crossings in the period. Equally, the wartime period is not given particular or sustained research in Laurence's study but is a central aspect of this one.

And, whereas Laurence decries a lack of correspondence (she notes as just one example that many letters between Xiao Qian and E.M Forster were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution) which might have 'shored up' her observations, this thesis found a wealth of just such primary resources in archives in America, London and

⁶⁹ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p 12.

⁷⁰ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p 101.

⁷¹ Laurence is here citing Partha Chatterjee, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p. 391.

⁷² Laurence notes about Lehmann on p186 that he 'also visited China' but during the course of this research project and despite searching for evidence to back this statement up, I found none.

Cambridge which has greatly enhanced this research and has never previously, for the most part, been the subject of critical inquiry.⁷³

A reappraisal of Lehmann and his magazine, through a critical inquiry of his international venture (specifically in relation to China) and the wider implications of this have never to my knowledge been attempted. It is research that has taken me from the Penguin Books' archive in Bristol to John Lehmann's editorial archive at the Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas, to the King's College archive in Cambridge and to the (still private/uncatalogued) archive of Kenneth Lo at the London Metropolitan Archives among a number of others. These sources are all English language sources as this research project and this thesis principally considers the ways that the ten China stories published in *TPNW* redrew China for an Anglophone readership as well as considering the lives of several of the writers who travelled to and lived in Britain. The only Chinese sources that this research has consulted were with reference to Ye Junjian, including parts of Ye's autobiography (which were translated for this project) and a documentary originally in Chinese (with subtitles) about his life.

1. 6 Introducing the Chapters

Chapters 3 - 7 of this thesis represent the work or works of a single writer. The exception to this is Chapter 4 which considers a collection of wartime short stories by a variety of Chinese writers. As these wartime contributions by Chinese writers to *TPNW* are war of resistance literature which emanated from Free China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, they have many uniting themes and ideas and so benefit from being considered together. These chapters are in broad chronological order as they appeared in *TPNW* (except the chapter on Harold Acton which, because it contains a critical assessment of many of the Chinese stories which appeared in *TPNW* necessarily follows after the stories themselves). Keeping the Chinese stories broadly in the order they were originally published, enables the thesis to trace the arc of Lehmann's interest in China, which began when his Communist affiliations were at their

⁷³ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p 180.

strongest, then shifted into an interest in wartime Chinese literature guided more strongly by anti-Fascist feeling and then into the post-war phase when the glue of war which had so tightly bound the short stories of China and Britain together no longer applied. These chapters are closely focused on *TPNW*'s content (the short stories that were published and the writers who contributed them). Bookending chapters 3 - 7 is Chapter 2, an introduction to Lehmann, *TPNW* and Penguin Books, and Chapter 8, which relies heavily on archival sources to delimit Lehmann's approach to China and Chinese writers beyond the content of his journals. Chapter 8 foregrounds Lehmann's editorial mission, his political and aesthetic concerns relating to modern Chinese literature, his network of China contacts as well as examining the influence of Lehmann's *NW* venture in China. As this chapter draws on archived correspondence which relates to the contents of the Chinese stories that Lehmann published, it necessarily follows after the stories themselves have been introduced and appraised. Chapter 9, in conclusion, is a reappraisal of Lehmann, *TPNW*, and his international venture, in light of findings in this thesis. The final chapter will also state the wider implications of this thesis for Sino-British relations, for literary history and for restoring overlooked figures such as Ye, Acton, and Lo. The conclusion will also consider the ways that the existence of *TPNW* and its internationalist venture comments on existing critical accounts of British modernism in the 1940s.

Chapter 2: Finding China: *TPNW*, John Lehmann and Allen Lane

This chapter lays the groundwork for the genesis of *The Penguin New Writing's* involvement with China and Chinese writers. As we shall see, Lehmann's autocratic editorship and Allen Lane's hands-off approach to the editorial business of the magazine, indicates that Lehmann's interest evolved from his own career trajectory. *TPNW* was an extension of a venture that Lehmann had begun in 1936 and overall would last 14 years in various forms, involve five different publishers and which would leave an indelible mark on the literary landscape.

Lehmann's intention to create a literary magazine with a truly international outlook is clear from the outset. It is an aim he stresses repeatedly in his memoirs and in other accounts of his publishing past, beginning with *New Writing*. Just four of the stories in the first issue of *TPNW* are set in Britain and by a British writer. The bulk of the fiction takes place in locations including Burma, China, Mongolia, India and the American south and is by writers from equally far flung parts of the globe. Lehmann quite deliberately sought to elevate, or put on an equal footing with the most talented voices from the British literary scene, the fiction and essays of China, Russia, France, and anywhere else capable of reaching his benchmarks for quality, and a certain spirit of writing. In his foreword to issue one, Lehmann cites a critic who commented that one of the most valuable aspects of *TPNW* was its 'representation of so many foreign writers - who showed a strong affinity to the British writers beside whom they were placed'.⁷⁴

2.1 *TPNW* - Forged in the Fire of *New Writing*

The collaboration between Lane and Lehmann, which aimed, and for the majority of its lifespan succeeded based on the magazine's circulation figures, to bring the best work from contemporary writers around the world to the broadest possible Anglophone

⁷⁴ *TPNW* 1, vii – viii.

readership, had begun several years before the first issue of *TPNW* went on sale. In 1936, Allen Lane was jointly running, with Lindsay Drummond, his 'late-uncle's' publishing house, The Bodley Head.⁷⁵ Lehmann had recently published a poetry anthology, *New Signatures* (1932) while working as an assistant at Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press and already established ties with The Bodley Head, editing their annual *The Year's Poetry* (1936).⁷⁶ The pair were introduced to discuss the possibility of publishing a literary magazine and eventually struck an agreement for a publication with 'stiff covers which was to appear twice a year with a guarantee of three numbers'.⁷⁷ Thus, *New Writing*, the first incarnation of Lehmann's editorial vision, the precursor to *TPNW* and the source of many of its early stories, was born. The first issue appeared in the spring of 1936. Recalling the months prior to its publication, Lehmann wrote:

For some time in the negotiations with publishers ... it was uncertain whether our magazine would crystallize as a quarterly or something more like *The Yellow Book*, appearing twice a year in hard covers. Eventually the latter scheme won the day.⁷⁸

It was no coincidence that Allen Lane was enamored of Lehmann's project, particularly as *NW* was to be, in certain ways, a reincarnation of the spirit of *The Yellow Book*. It was John Lane who had published and later edited that clothbound periodical which became an icon of 1890s aestheticism. What *NW* and *The Yellow Book* had in common was that both sought to appear unapologetically modern and anti-establishment and to promote short stories of unorthodox length and style. It is with evident pride that, in the foreword to the first volume of *TPNW*, Lehmann wrote:

⁷⁵ John Lane was not Allen Lane's uncle. He was a distant relative of Allen Lane's mother, Camilla, according to Jeremy Lewis, *Penguin Special: The Life and Times of Allen Lane* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 6.

⁷⁶ *New Signatures* included W. H. Auden, Julian Bell, Cecil Day Lewis, Richard Eberhard, William Empson, and Stephen Spender. Many of these writers went on to contribute to Lehmann's periodicals.

⁷⁷ John Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery* (London: Longmans Green & Co, Readers Union edition, 1957), p. 234.

⁷⁸ John Lehmann, *Thrown to the Woolfs* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978), p. 50.

Since then [since 1936 when *NW* was first published] it has been called “*The Yellow Book* of the thirties”, “the most adventurous modern publication”, and “a kind of international clearinghouse for new writers” and a great many other complimentary - and some abusive - names.⁷⁹

Despite the initial success of *NW*, The Bodley Head cut its backing of the project after two issues because Lane had become wholly preoccupied with the setting up of Penguin Books. It was not until 1939, by which time *NW* had been through two other publishers - Lawrence & Wishart, the political publisher associated with the Communist Party and the Hogarth Press - that Lane was again persuaded to back *NW* at his newest venture, Penguin Books.⁸⁰ While negotiations over a *NW* spinoff were ongoing behind the scenes, Penguin also agreed to publish, under the Pelican imprint, Lehmann’s *New Writing in Europe*, an analysis of the highly politicized literary movement in Europe in the 1930s, which appeared in January 1941 (although dated 1940).⁸¹

The first two issues of *TPNW* were originally intended as a cheap paperback anthology of some of the best contributions that had appeared in *NW* that also would serve as a ‘more accessible version’ of the Hogarth Press imprint.⁸² However, such was the success (Lehmann’s assessment) of the first issue that Allen Lane agreed to turn the ‘anthology’ into a monthly ‘magazine’, with part of the contents given over to new submissions. ‘My bi-annual book-magazine had, during the autumn of 1940, given birth to a vigorous foal in the stable of Allen Lane and his Penguin Books’, Lehmann described several decades later.⁸³

⁷⁹ *TPNW* 1, viii.

⁸⁰ Correspondence in Lehmann’s archive shows that he had been communicating with Lane about *NW*’s potential for Penguin Books since at least 1938. Typed letter dated April 20th 1938 from Lane to Lehmann in the Harry Ransom archive (Lane). Lane moved to pin down an agreement in 1939 after reading a volume of Lehmann’s essays entitled *New Writing in England*, published that same year in New York by the Critics Group Press.

⁸¹ Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume 1: Britain and Ireland 1880-1950* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 678.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Lehmann, *Thrown to the Wolves*, p. 95.

2.2 *TPNW* as ‘autonomous object’

When Patrick Collier made his call for fresh methodological approaches to modern periodical studies (2015) he emphasised the ways that future scholars might begin their enquiries into a magazine or periodical.⁸⁴ Collier cites Margaret Cohen, who urged consideration of a magazine as: ‘a strange object whose codes exceed the ones we are equipped to see; as a potential source of new critical inquiries and conversation rather than as a window onto pre-existing, valued critical categories’.⁸⁵ It is with these comments in mind that this research wishes to consider *TPNW* as an ‘autonomous object’, a phrase Collier borrows from Sean Latham and Robert Scholes.⁸⁶

As yet *TPNW* is not an archived resource and has not been digitised. As a result, the mix of literature, art and advertising in its pages remains unified (advertisements have not been stripped out to create what Latham and Scholes refer to as ‘a hole’ in the archive) and it is therefore possible to study *TPNW* as an intact cultural object.⁸⁷ Volumes 1-40 of *TPNW* are available for a reasonable sum on the second-hand market (particularly the later issues). Anyone today is therefore able to purchase a copy, read it and pass it around, as Lehmann intended his readers to do in the 1940s.

The magazine is small, smaller than A5 size, and its paperback format was deliberately intended to enable it to be tucked into the pockets of army fatigues or slipped into a bag and to ensure that the cover price remained affordable.⁸⁸ These factors are significant because they had an impact on the magazine’s circulation and therefore its influence. As well as being easy to share and pass around, *TPNW* could be and was intended to be easily sent abroad. Notes to readers inside the pages of *TPNW* expressly urged them to leave their copy of the magazine at a Post Office when they had finished with it, for those in the services to read.

⁸⁴ Collier, *JMPS*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 92 - 111.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, Collier citing Margaret Cohen, p. 109.

⁸⁶ Collier citing Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, in ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies’ *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006), pp. 517-31.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 520.

⁸⁸ At Penguin, Lane sought to make quality literature more affordable. When *NW* was published by the Hogarth Press, it was a cloth-bound book. At Penguin, the magazine was sold in paperback format.

The early issues are recognisably a Penguin Books production, with bold black strips over a single colour cover and the Penguin logo displayed clearly on the front. The look of the magazine was significantly redesigned after the war and again in 1947 and in 1950. The layout is unfussy and the contents were boldly proclaimed on the front cover of the wartime issues and briefly in the post-war period (*TPNW* 1-26, November 1940 - February 1946) so that readers could quickly see which writers the magazine featured in each volume. It is a magazine that appears to have been published with a certain kind of reader in mind; one likely to have been time-strapped, who appreciated the ability to dip in and out of this literary fix.

The magazine is evidently literary, with short stories accounting for the bulk of the content, particularly in the early years, before poetry, criticism and regular contributions, better-defined as reportage, were introduced. In the post-war period the magazine's content reveals a shift towards the arts more broadly (drama, ballet, music, and painting) and the greater influence of writers from America. What is harder to discern from copies today is the extent to which poor paper quality and print production and stapled pages are a commonplace feature of wartime publishing and not merely a sign of the journal's age.

Throughout World War II when harsher and more restrictive publishing conditions prevailed, Lane and Lehmann agreed that advertisements should be permitted in *TPNW*.⁸⁹ These are revealing of the magazine's personality as they are evidently aimed at readers for whom self-care and self-improvement, of the mind and body, is as much a motivation as thrift and economy. An advertisement for booklets and courses at the Pelman Institute, for example, claims to offer solutions to readers whose 'Grasshopper mind' is unable to find focus and may be holding them back.⁹⁰ Products such as Pears soap is marketed as ingenious (because the old soap cake can be wedged into the design of the new bar) and economic, while Euthymol Toothpaste is billed as 'refreshing antiseptic toothpaste'.⁹¹ The most notable wartime advertisements, which appear from

⁸⁹ Typed letter from Lane to Lehmann dated 12th September, 1944, noted 'the acceptance of advertising ... was only a wartime measure'. (HRC/Lehmann/Lane).

⁹⁰ *TPNW* issues 1, 4, 18, 19 for example.

⁹¹ Pears Soap, *TPNW* issues 1, 5 and Euthymol Toothpaste, *TPNW* issues 4, 5.

issue 1 of the magazine, are targeted at readers who wish to earn money writing short stories or other articles. Readers are urged to apply for booklets and sign up for courses at the Regent Institute.⁹² These sorts of readers, those who aspired to be writers, were greatly desired by Lehmann and were part of *TPNW*'s demographic.⁹³ Lehmann's forewords frequently urged would-be contributors to keep sending their manuscripts to him and by *TPNW 9* he refers to the 'flood levels' of manuscripts he receives some weeks.⁹⁴ Both the advertisements and the editorial comments suggest that *TPNW* sought to appeal to readers who aspired to become writers as well as aspiring (and established) writers who were readers. This signals to readers that *TPNW* was a space highly suitable for and nurturing of new and emerging writers and has obvious implications for young foreign writers seeking a foothold in Britain's literary market.

Several adverts for products (clothes, shoes, cigarettes, toiletries, dog food) in the wartime issues of *TPNW* directly request customers to remain loyal to their brand despite major shortages of products in the marketplace. Between the covers of *TPNW*, such advertisements are a reminder of acknowledged wartime consumer behaviour whereby a lower consumption of general products was sharply contrasted by a higher consumption of short stories, magazines, and literary materials in general.

In the back pages of the magazine, Penguin Books frequently advertised the titles that the publisher evidently believed would be of interest to *TPNW* readers, these included: books about the state and development of English literature, literary trends and other Penguin publications such as *Penguin Parade* which supported short story writing. These are equally suggestive of a readership that was literary-minded, self-improving and interested in the future of English literature.⁹⁵

The 'About the Contributors' section, where new and less well-known writers were introduced to readers, was an important feature of *TPNW* and one that reflected

⁹² 'Can you Write?' for The Regent Institute, *TPNW 1*, inside front cover, 'Short Story Writing' *TPNW 9*.

⁹³ The report by Mass Observation about *TPNW* subscribers contains one interview in which a subscriber comments that he attempted to write for the magazine, for example. Penguin Books archive, Bristol University, DM1294/3/2/2, p. 129.

⁹⁴ *TPNW 9*, Foreword, p. 7.

⁹⁵ These assumptions are broadly confirmed in the previously mentioned Mass Observation report about *TPNW* readers.

the magazine's attempt to foreground writers' worldly rather than literary achievements. Lehmann for example proudly published the work of anonymous soldiers (such as S.M. in *TPNW* 7) alongside more established literary figures. This suggests Lehmann's broad approach to the kinds of writers he sought out for the magazine.

The very first issue of *TPNW* carries a photograph of Lehmann which captures his aquiline, eagle-ish features and piercing eyes.⁹⁶ A brief biography underneath the image strongly emphasises Lehmann's worldly credentials. It notes that he has travelled 'all over Europe', is in touch with 'young authors from India to America' and lived for many years in Vienna. It also states that Lehmann has written poetry and travel articles and is writing a book about English literary trends. His literary credentials reveal that he has been the general manager of Hogarth Press since 1938 which places him close to the heart of British modernism and the second generation of Bloomsbury writers and artists. However, as this thesis will examine, *TPNW* (as evidenced in Lehmann's many forewords and his own memoirs) had a much broader approach to contributors than this association might suggest.

A note opposite the contents page states that *TPNW* 1 was first published in November 1940 and republished in January 1941, indicating that the magazine was instantly popular. *TPNW* was evidently curated with attention to budget. The advertising and additional materials at the front and back of the issues, and the publisher's notices, all suggest a magazine which promises or promotes a degree of self-improvement among its readers, with the implicit message that engaging with contemporary literature was a way for readers to pull themselves up in the world. It was published during the privations of war, but nonetheless kept abreast with advances in publishing techniques which in the post-war years enabled a shift from only black and white images in the magazine to colour and black and white. Two ink and wash paintings featured in the post-war *TPNW* are worth mentioning here as they take Asia for their subject. Leonard Rosoman's sombre image 'Damaged Boat on a Jetty' (Hong Kong 1945) appeared in *TPNW* 28 (summer 1946) and Anthony Gross's (mis-labelled) 'China At War' appeared

⁹⁶ The photograph of Lehmann in *TPNW* 1 is credited to Howard Coster.

in *TPNW* 29 (published 1947).⁹⁷ Both men had been commissioned as official war artists. Rosoman had previously served in the fire service alongside William Sansom, one of Lehmann's most prolific short story writers. His paintings from that period depicted the kinds of horror-laden scenes that Sansom crafted in his short stories. Rosoman was among the many neo-romantic painters, particularly of the younger generation, whose work Lehmann strongly supported during and after the war in *TPNW*. see Appendix D.

These then are signifiers of the magazine's profile and function, they can be gleaned without reading a great deal of its content, the approach outlined by Collier, Latham and Scholes, which places value on consideration of the periodical as an 'autonomous object'. And while their calls for fresh methodological approaches to periodical studies never suggest that the content of a periodical is not vital to understanding its function, they certainly highlight that much can be understood from approaching the print object as a whole. The remainder of this chapter and this thesis is, however, focused more closely on the editorial content of *TPNW*.

2.3 John Lehmann and his 'internationalist project'

The first issue of *TPNW* soon had a print run of 75,000.⁹⁸ *TPNW* 1 contained 14 short stories and essays, the final number of which was 'Hatred', T'chang T'ien-Yih's (Zhang Tianyi) powerful short story about suffering, conflict and human nature. Among the other contributions which made the cut were 'Conversation with a Lama' by Lehmann's friend, the journalist, novelist, communist historian and Genghis Khan biographer, Ralph Fox, about his travels through Mongolia. Another was George Orwell's short-story set in Burma, 'Shooting an Elephant', which some critics argue is his finest work of short fiction and which had been published for the first time by Lehmann several years earlier

⁹⁷ Although Anthony Gross's painting is labelled 'China At War' it is in fact from his 'Chins At War' series in which he depicted the local tribesmen of the Chin tribes who assisted British and Indian troops fighting the Japanese in the Chin Hills (situated in Burma and extending north into India's Manipur State).

⁹⁸ Lehmann, *Thrown to the Wolves*, p. 96.

after he entreated the author to contribute to his new venture *NW*.⁹⁹ Christopher Isherwood, one of Lehmann's closest collaborators in the mid-1930s, to whom he paid regular visits when Isherwood was living in Germany, provided 'A Berlin Diary'.¹⁰⁰ Other contributors included the poet and novelist William Plomer and André Chamson, the French novelist and essayist and founding director of the literary journal *Vendredi*, an acknowledged influence on Lehmann and *NW*.¹⁰¹ The British writer and literary critic V.S. Pritchett contributed the story, 'Sense of Humour', which later became one of his best-known works of short fiction. An anonymously translated story by Soviet writer Nicolay Ognev (Nicolai Ognev) further rounded out the issue.

In a recent critique of the 'internationalist project' at the heart of Lehmann's *NW* venture (1936-1950), Claire Battershill concludes that despite Lehmann's stated mandate to showcase the works of writers from around the world, the vast majority of his contributors were English, 65 per cent according to her calculations.¹⁰² While Battershill's figures may be accurate, by basing her analysis on the nationality of the writers, the research overlooks a valuable element of Lehmann's project, namely the content of the stories (or poetry, reportage, criticism). As a result, the extent to which this content was concerned with lives and events beyond British borders and more specifically the ways in which these lives were affected by all kinds of oppression (including imperialism) is not acknowledged. Without acknowledging the content of Lehmann's *NW* venture - the subject matter of the contributions which are the heart of the venture itself - and the instances where works challenge, or at least suggest significant anxiety about the Anglocentric, 'colonial view of the world ... where Europe, or specifically Britain, is at the centre' which Battershill ascribes to Lehmann and *NW*,

⁹⁹ For an account of the route to publication of Orwell's short story see George Woodcock's *The Metamorphoses of New Writing*, in A.T. Tolley's *John Lehmann: A Tribute* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987), pp. 101-102.

¹⁰⁰ The story went on to form the first part of Isherwood's six-part series of stories and novellas about life in Weimar Germany, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). It had previously been published in Lehmann's *New Writing*, in 1937.

¹⁰¹ Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 232.

¹⁰² Claire Battershill, 'This Intimate Object: Imagining the World of John Lehmann's *New Writing*', *Modernist Cultures*, volume 13, issue 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 96, and figure from p. 108.

she is not giving that journal a fair trial.¹⁰³ After all, why and indeed how might a British editor in London writing prefatory materials in the interwar period move outside of a ‘colonial view of the world’ that was still a reality outside of his office walls, if not by seeking to engage with literature from around the world and publish it side by side, page by page with work by British writers.¹⁰⁴ Certainly during World War II, Lehmann did far more than any of his peers to challenge perceptions about literature from around the world and to put it on an equal footing with British, European and a great many other countries’ writers.

Battershill also overlooks the difficulties Lehmann encountered when attempting to collate materials from abroad (identifying suitable writers, finding works that would resonate with Anglophone readers, getting works translated to an acceptable standard within a tight budget and smoothing out the rights for such an endeavour) which in wartime were manifold. With this in mind, a 35 per cent tally for contributors to *NW* from ‘outside of England’ might more accurately be hailed as an unparalleled triumph rather than evidence of an ‘internationalism informed by local concerns’.¹⁰⁵ Battershill also suggests that *NW*, reinforced ‘a language of colonialism in its paratexts and prefatory material by consistently referring to its diverse crowd of writers as ‘foreign’.¹⁰⁶ This seems an unnecessary criticism for the use of such a neutral, factual term particularly as it refers to writers for whom English was not their first language and at a time when colonialism still allowed for a great many more loaded and far more offensive ones. However, Battershill does recognise some debt owed to Lehmann conceding his efforts to ‘conceive of literary cultures across national borders’ may be seen to have prefigured ‘our present-day scholarly attention to the global nature of literary modernity’.¹⁰⁷ As this research will show, with specific reference to China and Chinese writing, Lehmann’s transnational literary venture not only promoted the work of foreign writers but also

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁴ It might be helpful to clarify here that Battershill directs her comments about Lehmann’s *interwar* publishing behaviour but her figures appear to include *TPNW* (so therefore stretch beyond the war).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108, p. 110.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

inspired groups of Chinese writers to adopt elements of - or to replicate entirely - the *NW* model for their own publications during the war as they sought to reach out to the world through their national literature.

2.4 Lehmann's Politics

In the years after graduating from Cambridge Lehmann continued the habit of his university holidays, travelling through Europe, where he would eventually settle for a period until work commitments pulled him back to London. The time he spent living and working in Europe (mostly in Vienna with regular visits to Berlin and Paris) and meeting first-hand many of the 'outstanding literary figures' who were in the vanguard of the Front Populaire in France, was key to shaping Lehmann's world view and most significantly, his political bent.¹⁰⁸ This period of Lehmann's life also sheds light on why, during his editorship of *TPNW* (and *NW* before it), the collection of Chinese stories from the younger generation of Chinese writers, appealed to him so directly.

In the foreword to the first volume of *TPNW*, Lehmann explained the magazine's genesis as: 'the fruit of an idea which had been for some years in my mind and gradually grew in the course of discussions with Christopher Isherwood, Ralph Fox and several other enterprising young writers in London and Paris'.¹⁰⁹ As the first volume of Lehmann's autobiography (first published in 1955) sets out, this 'idea' was the result of the time he spent in Weimar Germany and then in Vienna for much of the 1930s, where he witnessed: 'popular uprisings and counter-revolutionary repressions' and from where he made a pilgrimage to Moscow 'with the reasonable intention of trying to understand the other side of the picture'.¹¹⁰ Lehmann, who already had a theoretical adherence to left-wing politics, became fascinated with anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-war ideals, just as many of his contemporaries had at a time when fears over the approach of another world war were intensifying:

¹⁰⁸ Lehmann, *New Writing in Europe* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, 1940), pp. 92-93.

¹⁰⁹ *TPNW* 1, vii.

¹¹⁰ Lehmann, *Whispering Gallery*, p. 232.

I was inexplicably bewitched by the idea that writers and artists had a large role to play in the struggle to prevent it. The literary side of Barbusse's anti-war movement fascinated me; *Monde* and *Vendredi*, where the politics were interspersed with stories and reportage by a group of clever young writers, including André Chamson, Paul Nizan, Jean Giono and Louis Guilloux, seemed to reach a far higher literary level than *Left Review* in England, which had certainly not attracted many of the younger writers of parts.¹¹¹

Lehmann adds that: 'In *Left Review* the politics came fatally, first; I wanted a magazine in which literature came first, with the politics only as an undertone'. And he further hoped that his venture would become: 'A rallying point for the so rapidly growing anti-fascist and anti-war sympathies in my intellectual generation'.¹¹² Lehmann's dismissal of *Left Review's* editorial line is somewhat uncharitable here given the major influence the journal must have had on his cultural politics as well as on his own magazines. As well as being involved in the administration of *Left Review* in its early days (the journal was published from 1934 -1938) Lehmann was a contributor to its pages. Several important critical studies of leftist politics and culture of the 1930s place *Left Review* and *New Writing* alongside each other because of the crossover of writers, ideas and impulses at the two publications (while also acknowledging their differences).¹¹³ *Left Review*, officially the organ of the British Section of the Writers' International, and Lawrence & Wishart were housed in the same office in London and shared key editors.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 232.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ These critical studies include: Christopher Hilliard's *To Exercise Our Talents, The Democratization of Writing in Britain* (Cambridge Mass and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), see chapter 5 'Class Patronage and Literary Tradition'. Also, Margot Heinemann, 'Left Review, New Writing and the Broad Alliance Against Fascism' in Edward Timms and Peter Collier (eds) *Visions and Blueprints, Avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth-century Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988). Also, Andy Croft, 'Authors Take Sides: Writers and the Communist Party 1920-56' in Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman and Kevin Morgan (eds.) *Opening the Books, Essays on the Social and Cultural History of The British Communist Party* (London and Boulder Colorado: Pluto Press, 1995).

¹¹⁴ As Christopher Hilliard comments in his appraisal of British writing and reading habits throughout the first part of the twentieth century :

As Lehmann saw it, *Left Review* was a monthly responsive to political developments and his own magazine would be a literary quarterly and “a rallying ground for united front authors”. *Left Review*’s board agreed that the two publications [*LR* and *NW* when it was backed by *L&W*] could coexist, and Lehmann and the personnel of *Left Review* and Lawrence & Wishart continued to cooperate even after some contractual disputes.¹¹⁵

Critical studies of the two journals (*LR* and *NW*) indicate that, despite Lehmann’s public dismissal, they had a great deal in common. Both emerged from the broad alliance of all writers opposed to Fascism that first made itself felt in France, both were highly literary and came out strongly in defence of culture against the philistinism of fascism and book-burning Nazism, both promoted working-class writers and in terms of their literary style or aesthetics, both distanced themselves from - or in the case of *LR* were openly critical of - certain modernist writers and modernist writing, where it was felt that the writers and their works did not serve the people, or the future of literature, well in the increasingly politically urgent times. In the first issue of *LR*, one of its founding editors, Edgell Rickword denounced the ‘exasperated, plaintive individualism of Modernist aesthetics’ among other aspects of the genre as he set out something of a blueprint for Marxist cultural criticism in Britain.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, in *New Writing in Europe*, Lehmann outlines, over many chapters, the qualities which united the writers of the 30s and 40s and which drew him towards them as an editor. He points out how different their works

¹¹⁴ The Writers’ International (British Section) was established independently by members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). It was influential in the starting up of *LR* but its influence waned later on.

¹¹⁵ Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents*, p. 137. Hilliard is here citing Lehmann and gives the source as (Left Review Board) John Lehmann Publishing, 31 August, 1935.

¹¹⁶ David Ayers, ‘Literary Criticism and Cultural Politics’ in Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (eds) *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p 388.

were from the 'bizarre, clever stuff' of the 'twenties'.¹¹⁷ He further attributes 'a rejection of the elaboration and abstruse experimenting which had been characteristic of the main literary trends in the previous period' to foreign writers of the 1930s, many of whom were published in *New Writing*.¹¹⁸ He cites aesthetic concerns such as 'simplicity', 'short sentences', 'immediacy', 'direct colloquial style' and the primacy of 'the people' in the texts - a clear break from the urges that had come to characterise works by modernist writers in earlier decades.¹¹⁹

Lehmann's suggestion that *LR*'s literary level did not stand comparison with the great French leftist journals, is also rather ungenerous. *LR* was by no means anti-intellectual even as it was deliberately critical of the 'obscurantism' and 'irrationalism' of certain modernist authors (while at times also publishing their work).¹²⁰ As Margot Heinmann (who contributed a poem to *TPNW 4*) comments about one of *LR*'s contributors, the Scots poet best known by his pen name, Hugh MacDiarmid:

Who after all, could be more aggressively 'intellectual' than MacDiarmid, insisting in Scots dialect verse that the workers were entitled to be given the full complexity of Lenin's thought, specialist language and all?¹²¹

And while *LR* might not have attracted many of the young British poets who made their names in the 1930s, many of its young contributors and several of its senior editors had works published in *NW* which suggests that their literary levels were evidently considered by Lehmann to reach his own high bar of literary quality.

By the time Lehmann was writing the first volume of his memoirs recalling these days it was the 1950s and the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War were reverberating around the world. America was on the cusp of the Vietnam War and the threat of

¹¹⁷ Lehmann, *New Writing in Europe*, p. 79.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82, p. 81, p. 103.

¹²⁰ Heinemann, 'Left Review, *New Writing and the Broad Alliance Against Fascism*', p. 122.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

Communism to British society was considered both real and present. This may help to explain why, while Lehmann's memoirs acknowledge the almost utopian idealism with which he and other writers viewed the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, his more direct links to Communism (and involvement in Communist-backed publications such as *Left Review*) are given less than candid treatment.

Equally significant to note is the extent to which *Left Review* and the politics that it embraced is likely to have informed Lehmann's approach towards and understanding of China. Lehmann would surely have read *LR's* 'China' supplement of January 1938, in which editors extolled the country's ancient and contemporary culture in light of the threat posed to it by 'the armies of an imperialism which cares nothing for popular development or enlightenment [Japan]'.¹²² The special issue gives the floor to a roster of 'experts' to highlight aspects of Chinese culture and society that the war with Japan - and a possible Japanese victory - so imperilled. The outpouring of support for and sympathy towards China which flowed from the political Left in the first part of the Sino-Japanese War is on full display in the issue. The Japanese military incursions into China are described as 'unprovoked attacks of Fascist aggression' which the editorial fears 'will lead to the total destruction of culture' (defined here as 'the reflection of man's consistent aspiration towards freedom and fuller social consciousness').¹²³ Meanwhile, China is depicted as an ally and an ancient civilization which is now striving for modernity. Both China's 5,000-year-old civilization and its contemporary art, literature, theatre and cinema are featured in the China supplement in an attempt to gain support and understanding in the West. One of the key contributors to the *LR* supplement was Chen I-Wan, known by his alias Jack Chen, a journalist, author and artist, who took a travelling exhibition of political cartoons by Chinese artists to Europe, Moscow and USA during the war, and co-translated with Ye (as Chun-chan Yeh) one of the Chinese stories that Lehmann went on to publish in *NW* and later in *TPNW*.¹²⁴

¹²² Supplement to *Left Review*, January 1938 (Modern China section, edited by Jack Chen).

¹²³ Ibid. 'Editorial', p. 701.

¹²⁴ The story which appeared in *TPNW* as 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' had to pass through another set of translators in Britain before Lehmann would publish it.

However, Lehmann's adherence to ideas on the political Left - and by extension ideas about China - had been shaped well before 1938. As the sixth chapter of *New Writing in Europe*, 'New Writing Abroad' suggests, the influence of a political movement in politics and literature in France (in which figures such as Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland had central roles) that was sympathetic to the cause of the Front Populaire and therefore opposed to Fascism, had greatly inspired Lehmann in the early to mid 1930s. Indeed he went on to publish many of the mostly French and exiled Italian, German and Austrian authors associated with the movement in *NW*.¹²⁵ What Lehmann's essay on the subject does not clarify however, is the full extent to which he was directly involved in this European movement which had originally been created to counter 'imperialist war' following Japan's incursions into Manchuria, as well as in opposition to the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and fears on the political Left over the encirclement of the Soviet Union by capitalist powers among others. The 'Amsterdam-Pleyel movement' (as the movement in France became known) opened the French Left to the idea of an alliance of French communists and socialists, as well as other progressives. It would eventually form part of the French Popular Front.¹²⁶ According to Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) files on John Lehmann from March 1934, he was:

in close contact with The L. A. I. [the League Against Imperialism whose aim was to deter imperialist governments from oppressing weak nations], the British Anti-War Movement and the Bolshevik run Anti-War-Anti-Fascist Council in Paris

¹²⁵ Lehmann cites French writers including: André Chamson, André Malraux, Louis Guilloux, Paul Nizan, Jean Giono, Jean Cassou, Henri de Montherlant, Eugène Dabit, Luc Durtain, Antoine de St. Exupéry, André Gide and German writers including: Heinrich Mann, Anna Seghers, Ernst Toller, Lion Feuchtwanger, Ludwig Renn, Alfred Kantorowicz, Gustav Regler, Friedrich Wolf.

¹²⁶ For a brief summary of the establishment of the anti-war and later anti-fascist committees in France and across Europe in the early 1930s and acknowledgement that the Japanese incursions into China sparked their genesis, see David Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 158-159. Originally published (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[Amerstam-Pleyel], for which he carries secret messages from France to Germany.¹²⁷

The SIS 'minute sheets' on Lehmann, which sought to track his collaboration with Communist forces across Europe and in Britain, also suggest that he was writing under a pseudonym for *Monde* 'the extreme left-wing periodical run by Henri Barbusse'.¹²⁸

The LAI - a front organisation for the Comintern - whose first congress had been instigated by Willi Münzenberg (with whom SIS files show Lehmann had also been in contact between 1932-35) was formed off the back of the revolutionary surge in China following the 1926 united front between the KMT and the CCP. The LAI was a transnational, anti-imperialist organisation which brought together communists, anti-colonial organisations and activists from the colonized world, which is significant to recall when considering the urges that guided Lehmann's editorial outlook, albeit that the LAI was abandoned by the Communists and later collapsed. The LAI was essentially replaced by the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement (named after its founding meeting places), with Munzenberg stepping in and out of the leadership of its various incarnations. The SIS files show that Lehmann was bound up in the left-wing politics of Europe (and its approach to the rest of the world) as a young man much more so than his memoirs suggest. Such involvement would undoubtedly have shaped his views and ideas about China, albeit that the extent to which these ideas translated into editorial decisions later on is problematic to pin down and the views themselves shifted over time and particularly in light of an emerging disillusionment with the Soviet Union. What can be more generally inferred is that as a result of Lehmann's allegiance to these radical Leftist groups he would have been far more likely to view China's plight with sympathy (and to see the country's salvation as wholly entwined with the global fight against

¹²⁷ Secret Intelligence Service files relating to John Frederick Lehmann's involvement with communist-sponsored, anti-fascist groups between 1932-1934. The National Archives, Kew (KV 2/2253) report dated: 6.3.1934.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

fascism) long before the Japanese outraged much of the world by bombing China's civilian populations in the early years of the Sino-Japanese War.¹²⁹

2.4 a) Politics shape Lehmann's Approach to Literature: *New Writing in Europe*.

The ways in which Lehmann's political allegiances may have shaped his literary inclinations and his preoccupation with certain kinds of writers - at least up until 1941 - is presented with some degree of clarity in *New Writing in Europe*. This collection of essays sets out in nine chapters the urges and aims of the writers of the 1930s in Britain and across Europe and the evident extent to which Lehmann admired (and went on to publish) many of their works. Lehmann makes comparisons (and acknowledges contrasts) between British writers and émigré European writers. What Lehmann identifies as a central unifying aim of the 'foreign' (he is specifically here referring to European writers) is significant for the purposes of this research because these preoccupations can also be identified in the works by Chinese writers that Lehmann would publish in the 1930s and later in *TPNW* during WWII. Lehmann himself acknowledges this in his foreword to the book when he exculpates himself for not including any analysis of the literature of America or Asia in the collection:

The same is to a large extent true of a new literature which is growing up in Asia, - in Asiatic Russia, India and China. It is still crude and young, but it already shows many preoccupations similar to those of modern European literature.¹³⁰

The attraction for Lehmann of the 'outstanding literary figures' of Europe leads him to seek out other writers around the world whose work contains similar qualities.¹³¹ He

¹²⁹ This is not to imply that this incident marked the first time that China's civilian population had been bombed by the Japanese. In early 1932 in what is sometimes referred to as the 'Shanghai incident' 1,000 of civilians were killed by Japanese forces in and around the city.

¹³⁰ Lehmann, *New Writing in Europe*, Foreword, p.13.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

goes on, in the collection of essays, to outline in some detail the precise qualities of writing that had united the European writers and captured his attention. He comments:

They....had certain fundamental aims in common. They were interested, first of all, in the people, whether peasants or factory hands or sailors and soldiers or miners, the people at their work and in their struggles, their joys and their sufferings, rather than in the world of the select few to whom the advantages of life have fallen; they were attempting consciously or unconsciously, to create a new kind of realism, a realism which in the case of most of them involved a concentration on simplicity of style and a rejection of the elaboration and abstruse experimenting which had been characteristic of the main literary trends in the previous period; they were swayed to associate themselves with a certain amount of practical and at least partly political activity in addition to their writing, to further the popular cause as they saw it; their deepest impulse, one may say, was a desire to express a new humanism, a new belief in brotherhood and the value of the life of every single breathing man and woman.^{132 133}

Here, readers can glimpse evidence of the kinds of qualities and an element of the spirit of writing that Lehmann both admired and sought out in the writers that he had published and would go on to publish (both at home and those from abroad), particularly during the war. His words here also contain a rebuke to the literary aesthetics of an earlier modernism that had been embraced by so many writers of the previous generation and which Lehmann implies was by the mid-30s ill-suited to the urgent practical and political concerns of a world sliding towards another world war (and even less well-suited to the service of the nation in wartime).

¹³² The 'they' Lehmann refers to includes André Chamson, Jean Giono, Ignazio Silone and Anna Seghers but he acknowledges that these qualities and ideas coursed through the work of many other foreign writers at that time.

¹³³ Ibid, pp. 102-103.

In the concluding chapter of Lehmann's essay on the literary movements of the 1930s, 'Afterthoughts in Wartime', he outlines the specific qualities and urges of writing during wartime and how these were an extension of 'the seed' of the movement which had begun in France and to a somewhat lesser extent Britain. While first acknowledging the events which precipitated the disintegration of this movement (the Munich Agreement, the overthrow of the Spanish Republicans and the outbreak of international war), Lehmann nonetheless reminds readers that a very tangible shift had occurred in the minds of writers:

A new social consciousness, a new sense of the fact that writers belonged with the people and also that they had a great responsibility towards the people - a responsibility which they believed most of their predecessors of the 'twenties had shirked - was born in them. Parallel with this went an increasing desire to write naturally and simply, to avoid the recondite or elaborate as far as possible and bring language close to everyday speech ... A new realism began to grow up, the aim of which was to create an image of life as it was, not for the fortunate and protected few, but for the millions who had to struggle for their living and bear the main brunt of all economic and social disturbances.¹³⁴

Ultimately Lehmann concludes of the various literary movements that swept through Europe and Britain in the 1930s:

It was an important gain that writers should become more socially conscious and should plant their feet firmly on the earth once more; it was a healthy impulse for them to try and regain the speed and direction of narrative style that seemed to have been lost for so long, to break out of the confines of a modern "literary English" towards the colloquial and the vernacular; the idea that writers should not refuse action on principle, and should be prepared to take sides about the

¹³⁴ Lehmann, *New Writing in Europe*, pp. 147-8.

most important conflicts of their day remained valuable in spite of the qualifications that have now been applied to it.¹³⁵

As Lehmann's own words betray, it was no mere coincidence or whimsy that he published works about and from China when (as this research will show) they were so permeated with the literary ideals alluded to here. The concurrence of international politics influencing aesthetic concerns led the writers of China and Great Britain to converge in terms of certain overarching ideas about subject matter and style, even though the conditions in each country that led to the ideas had been very different. However Lehmann's essays identify certain characteristics of the literature of Britain and Europe, particularly an emphasis on 'the people' over the elites (as both writers and readers), a privileging of 'simplicity of style' in literature and a celebration of 'the brotherhood of men' in writing as qualities which - as we shall see - also resonated strongly through the literature which began to emerge from China during the war against Japan.

In the concluding remarks of Lehmann's essay collection, he confesses his deepest 'hope' and an answer to the obvious question, why do these movements in literature matter so much to him?

In all these aspects of the movement there was the promise of a refreshment and revitalising of the English literary tradition and with the forging of closer bonds between writers and the people the hope of a deeper understanding and support of art on the part of millions who had been indifferent before.¹³⁶

Here is evidence that Lehmann saw himself as a guardian of English literature, a role he no doubt felt the need to take on in response to the grave threat posed to culture of all kinds by fascism and Nazism and other forces that were sweeping the globe at that time.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.150.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

2.5 Lehmann and his First Direct Link with China

Lehmann came from a dynasty of men of letters. Many vows to find fame and 'honour by their deeds in the world of art, music and literature' were made by the Lehmann children long before their talents in any of these areas had been proven.¹³⁷ They forged Lehmann's instincts as an editor who did so much to nurture writers of his generation. Lehmann's father had been a major contributor to the satirical weekly magazine, *Punch*, a founding editor of *Granta* and a Liberal Party politician who sat in the House of Commons from 1906-1910. His sister, Rosamund became a critically acclaimed novelist and his younger sister, Beatrix an actress. Through his contemporaries at Eton, Cambridge and through his elder sister's literary connections, Lehmann met the writers, who would, in the early days of *NW* become his 'shadow committee' of advisors, among them Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. Lehmann, as Adrian Wright's biography of him describes, was undeniably upper-middle class - hailing from the strata of society who lived in large country homes, had staff, good jobs and had benefitted from the best education their country could offer - whether or not he always felt a part of that world and however hard he may have fought against the concept of a 'literary elite' in his magazines and to whatever extent he was dazzled by the idea of class struggle as a younger man.

Lehmann's contemporaries from Cambridge University (and some from Oxford) were to provide him with his first direct link to contemporary China. In his autobiography, he recalls the books that were his constant companions when he lived in Vienna in 1932 and that he wanted to 'absorb into my bloodstream'.¹³⁸ They included poetry by Rainer Maria Rilke, the German-language poet, by W.B Yeats and Wilfred Owen, and Arthur Waley's translation from the Chinese.¹³⁹ By the early 1930s, Waley was so widely regarded as a translator of classical Chinese poetry, that for many Anglophone readers, his work was sure to be among their earliest encounters with the literary traditions of

¹³⁷ Lehmann, *Whispering Gallery*, p.129.

¹³⁸ Lehmann, *Whispering Gallery*, p. 207.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

China. But, it was not until Julian Bell's correspondence began flowing back to Britain from China in 1935, when he was teaching English at Wuhan University, that Lehmann made his first direct link with modern China.¹⁴⁰ Bell, the elder son of Bloomsbury artist Vanessa Bell and art critic Clive Bell (and nephew of Virginia Woolf with whom Lehmann worked for a time at the Hogarth Press) is described by Lehmann as a 'young poet with whom I struck up the most intimate intellectual friendship of my Cambridge years ... one of the most gifted of that fortunate second generation of the Bloomsbury giants'.¹⁴¹ Throughout their Cambridge years and up until Bell's death in the Spanish Civil War in 1937, Lehmann recalls that the friends 'kept up an enormous correspondence' not least while Bell was teaching in Wuhan.¹⁴² Although the content of their letters often centered on discussions about poetry, Bell also wrote about his travels throughout China and about his best student, 'Yeh'.¹⁴³ Ye, was to be the source of most of the short stories by Chinese writers that appear in the pages of *TPNW*, as well as a contributor to the magazine.

While in China, Bell embarked on a love affair (almost entirely unknown at the time) with Ling Shuhua, a married Chinese modernist artist and writer, who, through Bell struck up a correspondence with Virginia Woolf and other members of the Bloomsbury Group. Woolf agreed to read drafts of Ling's manuscript that would eventually be published, after Woolf's death, as the autobiography *Ancient Melodies* (in 1953).¹⁴⁴ In *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, Patricia Laurence expounds on the dialogue that opened up between the literary communities of China and England at this time - partly as a result of Ling and Bell's relationship - and the mutual influence that each country's literary culture, especially modernism, had on the other's. To a greatly overlooked extent, this is a dialogue that John Lehmann took forward, revised and refashioned, by publishing the work of modern Chinese writers in the pages of *TPNW* alongside a

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁴⁴ For an account of the relationships, both personal and literary, between China and Bloomsbury see Laurence's, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*.

generation of British and European writers at a time when all were preoccupied with, and united by, the trauma of war and its implications for the future of art and humanity. However, as this research will examine, it was not the experimental form and expression of literary high modernism that particularly concerned Lehmann, despite his ties to Bloomsbury artists and writers (particularly the Woolfs and the Bells) and the Hogarth Press.

Another Cambridge contemporary was William Empson, the writer and literary critic, whose experiences teaching in China in the late 1930s landed him with a job during the war at the BBC Far Eastern Service in charge of radio broadcasts to China and propaganda features on China for the Home Service. Empson taught modern English poetry at *Xi Nan Lin Da* (Lianda) university during the Japanese war and influenced young Chinese scholars who would later form a modern poetry society known as 'The Chinese New Poets'.¹⁴⁵ Like his Cambridge professor, I. A. Richards, Empson is associated with 'Cambridge English' and in China as one of the 'progenitors of Chinese modernism'.¹⁴⁶ It was Lehmann's sister Rosamund who introduced him to the poet, novelist and essayist, Stephen Spender in 1930 and through whom Lehmann made his first connection with Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden (writers who were to contribute to *New Signatures*). Not long after Bell's death, Isherwood and Auden embarked for China after being commissioned by Faber & Faber in London and Random House in New York, to write a 'travel book about the East'.¹⁴⁷ In his autobiography, Lehmann recalled: 'It was a strange irony that led two more of my friends to China, about which they knew nothing, so soon after Julian, who knew so much more and might have played so effective a part in the war that had broken out'.¹⁴⁸ Correspondence from Isherwood to Lehmann in February 1938 sets out some of their

¹⁴⁵ Cao Li, 'Cambridge Critics and China: An Introduction', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Volume 41, Issue 1, March 2012, pp. 4 – 25. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/camqtly/bfs006>> Last accessed 30.11.19. The Chinese student poets included Mu Dan, Du Yunxie, Zheng Ming, and Yuan Keja.

¹⁴⁶ Shuang Shen, 'Empson and Mu Dan: Modernism as "Complex Word"', *Comparative Literature*, Volume 70, Issue 1, March 2018, pp., 1 – 24. <<https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-4344046>> Last accessed 29.11.19.

¹⁴⁷ W. H Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *A Journey to A War*, (New York: Random House, 1939)

¹⁴⁸ Lehmann, *Whispering Gallery*, p. 307.

objectives while in China, interspersed with details of dinners with the Governor of Hong Kong and Victor Sassoon among others. Included in the collection of black and white photographs published in the book, is one of a young, smiling ‘intellectual’ named C.C Yeh, who assisted Auden in translation. Lehmann also drops the name of the British Ambassador to China (1938-1942), Archibald Clark Kerr (later the first baron Inverchapel) in his autobiography, who is described as a ‘staunch supporter of *New Writing* and all the young writers associated with it’.¹⁴⁹

2.6 The Bridge: Lehmann’s Original ‘manifesto’

When Lehmann came to set out his editorial vision for *NW*, having persuaded The Bodley Head to agree to twice-yearly publication and an advance of £60 per issue to cover costs (which it didn’t), the simplicity yet breadth of his ambition was put into his ‘Manifesto’.¹⁵⁰ It is a vision to which he remained doggedly loyal in all but frequency of publication - the only element of the project beyond the control of his otherwise autocratic editorship.

As well as pledging devotion to imaginative writing, ‘mainly of young authors’ especially those whose work ‘is too unorthodox in length or style to be suitable for the established magazines’ the four-paragraph declaration also promised to keep ‘writers of reactionary or Fascist sentiments’ at bay and, famously proclaimed to be ‘independent of any political party’, a line which caused some critics to scoff.¹⁵¹ In the final paragraph, Lehmann declared his hopes ‘to represent the work of writers from colonial and foreign countries’. An anecdote in Lehmann’s autobiography reveals that following a discussion with The Bodley Head over the new venture, the magazine was almost named *The Bridge* ‘as a symbol of the work we wanted it to do in bringing together writers of our

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 235 - 236.

¹⁵¹ Cyril Connolly in the *Daily Telegraph* said Lehmann was ‘disingenuous’ on this point and Geoffrey Grigson in *Morning Post* called the words ‘sad jargon’. Both reviews are cited by Lehmann in *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 237.

own class and writers from the working-class, writers of our own country and writers from abroad'.¹⁵²

From the start of *NW* Lehmann had in mind a mission, unstated in his 'Manifesto', to provide a literary space which would bring together, the university-educated writers, steeped in middle-class privilege with those of the working-classes; factory workers, sailors, coal miners. He hoped, in the words of biographer, Adrian Wright, to 'make the extremes between these two worlds of literature indivisible'.¹⁵³ He also hoped, perhaps more fancifully, that his literary periodical would entice working-class readers. Although, Allen Lane wrote to Lehmann in June 1941, to say a friend who spent time 'among dockside workers tells me she hears *New Writing* being spoken of constantly in terms of the highest praise', Jeremy Lewis who cites the anecdote, calls it out as out as a pleasing notion 'more reminiscent of Soviet propaganda than everyday life'.¹⁵⁴ Lewis and Wright both express scepticism about Lehmann's aim to attract working-class writers and readers to *PNW*. Wright maintains that to Lehmann the working-class writers whose work frequently appeared in the magazine were 'a vague vogue' and always a 'supporting cast' although he concedes that Lehmann's hope of opening the English to the sensibilities of other cultures and peoples were both 'laudable and altruistic'.¹⁵⁵

He intended to break the stronghold that had held good for so many years, to introduce the vernacular. By a labelling of this cogent force he might have strengthened what could be achieved, but the movement, if such it was, remained ad hoc and unnamed. He might have defined both intention and limitation had he only given a title to their poaching activities. They [the working-class writers] were indisputably, the Trespassers of English Literature.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁵³ Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ Jeremy Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁵ Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

However a sharper critical line emerges from Christopher Hilliard whose research (published in 2006) is based not only on detailed critical studies of the working-class literary movement in Britain but also the correspondence between Lehmann and the writers themselves. Through a comparison of Lehmann's approach with that of his contemporaries (particularly Cyril Connolly and editors at *Left Review*) Hilliard concludes that Lehmann 'was the most successful supporter of working-class writing at the time' and 'the most important Popular Front patron of worker-writers [in Britain]'.¹⁵⁷ Hilliard notes that Lehmann's recruitment of and support and encouragement for his working-class writers was both sincere and career-changing for several of them. Lehmann was not, as Wright had suggested in his biography, interested in working-class writers 'solely as mouthpieces of exotic experience rather than as artists in their own right'.¹⁵⁸ That the working-class writers appear to fail Wright's 'where are they now' test is more a question for literary historians than a criticism that can be laid entirely at Lehmann's feet.¹⁵⁹ Equally, Hilliard contradicts Jeremy Lewis' suggestion that working-class readers, 'the reading proletariat' as Lehmann called them, were illusory. Instead he suggests that 'some workers did read it [*New Writing*] and were inspired', including those in a little mining village in County Durham.¹⁶⁰ Lehmann's commitment to working-class writers in Britain remained a powerful aspect of his editorial instincts and to a large extent influenced the kinds of writers and the kind of writing that he went on to seek from his foreign contributors. To give one example, Lehmann published the work of one young 'unknown writer' from China who was still at middle school in *FONW/TPNW* 7.¹⁶¹ He also gave prominence to stories from China that took the Chinese labourer, peasant, travelling musician or impoverished bystander as subject matter. As Lehmann himself commented:

¹⁵⁷ Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents*, pp.130 and 161.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234. Hilliard also notes that historians are still at a loss today to explain satisfactorily the end of 'literary populism' after the war, which also meant an end to left-wing and populist efforts to seek out working-class writers.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁶¹ The writer was Pai Ping-chei (Bai Pingjie), *TPWN* 5, p.143.

And it was not without significance that contributors from China and India fitted so easily into the pattern; that a writer like Mulk raj Anand, for instance, author of *The Coolie* and other novels, should take as his world not the feudal splendours and mysticism of traditional Indian literature, but the hard and suffering lives of the millions of his country's poor.¹⁶²

To Hilliard, Lehmann's interest in 'proletarian writing' - by which he means writing by the working-classes - was another way to bring literature into 'firmer contact with realities and about renovating English literature with new material'.¹⁶³

It is at this juncture worth noting that despite 'the sincerity' of Lehmann's youthful fellow-travelling and his desire for a new comradeship in the written word, his prefatory and editorial statements, including the 'Manifesto' to *NW*, as well as his extensive correspondence with writers around the world as he grew older, point to his being fundamentally liberal in his approach to literature and his political 'habits of thought' - as his father had been before him.¹⁶⁴ As Hilliard succinctly notes, Lehmann:

was uncomfortable with revolutionary change and heavily invested in the primacy of the individual conscience in aesthetic matters that shaded into political ones ... The idea of *New Writing* as a "bridge" between classes and subcultures was as much an Edwardian liberal dream as it was a 1930s Popular Front one.¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, Lehmann's left-leaning (but fundamentally liberal), egalitarian, globally inclusive (both of readers and writers) instincts chimed not only with the spirit of the age, but with the spirit of Penguin Books. The urge to reach out to a much broader readership and to new kinds of writers, which Lehmann clearly signals in the many forewords he wrote to *TPNW*, to build up a sort of genuine international consciousness at a time of global war, sat comfortably with the aims and objectives of his publisher,

¹⁶² Lehmann, *New Writing in Europe*, p. 79.

¹⁶³ Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents*, p. 143.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 141- 42.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

particularly if Lane could bask in the reflective glory of publishing this kind of a magazine.¹⁶⁶ Both *NW* and Penguin Books were founded in 1936, the same year that Oswald Mosley could be seen marching in the streets of East London and *The Left Book Club (LBC)* was formed shortly after as Britain sought new ways to battle extremism.

2.7 Booming Sales and Middle-Class Readers

By almost all counts, both Lane and Lehmann's ventures enjoyed massive success. While not all the reviews of the early issues of *NW* or the early publishing decisions taken by Lane were favourable, both journals went on to scale astonishing heights in their respective fields. Today, *TPNW* has been variously remembered as 'one of the great literary magazines' and the entire *NW* venture as a 'collective masterpiece of a whole generation'.¹⁶⁷ The circulation figures for *TPNW*, against the standards of literary periodical publications, remain extraordinarily high. The first issue of *TPNW* sold 80,000 copies, volumes two and three sold 55,000 each, partly hampered by paper rationing. Sales crept back up to 80,000 per issue during the war, although the frequency of the magazine was cut to quarterly in 1942. Just after the end of the war in 1945 sales peaked at 100,000 copies. During the war, readers had been urged to leave issues of *TPNW* in the Post Office so that their pages could be enjoyed by 'men and women in the services' and Lehmann estimates that because issues were frequently shared around, true readership, at its peak was closer to 250,000. To put this in context, one of the nearest rivals to *TPNW*, the monthly periodical, *Horizon*, started out with sales of 3,500 in 1939, which doubled the following month and peaked at 10,000 in 1947 although *Horizon* had a regular monthly output while *TPNW* did not maintain this. After the war, however, *TPNW* never quite found its feet and by 1950, the year it closed, an

¹⁶⁶ In the foreword to *TPNW* 1, Lehmann wrote: 'I have always believed that *New Writing* could and should appeal to a far wider public than that which a book costing 6s or 7s 6d reaches. And now, through the co-operation of the Penguins, this is at last going to be possible'.

¹⁶⁷ Jeremy Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p.181, and Françoise Bort, in 'John Lehmann's *New Writing*: the Duty to be Tormented', *Synergies Royaume-Uni et Irlande*, no. 4, (2011), p. 70.

issue of *TPNW* was selling just over 20,000 copies. *Horizon* had already ceased publication.¹⁶⁸

In order to consider the ways that *TPNW* 'shaped responses to China' it is necessary to consider, for a moment, the magazine's readers. The sales figures alone (which were probably just a fraction of the actual readership) suggest that it was widely circulated in Britain and throughout the forces and read among literary-minded readers as well as writers around the world, not least in China. But these numbers say nothing about the demographics of the readership, their reasons for buying *TPNW* or for giving it up. However, a report conducted between 1946-47 by the social research organisation Mass Observation on the Penguin Books readership, provides some valuable details about *TPNW* subscribers.¹⁶⁹ While the numbers of subscribers to the journal remained low (around 2,305 at the time of the survey) they can be viewed as the publication's most committed or core readership and are therefore extremely valuable as a source group. The section of the report about *TPNW* introduces the magazine as 'the platform of the new generation of poets and writers who challenged the values and ideals of the previously dominant Georgian group in the early 'thirties [which] quickly won immense prestige among young readers'.¹⁷⁰ The report goes on to comment that the majority of *TPNW* subscribers were male (1,471 to 834 women), lived in metropolitan areas with populations of over 1,000,000, or lived mostly commonly in London or Yorkshire in terms of county.¹⁷¹ Of the *TPNW* subscribers interviewed by Mass Observation in London, the majority were 'nearly all of middle or lower middle class background, nearly all under 40, nearly all with aspirational or established intellectual interests'.¹⁷² Whatever Lehmann's aspirations were, his core readership appear to have been a lot like him.

¹⁶⁸ All circulation figures for *TPNW* and *Horizon* in Lewis, *Penguin Special*, pp. 177 - 180.

¹⁶⁹ The report, carried out by Mass Observation on behalf of Penguin Books, was entitled 'A Report on Penguin World' (1946-7, report 2545) and was conducted to discover what the 'existing attitudes towards Penguin publications were among: the Penguin buying public, retailers, wholesalers and printers and Penguin employees'. The full report used formulated questionnaires, but also included a thousand interviews with reports written by ex-Penguin employees and Mass Observation staff. Penguin Books Archive, Bristol, DM 1294/3/2/2.

¹⁷⁰ Mass Observation, 'A Report on Penguin World', p. 122.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

And many of them were loyal. The report comments that many of the subscribers were 'old hands' who were extending a long standing loyalty to the original *New Writing*.¹⁷³

During the course of many interviews, *TPNW* subscribers complimented the magazine for being: value for money, an object they liked to pass on to others and for keeping them up to date with contemporary writing. One subscriber, a teacher, confesses that *TPNW* had inspired him to try to write a story for the magazine and that the 'whole character of the book seemed to express the way I felt about things myself'. Several readers also voiced criticisms, for example of *TPNW*'s post-war content and one reader objected to the 'continuance of war stories' after the end of the war.¹⁷⁴ Another reader suggested that the quality of the stories had slipped.¹⁷⁵ In the concluding remarks, the report observes - as no doubt Allen Lane had - that readers of Penguin Books and *NW* (in its early incarnation at Hogarth Press) had 'a lot in common'.¹⁷⁶ The chief characteristics they shared 'were an appeal to a literary taste above average and a progressive outlook'.¹⁷⁷

2.8 The Chinese Stories and the Spirit of *New Writing*

A hope which Lehmann's original 'Manifesto' did not express, and which he attempted to clarify retrospectively in his memoir was his express desire to appeal to a certain kind of writer. Lehmann defined this writer thus:

In the 'catastrophic impasse of the 'thirties, Keat's famous lines applied:

Those to whom the miseries of the world

Are misery, and will not let them rest.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Lehmann, *Whispering Gallery*, p. 236.

The words of an early review of *New Writing* from the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*, seemed to Lehmann to 'interpret with extraordinary insight the fundamental impulse behind it [the magazine]'.¹⁷⁹

That, the conception of an effective brotherhood born between victims of oppression, is the constant element, or the nearest to a constant element, which gives this miscellany its claims to unity. The oppression takes various forms - sometimes it is war, sometimes it is fascism, sometimes the social system, sometimes human nature or even the hard earth itself; but always it is this sense of broader comradeships breaking through the hard skull of confining, destroying individualisms'.¹⁸⁰

Put another way, Lehmann saw the war as 'one more reason to tighten the bonds between readers and writers, not only among authors, and to turn towards a form of practical humanism'.¹⁸¹

The ten short stories and essays from or about China that Lehmann published in *TPNW* are equivalent to a quarter of the issues of the magazine containing something significant from, or about, contemporary mainland China. Tchang T'ien-Yih's (Zhang Tianyi) *Hatred* was the first story from China to appear in *TPNW* and was a powerful, at times stomach-churning tale about the consequences of militarism. The author is described in the list of contributors as 'one of the best-known authors of the new China'.¹⁸² Presumably Lehmann is referring to the writer's reputation inside China as he was almost certainly unknown to the vast majority of Penguin Book's (or any other mainstream Western publisher's) readers. The story held a hallowed place in the collection for Lehmann, who described it as 'a near perfect example of writing that drove its implicit lesson home far more effectively than any straightforward propaganda could

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 238.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Bort, 'The Duty to be Tormented', p. 69.

¹⁸² *TPNW 1*, p. 156.

by being a work of art'.¹⁸³ It was also, according to the *TLS*, the contribution in which the spirit or fundamental impulse behind *NW*, seemed to crystallize 'most forcibly of all'.¹⁸⁴ Lehmann discloses how he first discovered the story in his autobiography:

I had discovered it in a French magazine, and had been deeply impressed by the simplicity and power with which it described the suffering of peasants and soldiers somewhere in the huge spaces of China, at some timeless moment in what seemed an eternal civil war: almost unbearable, so absolutely naked of all inessentials, and yet so beautifully done, so full of human feeling and at the same time so completely without sentimentality.¹⁸⁵

In a notable act of dedication to the story's genesis in the English language and probably because he was unable to find a talented translator, Lehmann claims he translated *Hatred* himself.¹⁸⁶ And so, it became, in Lehmann's recollections, the manifestation, in literary form, of the spirit of a venture that would be remembered as one of - if not *the* finest - literary magazines of its generation. The appearance of 'Hatred' in the first issue of *TPNW*, for which Lehmann had selected the choicest stories from the eight previous issues of *NW*, is further testament to the story's coming of age. Indeed, while not all of the Chinese stories that Lehmann pushed through the various periodicals he simultaneously published throughout the 1930s and 1940s made it onto the pages of *TPNW*, the majority of the Chinese stories that were published by Lehmann under the Penguin imprint were being reprinted for a second time by him. This suggests not only that Lehmann deemed them to be of sufficient quality and to chime with the spirit of his venture but also his desire to ensure they reached a broader readership. In part two of Lehmann's autobiography, *I Am My Brother*, he wrote:

¹⁸³ Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery*, p 240

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Lehmann cites a review in the *TLS*.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *TPNW* 1, p. 138. Lehmann notes that 'Hatred' was translated into French by Tai Van-Chou (Dai Wangshu, 戴望舒) and John Lehmann. He presumably translated the story into English from the French version as there is no evidence to suggest that Lehmann spoke or wrote Chinese.

The book volumes of *New Writing* had never been read as widely as I would have liked, and I believe that in its sixpenny format it would carry its message to thousands who had never heard of it before but in whose minds, especially in the revolutionary circumstances of the war, it would almost certainly strike a responsive chord.¹⁸⁷

It is hardly surprising that the themes, of misery and the suffering of common people but ultimately a sense of brotherhood dealt with in 'Hatred' should have resonated so forcefully with Lehmann as he was putting together the first volume of *TPNW*. By 1940, Zhang, a leftist intellectual, was approaching the peak of his career in China but the story was first published in Chinese in 1932, shortly after the author's home had been razed in the Japanese bombing of Shanghai, during which the civilian population was subjected to terror bombings in the build up to all out war with Japan in 1937.¹⁸⁸ Lehmann too, as he assembled the first *TPNW* for publication eight years later, describes the 'air-raids and the appalling precariousness of the country's situation'.¹⁸⁹ Both editor and writer are experiencing life under siege, with the looming threat of war ever present. As Tom Buchanan has noted with reference to the devastating effects of the Blitz that were recorded by Jack Chen (when he visited Britain) for the *Daily Worker* and *Tribute*, they 'evoked a new sense of shared suffering with China's heavily bombed cities'.¹⁹⁰ By the time of its publication in *TPNW* 'Hatred', was sure to have seemed more poignant than ever to Lehmann and, he would no doubt have expected, to his readers. In the context of world affairs, by 1940, Hitler had already allied with Japan, while the war in China had reached something of a stalemate before Western economic sanctions against Japan began to shift the balance of power and propel events to

¹⁸⁷ John Lehmann, *I am My Brother* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1960), p. 92.

¹⁸⁸ Yifeng Sun, *Fragmentation and Dramatic Moments, Zhang Tianyi and the Narrative Discourse of Upheaval in Modern China* (New York, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002), p. 31.

¹⁸⁹ Lehmann, *I Am My Brother*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁰ Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left 1925-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 84. Buchanan references Jack Chen's drawings in the *Daily Worker*, 25 November 1940 and *Tribune*, 20 September 1940.

conclusion. In Britain, the country's Royal Air Force bases were under siege from bombing raids from Berlin and in September of 1940 a massive bombing raid on London and Hitler's advance through Europe made it a bad year for the Allies.

Chapter 3: Ralph Fox and China's Revolutionary Potential

3.1 Communist Sympathies

This chapter considers the contribution from the Communist writer Ralph Fox (1900 - 1936) to *TPNW*. Fox was a key member of Lehmann's early (and unofficial) advisory committee, whose politics aligned with Lehmann's own in the early and mid 1930s. Fox's first and only story in *TPNW* appeared in the same issues as Zhang's and provides evidence of the aspects of Mongolian and Chinese history which fascinated him (and assuredly resonated strongly with Lehmann and he would have hoped, his readers). The story marks the start of the arc of Lehmann's interest in China, which stemmed from his strong allegiance to Leftist politics (particularly Communism) but which shifted considerably during wartime and again in the post-war period. Fox's single contribution to *TPNW* enables this research to trace the ways that Communist writers viewed Mongolia and China, for their revolutionary potential and their allegiance with, in the case of Mongolia, The Red Army, or in China, forces seeking to bring about a more egalitarian (and assuredly Leftist) society. As Fox disclosed in a letter to Lehmann, which is considered in this chapter, he hoped that his musing on the potential for co-operation between East and West in 'Conversation with a Lama' would become part of a bigger work following research in China. The story also sets the tone for Lehmann's approach to China, which sought to promote dialogue, greater understanding and sympathy among his readers. This chapter will also consider how Fox's name and legacy became strongly associated with organisations that sought to democratize (and increase the Leftist influence over) reading and literature in Britain of which Lehmann was also a part.

3.2 Ralph Fox 'Conversation with a Lama' (*TPNW* 1)

'Conversation with a Lama' begins by evoking the Western tradition of travel writing from an exotic locale. The tale, based on a real-life encounter, recalls the author's meeting with a Mongolian lama around the time of the Mongolian Revolution in 1921 and describes, among other details: felt tents, salty tea, airik, tattered robes, a temple, the green grass of the steppe, the eastern sky and a Buddhist shrine.¹⁹¹ The lama himself is a tulchi, or 'singer of the epics of his people', with an inclination to drink too much and with an interest in astronomy.¹⁹² While the setting of the story is evocative of a distant, exotic land, and the protagonist of the piece is a religious man (a Buddhist monk) the content of the discussion is distinctly political. The story begins as a conversation between 'two enquirers, one from the East, the other from the West', but it gives way to a commentary on the struggle of the Mongolian people for independence from (white) Russian, Chinese and Japanese invaders, in favour of liberation by a Mongol hero, with the support of the Red Army.¹⁹³ The political undercurrents of the piece and the politically pointed interjections from the narrator/author are perhaps little surprise from a writer, who by autumn 1936 when the story was first published by Lehmann in *NW*, was already known for his biography of Lenin (Gollancz, 1933) and for being one of the early members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), a cause to which he dedicated his entire life.¹⁹⁴ An advertisement for Fox's book *Communism* had appeared in the first issue of *NW*, in the spring of 1936.¹⁹⁵ By the time 'Conversation with a Lama' was published by Lehmann for a second time, in *TPNW* in 1940, Fox had been dead for almost four years. He was killed, like many other literary-minded leftists at the time, after joining the International Brigades to fight the Nationalist forces of general Franco in the Spanish Civil War. He was just 36 years old.

¹⁹¹ *TPNW 1*, pp. 127-132.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.130 and p.136.

¹⁹⁴ Harry Pollitt in John Lehmann, T. A Jackson, Cecil Day Lewis et al (eds) *Ralph Fox: A Writer in Arms*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ralph Fox's book *Communism* was published as part of the XXth Century Library, a series edited by V. K. Krishna Menon under The Bodley Head imprint in 1935. Menon went on to become the general editor of Pelican at Penguin Books.

Lehmann described Fox as a ‘novelist and political historian...who travelled extensively in the Eastern parts of the Soviet Union, and Mongolia’ in the second volume of *NW*. After Fox’s death in Spain, Lehmann dedicated the third volume of the periodical to his memory and to the cause he fought for. He described Fox as ‘one of its [*NW*’s] most valued contributors’. It is a testament to Fox’s memory as well as an acknowledgement of his influence on and support for Lehmann’s *NW* project that his story appeared in the first issue of *TPNW* in November 1940. Along with Christopher Isherwood, Fox had been one of the driving intellects behind *NW*, or in Lehmann’s own words part of the ‘shadow committee’ who had helped to guide the magazine to print.¹⁹⁶ It was expected that Fox would bring his wide knowledge of contemporary Russian writers to the table and indeed the first two volumes of *NW* contained five works translated from the Russian.¹⁹⁷ Fox’s politics evidently knitted closely with Lehmann’s own in the mid 1930s. In his memoir, Lehmann confesses to subscribing, at that time (1933-34), to the delusion that ‘Moscow of all places, was the sole source of light’ in the world and that he believed that the solution to the troubles and dangers with which we [the world] were faced lay in Marxism’.¹⁹⁸ He further adds that in the early days of *NW* his editorial coterie wanted to ‘evoke sympathy and understanding in Moscow intellectual circles’ and to win over Russian readers.¹⁹⁹

In ‘Conversation with a Lama’, we encounter a moment towards the end of the story where the Mongolian rhapsodist, Parchen-lama, exalts the anticipated liberation of his country by a man hailed by the people as a hero on the steppe, Suhebator (almost certainly Damdin Sükhbaatar, a founding member of the Mongolian People’s Party who led the liberation of Khüree, or Ulaanbaatar, in 1921). Fox is quick to remind Parchen-lama that it is the Mongol forces ‘with Red Army detachments from Russia’ who have united to ‘drive out the mad bandit’, the white Russian Ungern-Sternberg (Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, the anti-Bolshevik general turned independent

¹⁹⁶ Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 235.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 218 and p. 216.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

warlord who had driven the Republic of China out of Mongolia earlier in 1921).²⁰⁰ Fox does not miss the opportunity to remind readers of Mongolia's dependence on the Red Army, which would eventually lead to Mongolia becoming a satellite state of the Soviet Union. On the subject of another of Mongolia's invaders, China, the Parchen-lama again appears to share a view which would have been agreeable to Fox in terms of its political implications. While the Chinese invaders, specifically the Beiyang government which occupied parts of Mongolia from 1919, are described by the lama as 'the Chinese who rob our people,' the Chinese society of 'Go-Min' (Guomindang, or Kuomintang, or KMT) who Parchen describes as meeting in 1912 while visiting China, are remembered as 'good men'.²⁰¹ In particular, Parchen-lama stresses that he agrees with Go-Min beliefs that men should 'run their own affairs without princes' and that there 'should be neither rich men nor poor, but that all should be equal'.²⁰² In response to the lama, Fox, states:

Such beliefs are common to-day, Parchen-tulchi. In Russia the State is also being organized on the foundation of such beliefs and many heroes are fighting for these ideas. It is thought, too, that they will be victorious. In Europe also these beliefs are held. I am myself of the Go-Min of my own country.²⁰³

Fox's comments when considered in historical context, remind readers the extent to which the KMT in China, as the revolutionary party of the people, aligned itself with Soviet Russia in the early 1920s (when this conversation appears to have taken place). The KMT accepted support and later aid from Russia and, in 1923, the Comintern instructed the Chinese Communist Party to sign a military treaty with the KMT. Fox is also gently reminding readers that the 'Chinese invaders' of Mongolia (driven by the generals of the Beiyang government) were not the same as the 'Go-Min'. Good or bad intervention in Mongolian affairs is determined, Fox infers, by the political motivations of

²⁰⁰ A biography of Roman von Ungern-Sternberg provides an extremely lively account of the man and this period of Mongolian history: James Palmer, *The Bloody White Baron*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

²⁰¹ *TPNW* 1, p135 and p132.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

the people involved in the intervention. To Fox, the Mongolian cause is seen most clearly through the prism of politics. Indeed, in the closing paragraphs of the story, Fox describes the lama 'putting down the guitar, as though all his secret song had been nothing but a meditation politics'.²⁰⁴ Fox's tale too may be little more than this, although Lehmann was one of several in the British literary community who evidently saw more merit in Fox's work than mere Marxist propaganda. In a book of tributes and extracts of Fox's work which Lehmann co-edited and contributed to after his death, Lehmann recalls being surprised on first meeting Fox, by his 'intense interest in literature 'as literature':

This was a surprise to me then, chiefly I think because I was not yet free of the delusion, common among my contemporaries, that Marxists had a cut-and-dried method of dealing with literature, and were really only interested in it insofar as it proved something political. Talking with Ralph Fox soon made me see how stupid this idea was, and opened, too, an entirely new and exciting world to me.²⁰⁵

Another of Fox's contemporaries, his friend, fellow traveller, and also one of Lehmann's 'working-class' contributors, Ralph Bates, found much to admire in 'Conversation with a Lama'. In the same memorial book, he describes the story as: 'his latest and perhaps most beautiful piece of work ... all of wise things, expressed his character for me'.²⁰⁶ Fox's friends and fellow writers evidently took pains to ensure that Fox was remembered not merely for his writing about politics and his biographies, but for a certain creative spirit that enabled him to combine a genuine appreciation and knowledge of literature with his radical approach to politics. Ralph Bates' tribute goes on to remind readers that Fox had been longing to go to China:

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁰⁵ Lehmann et al (eds), *A Writer in Arms*, p. 107.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

I say longing, because though he had no trace of romanticism in his nature, he never accepted any idea with a merely intellectual and dry assent. I suppose that China for him, as Spain for me, represented two things, escape and reality. Ralph was one of those magnificent fortunate men who escape into reality. He could not go to China, which he already knew and loved. Instead he met his death in Spain.²⁰⁷

It was almost certainly the potential to witness revolution - 'the revolutionary destruction of imperialism' and the 'overwhelming millions of India and China ... awakening to political life' as Lenin put it in his *Theses on Tactics (at the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921)* which Fox cites in his 1933 book about British imperialism - that would have been a factor in Fox's fascination with China.²⁰⁸ Surely also, his motivation would have been to see at first hand, the unfolding of decisive events in global history:

The next world war, even though it begin in the Polish Corridor and not in the Manchurian plains or valley of the Yang-Tse, will be a war for the control of the Pacific and its territories in which the chief antagonists will be Britain, Japan and the USA.²⁰⁹

Among the other posthumous tributes for Ralph Fox's work, is one from the literary critic of the *Times Literary Supplement*, R.D Charques, in which he comments that 'Conversation with a Lama', 'is done with a conspicuous poetical strength and a deeply intuitive sense of the impalpable barriers dividing Asia from the West'.²¹⁰ Whether or not readers would agree with Charques' assessment that Fox intuits barriers between East and West in his piece (an alternative reading might forcefully argue for example, that

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰⁸ Citation by Lenin, from Ralph Fox, *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism* (Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 39. Originally published (London: Martin Lawrence, 1933).

²⁰⁹ Fox, *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism*, p. 114.

²¹⁰ R. D. Charques, 'A Writer in Arms', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 March 1937, p. 203.

Fox's piece seeks to demonstrate common-ground between specifically China and the West, in his assessment of 'Go-Min' people) Charques is another critic who alludes to Fox's genuine and powerful talent as writer. In Fox, these critics observe, is successfully married the not easily reconcilable qualities of a fervent Communist and a respected man of letters. Fox's work of Marxist literary theory, *The Novel and the People* (first published in 1937 and for an American edition in 1945 with a brief introductory note by Lehmann) is the ultimate testament to this achievement. Fox's writing suggests that he is no mere party mouthpiece, writing revolutionary novels to order from headquarters. He has credibility and to his staunchest communist supporters, he provided evidence that communism was not antagonistic to art. This thesis argues that Fox's story in *TPNW* is an example of what Jonathan Spence describes as writing about China 'starting in the late twenties' in which 'observers fascinated by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia began to place China itself within a world revolutionary context, and to trace radical impulses inside China with a new kind of precision'.²¹¹

3.3 Communist Influence in British Literary Circles

Fox also appears, according to a 2003 article about Communist party influence and control of young British writers in the 1930s, to have inspired an organisation which provides 'the only evidence that the Communist Party ever tried to coordinate the activities of its own writers in the 1930s'.²¹² In setting out his own and others' evidence of a communist conspiracy afoot in British literary circles, Andy Croft mentions not only Ralph Fox's legacy, but also John Lehmann's links to Soviet intelligence and Allen Lane's interest in publishing a communist journal under the Penguin imprint. The three men, Croft suggests, were seen by either the CPGB or Soviet intelligence networks, as individuals who, for divergent reasons, could advance communist causes. Although

²¹¹ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent, China in Western Minds* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1998), p. 188.

²¹² Andy Croft, 'The Ralph Fox (Writers') Group' in Antony Shuttleworth (ed), *And in Our Time Vision, Revision and British Writing of the 1930s* (London, New Jersey, Ontario: Associated University Press, 2003), p. 165.

ultimately none of them appear to have been of very considerable use (Fox died, Lehmann drifted away from any direct involvement with communist causes and Lane was urged and evidently decided not to publish a magazine that had been backed by the Comintern).²¹³

In terms of Lehmann's allegiance to communism, Croft, cites sources which suggest that Soviet Intelligence had considered recruiting him 'while he was working for the Anti-War International in Vienna' in 1934.²¹⁴ British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) files on Lehmann from the years 1932-1934 reveal that he was certainly under suspicion by the British authorities at that time and also confirm that Lehmann was in communication with Willi Munzenberg's Anti-War International (the propaganda branch of the Soviet espionage apparatus).²¹⁵ An entry in the SIS files on Lehmann from March 1934 states:

LEHMANN is in close contact with the L.A.I [League Against Imperialism], the British Anti-War Movement and the Bolshevik run Anti-War-Anti-Fascist Council in Paris, for which he carries secret messages from France to Germany. He is writing under a pseudonym for "Monde", the extreme Left Wing periodical run by Henri BARBUSSE and is in contact with the Cambridge Communist group headed by Maurice DOBB. He has also got relations of a highly suspect order with Gerald HAMILTON, who is known to be working as a spy for the Japs.²¹⁶

Croft's article makes clear however that Lehmann was never recruited by Soviet Intelligence.²¹⁷ Nor, as Lehmann's biographer, Adrian Wright, points out, was he ever

²¹³ The *Left Review* was set up by the British section of the Comintern-sponsored Writer's International (International Union of Revolutionary Writers) in 1934. It ran until 1938.

²¹⁴ Croft cites Andrew Boyle, *The Climate of Treason*, (London, Hutchinson, 1979) and Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Munzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (London: Harper Collins, 1995).

²¹⁵ Secret Intelligence Service files relating to John Frederick Lehmann's involvement with communist-sponsored, anti-fascist groups between 1932-1934 were made available at the National Archives at Kew in February 2006. Reference KV 2/2254 and KV 2/2253.

²¹⁶ SIS file on John Frederick Lehmann KV 2/2253. Minute sheet dated 6.3.34 (minute no.46).

²¹⁷ Croft, 'The Ralph Fox (Writers') Group', p. 164 and p. 179.

recruited by British intelligence.²¹⁸ The British SIS files on him moreover suggest that he was considered more use as someone to be snooped on (much of his correspondence between 1932-1934 in Britain and Europe was being opened and reports filed on its contents and his liaisons, sexual or otherwise, were being carefully monitored by local police who passed the information on to British intelligence) than as a potentially traitorous British spy. Croft also cites Stephen Koch's claim that:

Lehmann had been sent to Vienna [by John Strachey] as a recruitment test, and in his squeamishness and probably partly false naivete, he had failed that test. It was an examination that others passed, and passed brilliantly. One successful candidate [also in Vienna at the time] was Kim Philby.²¹⁹

Although never an informant or member of the communist party, Lehmann's leftist credentials and communist sympathies were hardly a secret and he was at the meeting when the first Left Book Club Writers and Readers' Group (WRG) was launched at the end of January 1938. The club was a spin-off of the increasingly popular, anti-fascist Left Book Club (LBC), pioneered by Victor Gollancz to revitalise the British Left by offering members a monthly book choice, a newsletter and later, the opportunity to join discussion groups. The WRG - one of an eventual 1,500 LBC discussion groups - essentially sought to promote literature for the masses, as opposed to the elite, in Britain. Alongside Randall Swingler (the poet, literary editor of the *Daily Worker* and editorial board member of the *Left Review*), Cecil Day Lewis (the poet who would become Poet Laureate and who had a troubled love affair with Lehmann's sister Rosamund) and the organiser John Lewis, Lehmann addressed this new group which 'was a significant and influential innovation in the developing intellectual culture of the Popular Front' from the rooms of the experimental Group Theatre.²²⁰ Croft concludes that the WRG was, on account of its core membership, effectively the public face of a

²¹⁸ Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, p. 77.

²¹⁹ Croft, 'The Ralph Fox (Writers') Group' p. 164.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

little known, secretive, CPGB organisation named the Ralph Fox (Writers') Group (RFGW).²²¹ The RFGW appears, according to a single report it drafted in 1938, to have been a group of communist party members and writers (including among others, Randall Swingler, Maurice Richardson, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Edgell Rickword and 'Amabel' Williams-Ellis - nee Mary Annabel Strachey) who sought to promote communist ideas in literature and to exert political influence on various British publications, writers and writers groups.²²² The single RFGW report claims that it 'instituted' the WRG and had been actively recruiting new members to the CPGB from among its growing ranks.²²³ Croft comments that:

This new group [WRG] was a significant and influential innovation in the developing intellectual culture of the Popular Front, attracting pledges of support from Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood, and Rebecca West. But its core, active membership consisted of Party members - Sylvia Townsend Warner, Mulk Raj Anand, Simon Blumenfeld, Randall Swingler, Jim Phelan, Arthur Calder-Marshall, Edgell Rickword, A.L. Morton, Alick West, Valentine Ackland etc. In other words, the LBC Writers and Readers' Group was effectively the public face of the Ralph Fox Group.²²⁴

Other attempts to 'Stalinize Bloomsbury taste', were said, by Stephen Koch in particular, to use fronts such as the Left Book Club 'and its many appendages' to influence the publication of certain books and writers, but Croft points out that evidence to support this is scant.²²⁵

However, what the 1938 report by the RFGW does reveal is that Allen Lane had been in talks with Swingler and other members of the editorial board of the

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., pp. 165-66.

²²³ Ibid., p. 166.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

Comintern-sponsored journal, *Left Review*, about taking over its publication. The RFWG report states:

The 'Left Review' was brought to a dignified close in May, and since then negotiations which are now on the point of settlement, have been carried on with Allen Lane of the PENGUIN PUBLICATIONS, with a view to publishing the magazine as a PENGUIN MONTHLY. The first issue of the magazine in this form should appear in October. Cde Maurice Richardson is now in charge of the Editorship of the magazine.²²⁶

Evidently no such magazine was ever published by Penguin and Croft cites this and the closure of the *Left Review* as 'hardly the work of a very effective conspiracy'.²²⁷

However, Lane's interest in *Left Review* sheds light on his decision two years later to back Lehmann. After all, the *TPNW* periodical would feature the works of many left-leaning and communist writers and its predecessor, *NW*, had been published by the communist publishers, Lawrence and Wishart. While Lehmann may have expounded on his desire to remain politically independent as the editor of the *NW*, Lane, with his evident and ambitious plan for a periodical that might rival the popularity of Gollancz's *LBC* books and newsletters, appears to have been seeking ways to harness precisely the politics of the leftist writers of the 1930s that Lehmann had pledged either naively or 'disingenuously' to remain independent from.²²⁸ Gollancz's venture had already proved to be highly influential by the late 1930s, if not necessarily profitable, and by April 1939, its membership peaked at 57,000.²²⁹ By October 1940, Lane had written to Lehmann signing off on a deal to publish *TPNW* and as Lane would have anticipated, many of the 1930s writers aligned to the WRG, including Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood,

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

²²⁸ See Lehmann's 'Manifesto' for *New Writing* in *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 263. Citation from John Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery*, p. 237, citing Cyril Connolly in the *Daily Telegraph*.

²²⁹ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: A Biography* (London: Gollancz, 1987), p. 295. Gollancz estimated that the club had, by this point, distributed two million books, half a million pamphlets and 15 million leaflets.

Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day Lewis as well as fervent communists such as Jim Phelan, Mulk Raj Anand, Alick West (as translator) and Ralph Bates either were or would become, contributors.

Chapter 4 : The Wartime Short Stories of China in *TPNW*

3.1 The Japanese Invasion of China by Chinese Writers

This chapter will examine a collection of five short stories by four different Chinese writers published in *TPNW* between November 1940 and February 1943, set and written in the early years of the Second Sino-Japanese War (between 1937-1939). The only exception is Zhang Tianyi's 'Hatred' which was published in Chinese in 1932. As 'Hatred' takes as its central theme refugees, and the suffering of civilians and the soldiery, and because 'certain motives of wartime resistance literature were anticipated by writers depicting events in the Northeast of China since 1931' it is included here.²³⁰ All of the stories except 'Hatred' were collected, translated and sent to Lehmann in Britain by Ye Junjian and Donald Allen in December 1939. The majority of these stories were published for the first time in China in wartime magazines.²³¹ With the exception of S. M.'s contribution, they were all published more than once in Lehmann's *NW* journals.

In order to situate the Chinese stories alongside the wartime short stories of Britain and elsewhere that were published in *TPNW* during and shortly after World War II, this chapter will begin with an introduction to Lehmann's approach to wartime writing and will situate *TPNW* within the wider magazine market that flourished in wartime Britain. A brief introduction to the wartime short stories of China will follow in order to situate them and provide context to their publication. However, the main focus of this thesis remains the reception of Chinese short stories in English, in Britain. An analysis of each of the five stories approximately in chronological order as they appeared in

²³⁰ Edward Gunn, 'Literature and Art of the War Period', in James S. Hsiung, Steven I. Levine (eds) *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), p. 237.

²³¹ Mao Dun's *On the Literary Front* (*Wenyi zhendi*) published 'Mr Hua Wei' and 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' and Hu Feng's July (*Qi Yue*) magazine published S. M.'s story.

TPNW (except in the case of Zhang Tianyi as Lehmann published two of his stories and these will be analysed together) will follow.

A great many letters within Lehmann's editorial archive reveal his attempts to offer himself to British intelligence services during the war but as he was a known Communist sympathiser (and collaborator) and open homosexual, these efforts amounted to nought.²³² As a result, *TPNW* became Lehmann's personal and professional war effort. The magazine became a space where Lehmann could keep literature of a certain quality and a certain spirit (broadly anti-fascist, left-leaning and egalitarian, with an emphasis on works which explored man's suffering at the hands of oppression) alive during wartime as well as providing a platform where writers could display their mastery of or experiment with the short story and other forms of creative writing and convey their experiences of the physical and psychological effects of wartime and post-war conditions. Sales of the magazine indicate strongly that it was a formula that worked best during World War II. And, today, literary historians recognise *TPNW* as one of the finest (if not *the* finest) wartime journals published in Britain.²³³ In his introduction to an anthology of wartime short stories, Dan Davin (the New Zealand author of Irish, Catholic descent, whose short story in *TPNW* 13, 1942, provided him with his first taste of literary success) described the magazine as 'the most truly representative of all wartime publications, the one most hospitable to talent from all over the world, whether already famous or still obscure' which he attributed to Lehmann's 'wider sympathy and receptiveness' compared with that of his rivals.²³⁴ What Davin here alludes to is Lehmann's openness to all manner of writers: British, foreign, established, unknown, of privileged background or working-class and in wartime those in active service or civilians.

²³² These are housed in Lehmann's editorial archive at the HRC and include letters to and from The Foreign Office, the Army Officer's Reserve, the Ministry of Labour and National Service and enquiries about a position at the Ministry of Information.

²³³ Robert Hewison, for example, comments that *Horizon* and *TPNW* 'dominated' the literary scene in *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939 - 1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), p. 81.

²³⁴ Davin, *Short Stories from the Second World War*, p. x. Other notable literary wartime journals in Britain included: *Modern Reading*, *Penguin Parade*, *Writing Today*, *Bugle Blast*, *Life & Letters Today*, *The TLS*, as well as literary sections of *The New Statesman & Nation*, *The Listener*.

3.1 a) Lehmann's Contribution to the Wartime Short Story

What is seldom acknowledged is *TPNW*'s specific contribution to the publication of and, through Lehmann, the coaxing into existence of, some of the finest short stories not only of wartime but also the twentieth century. Lehmann, for example was the first to publish Elizabeth Bowen's short story, 'Mysterious Kôr' (*TPNW* 20, 1944), one of the most emblematic of the Blitz. Lehmann also provided extensive and generous editorial support to writers such as William Sansom, who first came to prominence as a writer during World War II. Lehmann, also published many of V. S. Pritchett's early short stories, which are today considered some of the finest produced in the previous century and those of Henry Green (the pen name of Henry Vincent Yorke) who Lehmann had discovered and published at the Hogarth Press. Other writers who were or who became well-known and whose wartime short stories were featured in *TPNW* included: William Plomer, James Stern, Julian Maclaren-Ross, John Sommerfield, Dylan Thomas and to a lesser extent Alun Lewis and Denton Welch who both died during the war.²³⁵ Such was Lehmann's highly active and engaged approach to promoting lesser known writers in whom he detected talent that *TPNW* made a largely overlooked but nevertheless powerful contribution to short story production during the war and throughout the entire sweep of the last century. It is not overstating the influence of *TPNW* to suggest that the heyday for short stories in Britain was significantly underwritten by Lehmann. He not only provided a platform from which writers - including many former novelists - could experiment with the compact form but through his active engagement with and editorial support for, in particular, undiscovered writers or those experimenting with new forms, he teased stories out of them that may otherwise never have been written.²³⁶ During wartime, other forces were also at work on the short story as established novelists including Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamond Lehmann and Henry Green, discovered they were unable to find the focus necessary to write longer works. Readers too sought out short form fiction during the war which could be read in bomb shelters and passed on to

²³⁵ I note this in Thorniley 'TPNW and the Wartime Short Story' (forthcoming 2021).

²³⁶ Ibid.

others and did not require the same mental or psychological commitment as a novel. Market conditions similarly favoured magazine publishing over book publishing as soon as publishers began to find clever ways around wartime restrictions. Ann-Marie Einhaus is among a number of literary historians to have noted that (both World War I and II) favoured the short story.²³⁷ Lehmann was in a strong position to take advantage of these shifting conditions as he had been promoting the short story form and had already established a network of short story writers. For modern Chinese literature (in English) in wartime, this made *TPNW* an ideal platform, better even than Lehmann's other journals where many of the stories first appeared, because stories of war and conflict in China resonated so well with the majority of other contributions relating to World War II from the first issue onwards. Equally, as modern Chinese novels were not widely (or very successfully or very speedily) translated during the war, short stories which could be translated quickly and disseminated around the world, were a more powerful and influential literary form for those seeking international attention in wartime.

3.1 b) Lehmann's Approach to Wartime Writing

Although the first few volumes of *TPNW* were anthologies of stories that had been published in Lehmann's other *New Writing* journals (often prior to the outbreak of WWII), Lehmann had nonetheless deliberately selected stories in which war or more broadly conflict and suffering were central themes when he came to publish them again in the early years of World War II. And, while Lehmann's initial foreword to *TPNW 1* contains little reference to the war or wartime writing, by *TPNW 5* (April, 1941), the war and in particular literary activity during wartime, had become *the* central preoccupation of the issue.²³⁸ By 1941, Lehmann overtly signalled to readers his sense of duty and urgency, to 'keep our literary tradition alive' in wartime as well as his intention to chart

²³⁷ Ann-Marie Einhaus 'War Stories: The Short Story in the First and Second World Wars', in *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story*, Dominic Head (ed), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 152-167.

²³⁸ *TPNW's* wartime personality developed quickly, particularly with the introduction of regular articles such as 'Shaving Through the Blitz' and 'The Way We Live Now' and 'Books and the War' (*TPNW 2-12*).

the development of literature and creative writing from around the world.²³⁹ As Lehmann stated, he intended to seek out contributions, not just from 'England and America' but the 'Dominions, India and America' and in particular China, where he indicates to readers that creative writing is flourishing in wartime.²⁴⁰ In these comments, Lehmann signaled his interest in as well as sympathy and solidarity towards Britain's wartime allies (and potential allies) 'who are also engaged in a war against aggression, different though the circumstances may be'.²⁴¹ He promised to provide his readers with 'fascinating' examples of modern Chinese literature' and expressed hope that the example in *TPNW* 5 ('Along the Yunnan-Burma Road') will be followed by many others. In *TPNW* 7 (June 1941), Lehmann's foreword begins: 'In what way should a magazine of creative writing reflect the war' as he invites his readers (and writers) to consider this most pressing of questions before providing his own thoughts which in turn may influence theirs.²⁴² In the same foreword, Lehmann at once celebrates the diversity of content in the wartime stories of *TPNW* published so far but also signals the kind of content that he suggests is 'beneath the intelligence' of his readers, including stories: 'which will entertain innocuously' or help readers 'build dream worlds of romance and happiness' or 'pep talks ... under a thin coating of fiction or reportage, to stimulate the will to work and fight'.²⁴³ Instead what Lehmann has in his sights [and which he has already sought to publish in *TPNW*] are stories which reflect 'the anxiety, disillusionment and a sense of comedy in our shortcomings, as much as the more positive emotions'.²⁴⁴ Again here, Lehmann cites a Chinese story, 'The Third-Rate Gunner' by S. M. as well as Jean Paul Sartre's 'The Wall' (both in *TPNW* 7) as examples of how 'settings in other wars' have much to say about wartime conditions around the world to his Anglophone

²³⁹ *TPNW* 5, Foreword, p. 7. Lehmann was on a secret committee at the behest of Lord Esher, which compiled a list of literary and artistic figures who were too precious to Britain to send to war. Lehmann and many of his *NW* authors were also on the list. But the idea came to nothing. Ella Whitehead, *John Lehmann's 'New Writing' An Author Index 1936-1950* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 11.

²⁴⁰ *TPNW* 5, pp. 7- 8.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁴² *TPNW* 7, p. 7.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

readers.²⁴⁵ Overall Lehmann deems these stories (alongside Christopher Isherwood's 'The Nowaks' which he says 'commits the unpardonable sin in 1941 of showing working-class Germans in a sympathetic light') as 'the opposite of depressing or disintegrating' and which 'strengthen what is called morale, because they enrich the imagination'.²⁴⁶ He concludes:

In the failure to appreciate this aspect of creative literature lies the chief error of those who only believe in pep-talks. One sided, artificial propaganda may be necessary for a people that has only a weak organic cohesion and is not sure of the necessity of its resistance. But it seems to me that an adult civilised community functions in a very different way to be able to criticise, to see the dark side as well as the light, to be aware of every variety of human thought and feeling beside the emotion appropriate for the tie, confirms a resilience that is a sign not of softness but of a power to bend under pressure without breaking.²⁴⁷

Lehmann here is explicitly signalling to writers and would-be contributors as well as his readers that 'creative literature' must, even in wartime, be able to operate freely and that 'one-sided, artificial propaganda' in fiction would be a sign not of strength in society but of great weakness.²⁴⁸ The other significant red flag raised by Lehmann appears in his foreword to *TPNW 9* when he laments 'the great mass of would-be contributors ... [who are] obsessed by the idea that if an experience was described as baldly and dryly as possible in the way it was registered by eye and ear, a significant piece of writing would be the result'.²⁴⁹ In other words, experience without imagination is never going to qualify as good literature. His final lament is the lack of humour, wit or fantasy in wartime writing, which Lehmann commented 'could not be more completely absent if a law had

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴⁹ *TPNW 9*, p. 7.

been passed making them a crime against the national effort'.²⁵⁰ In the same issue he published Graham Greene's 'Men At Work' (specially written for that issue of *TPNW*) satirising the aimless bureaucracy at a meeting of the Book Committee in the Ministry of Information which he evidently felt was an exception.²⁵¹ The republishing of Zhang Tianyi's satirical sketch 'Mr Hua Wei' in *TPNW 15* should be considered with these comments in mind and Lehmann no doubt expected readers to draw parallels between the two stories.

What these early forewords to *TPNW* indicate is that Lehmann saw World War II as an opportunity to open English literature up to 'foreign' influences. In practical terms, as the editor of a literary magazine which foregrounded the short story, he was able to publish the works of foreign writers alongside those of Britain and elsewhere in the West and by standing the one up against or alongside the other, to encourage active comparison. As this thesis examines, a lack of widespread knowledge about modern Chinese literature made this a pretty tall order for his readers. Lehmann himself noted this lack of knowledge in *TPNW 5* when he commented that the finest contemporary literature of China is 'too little known over here'.²⁵² The early forewords of *TPNW* also show the extent to which Lehmann believed the Chinese stories, whether about inept officials, the new consciousness of the peasants or the sagacity of down-trodden labourers, could be held up as exemplary of the kind of writing his journal sought to publish.

3.1 c) Lehmann's Wartime Aesthetic

Lehmann's wartime aesthetic in *TPNW*, as evinced in his forewords and correspondence was broad and relatively open. He favoured, and called for, writers who could bring all of their imaginative forces to bear on their wartime experiences, whether in active service or not. In order for writers to achieve this, Lehmann indicated that

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ 'Men At Work' was specially written for *TPNW 9* following discussion between author and editor and very shortly after appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine in the USA (October 25 1941).

²⁵² *TPNW 5*, p. 8.

TPNW was open to a very broad array of literary styles which would shift over time and in response to changing wartime conditions and mood. In *TPNW 14* he notes for example, a trend in contributions towards ‘more introverted’ wartime writing with ‘more reflection and feeling’ while commenting that other short story writers were sticking with a more ‘hard-boiled realistic method’ and others still with ‘extreme lyricism’.²⁵³ With these words Lehmann sums up the highly eclectic nature of *TPNW*, and his deliberate efforts to eliminate a hierarchy in the types of stories that he published. As I argue in a forthcoming chapter:

He [Lehmann] sought...to ensure that distorted realism, anti-elitism, introverted prose, hard boiled realism and extreme lyricism could comfortably co-exist in the magazine. The short stories published in *TPNW* were modern - in so far as they were written in the 1940s - but they were never uniformly modernist in style or content.²⁵⁴

With this in mind it is possible to see why *TPNW* was a comfortable fit for writers from around the world who may have felt at a very great distance from the prevailing mores and developments in the literary centre of London, to invoke Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters*. Overall, what defined *TPNW* was a commitment to a wide variety of voices, capable of providing their own interpretation of the wartime condition (even in many of the stories that were not directly about the war) from around the world.

When Lehmann highlighted the shifting and developing aesthetics of wartime writing, his comments are evidently made with English literature (or rather Anglophone literature) at the forefront of his mind. For an editor in London in wartime that was a far easier trajectory to trace and shape and a literature that Lehmann was considerably more familiar with; unlike, for example, modern Chinese literature. Nevertheless he sought to draw links between modern literatures around the world and find commonalities of theme of style or of ideas implicit in the short stories that he published.

²⁵³ *TPNW 14*, p. 7.

²⁵⁴ Thorniley, ‘*TPNW and the Wartime Short Story*’ (forthcoming 2021).

By publishing the Chinese stories he indicates that Chinese writers on the subject of the war against Japan had plenty to say to his Anglophone readers about fighting oppression. While both the Chinese and British writers in *TPNW* demonstrate a shared awareness that outmoded ways of thinking (whether those of Edwardian-era Britain or the period in China before the masses took a stake in their country's plight) are impediments to a new and better future.²⁵⁵

3.2 Creative Writing in Wartime China

As Lehmann identified in his foreword to *TPNW 5*, creative writing in China flourished in the early years of the war just as it began to do in Britain after a brief hiatus at the start.

²⁵⁶ Critical and historical accounts of the literature of the period concur that the declaration of war against Japan in 1937 galvanized and united Chinese writers and put an end to decades of literary disputes and factionalism as all began to march towards the common goal of national salvation. Although, Nicole Huang has pointed out, in reality the literary field remained 'sharply divided' as writers chose to 'exercise their agency and creativity' in extremely diverse ways.²⁵⁷ In his introduction to a collection of the wartime short stories of China, published in America in 1947, the academic and translator Chi-Chen Wang (Wang Jizhen, 王際真) introduces the topic by stating 'the first years of the war saw the greatest literary productivity'.²⁵⁸ Wang's anthology of sixteen short stories were written between 1937 and 1942 and included two that had been translated by Cicio Mar (Ye's pseudonym in Esperanto, another language that he wrote in which is suggestive of his cosmopolitan, outward looking approach) and Donald Allen and published in *Story* magazine in America.²⁵⁹ These were precisely the same

²⁵⁵ Rosamond Lehmann was one writer who 'sought causes' for Britain's predicament in Edwardian Britain, see Hewison, *Under Siege*, p 90. Both S. M. and Yao Xueyin wrote about the need for China's peasants to, in some respect, awaken.

²⁵⁶ The effect of war on literary publishing is discussed in Hewison, *Under Siege*, p. 11.

²⁵⁷ Nicole Huang 'War, Revolution and Urban Transformations: Chinese Literature of the Republican Era (1920s-1940s)', in Yingjin Zhang (ed) *A Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, First Edition (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp. 67- 80.

²⁵⁸ Chi-chen Wang (ed) *Stories of China at War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), Preface v.

²⁵⁹ The two were: 'Chabancheh Makay', also known by the title 'Half A Cartload of Straw Short', published in *Story* magazine in May-June 1939 and 'Builders of the Burma Road' also known as 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road' published in *Story* magazine in March-April 1942.

stories that had been sent to Lehmann. Wang's collection also included several stories by Lao She (Lau Shaw the pen name of Shu Qingchun), one by Zhang Tianyi, one by Mao Dun and another by Guo Moruo (Kuo Mo-jo) evidence of the kinds of works available and, to Wang's mind, Chinese writers worthy of an American readership. The preface to Wang's collection comments on the early years of the war:

There was an air of hopefulness in the land which infected the masses and the intellectuals alike. In the early years of the war Chungking hummed with literary activity almost as Peking did during the Literary Revolution twenty years before. There was a general cry for the evaluation of the new literature as there was for an evaluation of the old two decades before.²⁶⁰

In China as in Britain, this flourishing of literary activity favoured short form works of creative fiction and reportage over novels and longer-form writing.²⁶¹ Although in China, the emphasis on shorter works was particularly related to texts which could be read aloud, as the literary elite sought ways to mobilize the illiterate masses. Quite unlike Britain, much of China's early wartime writing was written under the influence of official or semi-official channels. In China, in the early years of the war, 'writers caught up in the euphoria of resistance did seem to devote themselves voluntarily to propaganda work'.

²⁶² In March 1938 this creative unity took the form of the establishment of the All China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists (Wenxue, an abbreviation of the full name in Chinese, also known as the Federation of Chinese Writers) in Wuhan with Lao She as president and a great number of young, prominent Chinese writers among its membership.²⁶³ Its aim was to unite cultural workers from all political persuasions and

²⁶⁰ Wang, *Stories of China at War*, v.

²⁶¹ John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (eds) *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13, Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 469.

²⁶² Joshua S. Mostow (ed) *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 295.

²⁶³ For a thorough analysis of the organisation see Charles A. Laughlin, 'The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists, in Kirk A. Denton, and Michel Hockx (eds) *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Maryland, USA and Plymouth UK: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 379 - 411. Laughlin

to direct the momentum of anti-Japanese propaganda. It mobilized literary activities and deployed writers to the front lines and the border areas and its activities were one reason that during the war, modern Chinese literature began to lose 'its urban elitist character' which is reflected in the stories subsequently assessed in this chapter.²⁶⁴

The organization rallied a quite fluid membership of anywhere between 100-400 members over its eight-year lifespan to the cause of optimising 'the impact of literary activity on the war effort'.²⁶⁵ By 1939, after the fall of Wuhan, the association followed the Nationalist Government to Chongqing.

As Chapter 7 examines, Ye Junjian - the source and co-translator of four of these stories - was an active member of the association as well as working in the Third Bureau of the Military Commission (known as 'the third office' or disanting or 中国国民政府军事委员会第三厅) formed under the second united front between the CCP and Nationalist Government and where writers' propaganda activities became formally sanctioned. The thrust of the propaganda work in the third office was 'left to the Communists and their sympathisers'.²⁶⁶ The bureau was headed by the Chinese writer Guo Moruo, a secret Communist party member.²⁶⁷ Ye's role in the office enabled him to encounter many of the best wartime short stories circulating in China and the writers behind them, many of whom had been in or close to the frontline of battle.

In the early years of the war with the united front in place and the cultural civil war in abeyance, literature and art in Free China flourished and was circulated in conditions of relative freedom as noted in Stephen MacKinnon's *Wuhan 1938* which describes the 'explosive growth in print media' and the 'flowering of free expression' in

lists some of the famous writers among wenxie's membership including: Lao She, Wu Zuxiang, Xu Mao young, Tian Han, Su Sueline, Mao Dun, Ling Shuhua, Chen Xiyong and Hu Feng (pp. 379-380).

²⁶⁴ Carolyn Fitzgerald, *Fragmenting Modernisms: Chinese Wartime Literature, Art and Film 1937-1949* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 22, citing Chang-tai Hung in *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China 1937-45* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 14.

²⁶⁵ Laughlin, 'The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists' p 379.

²⁶⁶ Fairbank and Feuerwerker (eds) *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13, Part 2*, p. 467.

²⁶⁷ Guo Moruo in Ken Sekine, 'A Verbose Silence in 1939 Chongqing: Why Ah Long's Nanjing Could Not Be Published. Online at MCLC website: <<http://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/sekine/>> Last accessed 1.12.19. Sekine is citing from memoirs about Ah Long by Wu Xiru 吴奚如在 Xiaofeng (ed) *Wo Yu Hu Feng, Hu Feng shijian sanshiqi ren huiyi* (Hu Feng and I: 37 reminiscences of the Hu Feng incident) (Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe, 1993) pp 13-32 (not consulted).

the city that year.²⁶⁸ Similar observations have been made about Hong Kong and to a lesser extent Chongqing in the same period. These were years marked by relative artistic freedom, but it did not last. This was the period of optimism before fatigue, mass refugees and poverty for writers began to take a toll and the cultural civil war was reignited. As a result, stories written between 1937- 1942 had their own flavour and this is evident in the Chinese stories Lehmann published which are the subject of analysis here.

In his 1947 collection, Wang noted that the subject matter in Chinese wartime stories of resistance frequently centered on 'the soldiers and guerillas, the peasants and workers' and this is certainly reflected in the contributions which Lehmann published in *TPNW*.²⁶⁹ These people, Wang's preface commented 'were the real heroes of the war and they have captured the imagination of the writers'.²⁷⁰ Edward Gunn has noted that patriotic literature written under the united front (after 1936) focused on 'the transformation of attitudes' and that 'quasi-official emphasis fell onto the conversion of soldiers, Chinese civilians and minority tribes to the collective cause of resisting Japanese invasion'.²⁷¹ These themes are blatantly central in the *TPNW* stories by both S. M. and Yao Xueyin. Gunn also notes that the literature of the resistance continued as it had in previous decades, to introduce 'innovations from foreign literature' and embrace 'models and ideas regarded as international or cosmopolitan' as British commentators would note in reviews of the stories and critical accounts of Chinese literature, including the one by Harold Acton published in *TPNW* 15.²⁷² For the purposes of Lehmann's Anglophone readers such influences undoubtedly made these works easier to approach, but as Chapter 8 examines Lehmann also sought out stories from China in which more 'Chinese' qualities shone through.

²⁶⁸ Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Wuhan 1938: War Refugees and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2008), p. 63.

²⁶⁹ Wang (ed) *Stories of China at War*, pp. vi - vii.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Gunn, 'Literature and Art of the War Period', p. 237.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 239 and p. 235.

While critical accounts of the literary history of the period tend to highlight the quantity and form of the literature of the wartime period, contemporary Chinese accounts also considered the quality of China's wartime literature. Just as Lehmann in the forewords to his journals, sought to highlight the gaps, ruptures and lackings that he identified in the wartime literature which crossed his desk, so too did Chinese critics comment on the literary shortcomings in evidence in China. Of particular interest and relevance to *TPNW* is an article by Mao Dun (Mao Dun, 茅盾, the pen name of Shen Dehong - Shen Yanping 1896 - 1981) the essayist, novelist, critic and playwright and one of the leading literary figures in China at the time who went on to become China's Minister of Culture in 1949. The article entitled 'What Shall We Write About' was translated into English for a short-lived wartime resistance journal that was published (in English) by the Federation of Chinese Writers in Chongqing but collated in Hong Kong.

²⁷³ In it, Mao Dun broadly divides the war against Japan (up to that point, August, 1939) into three literary phases.²⁷⁴ The first six months, he wrote, were characterised by writers who wrote about 'the great heroic events of the period' but these accounts were mostly 'lacking deep thought and experience' and with 'over-emphasis on the description of events to the neglect of human nature' for which he blames writers' lack of 'wide experience' or 'keen observations of life' and an 'inability to create characters'.

²⁷⁵ Mao Dun defines this as a period of 'very little really good work' where 'monotony and sterility of theme' characterised much of the literature.²⁷⁶ In the next phase, Mao Dun comments that writers shifted from an interest in events to men, with critics reminding writers 'to create real and living characters'.²⁷⁷ Mao Dun suggests that the people were finding 'new leaders' but also 'the swindlers of the people; - the wartime bureaucrats, the new profiteers and the new pseudo-propagandists'.²⁷⁸ Mao Dun goes

²⁷³ *Chinese Writers (Zhongguo Zuoqia)*, August, 1939, Volume 1, Number 1, published by the Federation of Chinese Writers in Chongqing. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 88-125, McClure, Floyd Alonzo. SIA_88-125_808_F08_E02, <http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_229403>.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15 - 20. This magazine is the subject of wider study in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17. Mao Dun (is here citing himself in 'The Strengthening of Criticism' *Literature and the War of Resistance* No. 13.

on to deem the story 'Mr Hua Wei' the impetus that Chinese writers needed to 'to study and investigate the ugliness that is sometimes hidden beneath' before adding that 'some people have said that this is a sign and expression of pessimism but I believe that it is just the reverse'.²⁷⁹ Of 'Chabancheh Mackay [Half A Cartload of Straw Short], Mao Dun comments that the character, Dumb Wang, is a very representative task-assuming peasant of our time'.²⁸⁰ He ends with a lament about the lack of writing in China that exposes 'ugliness and evil' which he puts perhaps somewhat arbitrarily at 'not more than one or two per cent'.²⁸¹

What is immediately striking about Mao Dun's words is how closely they echo comments about wartime literature made by Lehmann several years later in *TPNW*. In particular when Lehmann argues in *TPNW* 7 of the need for writers to see 'the dark side as well as the light' and that to do so is a sign not of weakness but of power in society. Equally Lehmann's comments about uninspiring wartime writing (experiences described 'baldly' and 'drily') chime with Mao Dun's identification of the 'monotony and sterility' in some wartime works. In both China and Britain, leading literary figures suggested that there may have been a flourishing of literary activity but a great deal of it, was simply no good.

Lehmann's comments align so closely with certain of Mao Dun's that it is difficult at times to imagine that Lehmann had not read the article and indeed a letter in his archive shows that he had been sent a copy of issue 1 of *Chinese Writers*, which contained the article, in August 1939.²⁸² Either way the two gatekeepers of their respective literatures one in China and one in Britain had remarkably similar instincts about writing which they hoped to encourage in or from their respective countries in wartime, although the ways they suggest to achieving it were strongly divergent. These then are perhaps examples of when relations between different literary cultures

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.18.

²⁸² Typed Letter from Cico Mar to Lehmann dated August 9, 1939 in the Harry Ransom Centre Archive, states 'Under separate cover we are sending you the first issue of Chinese Writers'. Donald Allen subsequently sent Lehmann volume 2 of the magazine.

fluctuate in ‘processes of confluence and transformation’ that Prendergast argues are so lacking in Casanova’s model which foregrounds instead ‘rivalry and competition’ between dominant and dominated literatures in her world republic.²⁸³

It remains to be mentioned that these five stories were written with China’s resistance to Japanese aggression firmly in mind and in a period where culture frequently became subservient to propaganda. That they were written in this period of national resistance, self-consciously in some cases as resistance literature, does not necessarily rob them of their literary merit. Lehmann informed his readers he was alert to stories disguised as ‘one-sided propaganda’ (*TPNW* 7) although the fact that all of these five stories were from the pens of Leftist writers who were Communist sympathisers or party members, means his comment also rings a little hollow with regard to China. Overall, Lehmann’s politics undoubtedly, as Chapter 2 examined, influenced his literary selections but never entirely eclipsed his literary judgement.

Significantly, from the perspective of the reader, the stories featured in *TPNW* provide some glimpse of the anxieties of modern China at war (particularly in the late 1930s when these stories were mostly written) or at the very least the anxieties of the intellectuals writing literature in modern China.²⁸⁴ Through a closer reading of the texts themselves and by placing them in a historical and literary context, it will be possible to examine in greater detail what the responses to these works might have been and what, if any, implications this might have had for the cultural dialogue that took place between China and Britain in this period.

3.3 Zhang Tianyi: ‘Hatred’ (*TPNW* 1) and ‘Mr Hua Wei’ (*TPNW* 15)

²⁸³ Prendergast (ed) *Debating World Literature*, Introduction, p. 11.

²⁸⁴ For an overview of the typical Chinese intellectual and an explanation of what the term meant in China, in this period, see Bonnie A. McDougall, *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2003), Introduction pp. 2-3.

Zhang Tianyi contributed two short stories, probably unwittingly, to *TPNW*. As well as 'Hatred' (*TPNW 1*), a second work of short-fiction, written later in Zhang's most prolific period as a writer of fiction for adults, appeared in *TPNW 15* in 1943 and was entitled 'Mr Hua Wei'.²⁸⁵ This satirical sketch first appeared in Chinese in 1938 in Mao Dun's literary journal, in Wuhan (Hankou).²⁸⁶ This was a significant year in China for the flourishing of literary ideas and their dissemination at home and abroad.²⁸⁷ Zhang was already a member of the Chinese Communist Party when he published 'Hatred' in 1932. He had also joined the League of Left Wing writers, although he did not strictly adhere to the Communist group's more radical policies and, with encouragement from Lu Xun (that leading figure of modern Chinese writing who was a supporter of Zhang's work) among others, steered his writing away from anything as blatant as propaganda. Even later in his life, when Zhang became actively engaged in anti-Japanese resistance work, through this writing, he sought to avoid the transmission of Communist slogans or from communicating the Communist didactic impulse too readily. However, Zhang evidently chose sides, and 'Mr Hua Wei', is usually read as a clear satire on a certain type of official in the Nationalist government who is too concerned about trying to defeat the Left to put up a meaningful united front against Japan.²⁸⁸ Zhang's most prolific period of writing for adults (he later wrote children's fiction) was 1928-1938. His career as a writer of fiction for adults ended after he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis from which he didn't recover for many years. After the founding of the PRC, he returned to Beijing and wrote children's stories and was later appointed chief editor of the government's national literary magazine *People's Literature*. During the Cultural Revolution, Zhang

²⁸⁵ The printed version of *TPNW 15* (October - December) cites December 1942 as the publication date but it was not published until February 1943.

²⁸⁶ The first publication of *Mr Hua Wei* in China is cited by Nigel St. John Bedford in PhD thesis *Zhang Tianyi: A Critical Analysis of his Development as a writer of Fiction* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1986), Chapter 6, p. 269. It is also noted in an essay by Mao Dun in *Chinese Writers* (p. 17) as having been published in *On the Literary Front* (When I Chen Ti or wenyi zhendi), No.1.

²⁸⁷ For a detailed history of the cultural climate in Wuhan in 1938, see Chapter Five 'Culture and the Press' in MacKinnon, *Wuhan 1938, War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China*, pp. 62 - 82.

²⁸⁸ Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth-Century* (London: C.Hurst & Co, 1997), p. 138.

was stripped of this post and sent for rehabilitation. He returned to Beijing in the early 1970s.

Zhang wrote 'Hatred' towards the start of the decade of his most prolific literary output. The story begins with a description of a scorched landscape, heaps of dust and a ragged band of, burnt-skinned, civilian refugees traipsing along an interminable road somewhere in China. They are traumatised by the horrors of conflict they have already witnessed but soon encounter even more suffering. A man beside the road, whose torso is covered with sword-wounds, appears black because a nest of ants are feeding on his rotting flesh. As the peasant group attempt to save him, they discuss what they would do to any soldiers they encounter; the source, they believe, of the pain that has been inflicted on them and on their country. A trio of wounded soldiers staggers into the scene and after beating them and thoughts of killing and torturing them, the ragged group realise that the soldiers, their perceived enemies, are just as wretched as they are. The group also learns that the soldiers were peasants before starvation drove them from their villages to enlist in the fighting. Details of place and time and the precise conflict (presumably the action takes place during China's civil war but the story could equally have been written about Japan's encroachment into China) are all absent and add to a sense of the universality of the characters' suffering and undoubtedly added to the story's appeal for an editor in London with war on his mind. The third-person narrative lends a detached, authorial perspective but may also be deliberate to put an emphasis on objectivity or realistic effects. 'Hatred' was written shortly after Zhang had joined the League of Left Wing Writers, which sought to promote socialist realism in support of the Communist revolution. Since the anti-imperialist, cultural and political May Fourth movement in China, realism had been in the literary mainstream of the country's modern literature, whether in criticism or fiction and Zhang was certainly recognised as a realist writer and realism was the subject of many articles and essays by Zhang (and a great many other writers in China). In his analysis of Zhang's fiction for adults, Yifeng Sun cites the translation of a work by Hu Feng (胡风, 1902 -1985), the literary theorist and critic, in which he describes realism in literature as 'reflecting the

truth about the lives of the broad masses and evoking their aspirations'.²⁸⁹ In *TPNW 1*, 'Hatred' was published alongside George Orwell's story of a young police officer in the dying British Empire, in Burma, 'Shooting an Elephant' and André Chamson's tale of boyhood savagery 'My Enemy', and works by Mulk Raj Anand and Ralph Fox as well as Christopher Isherwood and V.S Pritchett.²⁹⁰

Zhang's story is therefore expected to stand up alongside some powerful works by writers with firm political instincts and who had or would occupy a high position in literary Britain and elsewhere in the world. Zhang's story with its strong political undertones and its examination of human suffering was in very good company in the inaugural issue of *TPNW* and came off the better for it.

It is notable examining the scholarly criticism about Zhang (what little of it there exists in English) the extent to which certain of the urges, aims and aspirations of the writer, chime with those expressed by Lehmann, as editor of *TPNW*, albeit that their context was evidently so different. In particular, Zhang's writings reveal that he was preoccupied with the role of the writer in times of war and the need to get under the skin of the working classes and to give voice to their lives. In the same year that 'Hatred' was published in China, Zhang wrote in an essay on the problems facing Chinese literature: 'Everyone of our new writers should leave his window and writing desk and go into society where the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers are to be found.'²⁹¹ It is an instinct with which Lehmann would have had much sympathy regardless of whether or not Zhang - or indeed Lehmann - are deemed to have succeeded in their efforts to communicate the lives of the working classes or masses to their readers. It is notable that Zhang berated himself for failing to do more for the labouring people by being even more 'realistic' in his writing and there is little evidence that Lehmann ever

²⁸⁹ Sun, *Fragmentation and Dramatic Moments*, p. 78, from a translation from Kirk. A. Denton (ed) *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature 1893-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 415.

²⁹⁰ The contributions by non-Chinese writers in *TPNW 1* were mentioned in Chapter 2.

²⁹¹ Cited in Nigel St. Bedford, 'Zhang Tianyi' (PhD thesis, SOAS), p. 77. St Bedford is citing a Chinese article entitled (in translation) 'The reasons why literature is in the doldrums and solutions to the problem' in *Beidou 2:1*, (1932), p. 11.

achieved the working-class readership he so desired.²⁹² ²⁹³ Writing about Chinese literature in the early twentieth century and the ways in which China's modern intellectuals sought to establish their right to social and moral leadership within the Chinese social order, Bonnie McDougall's words could apply, perhaps equally, to a Chinese writer seeking to serve the masses better, or a British editor hoping to engage working-class readers, and are illuminating on the subject of dialogue between the classes:

Control over literature was an important part of this strategy [to establish the right to social and moral leadership] but it set up an awkward conflict; at the same time as writers claimed to speak for the whole country, they addressed their work to only a small fraction of the national audience. Hence, a pervasive characteristic of modern Chinese writing; what Marston Anderson has identified as the imprint of a "moral taint" in would-be realistic fiction, or what could be called, from a different perspective "the anxiety of literacy."²⁹⁴

It is notable that Lehmann persuaded Virginia Woolf, shortly before her death, to allow him to print the text of a speech entitled 'The Leaning Tower' in which she speaks of British writers who were tainted by being so very middle-class and for their 'detachment from the workaday world'.²⁹⁵ Woolf died before the responses from the kind of 'butterfly' writers her lecture describes, could be published.²⁹⁶ Zhang's writing (and Lehmann's editing work) are united, to some extent, in their ambitions. Lehmann certainly tried to push forward writers of conscience in the pages of *TPNW* particularly those grappling with the moral dilemmas faced by a country at war and Zhang's work, 'Hatred', certainly points to the author's anxieties about just such dilemmas. The work indeed appears to

²⁹² Zhang's self-criticism in Yifeng Sun, *Fragmentation and Dramatic Moments*, p. 6. For Lehmann's aspirations for working-class writers see Jeremy Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p. 179.

²⁹³ See the Mass Observation report about *Penguin New Writing's* subscribers (Chapter 2)

²⁹⁴ McDougall, *Fictional Authors*, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ D.J Taylor, *Lost Girls: Love, War and Literature 1939-951* (London: Constable: 2019), p. 81.

²⁹⁶ Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower' (May 1940)

<<http://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks15/1500221h.html#ch18>> Last accessed 1.12.19.

be very much a part of the literature concerning the 'brotherhood of oppression' that so defined the spirit of Lehmann's venture in the wartime issues of *TPNW*.

When Harold Acton (a contributor to *TPNW* and a crucial figure in Lehmann's China network) wrote a powerful essay about developments in Chinese literature for Lehmann, he reserved the highest praise for the work of Zhang Tianyi from a selection of young writers making a name for themselves during the war with Japan. Acton wrote:

But one of his [Zhang's] finest stories, 'Hatred', a translation of which has appeared in *New Writing*, has a harsh and mirthless poetry, a terror and sorrow new to contemporary Chinese writing. One can only compare the accumulated, concentrated force of this story to a masterpiece of Chou bronze. In his exploration of language and human behaviour Chang T'ien-yi has mastered and moulded his discoveries as few others have succeeded in doing.²⁹⁷

Acton's endorsement of many of the stories that Lehmann published in *TPNW*, is the subject of a more extensive appraisal in Chapter 6, but suffice to comment here that Acton is clearly seeking to alert Anglophone readers to an exceptional piece of writing that he suggests more than stands up to scrutiny from the West.

It was while Zhang was undertaking the activities of Japanese resistance in 1937 and 1938, that he 'observed the perfunctory and abominable working style of some people, which he believed was detrimental to the work of combating the Japanese'.²⁹⁸ These observations inspired his most famous (in China) short satire, 'Mr Hua Wei', which appeared in *TPNW 15*, alongside works from Stephen Spender, V.S Pritchett and Acton's aforementioned essay on developments in Chinese literature. Zhang had been working for the Hunan General Association for Resistance to the Enemy and had established a propaganda committee which launched *The Masses* newspaper (*Dazhongbao*), a supplement of which he edited.²⁹⁹ 'Mr Hua Wei' is introduced to

²⁹⁷ Harold Acton 'Small Talk in China', *TPNW 15* (1943) p 150. It was first published by Lehmann in *Folios of New Writing* (Spring 1941).

²⁹⁸ Sun, *Fragmentation and Dramatic Moments*, p. 35.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

readers as a 'distant relative' of the narrator (Brother Tien-yi - he takes the author's name) presumably because it gives the story a greater ring of authenticity. This subsequently changes into an omniscient third-person narration. Mr Hua Wei appears to be engaged in the very serious work of Japanese resistance through his leadership of an array of associations and societies. In fact he does nothing but attend meetings, frequently cutting one short to attend another, in an absurd waste of his own and everyone else's time. He preaches the need for the masses to have clear direction and guidance in their resistance work, but he offers none. He is painted as a hypocrite who preaches the need for hard graft before going out and getting drunk. In his survey of Chinese realist literature, *The Limits of Realism Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period*, Marston Anderson explains the nature and the danger of Mr Hua Wei's self-aggrandising yet hollow style of leadership:

He intuitively understands that his political position is determined not by substantive actions or ideas but solely by his appearance at these meetings. Such performance politics may be effective within the closed system of Chinese society in aligning relations of power so that they favour Mr Hua Wei, but, as the text with its larger vision makes clear, they are not only ineffective in the face of such threats to the system's existence as the Japanese invasion but seriously undermined its power of resistance as well.³⁰⁰

When the story of 'Mr Hua Wei' was published in China, in 1938, it 'exploded like a bombshell in the midst of literary circles in the Nationalist ruled area and Hong Kong' and led to heated discussion about the role of literature and in particular satire in wartime, which lasted for the next two years.³⁰¹ The debate following its publication was further inflamed by the discovery that the story had been translated into Japanese and its 'pointed satire on the wartime bureaucracy' was being used by the Japanese in one

³⁰⁰ Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism, Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 174-5.

³⁰¹ Sun, *Fragmentation and Dramatic Moments*, p. 35.

of their propaganda campaigns.³⁰² The work was translated into English several times by different translators, one of whom was Ye Junjian. When Lehmann first published the story in another of his periodicals, *Folios of New Writing* in 1941 the foreword to the issue states only that the Chinese stories 'have come to us from behind Chinese lines through devious routes across the world'.³⁰³ In the same issue, along with Harold Acton's essay on modern Chinese literature, Lehmann published another work of short fiction, 'Half A Cartload of Straw Short' by Yao Hsueh-Yin (Yao Xueyin). Lehmann's foreword to this issue contained the following, telling passage:

The greater part of Europe may be obliterated for us, but we can still print works that have reached us from the English-speaking countries on the other side of the world, from our allies in Greece, and from that great people far away in Asia, our spiritual allies, the Chinese.³⁰⁴

Although these were not words that Lehman printed in the Penguin edition of his *New Writing* periodical, they quite clearly indicate where Lehmann's own sympathies and interest lay and his intention to seek ways to enable a cultural dialogue between the two countries. All of these stories later appeared in *TPWN* and, as it had in *FONW*, 'Mr Hua Wei' appeared in the same issue as Acton's essay. This suggests that for Lehmann, Zhang's rather bold and biting satire was easier to appreciate when read in the context of the latest literary developments on the ground in China.

3.4 Bai Pingjie: 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road' (*TPNW* 5)

³⁰² Anderson, *The Limits of Realism*, p. 67.

³⁰³ *FONW* (London: Hogarth Press, 1941), p. 5.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

In the list of contributors to the fifth volume of *TPNW*, published in May 1941, this is a surprising entry, even for Lehmann who sets a high standard in seeking out original kinds of writers. Readers are told that Pai Ping-Chei (Bai Pingjie), the author of the short story 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road' about the builders of that great WWII supply route, is: 'A Miao, the predominant aboriginal group of tribes in Yunnan. He spent his childhood with his native people in the mountains of this province. He is at present at middle-school in Kunming.'³⁰⁵

Yet this introduction positions the author very much in Lehmann's backyard. Bai is a young writer, unknown - perhaps even unknowable. He may, or may not, have ever written any other fiction. The content of the story reveals a preoccupation with the role and treatment of the labouring classes. The story begins among the coolie huts for workers somewhere near the newly paved base of the highway 'that stretches through Szechuan (Sichuan) and Yunnan along the Burma border'.³⁰⁶ A group of labourers discuss the role of the work in the war effort. They are awaiting a visit from a high official. The tale is recounted by a third-person narrator, an omniscient storyteller. The style and content are straightforward. The workers are ordered to throw piles of rocks into deep trenches at the side of the road. They argue that the rocks will shortly be needed for surfacing the road but a hot-tempered supervisor pompously lectures them that he knows better. When a high-official arrives from Nanking (Nanjing) he is quick to recognise the error and orders the stones be brought back up and it is the same workers who commented on the initial error who must labour to complete the task. The arrival of the high official marks the moment the narrative shifts into conveying its key message. One of the workmen, a character named Uncle Hu the Third, is 'bitterly disappointed' that 'no gongs, no banners and not even a la-la band' accompany this high official on his visit to the road builders.³⁰⁷ Instead the high official is described as an 'uninteresting old man' who 'looks like an honest peasant'.³⁰⁸ Yao is here surely signalling to readers that in modern China, the trappings of the past that attached to

³⁰⁵ *TPNW* 5, p. 143.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-52.

power, are no longer appropriate in such times when work must be carried out swiftly and efficiently for the sake of the country's survival. 'We must be efficient' the high-official tells the workers shortly before he dismisses the supervisor who ordered the rocks to be thrown away thereby vindicating the workers who had already warned him of his error.³⁰⁹ The high official also pointedly asks the labourers about whether 'the food is not enough' and if 'the huts are too uncomfortable' suggesting that in modern China, the humane treatment of workers is a primary concern.³¹⁰

In the final passages of the tale, the high official who is shown to be on the side of sense and decisiveness declares 'I am a workman, a coolie and the same as you!' suggesting his allegiance with the workers and the political Left.³¹¹ Yao's story seeks to project the attributes of modern China, a place which is better aligned with the West. The year after Yao's story appeared in *TPNW*, a novel written and illustrated by Chiang Yee about the workers who gave their lives for the building of the road, *The Men of the Burma Road*, was published by Methuen.³¹² An illustration of 'a road inspector' in the novel, in simple Western dress, appears to be the visual realisation of Yao's high official.³¹³

As Gunn has noted of this literary period in China, it 'produced a final peak of art seeking [or here projecting] modernity'.³¹⁴ Certainly Yao's story conveys the message that the traditions of old China are giving way to a land where hard work and common sense prevail. In this sense, circulating the story abroad, can be viewed as an attempt to broadcast ideas about modern China and the new order, to the world. Here, China wants to be seen as dynamic and modernising and a place where logic and reason trump traditional modes of hierarchical social interaction.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 54.

³¹² It was published by Methuen and dedicated to Xiao Qian who 'who witnessed the completion of the Burma Road and to those who gave their lives to the road, their labour and sacrifice will not be in vain'. (London: Methuen, 1942), v.

³¹³ Chiang, *The Men of the Burma Road*, p. 79.

³¹⁴ Gunn, 'Literature and Art of the War Period', p. 236.

In his essay on modern Chinese literature, Acton described Bai as ‘one of the most promising younger writers’ and of the story he adds that the ‘influence of Russian fiction is as powerful as ever, and in some stories so strong as to make them read like clever parodies’.³¹⁵ The story was written before anxieties over the foreign influences in literature and art in China had become suspect. Accompanying Bai’s story in volume 5 of *TPNW* is Lehmann’s foreword in which he describes the creative writing hot spots around the world. It is worth citing at length here as it reads like a paen to modern Chinese literature and to the elements of it that he seeks out for his journal. Of China, he wrote:

for the last quarter of a century, ever since the beginning of the national revolution, an entirely fresh literary tradition has been growing up in China, and the war against the Japanese aggressors seems only to have given it further impetus. Many of the stories and sketches now being written in the interior of the country have little more than a local, temporary value as might be expected; but there is nevertheless a large body of work, too little known over here, which has a deeper and more genuinely Chinese quality, a more permanent significance as well as particular interest for us who are also engaged in a war against aggression, different though the circumstances may be.³¹⁶

Lehmann here signals that it is literature, or writing with a more lasting quality or ‘permanent significance’ that he is seeking from China (which is the subject of further consideration in Chapter 8). A year after its publication in *TPNW*, the same story appeared as ‘Builders of the Burma Road’ in *Story* magazine (a magazine by then based in New York, which showcased the works of new writers) and was attributed to Cicio Mar and Donald M. Allen, who later became a well-known editor and publisher of American innovative writing and with whom Ye shared a flat in Hong Kong. *Story* magazine noted that ‘since 1939 [Pai Ping-Chei] has returned to writing of his native

³¹⁵ *TPNW* 15, p. 149.

³¹⁶ *TPNW* 5, p. 8.

people'.³¹⁷ In an anthology of works that Ye had translated from the Chinese into English, and which he published while studying at Cambridge University in 1946, he provides readers with an update on many of the writers whose work he features in this collection.³¹⁸ Bai's name is included in the list. Ye writes that before he left China in 1944, he learnt that: 'Pai Ping-chei is planning to return to his folk at Tenchun, his native town on the frontier between Burma and China, which was liberated shortly before V-J Day'.

Very little has been written about Bai or his work, in the English language, and it is beyond the scope of this research to attempt to locate scholarly sources in Chinese. Bai has certainly never made it into the (albeit shifting) canon of twentieth century Chinese literature, in the same way as Zhang Tianyi, as identified by C.T Hsia et al.

As well as the story's Leftist political undertones, its publication in Britain would have resonated strongly with readers who had witnessed the road's closure the previous year after the British government yielded to Japanese diplomatic pressure to cut supplies along it to China. The road was closed for a period of three months to a political and media outcry for its shameless appeasement of Japan. By publishing Bai's story Lehmann no doubt intended to remind his readers of Britain's rather shameful actions and official ambivalence towards China. Publishing a story that highlighted the back-breaking effort that went into the creation of that wartime supply line also strongly suggests that Lehmann hoped to engender a more sympathetic allegiance with China, in his readers.

3.5 S. M.: 'The Third-Rate Gunner' (*TPNW 7*)

When Lehmann published S. M.'s 'The Third-Rate Gunner' in *TPNW 7* (1941) it was the first time the short story had appeared in one of his journals. Evidently Lehmann

³¹⁷ The archives of *Story* magazine (and Story Press) at Rare Books & Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Box 98 (C0104) *Story* March - April 1942 (includes end pages).

³¹⁸ Chun-Chan Yeh (tr.) (Ye Junjian), *Three Seasons and Other Stories* (London: Staples Press, 1946) Note by the Translator, p. 136.

believed that the story's content about members of a guerilla unit fighting Japanese forces, would resonate with the other contributions in his wartime journal. It appeared alongside works by established writers such as V.S Pritchett's reportage in 'The Way We Live Now' about the ways in which war is making British society more egalitarian and the common man more valued, which echoes the underlying theme of S. M.'s tale.³¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre's 'The Wall', a powerful piece about oppression and persecution in the Spanish Civil War, is comic but chilling.³²⁰ While Isherwoods' 'The Nowaks' set in pre-war Berlin commits the 'unpardonable sin' of painting Germans in a sympathetic light.³²¹ With poetry from W. H. Auden and Lorca, and C. Day Lewis the volume strongly gives voice to ideas about the effect of oppression and conflict on humanity. For Lehmann S. M.'s story performs an important function in the issue in that it is the only contribution that takes place on the frontline of battle, in which characters confront and shoot the enemy. Volume 7 of *TPNW* also contains Lehmann's foreword which hails stories that reflect the negative emotions stirred up by war and express the 'dark side as well as the light' and the need to shun 'one-sided propaganda'.

Lehman introduced S. M. to readers with the comment that his initials are 'the pseudonym of a young officer ... who was badly wounded while fighting against the Japanese at Shanghai.'³²² The brief biography adds that he 'is one of the best of the new generation of Chinese writers'.³²³ What Lehmann emphasises is S. M.'s youth and his alignment with the 'new' writers of China but also his vantage point to write about the war against Japan. This is somewhat misleading as S. M. was a relatively high-level officer in the Nationalist Army. He had begun contributing stories to literary magazines in the 1930s and his reportage appeared in a variety of magazines in China during the war. He was also known by the pen name Ah Long as well as a host of others including: Yi-Men (亦门), Shi-Mu (师穆), Sheng-Men (圣门), Zhang Huairui (张怀瑞) but his real

³¹⁹ *TPMW* 7, p.17.

³²⁰ Lehmann took the story from a collection published by J. P. Sartre in 1939 although the story had previously been published in English in *Life & Letters* in 1937.

³²¹ *TPNW* 7, p. 8.

³²² *TPNW* 7, p. 142.

³²³ *Ibid.*

name was Chen Shoumei (陈守梅, 1907-1967).³²⁴ In his critical account of S. M.'s wartime novel *Ken Sekine* notes that the pen names were necessary because S. M.'s 'works were strongly critical of the Nationalist Party's wartime policies' although that is not evident in the story that appeared in *TPNW* which was written with a different aim in mind.³²⁵

By the time Lehmann published S. M.'s short story in *TPNW* 7, the writer had already completed a work that while 'not very-well known either in China or elsewhere' was the first Chinese novel to deal with the Nanjing Massacre of December 1937 - January 1938 in which the Japanese Imperial Army slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops and civilians and perpetrated widespread rape and looting across the city.³²⁶ As Sekine, who translated the novel (*Nanjing, or 南京*) noted, even though it won 'first prize in a novel competition of Resistance Literature magazine, it was not published until 1987, under another name.'³²⁷ For the purposes of understanding the provenance of 'The Third-Rate Gunner', S. M.'s civilian and military record prior to 1941 is of particular interest.

S. M. was born into a poor family from Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province) in 1907 and was traditionally educated. After moving to Shanghai against his family's wishes he began writing traditional-style poetry and began to contribute to literary magazines. As the conflict with Japan became fiercer in the early 1930s he became 'so sympathetic to the patriotic movement that he finally decided to go to Nanjing's Central Military College of Huangpu'.³²⁸ After graduating from military college, he was assigned to the Nationalist Army as a lieutenant and in August 1937 he was in the front line of the Battle of Shanghai. It was after being wounded in that battle that he began to write seriously, particularly reportage and short stories which he contributed to the magazine *Qiyue*

³²⁴ Sekine, 'A Verbose Silence in 1939 Chongqing' (2004). Online at MCLC website: <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/>.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid. The novel was published under the title *Nanjing xueji* 南京血祭 (The bloody sacrifice of Nanjing).

³²⁸ Ibid.

(July, 七月).³²⁹ Then in October 1938, S. M. moved to Yan'an and attended the Political Military University of Resistance. In the following year he moved to Xi'an where he sustained an eye injury during training and where he began to write *Nanjing*.³³⁰ The content, characters and implicit message of 'The Third-Rate Gunner' suggest that it was written after S. M. moved to Yan'an and attended the Political Military University of Resistance because its central theme is very strongly one of resistance while its portrayal of guerilla soldiers and a peasant who overcomes all odds and becomes the hero of his unit aligns the story more closely with the political Left and is no doubt a theme which Lehmann was sympathetic towards. Edward Gunn notes that S. M. 'turned to poetry' later in the war as friction between the Nationalist (who employed him) and the Communists (whom he spied for) deepened.³³¹

When readers first encounter the eponymous central character of the story, he is 'holding his rifle as though it were a hoe' to the evident amusement of his compatriots in the guerilla company he is part of.³³² Readers are informed that his motive for joining the fighters was provided the moment that his 'sole worldly possession, a small mud hut, had been burnt down by the Japanese.'³³³ The narrator of the tale appears to be an un-named member of this guerilla unit as the story adopts 'we' and 'our' when recounting the narrative, presumably to convey the impression of being closer to the action and therefore lending the story greater authenticity. Readers learn that the 'third-rate gunner' earned his epithet after many months of training failed to teach him to shoot a rifle accurately. The narrator comments, 'his real name was Li and something else' but everyone called him by his nickname, conveying the message that in wartime what matters most is not how to identify yourself but what you are able to do.³³⁴ The early part of the story contains two dialect jokes which a translator has taken pains to

³²⁹ This magazine's editor was Hu Feng, and Ah Long came to be considered a member of the so-called Qiyue pai 七月派, or July school. 'The Third Rate Gunner' was first published in *July* magazine according to Harold Acton *TPNW* 15, p. 149.

³³⁰ Michael Berry, *A History of Pain, Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University, 2011), p. 142.

³³¹ Gunn, 'Literature and Art of the War Period', p. 259.

³³² *TPNW* 7, p. 71.

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

explain. The first explains that when the men in the guerilla unit josh with the third-rate gunner about 'eating bread' they are referring to the slang term in Peking (Beijing) for 'good for nothing'. A footnote explains that bread in northern China is usually round and therefore like a zero. This is therefore a joke about the extent to which he scores a zero or misses the target with his rifle.³³⁵ A subsequent joke about the third-rate gunner attending a 'ceremonial service' refers to a joke about army target boards which had two flags (one red and one white) above a target and anyone hitting them 'attends a ceremonial service'.³³⁶ While providing a strong element of local flavour to the story and demonstrating the author's flair for capturing a variety of dialects, a lot of explanation is required such that a foreign reader can share in the humour. As the company commander fears wasting scarce and costly bullets, the third-rate gunner is made a stretcher bearer.³³⁷ 'Our bullets are as precious as our lives' he comments.³³⁸ S. M. here is likely imparting his first-hand experience of the (im)practicalities and realities of the war against Japan. When given another chance to show his ability in a shoot out with Japanese soldiers, the third-rate gunner again misses them 'even when the enemy was in full sight'.³³⁹ Although the commander has forbidden the other members of the unit to mock 'the third-rate gunner' they are unable to resist. After one such 'ragging' (evidently an English speaker had a hand in this translation), exasperated and humiliated he launches a tirade against them, stating 'do you think I miss on purpose' and to Victory Hu who has lead the mockery 'you're not happy unless you can insult me,'... 'you laugh at me and get a bastard pleasure out of it'.³⁴⁰ His words embarrass Victory Hu (his main detractor) and as a result of the friction, the third-rate gunner requests sentry duty away from other officers. He goes off to practice shooting by himself. While alone, he overhears Japanese officers in conversation and 'drawing on a piece of paper'.³⁴¹ He takes aim and shoots and kills the first and then the second. His guerilla detachment

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 77.

rush to him. It later emerges that ‘some very important documents were found on them [the Japanese officers] as well as a pair of beautiful pistols such as the guerrilla mobile arsenal could never make’.³⁴² The unit celebrates with millet wine and they hail the third-rate gunner who becomes instead ‘a regular guerilla’ and they agree to drop his old nickname. They drink to him and in the final line of the story, his face is ‘flushed with pride’.³⁴³

The character, the third-rate gunner is evidently a peasant everyman. The story imparts a clear resistance message that even the most seemingly hopeless individuals have a role in wartime. Ultimately the story is redemptive and encouraging, with an underlying suggestion that the Chinese guerillas were frequently either ill-suited to warfare or even un-trainable, and were hampered by too few armaments while fighting a better equipped and trained foe. In his critical account of Chinese fiction, Harold Acton commented that the story ‘enjoyed a sensational success’ in China.³⁴⁴

When Yao Xueyin’s ‘Half a Cartload of Straw Short’ was published in *TPNW* the following year (November 1942), readers might have noted the strong similarities with S. M.’s short story. Both narratives present hopeless peasants, unskilled in warfare who struggle to overcome their shortcomings as members of guerilla units fighting the Japanese forces in the remote countryside. The two stories are strongly works of Japanese resistance literature. Despite similarities in theme, setting, characterisation as well as the use of local dialects in the narrative, S. M.’s story did not appear in two of the key collections of modern Chinese short stories (one which only published war stories) published shortly after the end of the war while Yao’s appeared in both.³⁴⁵ What makes Yao’s tale a ‘finer’ work, from the perspective of British and American publishers was surely story’s central character who is a somewhat conflicted patriot and who

³⁴² Ibid., p. 78.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁴⁴ *TPNW* 15, p. 149.

³⁴⁵ The two collections are Wang Chi-chen’s Payne (ed) *Stories of China at War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947) and Yuan Chia-hua and Robert Payne’s (eds and trans.) *Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* (London: Transatlantic Arts/Noel Carrington, 1946).

exits the scene fighting for his life, which arouses greater sympathy for his sacrifice and for China's cause and which ultimately makes the story a more effective work of wartime fiction.³⁴⁶ In short, Yao's tale presents a rather more complex anti-hero. However, to judge a writer on the strength or weakness of a single short story can be folly. S. M.'s novel about the Nanjing massacre certainly examined the ambiguities of warfare, when, for example, Japanese soldiers are depicted in tears.³⁴⁷ The novel was also hailed by Michel Berry for creating a 'new concept of narrative fiction' that he defines as 'a poetics of violence'.³⁴⁸ Yao by contrast turned his hand to the more traditional genre of historical fiction sometime after the war.³⁴⁹ For Lehmann however, S. M.'s 'dual background as a poet [or writer] and a military man' was undoubtedly an irresistible combination which he detected in the story.³⁵⁰

3.6 Yao Xueyin: 'Half A Cartload of Straw Short' (*TPNW 14*)

Yao Xueyin's (Yao Hsueh-Yin) short-story, 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short', which appeared in volume 14 of *TPNW (July-September)* in 1942 is the second (after S.M.'s) of Lehmann's Chinese stories to take readers directly into combat in the war against Japan.³⁵¹ It was first published in China in Mao Dun's literary journal in April 1938.³⁵² At the time of its publication in China, Yao was employed in the literary propaganda division of the third office (where Ye also worked) in the wartime capital of Chongqing

³⁴⁶ Acton, *TPNW 15*, p. 149.

³⁴⁷ Sekine, 'A Verbose Silence in 1939 Chongqing' (2004). Online at MCLC website: <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/>.

³⁴⁸ Berry, *A History of Pain*, p. 145. Berry defines the work as difficult to categorise because of its detailed descriptions of war strategy and historical facts but a lack of heroes or main characters combined with the author's high-minded moralizing and ornately poetic language.

³⁴⁹ Sekine, 'A Verbose Silence in 1939 Chongqing' (2004). Online at MCLC website: <https://u.osu.edu/mclc/>.

³⁵⁰ Berry, *A History of Pain*, p. 144.

³⁵¹ *TPNW 14* was actually published in November 1942.

³⁵² Mao Dun's wartime journal, *On The Literary Front (Wenyi zhendi)*.

and the war against Japan was approaching its second year.³⁵³ Yao was young and almost entirely unknown as a writer prior to the publication of this story which transformed him into a 'new star on the literary scene since the beginning of the War of Resistance'.³⁵⁴ Yao went on to become best-known in China for his five-volume historical epic about the rise and fall of a peasant uprising in the Ming Dynasty, *Li Zicheng*. The books took him more than 30 years to write, with the last two volumes being published in 1999 after his death. He was protected by Mao during the Cultural Revolution and after his death, donated the proceeds from his estate to set up the Yao Xueyin prize for the historical novel.³⁵⁵

Yao's 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' is another self-conscious example of Chinese resistance literature published by Lehmann. The story takes as a central theme, the participation of a peasant in guerrilla warfare against the Japanese, or, more specifically, the 'awakening of revolutionary consciousness in a simple minded peasant' in the war against Japan.³⁵⁶ Its strict adherence to the aims and instincts of resistance literature might be explained by the fact that it was published in a year when authors faced criticism should they attempt to write anything else (and even, at times, when they appeared to conform).³⁵⁷ Marston Anderson, in his study of Chinese fiction from the

³⁵³ Kirk Denton's citation about Yao's employment appears in N.G.D Malmqvist, M. Doleželová-Velingerová, Z Słupski; L.L Haft; B. Eberstein et al (eds) *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature 1900 -1949*, Volume 2, The Short Story, p. 230. (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 229 - 331. Denton comments that it was mostly writers in cities of the Chinese interior, such as Chongqing (which were away from the main areas of Japanese occupation in China) who would have engaged in writing overtly about nationalism and revolution in China at that time.

³⁵⁴ This citation is attributed to 'the editor of a postwar collection of Yao's works' in Shuang Shen's *Cosmopolitan Publics, Anglophone Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 73. William A. Lyell comments that the story 'gained Yao an immediate following among readers and also attracted the attention of the literary world' in the essay 'The Early Fiction of Yao Xueyin', in Wolfgang Kubin, Rudolf G.Wagner (eds.) *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature and Literary Criticism*, Papers of the Berlin Conference, 1978, (Bochum, Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1982), p. 40.

³⁵⁵ Li-hua Ying, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Chinese Literature* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth UK, The Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 240.

³⁵⁶ Denton, *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature 1900 -1949*, p. 230.

³⁵⁷ In his study of Chinese fiction, Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period*, p. 67, he identifies a campaign in China in late 1938 to criticize literature not related to The War of Resistance. McDougall and Louie, in *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, recall that the writer, translator and critic, Liang Shiqiu was denounced and forced to resign after asking for works that were not 'eight legged resistance literature' in 1938, p. 190.

revolutionary period in China, stresses that literary dogma at the end of 1938 ensured that: 'Once again the demonstrated commitment of authors to immediate political goals became the touchstone by which their literary output was judged'.³⁵⁸ Certainly Yao's short story which highlights a number of politically charged themes, including: China's united-front against Japan; the enormity of the task of convincing the country's peasantry, farmers, and rural populace who the enemy is; and the awakening of the people to a new Chinese nationalism in the name of self-defence, is evidently written with political goals foremost in the author's mind. That the story begins with a prologue, recounted by a narrator speaking in the first person, who appears to be introducing the story as a personal reminiscence is undoubtedly to impart to the story 'an air of authenticity, crucial for the dissemination of political ideas'.³⁵⁹

The central character in the story is described as a 'farmhand' and 'our best comrade' but also a half-wit whose nickname 'half a cartload of straw short' is the title of the story. He is captured as a suspected traitor by a Chinese guerrilla unit for carrying a Japanese flag, unaware that it is the Japanese who have invaded. He is set free but returns and is accepted to join the unit as a fighter. At the story's end he is seriously wounded following a manoeuvre to destroy a railway and derail a train being used by the Japanese military. He is carried away on a stretcher, calling out confusedly for his ox. Although he appears to sacrifice himself to the higher cause, Dumb Wang, as his family named him in a peasant tradition to confound evil spirits, longs to return to his life as a peasant farmer and to the land that he loves so dearly. In the opening action of the story, he tastes and sniffs the soil before declaring 'What richness!' to alert readers to where his loyalties lie.³⁶⁰ There is a key moment in the plot when Dumb Wang is on a reconnaissance mission to a nearby village and he steals a rope. He is forced to abandon the rope by a comrade and receives instruction as to why profiting 'a wee bit by the revolution' is not acceptable for a revolutionary fighter.³⁶¹ Dumb Wang's comrade explains:

³⁵⁸ Anderson, *The Limits of Realism*, p. 67.

³⁵⁹ Denton, *A Selective Guide to Chinese Literature 1900 - 1949*, p. 230.

³⁶⁰ *TPNW 14*, p. 91.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

The revolution will do a lot of good for us as well as for many others...If we succeed in driving the invaders out of the country, millions of people will be able to lead peaceful lives. Won't we also get some benefit from that?³⁶²

The comrade goes on to explain that if Chinese people can live and work in peace, then 'we shall have a glorious time of it. And our sons and grandsons will be able to walk in the streets with heads erect'.³⁶³ The wartime message comes across clearly: revolutionary fighters must put their individual, petty concerns aside for the greater good that will flow to all the people of China for generations to come, if they can unite to defeat the Japanese forces. Put another way, the story seeks to remind readers that the consciousness of nationhood - of every man, woman and child pulling together for China - is a key plank in the country's defence against the Japanese.

As British newspaper and magazine reports from the time suggest, China's resurgent nationalism, was keenly observed by the West at a time when the country's plight had become closely entwined with that of Britain and America, as an ally in the Second World War. Even before the start of the war, through the works of organisations such as the China Campaign Committee, China's plight and the West's possible role in China, had been the subject of considerable media attention.

Based on Dumb Wang's indiscretion with the rope and other impulses revealed in the story, Dumb Wang evidently has some way to go before he can truly be declared 'a partisan'.³⁶⁴ Yao then, is certainly not implying in any heavy-handed way, that all of China's peasants are united against the Japanese (or even know that Japan is the major foe). Nor is he implying that the ideological battle, to enlighten and engage the masses to better support the war effort, has been won. It is worth noting that despite writing a pointedly political work of short fiction, Yao is never explicit about the party politics of the piece. By 1938, guerrilla warfare against the Japanese was being waged

³⁶² Ibid., p. 99.

³⁶³ Ibid., p.100.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

by both the CCP and the KMT (under the United Front) and it was not yet clear which party's ideology would eventually become the dominant force in shaping China's national consciousness.³⁶⁵ In his 1978 essay, William A. Lyell, argues that ultimately the story hinges, for its readers, 'around a wartime message that is incorporated without doing violence to the credibility of the plot' and by arousing readers' sympathies via an imperfect but 'thoroughly likeable' central character.³⁶⁶ By publishing the piece in more than one literary journal, Lehmann was evidently convinced that the story had more than mere propaganda value.³⁶⁷ But equally, when Lehmann published the story for his wartime readers in 1941 and 1942, he would have been confident that a tale about guerrilla warfare in China would resonate with readers of a leftist political persuasion (as the majority of his *TPNW* readers were) not least because of its associations with the Communist party in China. Newspaper reports being sent to Britain from China at the time, had explicitly linked the guerrilla fighting in China with the 8th Route Army (the former Red Army which collaborated with the KMT under the precarious United Front).

Other aspects of Yao's writing, in particular a fondness for footnotes, an ability to capture northern dialects in peasant speech and his realistic portrayal of the Chinese peasantry in general, are to a large extent lost to readers of the work in translation (especially the majority who have never encountered a Chinese peasant).³⁶⁸ It is worth noting here that the version of the story that appeared in *TPNW* contains two succinct footnotes. Lehmann also translated (or asked Ye to translate) into comprehensible English the title of the piece and the protagonist's nickname throughout the text which had appeared as '*Chabancheh Makai*' in Ye Junjian's (and Jack Chen's) original English translation.³⁶⁹ Evidently Lehmann decided the phrase in Wade-Giles romanisation which

³⁶⁵ A detailed account of guerrilla warfare by the Nationalists and Communists in China, is contained in Yang Kuisong's essay, 'Nationalist and Communist Guerrilla Warfare in North China', in Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven (eds) *The Battle for China, Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 308 - 327.

³⁶⁶ Lyell, 'The Early Fiction of Yao Xueyin', p. 40.

³⁶⁷ Lehmann published Yao's story in *FONW*, Spring 1941 and *TPNW* 14.

³⁶⁸ For references to Yao's reproduction of northern dialects, see McDougall and Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century*, p. 232, and Lyell, 'The Early Fiction of Yao Xueyin', p. 39.

³⁶⁹ The original English translation of Yao's short story appeared in the English-language, Chinese-edited magazine *T'ien Hsia Monthly* that was published in Shanghai between 1935 and 1941. The story was credited to Mar C (Ye's name in Esperanto) and Jack Chen. Jack Chen, was a journalist, translator and

would have been incomprehensible to most Anglophone readers without a lengthy footnote of explanation would have put his readers off, the opposite of the effect he was seeking. There would be no encounters with inscrutable Chinese phrases on Lehmann's watch.

When Lehmann published the work for the enlightenment of Penguin readers, he introduced Yao as being 'in his early twenties and a native of Honan (Henan) province' which was not quite accurate.³⁷⁰ Yao was 32 years old by 1942. Lehmann further commented, in 'About the New Contributors', that Yao had 'joined the Partisans as a political worker' and that Chinese critics considered the story 'the best that has come out of the war' with Japan.³⁷¹ Evidently Lehmann here sought to place the emphasis on Yao as a young but already highly respected writer on the plight of contemporary China, who was very much wrapped up in the war effort.

It is not until the subsequent issue of *TPNW*, volume 15, that Harold Acton confers his description of Yao as 'having obvious affinities with Gorki at his best' and in doing so, draws parallels in readers' minds between Chinese and Russian literature as well as alerting them to the foreign influences on the Chinese literary scene.³⁷² There is certainly evidence that Yao had read Russian fiction in translation and that it informed his depiction of peasants in his fiction. Shuang Shen in her survey of Shanghai print-culture, cites from Yao's autobiographical essay, written in the early 1940s, in which he comments that he 'tried to teach himself Esperanto and Russian fiction in translation, which he claimed provided him with a model of how to depict peasant figures with humorous detachment'.³⁷³

cartoonist who went on to set up the Chinese newswire Xinhua in London. His father had been personal secretary to Sun Yat-sen and his first foreign minister.

³⁷⁰ *TPNW* 14, p. 141.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *TPNW* 15, p. 149. Having taught English literature at university in Beijing (Peking) Acton was acutely aware of the influence of foreign literature, particularly Russian and English, on Chinese writers.

³⁷³ Shuang Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics, Print Culture in Semi-Colonial Shanghai* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 74. For the original citation in Chinese, Yao's autobiographical essay appears in Chinese in Yao Xueyin, 'Where I learned Literary Language' in Yao Beihua, He Guozhang and Yu Yunsheng, (eds.) *Yao Xueyin Yanjiu Zhuangji*, (Zhengzhou, Huanghe Wenui Chubanshe, 1985), pp. 67 - 75 (not consulted).

3.6 a) Leftist Representations of Wartime China

The inclusion of 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' in *Folios of New Writing* in 1941 and *TPNW* in 1942, suggests that Lehmann deemed it to have genuine literary merit and to rise above mere didacticism or being too formulaic a work of propaganda. And, stripped of its footnotes and any untranslated material, it would have been fit for *TPNW's* rapidly growing and often mobile, wartime readership around the world. It would also have appealed to Lehmann's - and assuredly his readers' - leftist political sympathies on several levels. The story is evidently anti-Japanese at a time when Japan was firmly a member of the Axis of powers in WWII which suggests its broad political appeal. But, as Tom Buchanan reminds readers in his exhaustively researched historiography of British views on China, particularly those of the British Left (1925-1976):

The [Second] Sino-Japanese War constituted a significant element in international anti-fascist politics, second only in its global impact to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9. The new unity in China [the United Front] was warmly welcomed on the British left, where anti-fascism dominated the politics of the later 1930s.³⁷⁴

As such the temporal setting of Yao's story (at the time of the United Front) would likely have had particular appeal to those readers inclined to the Left.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, Yao's story presents a (fictionalised) account of guerrilla warfare in rural China that is likely to have resonated strongly with any members of, for example, *The Left Book Club* (LBC) or readers of the *Manchester Guardian*, who would already have encountered reports of China's Communist guerrilla fighters resisting the Japanese in north-west China in the

³⁷⁴ Tom Buchanan, *East Wind, China and the British Left (1925-1976)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 62.

³⁷⁵ That is not to deny that the international anti-fascist movement at that time often had broad cross-party support.

late 1930s. When *Red Star Over China*, by the radical American journalist, Edgar Snow, was published by Victor Gollancz's LBC in October 1937, 'Snow's "discovery" of an anti-fascist movement that had succeeded against all the odds gave a 'tremendous fillip to the British Left'.³⁷⁶ Snow's 'world scoop' about the months he spent with a ragged band of guerrilla fighters, hiding out in caves in Shaanxi (Shensi) province, and the emergent Communist leaders, including Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong), went through three printings in its first month with sales quickly exceeding 100,000 copies.³⁷⁷ Its fame quickly spread around the world. In America, following its publication by Random House, a copy was handed to President Roosevelt by his Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes after he stayed up all night reading it.³⁷⁸ By 1942, the new Gollancz edition was emblazoned with the words 'the world famous book' on the dust jacket. As well as most famously introducing Mao to the world, Snow's book provided the first, first-hand account of the functioning of the red base areas in Shaanxi following the Long March and details of the operations of the Red Army, at a time when the Communists had been blockaded in and were largely cut off from the rest of the world. The book also highlighted the nature and uses of 'partisan warfare' (guerrilla warfare) in the Red Army's approach to Japanese resistance. In one chapter, Snow presents a detailed account of partisan warfare by P'eng Teh-huai (Peng Dehuai) whom Snow describes as deputy commander-in-chief of the Eighth Route Army. Peng, readers are informed, 'successfully expanded guerrilla war against Japan' at the time of united front.³⁷⁹ In *Red Star over China*, Peng sets out for Snow, (and, the Communists accurately anticipated, the Western world) both the reasons for partisan warfare in China and the CCP's

³⁷⁶ Buchanan, *East Wind*, p. 58.

³⁷⁷ The citation about the number of printings appears in John Maxwell Hamilton's biography of Snow *Edgar Snow: A Biography* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 85. Jonathan Mirsky commented that Snow's 'scoop' in writing *Red Star Over China* could 'hardly be exaggerated' in his 1989 review of Hamilton's biography of Snow. Mirsky's review appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, 'Message from Mao', 6 February 1989. Buchanan refers to Snow's 'world scoop' and the book's massive success in *East Wind*, p. 58.

³⁷⁸ Hamilton, *Edgar Snow*, p. 85.

³⁷⁹ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, (London, Toronto, New York: Grove Press, 1978). Biographical Note on P'eng Teh-huai, p 543. Peng would eventually become China's Minister of Defence (1954-59).

principles, or 'rules of tactics' for this mode of fighting.³⁸⁰ Through Snow's account, guerrilla combat by the CCP against the Japanese is presented as one of the only strategies likely to successfully disrupt the better armed, better trained but widely dispersed Japanese army in the Chinese hinterland. The point to note is that Snow's very widely-circulated and influential book had already strongly linked guerrilla fighting with the Communist resistance in the minds of Western readers, even though, as previously mentioned, the Chinese Nationalist Party also, eventually sanctioned its use. It is also worth noting that Snow's account of partisan warfare by the CCP includes a reference to Mao Tse-tung's (Mao Zedong's) own book about guerrilla warfare which Snow declares he was unable to read at that time. A footnote by Snow informs readers: 'Mao's *Yu-chi Chan-cheng (Guerrilla Warfare)*, published in Wayapao, Shensi, in 1935, was out of print'.³⁸¹ Whilst the earliest English translation of Mao's account of partisan warfare, was made in 1940 by Samuel Griffiths of the U.S Marine Corps, it was not widely read or republished until the 1960s.³⁸²

Agnes Smedley was another Communist sympathiser (although never a card carrying member of the party in either China or America) and American journalist whose accounts of the guerrilla tactics of China's Eighth Route Army in Shansi (Shanxi) Province began reaching British readers of the *Manchester Guardian* (later the *Guardian* newspaper) in the 1930s. Her first account, originally written for a Shanghai newspaper but forwarded to the *Manchester Guardian* and printed (without her consent) appeared on 13 January 1938.³⁸³ It contained a vivid account of the suffering endured by 'thousands of Chinese guerilla fighters ... marching barefoot deep in snow and

³⁸⁰ Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 232. It is worth noting here that the reading public was for many years oblivious to the level of editing that Snow's original text had undergone at the hands of Mao, Zhou Enlai and the Comintern. See Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic*, (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 46 - 47.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

³⁸² Detail on the translation of Mao's work by Aaron R.B Linderman in *Rediscovering Irregular Warfare: Colin Gubbins and the Origins of Britain's Special Operations Executive* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

³⁸³ For details about Agnes Smedley and the *Manchester Guardian*, see John Gittings, 'Agnes Smedley and the *Manchester Guardian*,' <<http://johngittings.com/id52/html>> (Last accessed 17.7.17). Article in the *Guardian* newspaper archive (and reproduced online) <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jan/14/china-japan-war-1938-agnes-smedley-archive>>, (last accessed 17.7.17).

wading neck-deep across freezing rivers' among other heroic acts, as civilians increasingly took up arms in defiance of their Japanese aggressors. Her report goes on to comment that: 'All the young men have joined the guerilla bands or are acting as carriers or look-outs for the regular units of the Eighth Route Army'.³⁸⁴ As an addendum to the (online) article points out, Smedley was taken on as a reporter for the newspaper following that report and went on to file two dozen articles on the war in China for the publication. Smedley was known for her cropped hair, army fatigues, and for rarely being behind a desk. Her work was characterised, along with that of a handful of other American journalists' work (including Snow and his wife Helen Foster Snow, or Nym Wales), by a 'passionate commitment to the Chinese (and often to the Chinese Communist) cause and a desire to present the conflict in an exciting and intelligible manner for the non-specialist reader'.³⁸⁵ In the same year that Yao published 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' in China, Smedley's book *China Fights Back*, a diary of her time following the Eighth Route Army as it waged guerrilla war against the Japanese, was published by Victor Gollancz in Britain and The Vanguard Press in America. Although, the book did not do as well as Smedley's other books, a fact that she attributed to injudicious editing and censoring by her U.S publishers.³⁸⁶ Nevertheless, her writing undoubtedly contributed to the perception in the West that guerrilla fighting was a characteristically Communist form of resistance to Japanese invasion. In the same year that Lehmann published Yao's story in *TPNW*, Penguin Books, under its Pelican imprint, published a book by a now forgotten writer, Winifred Galbraith. *The Chinese*, as the book was named (not without protest) looked at the values of Chinese civilization across its 5,000 years of progress to the 'New China' of the twentieth century.³⁸⁷ An introductory note which appeared on the first page of the reprint for 1943 (complete with staples which were a feature of book production during the war)

³⁸⁴ <<http://johngittings.com/id52/html>> (Last accessed 17.7.17)

³⁸⁵ Buchanan, *East Wind*, p. 59.

³⁸⁶ For an account of Smedley's explanation for the cool reception of her book in 1938, see Ruth Price, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 330.

³⁸⁷ Winifred Galbraith, *The Chinese* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, first published 1942, republished 1943), p. 1.

suggests to readers that China is a 'potential ally of the democracies' and expresses the hope that the country will 'emerge from this struggle [the war with Japan] a united democratic nation based on ideals not unlike those of the Anglo-Saxon people'.³⁸⁸

Galbraith, a missionary teacher who lived for many years in China, travelled extensively through the country and spoke fluent Chinese, was known to the British authorities after repeatedly defying orders from them to leave China during Mao's attempted Autumn Harvest (September 1927). She had written two previous books: *The Dragon Sheds his Skin* (1928) when she was turned out of central China by the Communists and *Men Against the Sky* (1940) a story of wartime China. Galbraith, like Smedley, was concerned with the plight of the people of China, but unlike Smedley she did not have Communist sympathies.³⁸⁹ Two years before her book was published by Penguin Books, Galbraith wrote an article for the weekly magazine, *The Spectator*, entitled 'The War and the Student' which unpicks for a British readership many of the themes that are explored through the medium of fiction in Yao's short story.³⁹⁰ Her account is valuable as it provides a politically impartial, albeit somewhat despairing, Western perspective on the ongoing war effort in China and its effect on some of the most vulnerable citizens, namely students and the rural population. In setting out with extraordinary clarity why, in particular, efforts linked to propaganda and educating the masses are key to China's national defence programme, Galbraith argues that it is the 'consciousness of nationhood' that is the country's last line of defence. It is a 'force' that Galbraith describes as 'spiritual' and therefore, beyond (and we may believe more powerful than) the political and military action of war.³⁹¹ It is also the force that writers and translators such as Yao, and Ye from their work from inside China's propaganda apparatus, appear most preoccupied with in stories such as 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short'. In her article, Galbraith wrote:

³⁸⁸ Galbraith, *The Chinese*, p. 1.

³⁸⁹ There is no evidence that Smedley was ever a member of the Chinese or American Communist Party.

³⁹⁰ Winifred Galbraith, 'War and the Student', *The Spectator*, 28 April 1938.

<<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/29th-april-1938/9/china-the-war-and-the-student>> (Last accessed 6.8.17).

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

This time every Chinese farmer, at least in the invaded areas, probably does know that the enemy is the Japanese. Extensive advertisement since 1927 has printed on the walls and minds of even remote villagers the slogans "Down with Imperialists "(we were all lumped together at first or England was singled out for special attack) and later "Down with Japanese Imperialism." But it is hard to distinguish friend from foe when both appear in the guise of looters. And so, in what is left of China, extensive schemes for organised guerilla warfare and for mass education and social reform are being launched. In this time of national danger China's last defence is to be found in a spiritual force, the consciousness of nationhood on the part of every man, woman and child, so that even if they are conquered they may know that they are still Chinese.³⁹²

It is worth noting as an aside that Galbraith's claim that every Chinese farmer (by April 1938) 'knows that Japan is the enemy' is the opposite of the conceit in Yao's short story, where the narrative hinges on a persistent confusion among peasants in China's remote, rural areas about the enemy. When Dumb Wang is captured as a suspected traitor for waving a Japanese flag (he believes it will protect him) the commander of the Chinese guerrilla unit which apprehends him tells Dumb Wang: 'From now on don't call those Japanese devils "Northern troops", understand? The present situation is quite different from the past. There are now only two armies - the Japanese and the Chinese. Do you see what I mean?'.³⁹³ Ultimately - whether any confusion remains or not - Galbraith is sympathetic to the plight of the 'illiterate peasantry' who during their lifetime have seen Northern soldiers, Southern Soldiers, Communist armies, Government armies, 'pass over their fields and property' leaving it bare. Yao too, sought to create a portrait of a peasant who will engage his readers' sympathies while also suggesting that the awakening of revolutionary consciousness among the illiterate peasantry - to save China - still has some way to go. Edgar Snow did not share Yao's reticence when he

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ *TPNW 14*, p. 94.

proclaimed the progress of the Communist revolution in China. In a description of 'red warriors' in *Red Star Over China*, Snow remarks that one of their major strengths over the 'White armies' of Chiang Kai-shek is their 'revolutionary consciousness'.³⁹⁴ It is, Snow comments, the 'one thing' that the White armies could not copy.³⁹⁵ What these various accounts (whether fictional or reportage) suggest is that the literary communities of the West (the newspaper men and women, journal editors and writers), were, from the end of the 1930s highly attuned to accounts of China's 'awakening' whether political, spiritual or national in form. While British commentators and Chinese writers may have disagreed about why and how and in what way this was happening depending largely on their personal beliefs and prejudices - Snow for example evidently sees it as a uniquely Communist force, Galbraith, with her missionary instinct sees it as spiritual, while Yao, the propagandist, views it as key to the war effort - they are certainly united in agreement that it was happening.

'Half A Cartload of Straw Short' was first translated into English shortly after its publication in Chinese, suggesting that it was considered ripe for dissemination among foreign readers and abroad.³⁹⁶ In particular, Yao may have hoped that foreign readers would have been receptive to its somewhat humorous and hopeful depiction of China at war. Yao's story, as previously mentioned, was first translated by two Chinese writers who, throughout the course of the war were firmly engaged in anti-Japanese propaganda. The first is listed as Mar C, an abbreviation of Cicio Mar.³⁹⁷ He is listed alongside Jack Chen. Both men would later travel to Britain to highlight China's plight and promote their country as an ally in the war. Ye was already in communication with Lehmann following an initial introduction in 1936 through the poet Julian Bell. In *Three Seasons and Other Stories*, published while Ye was studying at Cambridge University, he reprinted several of his own translations of Chinese short stories including 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short'. In a 'note by the translator' Ye claims to know Yao 'quite well'

³⁹⁴ Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 295.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 294.

³⁹⁶ The story appeared in English, in the Chinese-published magazine *T'ien Hsia Monthly* in December 1938, pp. 495 - 508.

³⁹⁷ Ye also wrote under the pen name 'Ma Er' in China.

and informs readers that 'he has produced three long novels during the past three years'.³⁹⁸ Although it was Ye who sent the translation of Yao's story to Lehmann, neither Ye nor Chen is credited for their translation.

That Chen was involved with the translation of fiction ripe for propaganda, was no coincidence. By 1938, Chen had established himself as an outspoken art critic and journalist for English-language publications in China and abroad. He had travelled widely, including a childhood lived partly in the Soviet Union after his father, who was part of the leftist faction of the Chinese Nationalist Party that opposed Chiang Kai-shek, was exiled there. In the 1930s and 40s, Chen was a sympathiser of the Communist Party and he interviewed Mao in Yan'an.³⁹⁹ Chen is perhaps best-known in the West as a political cartoonist, whose powerful images of China's suffering during the war with Japan, had appeared in *Life* magazine (January 1938), by then an American weekly news magazine with a strong emphasis on photojournalism owned by Henry Luce.⁴⁰⁰ One particularly grim but defiant image shows a peasant squatting beside a dead child and a gun, beneath which a caption has been added, which reads that the peasant: 'is looking into a future in which there is no other course but to take up his gun and fight Japan'.⁴⁰¹ Chen's visual image to some extent echoes Yao's narrative which looks at what motivates a simple-minded peasant to move from farming that land to taking up arms against Japan. During the Japanese war Chen curated exhibitions of contemporary Chinese art alongside drawings and caricatures by American and British artists. He took a traveling exhibition of Chinese cartoons and woodcuts to Britain in 1937 and on to America to raise money for aid to China, before continuing the tour back in mainland China.⁴⁰² Chen would later help to open the first London office of the New

³⁹⁸ Yeh (trans.) *Three Seasons and Other Stories*, p. 135

³⁹⁹ For a brief biography of Jack Chen (Chen Yifan, 1908-1997) particularly his politics and his published work, see Shen, *Cosmopolitan Publics*, pp. 69 - 76.

⁴⁰⁰ Online link to *Life* magazine 17 January 1938.

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=wkoEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA50&dq=%22Chinese+Cartoonists%27+Circle+on+a+hilltop+outside+Shanghai%22&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Vz8aUbzmFMXj0QHN3IGABA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=%22Chinese%20Cartoonists%20Circle%20on%20a%20hilltop%20outside%20Shanghai%22&f=false> (Last accessed 7.8.17)

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² For details about the movements of Jack Chen between 1935-1938 see Paul Bevan, *A Modern Miscellany: Shanghai Cartoon Artists, Shao Xunmei's Circle and the travels of Jack Chen, 1926-1938*

China News Agency (now Xinhua). Chen's wartime propaganda has been on display at the British Museum as recently as 2013.

Shortly after Chen and Ye's English translation of Yao's story appeared in *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, the same translation was featured in Whit Burnett and Martha Foley's *The Magazine of the Short Story* (May-June edition, 1939) published in New York and heralded on the front cover as 'the first short story of the guerrilla warfare in China'.

One further explanation for the speed of the story's translation into English as it passed through the Chinese propaganda office, is undoubtedly Yao's favourable portrayal of Chinese soldiers in action. The men in the guerrilla unit in Yao's story are comradely and joshing but more significantly they are effective and successful in their mission to derail a train carrying Japanese military personnel by blowing up the tracks. In this sense, Yao's short story, once it has been translated into English, is transformed into a work of resistance of a different sort, taking on as it does, Western prejudices about Chinese soldiers. Accounts and images of Chinese military men as cowardly, ill-equipped and ill-trained had persisted since the Qing Dynasty (for example following the Opium Wars and the devastation of the Banner armies in the Boxer Rebellion). Snow acknowledges the stereotype explicitly in chapter five of Part Eight, in *Red Star Over China*, which begins:

The Chinese soldier had had a poor reputation abroad. Many people thought his gun was chiefly ornamental, that he did his only fighting with an opium pipe, that any rifle shots exchanged were by mutual agreement and in the air, that battles were fought with silver and the soldier was paid in opium. Some of that had been true enough of most armies in the past, but the well-equipped first-class Chinese soldier (White as well as Red) was no longer a vaudeville joke.⁴⁰³

(Leiden: Brill, 2016). Tom Buchanan, *East Wind*, mentions Jack Chen's contributions to British newspaper and journals including the *Left Review* and the *Daily Worker*, during this time, pp. 77-79.

⁴⁰³ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, p. 289.

Snow then proceeds to attempt to smash this old stereotype and to present his case that in recent years ‘there has arisen a new type of Chinese warrior’.⁴⁰⁴ It is this new fighter that Yao portrays in the guerrilla unit that Dumb Wang stumbles across. Dumb Wang’s shortcomings only serve to highlight the effectiveness of the unit of soldiers who adopt and train him. Yao’s tale includes a stern commander and a unit of guerrilla soldiers who creep fearlessly into a village thought to be held by the Japanese. And, although the narrator in the story admits that his unit did not have ‘very up-to-date weapons’, they are able to carry out their mission successfully under fire from the enemy’s machine guns.⁴⁰⁵

Shifting Western perceptions about China and in particular, Chinese soldiers, are noted in a recently published study of comic representations of China (1890-1945) by Wendy Gan. In chapter four, ‘Levelling Laughter: Travel Writing in China Between the Wars’ Gan takes a comic encounter with soldiers in the Nationalist army, from Christopher Isherwood and W.H Auden’s *Journey to a War* (1939) to provide a new prism through which to view the development of the West’s relationship with China. For Gan, the encounter is a moment of shared comedy which replaces the anticipated mockery that might more commonly have set the tone for a Western man’s encounter with the Chinese army. Thus Isherwood recalls being pulled in a rickshaw past a squad of new Chinese recruits being drilled along the streets of Hankow (Wuhan). Gan states:

The actions of the soldiers are mystifyingly comical. On an order barked out by the officer in charge, the men “slightly and elegantly advanced one foot, in an attitude which suggested ballet-dancing, combined with a sort of stolid ferocity”. This is familiar territory, very much in keeping with the usual jokes made at the expense of the ill-equipped and ill-trained Chinese soldier.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 289.

⁴⁰⁵ *TPNW 14*, p 100.

⁴⁰⁶ Wendy Gan, *Comic China China: Representing Common Ground, 1890-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2018), p. 88.

However, when Isherwood's rickshaw coolie becomes lost and begins passing the recruits for the second and third time, there is a 'delightful moment of mutual comic acknowledgement; the recruits are silly but so is Isherwood'.⁴⁰⁷ Gan goes on to comment that in the interwar world, no one is exempt from ridicule and that by 1939 'the dominant mode had become a good-natured self-deprecation, rather than anxious attempts to regain lost authority'.⁴⁰⁸ By the time Penguin Book's readers encounter the likable but somewhat half-baked (in revolutionary terms) guerrilla fighter Dumb Wang in 1942, Lehmann surely intends that they find the story humorous but without any hint of outright mockery of the main unit of Chinese soldiers. The 'mode' that Gan identifies as evident in 1939 appears then to have endured.⁴⁰⁹

There is no doubt the course of events in World War II that led to Britain and America declaring war on Japan were a factor that contributed to these moments of greater sympathy for a China engaged in fierce Japanese resistance. By the end of 1942, more than a year after the attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, the British Empire in the Far East, including Hong Kong, Malaya (including Singapore) and Burma had been surrendered to the Japanese. It had collapsed with devastating speed. The fall of Singapore was described by Churchill as 'the biggest capitulation in British military history'.⁴¹⁰ The BBC reports at the time referred to the Japanese as well-trained and battle-hardened: Japan had become the underrated enemy.

When the Chinese writer, Xiao Qian, a former student of Snow's and a close friend of Ye's during the war, came to Britain in 1939, he commented that after December 1941 (shortly after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor) China 'began to exist in

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 89.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 89.

⁴⁰⁹ Gan also mentions in a footnote the 'spirited defence' of the Chinese soldier in Peter Fleming's *One's Company, A Journey to China* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1934) as an early attempt to shift Western ideas about China's military. Gan, *Comic China*, p. 178. It is also worth noting that Fleming (a contemporary of Harold Acton at Eton who also went to Oxford and travelled in China) was recruited by the British War Office to conduct research about irregular warfare, including developing ideas that might assist the Chinese guerrillas fighting the Japanese.

⁴¹⁰ Christopher M. Bell, 'Churchill and the Guns of Singapore, 1941-1942, Facing the Wrong Way?' Online source <<https://winstonchurchill.hilldale.edu/singapore-guns/>> (Last Accessed 5 August 2019). Corrigan, Gordon (2010). *The Second World War: A Military History*. New York: Atlantic Books

the eyes of the British'.⁴¹¹ And what Lehmann was able to provide for the literary, the leftist or simply the curious, was a vision of China, as perceived by its own people. Lehmann invited readers to explore, through works very much held, by Chinese writers too, to be at the heart of China's resistance movement the mood and preoccupations of the Chinese people. Xiao, for example, wrote an article for the BBC's weekly *The Listener* magazine on 11 June 1942, entitled 'China's Literary Revolution' in which he concludes by singling out the writers of note from that period:

Among the essays, one finds today sketches, full of hope and enthusiasm about the guerrilla areas. There are portraits of heroes and martyrs of the war, both on land and in the air. Many such heroes are very ordinary men, such as ... the very touching illiterate peasant in Yao Hsueh Hen's 'Half a cart of straw short' (*sic*).⁴¹²

Xiao also praises Chang Tien-yi's (Zhang Tianyi) 'Mr Hua Wei' in the essay and S. M.'s 'The Third-Rate Gunner' and alerts readers that all the stories can be read in *New Writing*. It is another endorsement for Lehmann and his ability to seek out unique and powerful young writers around the world and elevate them to a literary space that amounts to a world (the Anglophone world) stage. Four months after Yao's story was published in *TPNW*, Britain signed the landmark treaty with China which abolished extraterritorial rights and 'unequal treaties'.

⁴¹¹ Xiao Qian, *Traveller Without A Map*, p. 76.

⁴¹² Hsiao Ch'ien (Xiao Qian), 'China's Literary Revolution', *The Listener*, 11 June 1942, pp. 756 - 757.

Chapter 5: Kenneth Lo, Literary Success and Failure

5.1 Introducing Kenneth Lo

Kenneth Lo's (Lo Hsiao Chien, 羅孝建) short story 'A Chinese Seaman' (*TPWN* 24, 1945) was written in English and is therefore best defined as an example of Anglophone Chinese literature rather than modern Chinese literature in translation (which defines the stories in the previous chapter). For these reasons 'A Chinese Seaman' is the subject of its own chapter.

'A Chinese Seaman' is the only story by Kenneth Lo that Lehmann published in *TPNW* even though correspondence between the two shows that Lo sent short stories, sketches, poems, translations and a collection of essays to Lehmann from 1942 onwards.⁴¹³ Lo is best known as the foremost expert in Britain on Chinese food during the 1980s and 1990s when his writing found an enthusiastic readership curious about China as the country began to open up to the rest of the world. He wrote almost 40 Chinese cookery books, launched a cooking school and opened the Memories of China restaurants which are still serving regional Chinese dishes to this day.⁴¹⁴ When Lehmann first encountered Lo in 1942 however, he had recently completed his studies in English literature at Cambridge University and was an aspiring Anglophone writer. Throughout the 1940s and despite the diplomatic duties that diverted him during the war, Lo sought to become 'one of China's front rank writers in English'.⁴¹⁵ In correspondence in October 1944 Lo stressed his belief that with two or three years further study he should 'be able to improve my writing in English to such an extent that

⁴¹³ This correspondence is housed in Lehmann's editorial archive at the Harry Ransom Centre, Austin, Texas.

⁴¹⁴ Of the restaurants, there is one in London and one in the Algarve, Vale do Lobo, Portugal.

⁴¹⁵ Typed letter from Lo to Mr Dao (The Chinese Consul in Liverpool) dated October 8th 1944 (LMA/4680/C/001). This archive at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) is not yet available to the public and as a result the box references are likely to change.

at the end of the term it should be quite comparable to that of Ling yu-tang [sic] or any other Chinese authors writing in English'.⁴¹⁶ Lin's writing and his position in the US as a valued interpreter of China and Chinese culture appear to have convinced Lo that there was a gap for such a role in Britain that he himself might be able to fill. Although he only alludes to them in correspondence as 'other Chinese writers', Lo certainly knew his competition in this arena in wartime Britain. Through his time at Cambridge University he was acquainted with the small community of artistic and literary-minded overseas Chinese (mostly based in London, Cambridge or Oxford throughout the 1940s) and was able to foster opportunities at the BBC and begin to meet and correspond with literary and news editors in London who had a particular interest in China. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Lo wrote several leader articles for the *New Statesman & Nation*, he contributed to and was briefly an associate editor for Dorothy Woodman's *Asian Horizon* magazine, he self published a collection of stories, poems and sketches, wrote newspaper articles and was published in *TPNW*.⁴¹⁷ Lo's letters to Lehmann (in the Harry Ransom Center) show that he was still submitting translations to Lehmann for publication in March 1954, by which time Lehmann had become editor of *The London Magazine*.⁴¹⁸ These minor literary achievements and Lo's efforts to become an English writer and a translator in his early career have been entirely overshadowed by his cookery book publishing and restaurant empire which he began to build in the mid 1970s. This is in no small part because Lo's aspiration to become a similar figure to Lin Yutang (林語堂, 1895-1976, a writer, scholar, philosopher, poet and historian) who would eventually be remembered as a peerless 'interpreter to Western minds of the customs, aspirations, fears and thoughts of his people and their country, China', was never achieved.⁴¹⁹ At least, not in the ways he identified in correspondence from this

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. Lo probably refers to Lin here because of a sense of affinity with a fellow Fujianese and because Lin already had a well-established reputation as an Anglophone writer in Britain and American by the mid-1940s.

⁴¹⁷ *Asian Horizon* article, Kenneth Lo, 'Asia in the Olympic Games' is an account which includes some of Asia's failures at the Olympic Games. (*Asian Horizon*, Vol 1. No.3, Autumn 1948).

⁴¹⁸ Typed Letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 10th March 1954 (HRC/Lehmann under Kenneth Lo).

⁴¹⁹ *New York Times*, 'Lin Yutang, 80, Dies; Scholar, Philosopher' March 27th 1976 on p. 57 of the New York edition (also online ref:

period. It was not until his later years that Lo's instinct to educate and inform the British public about the ways of China, found its full expression in his food and cookery writing and related activities.

When Lo set off for Britain in 1936 as a young man of 23 years as his father, several uncles and his paternal grandfather had before him, it was for the second time. His father Lo Tsung Hsien, had worked for the Chinese embassy in London between 1919-22 which accounted for Lo's first stint in the country.⁴²⁰ His paternal grandfather, Lo Fenglu, was a former Chinese ambassador to London who had been knighted by Queen Victoria for his services to Anglo-Chinese relations and one of his uncles had held the second most senior position at the Chinese embassy in London (and previously studied at Cambridge). At this stage in his life, Lo was travelling a path that was well laid out before him but, as his memoir testifies, the academic achievements of his two grandfathers alone remained 'daunting to follow'.⁴²¹ As Lo set sail for Britain, travelling first to Berlin alongside the 142-members of the Chinese Olympic team although not himself a competitor, he confessed to having no idea how long it would be until he returned to China.⁴²² His anxiety about waving farewell to his country for an indeterminate period of time, it turns out, was both prescient and well-founded. For, despite only very modest literary success in his early career and becoming disillusioned with Chinese foreign office work, despite borderline poverty and a failed fine arts business, Lo remained in Britain, married a British woman and eventually became a British citizen. It would be fifty-four years before he set foot on Chinese soil again.⁴²³ Meanwhile, Lo's more successful (in terms of literary reputation in the 1940s) fellow Anglophone writers in Britain, including Xiao Qian and Ye Junjian, left the country during

<<https://www.nytimes.com/1976/03/27/archives/lin-yutang-80-dies-scholar-philosopher-lin-yutang.html>> (Last accessed 3.12.19).

⁴²⁰ Lo's father had been to Cambridge University (along with two of his father's uncles). His grandfather studied at Greenwich Naval College and London University. Lo's uncle had served as First Secretary at the Chinese Embassy in London. Lo's maternal grandfather was director of the Wampoa Naval Academy in China. Kenneth Lo, *The Feast of My Life* (London, New York: Transworld Publishers, 1993), p. 11, 25, 58, 59.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

World War II or immediately after the founding of the PRC. Ultimately and despite his family's tradition of 'getting to the roots of western culture and philosophy' in order to 'modernize' and improve China, Ken Lo never took back to China the knowledge he gained in Britain.⁴²⁴ Instead he eventually settled on the role of cultural bridge and cultural translator for an enthusiastic readership in Britain, which was undeniably a more effective promotion of trans-cultural understanding in the 1970s and 1980s than he could have achieved from inside China. It was a role that also enabled him, via unofficial channels, to promote an alternative narrative to the official dialogue and international exchange that characterised much of the Cold War period.

Despite the literary success he prized so highly eluding him in those early years, Lo's early writing and correspondence (particularly relating to *TPNW* and Lehmann) is worthy of consideration because it shows the beginning of Lo's fascination with how Chinese people were perceived in Britain and how he sought to push against stereotypes and outdated, narrow ideas about China and its people which assuredly persisted during the war even after the country became an key, albeit cynically exploited, ally.⁴²⁵ Examining the context for his early writing and mapping the paths that Lo sought to tread, and the paths of other Chinese Anglophone writers which he sought to follow, across Britain's literary landscape in the 1940s indicates not only the routes and obstacles that existed for outsiders seeking acceptance and recognition within the boundaries of British literature, but also the central role that Lehmann himself played in establishing, or not, their reputations and literary standing. A consideration of Lo's writing which failed to find a readership, provides valuable evidence about what inspired him to write and where his ambition outran his ability or came up against the apathy or indifference of British publishers. As a result of Lo's ultimate failure to publish a great deal of his creative or critical writing in the 1940s, ideas contained within Hsu's *A Floating Chinaman Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific*, are illuminating as they suggest that one explanation for Chinese writers' (translators and editors too) struggle

⁴²⁴ Ibid, p. 59.

⁴²⁵ For insight into Winston Churchill's public and private attitude towards China during World War II see Buchanan, *East Wind China and the British Left 1925-1976*, p. 93.

for recognition in 1930s and 1940s America was because their work ran counter to mainstream (in America) narratives about the country that made it difficult for them to proffer alternative narratives.

The first short story that Lo sent to Lehmann for publication was in February 1942 while he was living in Harvey Road, Cambridge. The story had been written the previous year while Lo was a student at Fitzwilliam House (then a non-collegiate college at the university which supported students who could not afford to belong to a college) where he had been tutored by, among others, the literary critic and sinophile, I. A. Richards.⁴²⁶ In a typed letter which accompanied the short story, Lo wrote:

It [the story] was jotted down in twenty minutes when I woke up one morning last spring when the nocturnal upheaval of the previous night was still fresh in my mind. The story doesn't reflect anything of any significance about this war, but, I think, it does represents (sic) the extremely complex consciousness (sic) of a contemporary Chinese who has had to live through a period of transformation which has no parallel in the West.⁴²⁷

As the MSS of the story which accompanied the letter is absent from the John Lehmann archive, Lo's comments are now a tantalizing reference to what was probably his first attempt at literary recognition. What is in evidence is that Lo believed that Lehmann was a literary editor with an interest in and openness towards literature which explored the 'complex consciousness' of contemporary Chinese people. Unfortunately for Lo, his story did not reach the journal's benchmarks to pass to publication. A handwritten note pencilled at the top of Lo's letter contains the response 'n.g.e. but a nice letter' ('n.g.e.', an abbreviation of 'not good enough', was among Lehmann's and/or his secretary at

⁴²⁶ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, pp. 112-113. Lo recalls I. A. Richards at Magdalene College but notes that Richards wasn't allowed to teach English there, and so he taught at other colleges. Lo's association with Richards probably at least partly accounts for Lo's translation of Mencius after the war (but Lo was unable to sell it).

⁴²⁷ Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated February 17th 1942 (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao Qian). Note this letter had been mis-filed in the archive under Xiao Qian as Lo's name in Wade/Giles romanization is almost identical to Xiao Qian's (ie: Lo Hsiao Chien).

that time, Barbara Cooper's, standard rejections). The addition of 'nice letter' was their way of letting the aspirant down gently.⁴²⁸ Although there is no mention of it in his memoir, Lo, had briefly lodged in Cambridge in the house of an Italian family (the Vancillis) with Xiao Qian who was teaching at the School of Oriental Studies (then part of the University of London) which had been evacuated there at the start of the war.⁴²⁹ It is probable that Lo first wrote to Lehmann on Xiao's suggestion as Xiao was already in regular correspondence with the literary editor by that time. It is further evidence that Lehmann and *TPNW* were considered by Chinese writers in Britain, aspiring ones included, as something of a hub. There were assuredly others with this status, among them Kingsley Martin and to an even greater extent, his partner Dorothy Woodman who made Lo an associate editor of her journal *Asian Horizon* (for the Autumn-Winter 1949-50 issue which was the magazine's last) after Ye Junjian returned to China.

5.2 'A Chinese Seaman' (*TPNW* 24)

It was just over two years after Lo's initial letter to Lehman that the pair again struck up correspondence over the publication of a story that is more accurately described as an account or piece of reportage than a work of creative imagination. The extraordinary tale that would eventually appear in *TPNW* 24 was based entirely on a verbatim account by Poon Lim (Pan Lian, 潘 濂), a Chinese seaman who had become a global celebrity after he survived for what was then a record 133 days adrift on a raft in the South Atlantic Ocean. Lo's version of the story, a narrative account written in the third person, was penned after a ten hour interview conducted in the 'Wellbeck Palace Hotel' (sic) with Lim in October 1943, shortly after King George VI had awarded him a British Empire Medal (BEM).⁴³⁰ Accounts of Lim's ordeal had already appeared in newspaper articles around the world and, following Lo's negotiations, a full exposition appeared in

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Xiao Qian's *Traveller Without a Map*, p. 80. This Italian family, the Vancillis, in Cambridge is not to be confused with the Petoello family with whom Lo lived later on, in Harvey Road.

⁴³⁰ The Welbeck Palace Hotel is now a Holiday Inn on Welbeck Street, W1, London.

the Sunday newspaper *Empire News*. Lo's memoir recalls that he had extracted 'quite a lot of money from the Press for the story'.⁴³¹ However, it would have been the possibility of literary recognition that prompted Lo to write the short story version of Poon Lim's experience at sea which he passed to Kingsley Martin, along with a bundle of 11 or so other stories, sketches and fragments, for his consideration and safekeeping. In June 1944, Martin passed the short story to Lehmann with an effusive letter that nevertheless acknowledged the work as 'a piece of straight reportage'. In his response to Martin, Lehmann concurs Martin's verdict.⁴³²

When Lo received Lehmann's letter of interest in the Poon Lim story he wrote back immediately and sought to brush aside the editor's concerns over publication rights concerning the Kemsley Papers newspaper group (the owners of *Empire News*).⁴³³ The typed letter has the letterhead of 'The Consulate of the Republic of China in Liverpool' where Lo by this stage had been co-opted to work by the Chinese Ambassador, Wellington Koo (Gu Weijun, 顧維鈞) as a 'Student Consul' tasked with mediating in an increasingly acrimonious dispute involving thousands of Chinese seamen in the city who wanted pay parity with their British and other counterparts and wartime bonuses, given the extreme danger of their work. As the dispute and a resultant strikes and desertions by Chinese seamen began to hamper the Allied war effort, which relied on around 20,000 Chinese sailors in the merchant navy during WWII, it had become a source of tension for the British and Chinese governments as well as a headache for the shipping lines and the Ministry of War Transport (and prior to 1941 the Ministry of Shipping).

In the early years of the war, in Cambridge, Lo had agreed to give lectures to British troops and earned a small sum writing broadcasts for the BBC about the European war which were then translated into Chinese (by Lo) and, after being censored, read out by him in Mandarin. This is very similar to the work Xiao Qian was doing for BBC radio during the war. Lo had also acted as a fireman, sleeping at night in

⁴³¹ Lo, *The Feast of My Life*, p. 140.

⁴³² Typed letter from Lehmann to Martin dated 2nd June 1944 (HRC/Lehmann/Martin).

⁴³³ Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 17th June 1944 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

the canteen of the Cambridge Library with buckets of sand at the ready.⁴³⁴ It was not, however, until Lo wrote to Ambassador Koo, offering his services, that his serious work in the war began. Lo's memoir notes: 'He [Ambassador Koo] said he wanted me to go to Liverpool and join the consulate as a 'Student Consul'. My special task would be to organise the Chinese Seamen's Union so that they might best continue to assist the Allies in their war effort.'⁴³⁵ This was the KMT Government's equivalent of the Communist-backed Liverpool Seamen's Union which already represented a large number of mostly Shanghainese seamen in the city and with whom the British government and the shipowners refused to negotiate because they did not want to concede them any legitimacy. Evidently the underlying tensions and uneasy (and temporary) peace that marked this period of China's civil war, spilled over into Britain during WWII and Lo found himself in the midst of it all. In the Author's Note to a collection of stories and sketches about the seamen in Liverpool that Lo self-published in 1947, he commented: 'My office desk [in the Liverpool consular office] came therefore to be a good ringside seat for the Battle of the Oceans which was then raging',⁴³⁶ Between 1941-1945, Lo estimated that his office dealt with 'a dozen to two score' cases per day (a case lasting anything from a few minutes to several months) from Chinese seamen.⁴³⁷ And, in correspondence from Lo to a Dr Wang (who appears to be both an official and a family friend) he comments that he and his colleague, Christopher Chen, had handled 2500-3000 cases since start of 1942, including incidents ranging from 'strikes and wage disputes' to murder and 'white slave traffic'.⁴³⁸ Lo's memoir, recalls the sense of urgency in the negotiations and the vital role the Chinese seaman played in middle years of the war:

⁴³⁴ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 123.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴³⁶ Kenneth Lo, *Forgotten Wave* (Padiham, Padiham Advertiser, 1947), pp 4-6. The publication is available online at:
<<https://www.facebook.com/BritishChineseHeritage/photos/a.526817160721345/526817280721333/?type=3&theater>> (Last Accessed 3.12.19)

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴³⁸ Typed letter from Lo to Dr Wang dated 26th June 1944 KL archive (LMA/4680/C/001).

To the Allies, at this vital and highly sensitive period of war, Chinese participation in Europe was even more crucial than the expeditionary force which Chiang Kaishek had sent to re-enter Burma with the British 14th Army. Without them the German U-boats, E-boats and battleships ... might easily have cut the jugular, long before Roosevelt's frigates or the American liberty ships arrived in sufficient numbers to save the day.⁴³⁹

Lo's fluency in Chinese and English and his family's history of service in the Chinese foreign office as well as his grandfather's illustrious naval career undoubtedly made him an ideal candidate to attempt to subdue the growing tensions in Liverpool. It was because of Lo's role as a diplomatic administrator between 1942-44 (in Liverpool) that he found himself in the right place, at the right time to encounter Poon Lim.

The real Poon Lim was 24 years old and the Second Steward on the British merchant ship the SS Ben Lomond when it was torpedoed by an Italian U-boat as it headed for Dutch Guiana in November 1942.⁴⁴⁰ The ship sank very quickly killing almost everyone on board. Lim was one of the few survivors after he managed to swim to a life raft before floating off alone across the south Atlantic. He eventually drifted to a river inlet somewhere off the coast of Brazil, having survived for four and a half months by eating dried fish, shark and birds and caching rain water and condensation after his initial supplies of food and drinking water ran out. During the war there had been a steady flow of newspaper reports about the survivors of u-boat and e-boat attacks who had drowned or were rescued at sea, days or weeks after they were forced to abandon ship. Several of these had involved Chinese seamen who were either rescued or who had perished at sea. But in comparison with earlier tales of survival, Lim's story was extreme. It also provided its narrator with a chance to fashion a positive role model out of a Chinese seaman who, because of his ingenuity, resourcefulness and mental self-control (in no small part the story suggests, linked to his Chinese upbringing) found

⁴³⁹ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 130.

⁴⁴⁰ *TPNW 24*, p. 65. Lo refers to the 'Fascist emblem of Italy' on the U-boat. This directly contradicts Poon Lim's wikipedia entry which mentions a German U-boat.

that he was equipped to withstand the physical and psychological hardship of the ordeal. Such was the international interest in the story and the sympathy it generated for Lim that six years after his rescue, in 1949, he was given permission by Congress to spend the rest of his life in America even though the Chinese immigration quota for that year was 'oversubscribed'.⁴⁴¹

5.3 Challenging Chinese Stereotypes

The short story in *TPNW 24* which recounts Lim's experience being shipwrecked begins moments before the ship sinks as he is tidying his cabin and ends with his rescue on April 5, 1943 by Brazilian fishing folk. It was the first time the story, in a short story format, had been published in Great Britain. Lo noted in a letter to Lehmann prior to its publication that although an article about Lim had appeared in the *Empire News* under his name, he had not in fact written it, merely supplied the details: 'It was simply something knocked out by a reporter but using my name simply to accentuate the oriental flavour, I suppose.'⁴⁴² What appears in *TPNW 24* is a piece of straight third-person narration which, because of its factual content is closer in genre to reportage than imaginative prose, although Lo at times appears to encroach upon Lim's story. Lehmann's *NW* venture, through its various iterations, had been closely associated with reportage, including a fictionalised version of reportage which veered from a hybrid form of autobiography combined with reportage in the 1930s, to 'realism turned strange' during WWII.⁴⁴³ The magazine also carried regular features, often written under a pseudonym, about goings on in government departments or snatches of conversation overheard in the streets or descriptions about life in the Home Guard, which were closer to works of pure reportage. Although reportage was permitted, and encouraged in all its playful variants in *TPNW*, Lehmann fought to keep out of the magazine a great deal of experiential writing that he found to be too plain. In the

⁴⁴¹ 'Special Bill for Poon Lim', *Dundee Courier*, 21 July 1949, p. 3.

⁴⁴² Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 17th June 1944 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁴⁴³ For analysis of a shift in writing during WWII in which Lehmann's writers are given some consideration, see Rod Mengham, 'Broken Glass' in Rod Mengham and N.H Reeve (eds) *The Fiction of the 1940s, Stories of Survival*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 124 -129.

instance of 'A Chinese Seaman' however, because the experience is so extraordinary, applying further imagination to it would have been excessive. For two other reasons the short story is the first of its kind by a Chinese writer in *TPNW*. The setting of the piece is outside of China, in a neutral sea zone, and the text has not been translated from the Chinese but was written in English and so does not suffer from the inevitable (no matter how expertly done) odd phrase that makes the reader aware of the process that the text has undergone and its distance - be it slight or very great - from the original.⁴⁴⁴ The setting of the story, a man adrift on a boat at sea, is somewhat universal in so far as it could happen to almost anyone at sea during WWII and the language, its idioms, and the reportage style would have been comfortably familiar to *TPNW* readers. However, it is the 'oriental flavour' of the story which lends it uniqueness and enables the narrator to convey a great deal about Chinese people in general and Chinese seamen in particular that ran counter to official perceptions as well as mainstream representations (particularly in newspapers) at the time as this chapter considers.

The few details provided about Lim in the initial paragraphs of the story include the fact that he 'signed on as a sailor in Hong Kong in 1940, and later re-signed on in Manchester in June 1942 under the articles of the new Anglo-Chinese Agreement concluded in April' that year.⁴⁴⁵ This is the only, somewhat oblique, reference to the political, racial and pay-related tensions that were the real-time context to the story and with which Lo (and assuredly Lim) would have been only too familiar. Following the fall of Hong Kong and Singapore to the Japanese in 1941 and 1942, Chinese seamen came to Britain in greater numbers. The 1942 agreement had been meant to settle, decisively, disputes over pay and bonuses and to bring an end to the disruption that was beginning to hamper Britain's war effort. It achieved this only temporarily and as a result after a matter of only months, trouble began to flare again. Throughout the rest of the short story, the floor is given entirely to Lim and the political, wartime, context becomes the backdrop to a compelling personal account. After 'a shattering explosion' Lim grabs

⁴⁴⁴ Lo translated Poon Lim's original interview from Chinese as the seaman spoke almost no English according to Lo's memoir, Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 140.

⁴⁴⁵ *TPNW* 24, p. 63.

his shoes and life-jacket and rushes onto the deck to help his fellow seamen lower the lifeboats.⁴⁴⁶ Instead, the sea overcomes them and when Lim emerges, gasping from the water the ship has already disappeared below the surface: two of his family members are among the dead. A bereft Lim finds a piece of driftwood, a hatch door, and from this new vantage point spots a raft with no one in it and is able to climb aboard. Lim briefly sees another raft with a few men onboard but without oars (he later discovers the raft does in fact have oars) he is unable to reach it. From this moment, Lim realises that he is stranded, alone in the Atlantic. One of the few benefits of his solitary state is that the provisions he discovers on board the raft, 'water, chocolate, milk tablets, biscuits, barley sugar, fish-paste, bottle of lime juice ... and oil' will not have to be shared. As a result, he calculates the supplies should enable him 'to carry on for a fortnight, a score of days or even a month'.⁴⁴⁷ He also discovers a stash of signalling equipment: yellow smoke and life flares. As the narrative unfolds and with the immediate physical concerns of food and water at least temporarily abated, it is the psychological challenge of his predicament that afflicts Lim the most. There are several instances during the story which refer specifically to Lim's state of mind. The first, suggests: 'It now occurred to him that he must not allow his mind to wander the way it was doing: it wouldn't do him any good. He had better come down to practical things.'⁴⁴⁸ And later, the narrator informs readers:

He decided that he must not allow his mind to be too active. For whatever he thought he couldn't raise the dead, or the ship, or grow wings. It was better for him to prepare for sleep and, if he thought of anything, to think only of the coming rescue.⁴⁴⁹

And later the narrator comments: 'But each time thoughts of the strangeness of his position and all the contingencies he was exposed to entered his head he banished

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

it with the counter-thought of the coming rescue'.⁴⁵⁰ Already in these early passages the narrator is building an impression of Lim as an individual who is practical, calm, measured, self-contained and has his wits about him in extraordinary circumstances. Lim appears in command of his thoughts as much as his actions. In order to cope with the exceptional strangeness of his predicament, Lim alights on memories of the past to comfort him, and to bring his mind to some sort of state of equilibrium. He lies at the bottom of the raft, when not keeping lookout, underneath a sailcloth that he has fashioned and there, 'feeling the slight toss and roll of the raft' recalls the 'summertime of his boyhood days in Hainan [the tropical island at the southernmost tip of China] where the sun was just as hot....when he used to nap in the afternoon under the shade of trees or the bamboo superstructure in the courtyard'.⁴⁵¹

The seaman's musings invite readers to glimpse into his past and there discover moments of ease and comfort which challenging mainstream representations in Britain about the personal lives of Chinese labourers or 'coolies' (the derogatory term alluding to foreign labour still firmly in use by some western officials in the 1940s) as impoverished and wretched and characterised by discomfort and misery from start to finish. Whether these musings are genuinely representative of Lim's own experience it is difficult to know. Lo's privileged childhood may equally have been the inspiration for the passage. Readers also learn of the seaman's professionalism. Even though he is utterly alone with no one there to witness it: 'True to his own habit and tradition of a sailor, each day he would spend some time cleaning his raft and putting it in a tidy state. For even in his misfortune, he could not bear filth and untidiness'.⁴⁵² These positive impressions of Lim as organised and in control are somewhat mitigated by his response on the seventh day at sea when he sights 'a two-funnel ship sailing from south to north' which comes 'quite close' to his raft.⁴⁵³ Overwhelmed by sudden excitement, he lets off all the three tins of 'yellow smoke' and the dozen 'life flares' only to discover that 'there must have been nobody on deck at all' or the watch must have been asleep because the ship

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁵² *TPNW 24*, pp. 74 - 75.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 69.

sailed on without altering its course.⁴⁵⁴ Lo here presents readers with an impression of the seaman as a flawed being, a narrative device with the effect of arousing greater sympathy for the protagonist who appears both more human and more universal as a result. The incident, as narrated by Lo, also gives greater dimension to Lim's character.

As the narrative progresses, a dualism emerges in Lim's recollections of the past which offer a sense of comfort but which also contribute to a strong sense of the alienness of his present environment. At times, the alien overwhelms the seaman's thoughts: 'it sometimes even appeared that he might have always lived the way he did [floating on a raft at sea]; it was the only normal way of living ... the rest, the life of his memory and imagination of the past he once knew were in reality only baseless dreams or fantasy'.⁴⁵⁵

Passages such as this demonstrate an affinity with the many wartime short stories in the magazine in which writers - through their characters - grapple with situations and events that overwhelm the senses and render them unable to process events. The instinct to evoke childhood as a way to comprehend the present and to gain comfort is another writerly response that became emblematic of wartime short story writing in Britain and is certainly a feature of *TPNW* stories, including for example, in the same issue of *TPNW* as Lo's story appeared, in Rosamond Lehmann's serialised short story 'Wonderful Holidays III' based on her own experiences growing up. Rod Mengham notes the recourse to 'infantile security' in wartime writing in his survey of 1940s fiction.

⁴⁵⁶

What brings an abrupt end to Lim's lackadaisical if, at times, fortifying mental meanderings is the mounting fear, which quickly becomes 'a horror' of the prospect of starvation.⁴⁵⁷ However, he has noted that the little fishes near the boat 'seemed abnormally stupid' even though he cannot immediately work out how to catch them.⁴⁵⁸ After an initial attempt to smack them with a paddle, which offers readers a moment of

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁵⁶ Mengham, 'Broken Glass', p. 125.

⁴⁵⁷ *TPNW* 24, p. 71.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

comic relief, Lim, swings into action. He makes a fishing line by unravelling a bit of rope and breaks the spring off the yellow smoke container to use as a hook.⁴⁵⁹ He first attempts to lure the fish with some biscuit paste on the contraption and when this does not work he uses a barnacle that he has plucked off the side of his raft.⁴⁶⁰ Here, the story is reminiscent of a boy's adventure tale as Lim snares fish, then a shark and eventually 'as many [fish] as he wanted'.⁴⁶¹ Lim, becomes 'skilled and experienced' in the making and preserving of the lines and the catching of the fish and the work even becomes 'quite a pleasure'.⁴⁶² He further finds entertainment by teasing the sharks which encircle the raft 'the sharks would fight and scramble for the these chunks and odd pieces thrown to them, just as the fishes used to scramble and fight for the biscuits thrown by the visitors to the old monastery ponds back in China'.⁴⁶³ As the portrait of Lim takes clearer shape throughout the story, readers also see the role of inanimate objects intensifying and swelling exponentially. A thread from a piece of rope becomes a life line (to fish for food). A piece of cloth becomes vital shelter and a cover over a pot becomes a vehicle for collecting life-sustaining condensation (fresh water). The short story format here is an extremely effective medium for conveying moments which are characterised by intensification, another noted feature of wartime writing where the form suited the content.

Overall, what emerges in these passages describing Lim's survival techniques is the portrait of a diligent, capable, empowered individual, one who is even capable of deriving satisfaction and some pleasure from his traumatic experience. In the final passages as the raft drifts closer to land, Lim finds a technique to catch birds landing on the raft. He waits until nightfall when they are asleep to grab them and kill them. Lim goes on to discover a particularly Chinese solution to his next dilemma onboard, how to store the piles of fish he has caught:

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

They would all go bad if he just left them on the raft. At this point he was reminded in his memory of the typical drying platform on every house-top in which the housewives used to dry their laundry in South China. He therefore tied a string around the four corner poles of the raft in imitation, and hung up all the sliced fishes to dry. In the scorching sun of the day they were dried in two days before they could go bad. Looking up from his lying position, the arrangement almost reminded him of home and frequently caused him to want to laugh. The sight of the lines of drying fish seemed comical to him in his state of misfortune.

⁴⁶⁴

What is being woven together here are strands of the story that appeared earlier. Readers witness how Lim's childhood memories and his Chinese past, inform his decisions and his actions and ultimately save his life. The sight of the drying lines is so strange yet familiar, that he cannot help laughing. He has created an image from his childhood - a version of it - on his boat. The description is extremely personal, extremely Chinese, while also lifting the readers' spirits with humour. Lim employs other techniques to provide psychological comfort and release as he bobs aimlessly on the high seas, such as when he sings to himself:

There were some lines from an old Chinese opera which he had sung since his youth; now he repeated them over and over again shouting away to the sea and sky and the four winds. Singing not only roused and maintained his spirit but also opened his deep-seated sorrow which was often now thickly covered under the habits and routines of the day. For more than anything else singing reminded him that this was not his natural form of life. The familiar strains and lines of the songs brought back forcibly the familiar realities of the world he really belonged to.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

Another psychological survival technique that the narrator suggests Lim employs to great effect is the suppression of hope, particularly when he begins to see signs that he may be approaching land. Again here, it is the seaman's Chinese upbringing, or precisely (and perhaps improbably for a Chinese seaman) his recollection of 'classical teaching' from his 'deep distant past' that reminds him that 'he who wishes to be rewarded must not allow himself to be over-burdened with hope'.⁴⁶⁶ A few pages previously Lo had begun building up this theme. He suggests that Lim:

Had been hoping for so long now that he was not hoping very much any more, and without hoping too much he could pass the hours of the day more easily, and take life in a more carefree spirit. He was resigned to fate and taking things as they came.⁴⁶⁷

The recollection of a classical teaching may be an instance in the short story where the details reflect the author's rather than the subject's experience. Lo, as his memoir testifies assuredly had a classical education but it seems unlikely that Lim, a Hainanese native who became a seaman, enjoyed such privilege.⁴⁶⁸ Either way, the effect is to elevate the Chinese race in the minds of Lehmann's Anglophone readers by suggesting that this kind of philosophising and psychological discipline is commonplace among the Chinese masses.

When Lim eventually sees land and the Brazilian fishermen who rescue him he notes: 'the boat was very much like the Chinese fishing boat one usually sees along the South China coast'.⁴⁶⁹ The narrator after so long in an alien environment instinctively seeks some familiarity in his new surroundings. But for his rescuers, it is Lim who is alien. As he attempts to explain to his rescuers that he is Chinese and he points to a flag of China, it becomes evident that they have 'never heard of China'.⁴⁷⁰ Ultimately this

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁶⁸ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 49.

⁴⁶⁹ *TPNW 24*, p. 80.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

response suggests that Lim's nationality is of little import, he is a man who needs rescuing, his humanity is enough, which is a reminder of the story's universal appeal. The fishermen then take Lim on a three day journey to the Brazilian port of Belem. The story ends with the final line: 'During his forty-five days convalescence at the hospital he ate a chicken every day'.⁴⁷¹ There can be few recovery responses more typically Chinese than the consumption of chicken as a restorative. But equally the line brings readers to a point that they can easily relate to. Perhaps the line is also a subconscious signal of where Lo's interest in and way of interpreting the world will lie, in the future.

5.4 Representations of China: Patriotism, Politics and Propaganda

When Lehmann introduces Lo to readers for the first time in 'About the New Contributors' (*TPNW* 24) they learn that he was: 'Born in 1914 and brought up in Foochow' [Fuzhou, Fujian Province in southeastern China]. That 'he graduated at Yenching University, Peiping [Beijing]' and that he 'came to England in 1936' and 'took a degree at Cambridge in 1938'.⁴⁷² Readers learn that he is 'a Cambridge tennis blue' and 'champion in north china'. They are told that 'he is now working with the Chinese Consulate in Liverpool as a seaman-administrator'. What this condensed biography indicates is that Lo is undeniably part of the Chinese elite in terms of his academic training (he has studied at top universities) and his leisure pursuits (he plays tennis to a high level). Most significant though is his work for the Chinese Foreign Office which provides his story with authenticity and puts him alongside the action. Lo's literary credentials are not emphasised, there is no mention that he studied English literature, for example, which is somewhat typical of Lehmann's approach to author biographies, which tended to stress worldly, rather than literary, achievements. The biography is the only indication that Lo had an official interest in the plight of the Chinese seamen in Britain, although this is not to suggest that Lo saw himself simply as an official mouthpiece for the Chinese (Nationalist) government.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁷² *TPNW*, p. 24.

Lehmann evidently responded positively to 'A Chinese Seaman' which as well as being highly personal and experiential, presented an often maligned and not highly visible segment of the Chinese population in a sympathetic light, without - readers may surmise - setting off Lehmann's propaganda radar. In the same issue of *TPNW* as the Poon Lim story, Lehmann contributed an essay entitled 'State Art & Scepticism' in which he highlights the complete lack of literary freedom for Soviet writers since 1941, particularly in comparison to British writers. In the essay, Lehmann comments: 'Propaganda to the Englishman is like sago-pudding to the schoolboy: nothing will make him like it, and he will detect it under the most seductive of sauces'.⁴⁷³ The essay suggests that Lehmann's propaganda radar remained on high alert (on behalf of his readers) albeit that he evidently had a far better knowledge and appreciation of the literary situation in (and output from) Russia compared to China.

'A Chinese Seaman' undoubtedly points to its author's strong sense of patriotism but it cannot be defined as a work of propaganda in any official sense as there is no evidence that Lo was compelled to write it. Equally, Lo's memoir of the wartime and post-war period and correspondence from that time suggest that ultimately it was his literary rather than diplomatic ambitions that he prized most greatly. Although a sense of duty in wartime initially compelled him to do what he could for his country, by 1944 and sensing that the urgency of his work in Liverpool was waning, Lo moved quickly to enrol in a British Council sponsored PhD at London University with the title 'China as reflected in English literature'.⁴⁷⁴ Shortly after this Lo requested a position at the Chinese Ministry of Information with George Yeh in London, or alternatively an appointment in the Foreign Office more compatible with his 'responsibility and qualifications'.⁴⁷⁵ In this pleading if rather pompous letter to the Chinese Ambassador in London, Wellington Koo, Lo lists his academic credentials and stresses that he is struggling in Liverpool to deal endlessly with people with 'very little education' and implores Koo to find him a job

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p.160.

⁴⁷⁴ Typed letter from University of London, Senate House to Lo, dated 15th November 1945, (LMA/4680 'University Life' A).

⁴⁷⁵ Typed letter to Welling Koo from Lo dated 5th May 1944 (LMA/4680/C/001).

more suited to and commensurate with his training and abilities.⁴⁷⁶ These are hardly the confessions of a diehard government spokesman. Ultimately, and unfortunately for Lo, a staffing crisis in the Chinese foreign office, meant that he was dispatched to Manchester to fill a position in that city and his doctoral studies and his immediate ambition to become a writer was curtailed. He remained in Manchester for less than a year before quitting the diplomatic service for good.

If 'A Chinese Seaman' stops short of outright propaganda despite being written by a Chinese government employee, it is by no means apolitical and the modesty and heroism which characterise Lim would certainly have met with approval from Chinese officials while also challenging some of the official British attitudes towards Chinese labourers and mainstream narrative about the seamen in particular. When Lim steps off his raft, he has his dignity intact. The abiding impressions of Lim in Lo's account, constructed over 18 pages in *TPNW* are of a diligent, brave, practical, inventive, organised individual who is, above all, highly rational. This characterisation of a Chinese seaman is in stark contrast to accounts that appeared in the pages of many mainstream regional and national newspapers which covered the travails of these men during wartime (with a few exceptions). From the start of WWII, the general flow of news about the Chinese seamen in Britain, tended to alight on their propensity to strike, desert ship, end up in jail, refuse to work, gamble, peddle (rare cases) and smoke opium, murder their compatriots (in one particularly high profile case) and to resort to mutiny and armed rioting *en masse* when and if their demands were not met. There were occasional reports of Chinese seamen awarded medals for bravery and less negative stories which settled for example on quirky customs such as thin paper letters being sent to the Pensions Ministry from relatives of Chinese seamen who died and were seeking compensation. Generally the newspaper reports relating to the Chinese seamen focussed on single, newsworthy events, most frequently court cases and police reports. Throughout 1942 such reports increased as the number and intensity of incidents involving Chinese seamen rose sharply in the run up to the settlement over

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

pay and bonuses being reached in April that year. When the settlement proved ineffective after just a few months reports again began to surface of Chinese seamen's unruly behaviour. Lo's memoir recounts 'one of his biggest cases' in Liverpool involving the arrests of hundreds of striking seamen on 'a Canadian Pacific Empress liner [the Empress of Scotland] which was due to carry troops to the front line in North Africa'.⁴⁷⁷ The *Daily Mirror's* account of this event was headlined '400 in ship riot' and it detailed how Chinese seamen wielding 'axes, swords, daggers, wooden mallets and ship's sounding lead' fought with nine police officers who boarded a ship in Liverpool following a riot onboard.⁴⁷⁸ The *Daily Mirror* report is largely based on comments made by a prosecutor in a Liverpool court, who sought to emphasise the overwhelming numbers of unruly Chinese against a few [we might infer, brave] officers, as part of the case against the men. Only brief mention is made of the cause behind this outbreak of violence - war risk bonuses - and there is no suggestion that the Chinese may have been justified in their actions. An article about the 'riot' in the Dundee *Evening Telegraph* highlighted the 'valiant attempts' of the Ministry of War Transport, the shipping companies and the defence' to settle the dispute but said nothing about the grievances of the seaman.⁴⁷⁹ In his account of the merchant seaman who served Britain during WWII, Tony Lane, analyses the coverage of the 1942 incident onboard the *Empress of Scotland* in the *Journal of Commerce and Shipping Telegraph*, the Liverpool-based British shipping industry newspaper, which was reported across five issues of the newspaper. Lane comments:

The imagery of a people capable of apparently becoming unaccountably wild and resorting to collective violence was part of the everyday definition of Chinese - as was the counterpoint of Europeans keeping-their-heads and demonstrating their superiority with courageous individuals confronting mobs alone.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 133.

⁴⁷⁸ *The Daily Mirror*, Saturday 19th of September 1942, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ *The Evening Telegraph* (Dundee, Scotland) September 23rd, 1942.

⁴⁸⁰ Tony Lane, *The Merchant Seamen's War* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), p 167.

Lane notes that the court case was eventually concluded 'with 386 men being fined £10 each, 24 jailed for three months and 15 for one month'.⁴⁸¹ Lo's memoir recalls that news of this incident got through to Chiang Kaishek, (who had by then appointed himself Foreign Minister as well as Commander-in Chief of China) who responded 'with the instruction to withdraw the total force of Chinese from the Allied Fleet if the British employers were to continue coercing Chinese with such brutality'.⁴⁸² Although Lo states 'the British bluff was called' by China's leader, it evidently failed to achieve its aim as Lo presently found himself among a handful of officials in Liverpool 'attempting to arrest 450 [sic] seamen with what amounted to no more than the dozen CID officers left' in the city.⁴⁸³ In a telling reference to the official (British) attitudes that Lo must have encountered towards the Chinese seamen through his work, his memoir comments that it was 'bureaucratic rigidity' which seemed 'part of the plot to keep aliens in their place'.

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The British shipping industry as well as the British Government could be harsh and derogatory in its dealings with the Chinese seamen. This attitude is exemplified by comments which Tony Lane attributes to the head of the British Shipping Mission in Washington in 1943, who, exasperated no doubt by the mass desertions of Chinese seamen from British ships in America, but unable apparently to grasp that any blame might lay at the feet of officials, declared that the Chinese 'seamen were coolies before they became seamen and they are still coolies'.⁴⁸⁵ As Lane notes, the comment was subsequently lampooned by Lin Yutang, in a letter to the New York newspaper *PM Daily* on May 16th 1943, a sign that the US Chinese community was, unlike the British 'well-equipped to cope with the crudities of the shipping industry' not least because of

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., p. 166.

⁴⁸² Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p. 133.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p.130.

⁴⁸⁵ Lane, *The Merchant Seamen's War*, p. 170. Lane comments that the head of the British Shipping Mission in Washington used the term 'coolies' to which Lin Yutang wrote a stinging ironic response in a New York newspaper.

representatives willing to stand up for it, such as Lin.⁴⁸⁶ Lin drew his readers' attention to:

The fantastic illusion that because some 'coolies' barely speak a few words of pidgin English therefore they only understand the language of the boots or perhaps of the pistol. The Chinese seamen as a class happen to be highly intelligent and even refined in manners. I have talked with dozens of them and I know. They know more about the issues of this war than the English captains suspect. What is more, they have been trained in homes that respect good manners, no matter how poor they may be. Remember, therefore, that when you want to 'get tough', to make them work, they are thinking in their hearts that your mother probably never taught you manners.⁴⁸⁷

To a very great extent, Lo's short story of Lim's conduct, contradicts the negative and often derogatory, colonialist, in the sense of the seamen's inferred place in western power structures, and often heavily biased accounts of Chinese seamen. In Lo's account there are no 'panicking natives' but instead a calm individual whose upbringing in China has to a large extent equipped him with the physical and psychological attributes to triumph in an ordeal that is known to have overwhelmed many others.⁴⁸⁸ What Lo describes in his short story is comportment much closer to that described by Lin than the kind of behaviour more commonly attributed to Chinese seamen in newspaper reports.

In the concluding paragraph of Lane's account of the treatment and experiences of the Chinese merchant seamen in WWII, he refers to the Poon Lim story (at least, a version of it which appeared in the *Journal of Commerce and Shipping Telegraph* on 19 July 1943) and suggests that the enthusiastic and largely positive media coverage of the event, is an indication that Chinese 'resourcefulness' was 'not usually challenged'

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Lane, *Merchant Seamen's War*, p. 173.

because it was an accepted stereotype.⁴⁸⁹ This may indeed be the case, however, by the time the short story of Lim's experience appears in *TPNW 24*, several years later, the narrative goes a long way beyond describing mere 'resourcefulness' and is certainly a challenge to a great number of contemporary accounts of the Chinese workers on British ships. Through the medium of fiction and via a short story format in a literary journal founded by an editor with sympathy for China's plight and that of its people, Lo alighted on a space in which alternative representations to the mainstream, the popular and those frequently churned up by newspapers were welcomed. In particular by narrating Lim's experience in a short story format, Lo was able to offer readers, a characterisation which presents the seaman into an individual rather than a mass or a mob. The personal, the human, as well in some sense the universal, qualities which are developed in the short story are Lo's most effective means of countermanding popular prejudice and ignorance.

Highlighting these negative reports does not intend to suggest that there was no counter-narrative in Britain during the war to reports of marauding and unruly Chinese seamen or political support for the men's cause. As early as February 1941, Kingsley Martin's leftist political weekly, the *New Statesman & Nation* published a stinging rebuke to Mr Churchill and the Cabinet for their failure to give Chinese seamen 'their obvious due'. The article summarized:

It is hard to resist the conclusion that the real reason for refusing the Chinese sailor £5 as a reward for risking his life on our behalf is that the Chinese have already been treated like dirt in the past, and that it is difficult to persuade the authorities that China is now a nation fighting for the same cause as ourselves, with a new and conscious nationalism, and that her people are no longer willing to be treated as coolies have always been in the past.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. Lane is citing the *JOCST* 19 July 1943 and comments that a full-length reconstruction of the story based on interviews with Poon Lim was published in 1985 by Ruthanne Lum McCrum and entitled 'Sole Survivor'.

⁴⁹⁰ 'The Case of The Chinese Seamen', in *The New Statesman & Nation*, 15th February 1941, p. 154.

Lane's account of the Chinese seamen also notes that there was considerable cross-party support among MPs for equalising the pay and bonuses of Chinese and British seamen:

Backbench MPs continually harassed the MOWT's parliamentary spokesman on the issue of why Chinese seamen, although sharing the same risks as British seamen, did not receive the same bonus. This same question, repeatedly asked between November, 1940 and April 1941, was invariably met with disingenuous answers.⁴⁹¹

Whatever sympathy there may have been ultimately did little to improve their treatment at the hands of British authorities or the companies that employed them. As Lane points out from the first problems over the pay and conditions of the Chinese seamen during WWII to the end of the war, the Ministry of Shipping, the Ministry of War Transport, the Foreign Office, the shipowners and the shipping officers, saw the Chinese sailors in the British merchant navy as 'a constant source of aggravation'.⁴⁹² When the war finally ended in September 1945, thousands of Chinese seamen who had transformed parts of Liverpool into a crowded Chinatown, returned home. 'Within weeks Liverpool was deserted of Chinese' Lo recalls.⁴⁹³ It has since been reported that a great many of the Chinese seamen, potentially numbering 300, who remained in Liverpool after the war were repatriated from Britain back to China in 1946 against their will. Many among them were forced to leave behind their wives and Eurasian children and some were never seen by their families again.⁴⁹⁴ A 2017 newspaper report suggested that the husband of one of these abandoned daughters, Charles Foley, found evidence in the Alfred Holt shipping company archive that the organisation had been eager (after the war) to

⁴⁹¹ Lane, *The Merchant Seamen's War*, p. 163.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Lo, *Forgotten Wave*, p.139.

⁴⁹⁴ The following online sources refer to the plight of the seamen and their families after the war:

<<http://www.halfandhalf.org.uk/>> (Last accessed 3.12.19) and

<<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2118142/why-did-300-chinese-fathers-vanish-liverpool-1946>> (Last accessed 3.12.19).

jettison the militant Shanghai seamen, with their Communist sympathies, and replace them with whom they regarded as the more pliant Cantonese, recruited in Hong Kong.

⁴⁹⁵ While there have been significant efforts, not least in Britain, to reevaluate the contribution that Chinese labour made in WWI and WWII in recent years, it appears that certain aspects of official government and company policy towards the Chinese seamen still remains hidden from public gaze.

5.5 Kenneth Lo: 'What of Those Who Fail?'

At least three publications respected for their literary opinion reviewed 'A Chinese Seaman' in *TPNW 24* and all the reviews were positive. *The Times Literary Supplement* described the story as 'a straightforward, objective, and affecting piece of writing'.⁴⁹⁶ *The Listener* commented that Lo 'chronicles his countryman's amazing story with a moving and impressive modesty'.⁴⁹⁷ In the *New Statesman & Nation*, W. P. Rilla described Lo's story as 'extremely graphic in its crisp and objective style'. Correspondence between Lo and Lehmann reveals that as well as being favourably reviewed, Lo had 'several requests for translation' of the story and in December 1945 received the first cheque for 'an Italian translation'.⁴⁹⁸ Evidently the short story enjoyed some literary success and began to circulate more widely around the world. This motivated Lo to push more emphatically for Lehmann to publish his other works (including the aforementioned batch which Lo had passed to Kingsley Martin for safekeeping) relating to the Chinese seamen. In July 1944 he asked if Lehmann 'could make use' of his other sea-stories.⁴⁹⁹ However he was unaware that Martin had already suggested to Lehmann that 'the rest [of the Chinese stories] are less exciting, but quite interesting' which was hardly a ringing endorsement.⁵⁰⁰ Then, in April 1945, Lo wrote to Lehmann to ask for one of the stories entitled 'My Name is Chow' back because he planned to use it as a character

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., *South China Morning Post* article.

⁴⁹⁶ 'A Miscellany', R. D. Charques, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 August, 1945.

⁴⁹⁷ *The Listener*, August 16th 1945.

⁴⁹⁸ Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated November 22, 1945 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁴⁹⁹ Typed letter Lo to Lehmann dated 30th July 1945, (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁵⁰⁰ Handwritten note from Martin scribbled on a letter that Lehmann had sent him on 1st August 1944, on *New Writing* letter head paper. (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

reference in a court case involving Mr Chow Pao Dai (the eponymous hero of the tale).

⁵⁰¹ Two months later, Lo sent Lehmann his poem about the Chinese Seamen but a scribbled note on the original letter makes the observation ‘there is something nice about this, but I don’t think it is quite successful as a poem’.⁵⁰² Lehmann had evidently read several of the seamen stories and other submissions and deemed that they were not sufficiently interesting or successful as works of literature to earn a place in his magazine. Undeterred and possibly unaware of Lehmann’s verdict Lo wrote again in November 1945 to ask if Lehmann might consider publishing the seamen stories ‘in a collection’ and he outlined the terms of a possible publishing contract.⁵⁰³ Lo then invited Lehmann for a meal (which did not take place) and went to a poetry reading by Lehmann where they exchanged a few brief words. His actions in this period in 1945 are reminiscent of Xiao Qian’s (who, as Chapter 8 notes) felt compelled to apologize to Lehmann for pestering him into a response to a collection of his stories he would shortly publish. Evidently Lehmann’s support and endorsement was highly sought after by Chinese (and a great many other) writers seeking to establish a name for themselves.

As Lehmann procrastinated over the stories, Lo embarked on his doctorate in London before again being drafted into Foreign Office service. During 1946 and 1947 as the real Poon Lim was cleared to set sail for a new life in America while his less fortunate compatriots were suffering an ignominious end to their allied war effort, Lo sought out alternative routes to publication for the collection. He found little interest, despite meeting with the distribution manager of WH Smith and was forced to resort to self-publishing the stories, poems and fragments in a collection entitled *The Forgotten Wave* for £200 for 2,000 copies.⁵⁰⁴ Lo’s memoir noted that ‘the distribution was not a success’ and the text was printed on ‘very rough paper and had no coloured illustrations’.⁵⁰⁵ However, the collection did not go entirely unnoticed. Dorothy Woodman cast a critical eye over the work and found several pieces worthy of praise. She

⁵⁰¹ Typed letter Lo to Lehmann on 5th April 1945 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁵⁰² Note scribbled on original letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 1st July 1945 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁵⁰³ Letter from Lo to Lo dated 22nd November 1945 (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁵⁰⁴ Lo, *Feast of My Life*, p.150.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

described the poem 'The Chinese Seaman' (not to be confused with the short story) as displaying the author's 'unusual gift for writing poetry' and suggested that the rest of the stories and sketches 'would have moved James Conrad'.⁵⁰⁶ Presumably she was drawing similarities with Joseph Conrad, that great novelist in the English language who did not speak fluent English until his twenties. The error rather took the wind out of the sails of her praise. However Woodman went on to comment that *Forgotten Wave* was so badly produced that 'if I hadn't known the author, I should have passed it by thinking it was an "opium horror"'.⁵⁰⁷

Either because of the quality of the publication, the quality of the writing or apathy from publishers who presumably believed that there would be little appetite for the stories about Chinese seamen (who had mostly vanished from Britain) after WWII, the collection flopped. Lo made one more attempt at publication in *TPNW* in January 1946 when he sent Lehmann two essays. He informed Lehmann that he had switched from writing stories and sketches about Chinese seamen to writing 'general interest' essays about 'Happiness, Love and Money etc'.⁵⁰⁸ The verdict from Lehmann's office was damning: 'These essays are very boring and not at all suitable for N.W [New Writing]. He had much better stick to stories'.⁵⁰⁹ Lo's letter also promised 'plays and a novel' but his studies and experiments in literature were cut short by his foreign office work. A final piece of correspondence in Lehmann's archive reveals that by 1954, Lo had not entirely given up on his literary ambitions. A letter to Lehmann with the letterhead of Cathay Arts reminded him of the success of 'A Chinese Seaman' in *TPNW* that was 'translated into many languages' and asks whether Lehmann, who has recently taken up editorship at *The London Magazine*, would consider Lo's translation of 'Hsu Tze Mou's (Xu Zhimo) Recollections of Cambridge'.

'A Chinese Seaman' therefore remained the high watermark of Lo's early literary strivings. However, what Lo's memoir and correspondence between Lo and Lehmann strongly suggest is that Lo sought - as Ye and Xiao Qian had done - Lehmann's

⁵⁰⁶ 'Asia Bookshelf', *Asian Horizon*, Vol 1. No. ??, Autumn 1948, pp. 73-74.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 18th of January 1946, (HRC/Lehmann/Lo).

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. Hand-written note scribbled on letter.

endorsement and knew well the value of being published in *TPNW* and any of Lehmann's journals, even into the 1950s. What the correspondence between Lehmann and Lo reveals, is that the support of sympathetic China experts and watchers such as Woodman (who had helped Lo negotiate the original deal with the Kemsley Papers) and Martin (who passed 'A Chinese Seaman' to Lehmann) was crucial but in order to flourish as an Anglophone writer he needed the endorsement of a major editor or publisher which he failed to attain.

Lo's striving and failing to win over publishers in 1940s Britain, calls to mind a foreword written by Lehmann in *TPNW* 38 (1949), in which he asked: 'What of those [writers] who may have had the same energy and passionate hope, but failed?'.⁵¹⁰ In the foreword Lehmann expresses his doubts in the commonly held belief that good writing will always 'win through to recognition' and perhaps, implicitly acknowledges that he, as a literary gatekeeper, may have some hand in the business of success and failure for writers. Lehmann is specifically considering such thoughts in relation to the writer Denton Welch, (whose untimely death had prompted Lehmann's comment) but they aptly describe the wasted efforts of Lo's early literary career, whether because Lehmann did not detect sufficient talent in his work or because the subject matter of the transient and, after the end of war, rapidly dwindling community of Chinese seamen in Britain failed to entice.

Such ideas about the reasons that certain Chinese writers failed to gain recognition for their work while other writers were lauded as China experts, are at the heart of Hua Hsu's cultural criticism which examines the impediments to the Chinese writer H. T. Tsiang being published in 1930s and 40s America. Hsu roughly divides the American literary community relating to China at that time into two factions. One is represented by Pearl Buck, her husband, the publisher Richard Walsh and Lin Yutang, (to whom the Walshes acted as 'benefactors and patrons') whose writing or publishing choices are characterised by 'easy sentimentalism' and considered to be not too challenging or 'inoffensive'.⁵¹¹ The other group, is represented by the unpublished H. T.

⁵¹⁰ *TPNW* 38, p. 7.

⁵¹¹ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 166 and p. 191.

Tsiang, whose avant-garde and proletarian literature fails to find a readership in America, and the academic Chi-chen Wang who sought, unsuccessfully at the start, to promote Lu Xun's short stories, as a 'more sophisticated vision' of modern China and an antidote to Buckian sentimentality.⁵¹² The version of China which in the late 1930s early 1940s still predominated was the former. Buck's writing had been so influential and her vision of China so pervasive, while Tsiang and Wang remained at that time, outside of the 'acceptable orbits of Chinese discourse' in America.⁵¹³ A British example could not be drafted in precisely the same way, not least because of the influence of the political Left, which was sympathetic towards China, and which had a very strong influence on, and position within, the literary establishment. This had been the case since the 1930s, when the promise of revolution in Russia, Spain and China, had inspired writers and led to the politicization of writers and writing in Europe as in Britain (as never before). As this thesis has noted, a great many of those on the British Left, such as Lehmann, were sympathetic to China, originally as a site of potential revolution (as the Soviet Union had been), and later on with renewed fervour after Japan went to war with China and this was perceived as an act of fascist, imperialist, aggression. They had a vision and approach to China that had many flaws but was rarely sentimental and they had made incursions into the mainstream, not least through magazines such as *TPNW*. That is not to suggest that, literary leftists in Britain dominated mainstream or popular narratives, in terms of representations of China. And Lu Xun's short stories were no more widely sold initially in Britain than they had been in America. However, Hsu's descriptions of mainstream fiction about China as 'palatable' and 'comfortable middlebrow' could equally be applied to Chiang Yee's observations about British people and places through Chinese eyes that made him a top selling author for Methuen for a decade.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² Ibid., p. 171. Chi-chen Wang's preface to a collection of short stories by Chinese writers about the war against Japan is cited in chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵¹³ Ibid., p. 166. In his study, Hsu examines the study by Harold Isaacs (John Day, 1958) which examined where ideas about India and China came from in America during the course of which he discovered the extent of Pearl Buck's influence with regards to ideas about China circulating at the very highest levels of American society.

⁵¹⁴ Citations from Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 11. Da Zheng, *The Silent Traveller from the East, A Cultural Biography* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 103.

Ye Junjian's novel about peasants in the hills of central China in the early years of the revolution, which emphasises their innocence and naivety and offers a somewhat idealised version of village life, became a Book Society recommendation (as Chapter 7 will examine).⁵¹⁵ Equally the success of the play *Lady Precious Stream*, and Arthur Waley's abridged version of *Journey to the West*, (named *Monkey*), were all suggestive of what Wang identified as a desire to 'preserve China in amber'.⁵¹⁶

Meanwhile Wang (in America) or Noel Carrington (who published a collection of contemporary Chinese stories in Britain in 1946), or Lehmann, or Woodman and Martin, or Robert Herring or the journal *Left Review* were seeking to represent an alternative vision of China, often one proffered by the country's own writers, in which the Chinese people were awakening, were fighting, bleeding and dying. In Emily Hahn's words these writers and editors were interested in a China which had found a voice 'to roar across the seas'.⁵¹⁷ Such divisions, signal the contested versions of China that were being published in Britain throughout the late 1930s and 1940s.

While Tsiang was in the camp which wanted to push against the sentimental representations of China and 'despised' Lin Yutang, Kenneth Lo greatly admired Lin and was inspired by his fluency in English and authority as an interpreter of the East, in the West.⁵¹⁸ However certain similarities between Lo and Tsiang are striking. Like Tsiang, Lo wanted more than anything to be a writer and both aspirants self-published their works but remained shut out of the literary establishment. And just as Tsiang's proletarian literature failed to find favour with British publishers, Lo's version of China, the Chinese in Britain (as conceived in his seamen stories, sketches and poetry) where the oppressors were not fascist forces of Europe but the British government, was similarly shunned in the immediate aftermath of World War II. By the time that Lo was seeking a

⁵¹⁵ Chun-chan Yeh, *The Mountain Village* (London: Sylvan Press, 1947).

⁵¹⁶ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 170. Hsu here is interpreting Chi-chen Wang's ideas about *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck and the new market she created for 'breathless, China-loving books and articles and which so appealed to American middlebrow readers. *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'un is one of the Four Great classical novels of Chinese literature. Waley's abridged translation was first published in 1942.

⁵¹⁷ Hahn, *The China Boom*, online source

<http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tien-hsia.php?searchterm=022_boom.inc&issue=022>. (Last Accessed 1.19.20)

⁵¹⁸ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 162.

publisher, the community of Chinese seamen had mainly vanished and there was no Lin Yutang figure to defend them or examine their unjust treatment in Britain, which still today has not been officially acknowledged. In a 2013 article for the *New York Times*, Rana Mitter, noted that:

China's resistance to Japan is one of the great untold stories of World War II. Though China was the first Allied power to fight the Axis, it has received far less credit for its role in the Pacific theater than the United States, Britain or even the Soviet Union, which only joined the war in Asia in August 1945. The Chinese contribution was pushed aside soon after the conflict, as an inconvenient story in the neat ideological narrative of the Cold War.⁵¹⁹

Certain versions of China or Chinese narratives were and still remain, shut out. This is to suggest that *TPMW* shaped ideas about China as much by what it did publish as what it did not. The example of Lo is evidence (whatever the reasons for his failure to find a publisher) of the boundaries or limits of the versions of China in Britain.

⁵¹⁹ Rana Mitter source:
<<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/opinion/the-worlds-wartime-debt-to-china.html>> (Last accessed 29.11.19).

Ch. 6

Harold Acton 'Small Talk in China' (*TPNW 15*)

6.1 Harold Acton's Representations of China in *TPNW*

This chapter will appraise the contribution made by Harold Acton (1904-1994) to *TPNW* and to Lehmann's China venture, which was considerably greater than the amount of his contributions published in the magazine might suggest.⁵²⁰ Acton's fascination with China, as this chapter will examine, pre-dates the seven years that he spent living, translating and teaching in Peking (Beijing). Until the end of his life Acton maintained that 'the happiest years of my life' were spent in China.⁵²¹ Acton's interest in China was personal, aesthetic, literary and professional and the knowledge, particularly of contemporary Chinese literature and culture that he amassed, proved invaluable to Lehmann who lacked any direct knowledge of China himself. Without Acton's intervention it unlikely that the Chinese wartime stories would ever have made it to publication in Lehmann's journals. Yet this and other dimensions of Acton's China expertise remain unacknowledged and his legacy in respect of this is ripe for recovery. The appraisal of Acton's contribution to *TPNW* and the ways in which he sought to shape ideas, particularly about modern Chinese literature and also China more widely, leads to a consideration of the reasons that might account for both Acton's neglect as an authority on China and, in the spirit of Hua Hsu's *A Floating Chinaman*, an evaluation of who did and did not get to speak for China in 1940s Britain.

6.2 'Small Talk in China' (*TPNW 15*)

⁵²⁰ As well as the critical account of China's literary scene in *TPNW 15*, Acton's short story 'A Monopolist' - which is not about China - was published in *TPNW 22* (1944).

⁵²¹ Online recording of a 1992 interview with Acton. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiMWZbS326I>> (Last accessed 25.11.19) At 9 mins 33 seconds.

While Ye Junjian is the unacknowledged source of many of the short stories by Chinese writers that appear in *TPNW*, Harold Acton provided 'the bridge' who sought to make Chinese fiction accessible to Anglophone readers. Acton's essay 'Small Talk in China', which appeared in *TPNW 15* gives a sweeping overview of the progress of Chinese fiction from the tales recounted to a Song dynasty emperor and tea-house storytellers, to the introduction of the vernacular following the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and its implications for the future of contemporary fiction.⁵²² In Acton's essay, contemporary fiction largely refers to short stories of the 1920s and 1930s which he encountered while working as a translator and teacher in China (1932 -1939). Acton pays particular attention to the literary movements of the early-twentieth century in China when modern fiction was emerging and developing. As well as explaining, for the lay reader, the major influences on Chinese fiction writers, Acton places the contemporary stories in a global literary context. He draws parallels between the Chinese writers of the 1930s who would have been largely unknown to English-language readers and Russian and Anglophone writers who would, as he points out, be familiar to most Western readers.⁵²³ He encourages his readers to consider the new movement in Chinese writing as 'largely a result of contact with the West', in order to make it easier for them to approach but he is equally careful to stress that Chinese writers are no mere imitators and that an 'essentially Chinese' quality and an 'innate concern for style' are apparent in their finest works.⁵²⁴ Acton also warns that the influence of Russian fiction on Chinese writing can be overstated because 'the Chinese have a lyrical attitude towards Nature and a bitter-sweet humour' that is so akin to the Russian.⁵²⁵ Acton here reveals that he has a deft ability to observe and delimit the trans-cultural influences on Chinese fiction. As

⁵²² 'Small Talk' is a literal translation from the Chinese 'xiao shuo' (小说). Although it can be literally translated as 'small talk', it is more generally used to refer to works of fiction of any length.

⁵²³ The Russian writers Acton refers to are: Maksim Gorky (Gorki), Anton Chekhov and Nikolai Gogol. The British writers include: Dr Johnson (Samuel Johnson), T. S. Eliot, John Keats and Charles Dickens as well as Upton Sinclair. *TPNW 15*, pp. 138 – 150.

⁵²⁴ *TPNW 15* p. 139, p. 140 (with reference to Lu Xun), p. 148 (with reference to Pien Chih-lin (Hsueh Lin)).

⁵²⁵ *TPNW 15*, p. 140.

Chapter 8 will consider, the innately or essentially Chinese quality in modern Chinese fiction is an aesthetic quality which Lehmann admired and sought out for the stories that he published from China in *TPNW*.

Acton's article delves into the motivations, struggles and achievements of contemporary Chinese writers, to underline their importance and significance for Anglophone readers. His analysis also stresses the aptness of the short story form for Chinese writers because 'concentration of style and economy of effect ... has always been the aim of conscious Chinese artists'.⁵²⁶ Acton places strong emphasis on the growing political importance of fiction in China, particularly from the moment writers began to oppose China's 'static feudalism' and 'hoary ethical teaching' of the past.⁵²⁷ Although he is not explicit about it, he no doubt assumes that Lehmann's readers will draw a parallel with the concurrent politicisation of literature in Europe which had such a powerful influence on Lehmann and his journals.

When Acton approaches the subject of modern Chinese writers in wartime, he is forced to acknowledge that there is an element of message in certain of the stories written since the outbreak of the war with Japan. But again, he highlights the Chinese writers whose work transcends mere didacticism, including all of those published by Lehmann. Correspondence between Lehmann and Acton clearly shows that Acton and Xiao Qian (whom Acton first met in China and whose editorship at that time of the literary supplement of the *DaGongBao* newspaper made him a valuable literary source) guided Lehmann's selection of the stories as well as polished the original translations.⁵²⁸

When Acton describes the publishing conditions for writers in China in the early years of the war against Japan, what is striking are the similarities to conditions in Britain and particularly for *TPNW*. Acton notes that when the war broke out many publishers closed down but the writers soon combined to issue their own publications. A similar 'mushrooming of new magazines' was noted after an initial cultural hiatus immediately after war was declared in Britain (although not necessarily with writers at

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵²⁸ This correspondence is in the HRC archive, Austin, Texas.

the helm of new magazines).⁵²⁹ Acton notes how writers became ‘men of action’ who went to the front’ which ‘brought them into contact with the people’.⁵³⁰ He further describes the wider circulation of modern writing as well as a different class of reader in wartime: Government clerks, post-office employees, soldiers and policemen ‘many of whom have literary aspirations’.⁵³¹ With these words Acton might equally and accurately be describing the impact of war on British writers and specifically on Lehmann’s readership which swelled considerably in the middle and lower-middle class demographic.

Acton also notes his awareness of the impediments to the circulation of modern Chinese literature in the West, whereby certain writers and certain types of writing (that were characteristic in wartime China) were at a particular disadvantage. Acton notes, for example, about the writer Shen Ts’ung-wên (Shen Congwen) that translators have found it ‘hard to render justice to his fresh and picturesque idioms and vivid local colour’.⁵³² Lehmann never published his stories although Acton describes him as a ‘versatile’ and prolific writer.⁵³³

By the time the essay appeared in *TPNW* in the October - December issue (which was eventually published in February 1943), Acton was already considered an authority on aspects of traditional and contemporary Chinese culture. He had published a volume of *Modern Chinese Poetry* (1936) which he translated in collaboration with the young scholar Ch’ên Shih-hsiang (Chen Shixiang) which highlighted the avant-gardism of Chinese poetry.⁵³⁴ Acton quickly followed with the publication of *Famous Chinese Plays* (1937) which provided readers with synopses and partial translations of thirty-one Peking operas and two Ming Dynasty K’un-ch’u (Kunqu) plays, which he translated with

⁵²⁹ Hewison, *Under Siege*, p. 11.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 148.

⁵³¹ *TPNW 15*, p.149.

⁵³² *Ibid*, p. 147.

⁵³³ *Ibid*, p. 146.

⁵³⁴ Acton and Chen (1912-1971) also collaborated over the translation of the great Kunqu drama *The Peach Blossom Fan* (*Tao hua shan*) in 1948 when Chen was living in California. A brief account of this collaboration is given in David E. Mungello, *Western Queers in China: Flight to the Land of Oz* (UK, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), p. 56. At the end of this account Mungello comments that their translation of *The Peach Blossom Fan* has been ‘highly praised and represents Acton’s most lasting contribution to Chinese studies’, p. 56.

L. C. Arlington, the veteran of the Chinese Maritime Customs and its subsidiary Post Office and co-author of a guidebook to Peking (Beijing).⁵³⁵ Both of Acton's books had received favourable reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*. Laurence Binyon, the poet and art scholar (who played a crucial role in the formation of literary modernism in London by introducing poets to the East Asian visual art and literature he encountered through his work at the British Museum) commented on *Famous Chinese Plays* that:

It is to help such ignorant but interested visitors to the Chinese theatre that Mr. Arlington and Mr. Acton have made these versions of thirty-three popular Chinese plays. The collection should admirably serve its purpose.⁵³⁶

In his review of Acton and Chen's poetry anthology, Edmund Charles Blunden, the poet, author and critic who became assistant editor of the *TLS* in 1944 and went on to become professor of English Literature at Hong Kong University, described their work as 'delightful' and commented appreciatively that Acton is 'candid and discerning' when he speaks of 'the facts and characteristics of poetry and poets in modern China'.⁵³⁷ Overall Blunden deems the collection to be 'of such general grace and sensibility - the poetic talent of Mr Acton having served his share of the translating with all willingness - that the reader with no knowledge of Chinese need not feel that he is only receiving a maimed beauty'.⁵³⁸

Acton's observations of the foreign community in Beijing compelled him to write the novel, *Peonies & Ponies* 'in a spirit of laughing protest'.⁵³⁹ The book was published by Chatto & Windus in 1941 and received glowing reviews from R. D. Charques in the

⁵³⁵ *Modern Chinese Poetry* (London: Duckworth, 1936) First published. *Famous Chinese Plays* (Peiping (Beijing): Henri Vetch, 1937). L.C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking* (Peiping (Beijing): Henri Vetch, 1935).

⁵³⁶ Robert Laurence Binyon, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 August 1937, p. 573.

⁵³⁷ Edmund Charles Blunden, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 22 February 1936, p. 154.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Citation from the back cover of the Penguin Books edition of *Peonies and Ponies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950).

TLS and Edwin Muir in *The Listener*.⁵⁴⁰ It would be published under the Penguin Books imprint almost a decade later. When Acton and Lee Yi-Hsieh's *Glue & Lacquer: Four Cautionary Tales*, featuring selections from the seventeenth-century writer and editor Feng Meng-lung's (Feng Menglong) *Tales to Rouse the World*, was published in 1941 it contained a preface by Arthur Waley.⁵⁴¹ As Kristin Mahoney has commented, Waley's preface confirms (traditional) Chinese literature as fundamentally modernist for its integration of prose and verse that would be familiar to readers of E. M. Forster or Virginia Woolf.⁵⁴² Glue and Lacquer, a metaphor for 'the closest of human intimacies' also contained erotic illustrations by Eric Gill and the content, despite discussion between the co-translators, was never toned down for English readers.⁵⁴³

Although on the margins of the Bloomsbury Group of writers and artists in London in the 1920s and 1930s, Waley is widely acknowledged to have influenced the group's, and England's, images of China through his hugely popular translations of poetry. During the course of Waley's career, he strove tirelessly to introduce Chinese and Japanese landscapes and literature to the general reader in the West. Waley's contribution to, and endorsement of, Acton's book served to underline Acton's authority as a purveyor of Chinese culture to the English reading world as well as tacitly commending the quality of the translations themselves (although Waley makes no explicit mention of the quality of Acton's translation in his preface). Waley dedicated his 1942 abridged translation of the great Chinese novel *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*) by Wu Ch'eng-ên (Wu Cheng'en) to Beryl de Zoete, his companion of forty years, and to Harold Acton. Waley's version was entitled *Monkey* and the book's influence is such that it has never been out of print since its first appearance under the George Allen &

⁵⁴⁰ R. D. Charques, 'The Land of Dilemma', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 29 March 1941, p. 149, and 'New Novels', *The Listener*, 17 April 1941, p. 571.

⁵⁴¹ Harold Acton and Lee Yi-hsieh (Yixie Li) (tr.) *Glue & Lacquer: Four Cautionary Tales* (London, The Golden Cockerell Press, 1941).

⁵⁴² Kristin Mahoney

<<https://lapietra.nyu.edu/event/a-solitary-flower-bachelordom-and-harold-actons-china/>> (Last accessed 4.12.19. Comment at 47minutes, 04 seconds).

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

Unwin imprint.⁵⁴⁴ It was published by Penguin Books in 1961 as a Classic. Waley's endorsement, also a testament to the longstanding friendship between the two men, was a professional compliment that Acton repaid in the first part of his autobiography, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, in which he describes Waley as 'the ideal translator of Chinese' among other words of praise.⁵⁴⁵ Acton, much like Waley, gained authority and popularity as a translator of Chinese via his published works and because of (as one reviewer put it) the 'grace and sensibility' of his translations which rendered them accessible to the general reading public.⁵⁴⁶ But the principal reason that Acton, not Waley, appealed to John Lehmann as a contributor for his periodicals was because of his insight into contemporary China. Arthur Waley, although it could be argued was 'associated more than anyone with China by the literary public' never visited China; not that this was in any way an impediment to his career and reputation as a sinologist in those days.⁵⁴⁷ The literary critic Raymond Mortimer mused in a newspaper article that the reason Waley never visited China may have been because he 'felt so much at home in Tang China and Heian Japan that he could not face the modern ugliness amid which one has to seek out the many intact remains of beauty'.⁵⁴⁸ By contrast, Acton had spent seven years in Beijing between 1932 - 1939, teaching English literature and translating and had met many of the Chinese writers whose work he enthuses over in 'Small Talk in China'. This gave Acton authenticity as a go-between or bridge between the literary communities of China and Britain; one whom Lehmann identified as 'badly needed' if the writers of the two countries were ever to communicate effectively.⁵⁴⁹ To underline this point, when Ye published his collection of his translations of modern Chinese short stories, *Three Seasons and Other Stories* (1946), Acton's essay was republished, with permission. Ye was aware that the stories themselves were greatly enriched for readers

⁵⁴⁴ Frances Wood, *The Lure of China, Writers from Marco Polo to J. G. Ballard* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 200.

⁵⁴⁵ Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 1.

⁵⁴⁶ Blunden, *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 February 1936, p. 154.

⁵⁴⁷ Wood, *Lure of China*, p. 199.

⁵⁴⁸ Ivan Morris (ed), *Madly Singing in the Mountains; an appreciation and anthology of Arthur Waley*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 80. Original citation from 'Arthur Waley' by Raymond Mortimer, *The Sunday Times*, 3 July 1966.

⁵⁴⁹ Lehmann, *FONW*, Spring, (London: Hogarth Press, 1941), p. 5.

by Acton's contextualising.⁵⁵⁰ Henry Reed was among the literary critics to note that modern Chinese literature when published in Britain was generally enhanced by 'a valuable introduction'.⁵⁵¹ As Lehmann himself noted in *TPNW* 5 this is because to the general reader, the subject remained 'so little known'.⁵⁵² In a 'Note by the Translator' at the back of the book, Ye wrote of Acton: 'His long residence in Peking has enabled him not only to become familiar with modern writing in China, but also to be in close contact with Chinese writers'.⁵⁵³ Ye's words acknowledge Acton's position as an authority figure in matters of contemporary Chinese fiction.

With the exception of Mao Dun (who by the early 1940s would not have been considered a young and new writer in China and so would not have aroused the same interest from Lehmann) the stories translated by Ye in *Three Seasons and Other Stories* were the same ones that Lehmann had published in *TPNW* and his other *NW* periodicals from the original batch he and Allen had translated. In his article, Acton conferred particular praise on each of these stories in turn.⁵⁵⁴ By doing so he underwrites the quality of Lehmann's selections.

Lehmann recognised the crucial role that Acton could play in rallying interest from Anglophone readers for modern Chinese fiction. When he first published Acton's essay in *Folios of New Writing* in the spring of 1941, his foreword carried the lines:

also [in this issue is] a study of the new literature which is still developing in the middle of the war, by an Englishman who has only recently returned from China. In spite of the many points of natural sympathy between the English and the Chinese, such bridges are badly needed before the modern writers of the two countries can fully understand one another.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ As Chapter 7 notes, the stories Ye published included: 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short', 'The Third-Rate Gunner', 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road' and 'Mr Hua Wei'.

⁵⁵¹ Henry Reed, 'New Novels', *The Listener*, 16th January 1947, in a review of *Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* (eds. tra) Robert Payne and Yuan Chia-Hua (Transatlantic Arts).

⁵⁵² *TPNW* 5, p. 8.

⁵⁵³ Chun-Chan Yeh (trans.), *Three Seasons and other stories* (New York, London, Toronto: Staples Press, 1946), p. 135.

⁵⁵⁴ These comments are contained in the subsection of the appropriate writer, in Chapter ?.

⁵⁵⁵ *FONW* (Spring 1941), p. 5.

In the same foreword, Lehmann emphasised his preoccupation with how to keep the humanities alive during the war and to battle the Philistines who have been ‘chalking their slogans up on the walls’.⁵⁵⁶ If there was ever a man who could take on the Philistines, it would be Harold Acton, who, despite howls of disapproval from his friends who feared that the term would be too much associated with ‘scruffy, long-haired types lisping about art for art’s sake’ entitled his autobiography *Memoirs of an Aesthete*.⁵⁵⁷ Acton ignored them and, for readers who remained in any doubt as to his artistic intent as a writer and translator, he spelt it out for them in the preamble to the memoir:

And it is our duty to remind our fellow creatures of what they are fast forgetting, that true culture is universal. Over two thousand years ago Confucius talked of *T’ien hsia wei kung*, ‘the Universe for everybody’ such an aspiration will only be realised by North, South, East and West speaking mind to mind and body to body, a mutual exchange of ideas between the nations - ideas without national boundaries. Peace on earth and goodwill to all men will only be brought about by individuals like myself.⁵⁵⁸

In their quest, for meaningful, brotherly, trans-cultural, cosmopolitan, dialogue, Lehmann and Acton were clearly fighting on the same side. They both sought ways to unite the writers, and readers, of Britain and China (among other countries) at a time when few had the talent, ability or inclination to press forward with such a venture.

However, Lehmann’s implicit endorsement of Acton was never overtly conveyed to Penguin’s readers. In 1943, when Acton’s essay appeared in *TPNW*, Lehmann’s foreword suggests that he is, by this time, too preoccupied with the war in Britain and Europe and with satisfying the often conflicting demands of his readers in the British armed forces scattered around the world to call readers’ attention to Acton’s unique

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁵⁷ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 1 - 2.

position as a commentator on the merits of Chinese fiction. Acton's essay and Zhang's short story were left to speak for themselves.

What is not evident from Lehmann's forewords and Acton's effective endorsement of Lehmann's editing selections is the extent to which the two men conferred prior to Acton's penning of the essay. They were certainly acquainted long before Lehmann began publishing Acton's essays and translations relating to China. The two men were contemporaries, along with Cyril Connolly, at Eton and they shared many friends following Acton's departure for Beijing, including Julian Bell, William Empson (whom Acton cites in 'Small Talk in China') and, later, Ye Junjian.⁵⁵⁹

Although there is no mention of Lehmann in *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, which details Acton's life up until his return to England and Europe in 1939, Lehmann and Acton went on to become firm friends who kept up regular correspondence and who supported each other's professional ambitions. Lehmann published Acton and Li's translation *Four Cautionary Tales*, in 1947. In a contribution to a book of writing put together to celebrate Acton's eightieth birthday, Lehmann's entry, 'Letter from an Old Friend', recalls first meeting Acton when he stayed with a neighbour of the Lehmann's (Violet Hammersley): 'We were both at Eton then ... I was rather in awe of you'.⁵⁶⁰ Lehmann further comments that when Acton returned from China (in 1939) and was sent to India with the Royal Air Force, he began to write to Lehmann 'as if we had never been parted'.⁵⁶¹ Lehmann comments that Acton had become 'deeply interested' in *Penguin New Writing* and that when Acton transferred to Paris (again with the RAF) a 'new close connection began' between them.⁵⁶² Lehmann recalls that Acton urged him to 'believe in your star' at a moment when Lehmann was wavering in his career and that when Lehmann began publishing he was able to 'reprint books of yours [Acton's] which were, lamentably, no longer available'.⁵⁶³ It is probably not going too far to suggest that

⁵⁵⁹ See Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, p. 32, for Lehmann at Eton with Acton.

⁵⁶⁰ E. Chaney and Neil Ritchie (eds) *Oxford, China and Italy, Writings in Honour of Sir Harold Acton on his Eightieth Birthday* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984) p. 23.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

'Small Talk in China' was written at Lehmann's behest in order to promote the short stories by Chinese writers that were featured in *TPNW* as the short stories Acton singles out for praise in 'Small Talk in China' were, conveniently, those which Lehmann had published.

Many of the key themes and the citations that Acton turns to when he describes the development of Chinese literature in his essay are ones that would have appealed greatly to Lehmann and his aspirations for literature almost anywhere in the world at that time. In this sense, Acton's article provided an explanation for readers as to why Lehmann was so interested in the urges and instincts of Chinese writers. Acton appears then as a bridge not simply between the writers of East and West but a bridge also between Lehmann and his readers. Acton's essay makes explicit certain uniting forces of modern Chinese literature, that would have resonated with Lehmann in his efforts to demonstrate - by printing them alongside each other - that the literature of China and Britain and Europe and Russia could find common ground.

The most striking of these intercultural literary intersections highlighted by Acton is the growing politicisation of literature. Acton's essay points out that, particularly since the start of the war with Japan, Chinese writers have increasingly become outspoken commentators (especially those tending towards left-wing politics) and their works concern 'revolutionary' causes. Seeking to explain the instincts of 'proletarian literature', Acton cites Kuo Mo-jo (Guo Moruo), who, in 1925, wrote: 'We writers of China must reach the masses, the barracks, the factories, and the very rank and file of the revolutionary army.'⁵⁶⁴ As the chapter on Fox noted, this edict from one of China's leading literary figures, urging China's writers to seek out readers among the 'masses' is very similar to Lehmann's own desire to reach out to the working classes in Britain, both as a source of new fiction and also in an attempt to win new readers (never less so than during the war). And Lehmann, who as an editor 'patrolled the wards of' British literature with greater attention than many others, was not alone in his desire, nor was his desire created in a vacuum.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ *TPNW* 15, p. 145.

⁵⁶⁵ Davin, *Short Stories from the Second World War*, x Intro. II.

As previously discussed, Lehmann never quite created the platform for working-class writers that he had envisaged at the founding of *NW* and he never garnered the level of interest from working-class readers that he had hoped for. As a result, *TPNW* remained a broadly middle-class publication. With this in mind Acton's own comments about the failure of Chinese literati in the mid-1920s to appeal to the masses, can be read with a wry smile:

In spite of this determination [for writers to fulfill the aspirations of the Chinese people], revolutionary writers remained way above or beyond the Chinese masses. Though they expressed themselves in pai-hua their form and substance were too alien and exotic. Ninety per cent of their readers were university and middle-school students.⁵⁶⁶

Although Lehmann's readers could hardly have recognised it at the time, the instincts of the Chinese literati dating back from the mid-1920s turned out to be as unrealised as Lehmann's own attempts to raise up working-class writers and to draw in working-class readers. Both camps, it appears, shared equally misguided ideas about the nature and reach of their influence. For while they both certainly exerted influence, it was rarely with the masses.

In his essay, Acton also cites Mao Tun (Mao Dun), whom Acton describes as the 'spokesman for all Chinese writers on the National Front in the war against Japan'. The citation from a Chinese magazine, states: 'Our new literature is essentially a literature of national defence ... True, it has hatred for the enemy invading our country, yet it has sympathy for the enemy soldiers, who are innocent folk driven to the front for cannon fodder.'⁵⁶⁷ Here, Acton, through the words of Mao Dun, highlights the common humanity which can, and for Lehmann must, lie at the heart of the writerly instinct in wartime. It is

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 145. Pai-hua (now bai-hua) was a simpler language, closer to the common speech of the Chinese people, introduced in the early twentieth-century in China to replace classical Chinese (which could not be spoken or verbally understood). Bai-hua was considered more suitable as a means of popular education.

⁵⁶⁷ *TPNW* 15, p. 147.

an instinct which has much in common with the ‘brotherhood of oppression’ identified by a reviewer as one of the uniting forces behind Lehmann’s editorial selections.⁵⁶⁸ Another of Lehmann’s preoccupations, the practical and tangible impact of war on writers and readers, is probed in some detail by Acton in the final pages of his essay. Acton describes how Chinese writers ‘became men of action and went to the front to drive lorries, wrote letters for the wounded in hospitals, taught refugees in camps’, following the Japanese invasion, invoking not only Lehmann’s forewords for *TPNW* about the world war in Europe but also, the earliest issues of *NW*, when many of the writers whom Lehmann knew and whose work was featured in the magazine, left Britain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Acton goes on to comment that the war against Japan has ‘strengthened and canalised’ the creative impulses of Chinese writers.⁵⁶⁹ And he concludes that an increase in circulation of works by modern writers and a new class of reader is evidence that: ‘China’s Renaissance may truly be said to have begun with the Sino-Japanese War’.⁵⁷⁰ In Britain and for Lehmann too, the war proved a boon with more writers getting out among the masses and with circulation steadily climbing and with new types of wartime readers emerging. It can be argued that Lehmann’s own star was never higher than when he was editor of *TPNW* during the war.

Attention to Acton’s pivotal essay and his role in Lehmann’s project, demands consideration of Acton’s own status as a China expert. A clue is tucked away in a footnote in the early portion of the text, where Acton criticises a translation of two of Lu Hsun’s (Lu Xun’s) earliest stories, ‘K’ung I-chi’ and ‘Medicine’, for injury to the stories’ ‘sense, shortness and salt’.⁵⁷¹ The footnote reveals that Acton is referring to the translations by Edgar Snow in *Living China*.⁵⁷² Both Snow and Acton sought to highlight the plight of ‘modern’ China and its ‘creative mind’ to the West.⁵⁷³ Snow’s translations

⁵⁶⁸ Cited in Chapter 2.8

⁵⁶⁹ *TPNW* 15, p. 148.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵⁷¹ *TPNW* 15, p. 141.

⁵⁷² Edgar Snow (ed) *Living China, Modern Chinese Short Stories* (London, Bombay, Sydney, George G. Harrap & Co, 1936). The stories were published by G. G. Harrap after being rejected by many British publishers.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

also contain an essay on the state of Chinese literature, written by his wife (Helen Foster Snow) under the pen name Nym Wales. Yet the introduction to Snow's book contains the confession that when he started to translate the works he 'knew little Chinese' and makes 'no claims to sinology now'.⁵⁷⁴ Where Snow has sought to downplay his expertise in this area, Acton seized an opportunity to climb the rankings as a critic of aspects of modern China, in particular its fiction, because of his expertise in Mandarin. Viewed in this way, Acton's footnote is more than mere criticism of a rival, but evidence of Acton jostling to consolidate his standing as a China expert. Which for reasons this chapter will consider never happened in the ways that he might have hoped given the critical praise for his early publications linked to China.

Across the many *NW* journals that Lehmann published between 1936 and 1950, the only apparent translators from Chinese to English (or Chinese to French in one case) that he relied on were: Ye Junjian (unacknowledged), Tai Van-Chou (Dai Wangshu) and Nym Wales (the pen name of Helen Foster Snow) who worked with Wu Chia (the pair translated several Chinese stories for publication in literary journals in the West). Although only Tai Van-Chou is credited, Wales' introductory article about modern Chinese fiction that accompanied *Living China*, had been widely read and parts of it, in particular the history and development of literature in China, may have influenced Acton's own writing on the subject. Yet Acton and the Chinese writer Xiao Qian worked on the translations of at least four of the wartime stories from China that Lehmann published, correspondence in Lehmann's archive makes this explicit.

It is worth considering for a moment, Acton's legacy in terms of his position in the hierarchy of 'China experts' or 'authorities' on China. There is certainly a solid case to be argued based on his literary output. As well as the books that Acton translated and co-translated about Chinese poetry, plays, and his fiction about China, *Harold Acton A Bibliography*, compiled by Neil Ritchie in 1984, reveals the considerable extent to which Acton contributed to magazines, periodicals, made translations, reviewed books and contributed to sections of books throughout his lifetime, all on the subject of China. Yet,

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., p.14.

despite his evident lasting fascination with China, Acton is still probably best known for his three volumes on Italian history, and his memoirs.⁵⁷⁵ There also remains a question to be answered as to whether Acton wanted to be considered an 'expert'. His memoir proclaims that he had 'no sinological pretensions'.⁵⁷⁶ As a homosexual aristocrat living in a time when prejudice about both abounded, he may have had good reason to wish to avoid rubbing up against China experts seeking to aggressively defend their intellectual patch. It is probable that Acton instead sought to cultivate a differently defined expertise, to allow himself the freedom to pursue his own interests without having to publicly do battle with sinologists in the field of Chinese culture. Certainly, the people whom Acton states he admires are not sinologues, about whom he is scathing, but autodidacts of the kind L. C. Arlington represents. Acton comments that Arlington 'was more self-educated than most of us and China had been his finishing school' and later adds that Arlington 'had amassed more multifarious knowledge about every conceivable subject than anyone I had ever met'.⁵⁷⁷ Acton's collaboration with Arlington, he would have readers of his memoir note, underlines his own status as an authentic source on matters relating to Chinese theatre. He writes that he was 'flattered that he [Arlington] did not regard me as a trespasser, perhaps because he knew I had no sinological pretensions'.⁵⁷⁸ If an individual as talented and knowledgeable about Chinese theatre such as Arlington, endorses Acton, that to him, is the greatest prize.

In his memoir, Acton is specific about the limitations of sinology as he saw it, from that period. As well commenting that the sinologists in Beijing suffered from 'mental astigmatism' so unenlightened are their ideas about China, he wrote: 'It was evident that the influence of sinology on foreigners was anything but benign. It brought home to me the sharp difference between Cathay and China, and with all due respect to

⁵⁷⁵ Acton wrote *The Last Medici* (1932), *The Bourbons of Naples* (1956) and *The Last Bourbons of Naples* (1961) which are described as 'noteworthy' in his obituary in *The New York Times*, 1 March 1994. The two volumes on the Bourbons are described as 'probably his best work' in *The Independent*, 28 February 1994.

⁵⁷⁶ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 358.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Cathay, it was China that I wished to know'.⁵⁷⁹ It is significant to note that Acton clearly considered the gravest flaw of sinology to have been its utter disregard for the country as an integral part of the modern world.⁵⁸⁰ This position might seem surprising from a self-proclaimed 'aesthete' whom it might reasonably be expected would consider China of the imagination to be of greater or at least equal interest compared with modern China. Perhaps what we see here is an example of where the label of 'aesthete' has served to muddy understanding about Acton's true ability and impede proper appreciation of his body of work.

Based on Acton's output, the quality of his Chinese translations and the acclaim his works received from reviewers (several of them scholars in some aspect of Chinese culture), it is worth considering, in the spirit of Hua Hsu's *A Floating Chinaman*, the reasons why Acton is not better remembered as an authority on China and why he never returned to the country after 1939 despite the happiness it had once brought him. In order to hone his aesthetic sensibilities, Acton kept a deliberate distance from the foreign community in Peking. His memoir states that he resolved to remain 'aloof from Europeans who did not share my enthusiasm for China' which meant the majority of them.⁵⁸¹ And, as his teaching and translation work delighted and absorbed him later on, he admitted to having had 'fewer and fewer compatriots' in Peking.⁵⁸² The end of his memoir recalls a moment when he encountered the prejudice of the European community in Peking, in no small part because he had immersed himself too much in Chinese life (and too little in the expatriate community):

Writing English and studying Chinese absorbed far too much time to enable me to indulge in stupefaction of the senses, yet because I kept myself comparatively

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

⁵⁸⁰ Acton's comments and recollections about Western perceptions of China and the chasm that existed in the late 1930s between China in the Western imagination and modern China, chime strongly with the ideas contained in Emily Hahn's article 'The China Boom' in *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, 1937.

⁵⁸¹ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (Faber), p. 323.

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 368.

to myself I had evidently become a sinister figure in European eyes. Lurid stories were repeated about my arcane activities.⁵⁸³

Acton's memoir, as this chapter will go on to discuss, reveals that he was strongly aware of the common prejudices against China circulating in Britain and Europe, so he knew the risks of going 'completely native'.⁵⁸⁴ Yet there is a strong possibility that Acton's preference, for aesthetic, professional and personal reasons, to live outside of the social and domestic norms of the foreign community in China ultimately contributed to his future in the country being dramatically curtailed. Correspondence with Lehmann shows that Acton had planned to return to China during the war, where he would presumably have been of considerable use as he had been teaching at universities, had established literary contacts and spoke good Chinese. But his request to return to China with the Royal Air Force was rejected and instead he was sent to an unimportant post, to carry out work that was beneath him, in India. In a handwritten airmail letter to Lehmann in November 1942, Care of RAF Ceylon, a clearly bereft Acton wrote:

I believe I told you that China is out of the question. A certain Berkeley Gage at the embassy in Chongqing was the villain of the piece. You will be indignant if you hear the details...personal. Once I recovered from the shock - and it took me some time for I had quite hitched my wagon to that star - I became quite passive and placid. Now I smile and contemplate my navel.⁵⁸⁵

In the letter, Acton has underlined the word *personal* which suggests that the complaint was linked to his comportment, his personality or his behaviour. Gage had the final word and Acton was cut off from China. After the war Acton returned to Europe and to family, to start anew in an environment with no 'discreet tolerance of homosexuality' surely one aspect of Chinese culture that had enabled him to find such peace in Peking.⁵⁸⁶ He may

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p. 380.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 368.

⁵⁸⁵ Handwritten airmail letter from Acton to Lehmann dated 14th November 1942, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

⁵⁸⁶ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p. 193.

have left London as an 'aesthete' but Acton returned to Europe with a degree of expertise in his field of interest that has been greatly overlooked as a result of official meddling, his own self-positioning and an instinct to shun traditional modes of establishing authority, that would have legitimised him as an 'expert'.

6.3 Acton's 'Innate love of China beyond Rational Analysis'

Given his passionate endorsement of modern Chinese literature as conveyed in *TPWN*, it is useful to consider the extent to which literary fiction inspired Acton's wanderlust for the country. Although, as his memoir clearly states, there were other inspirations, not least a Chinese chef whom Acton sought out in London prior to his departure.

Acton's memoirs emphasise that he had little time for the 'ignorant' or 'blasé travellers' whose writing on China could never rise above their own national prejudices, the amateur observers of China with their orientalist tendencies whom he sends up so mercilessly in *Peonies and Ponies*:

I do not understand those blasé travellers who come to China boasting of their ignorance. No doubt they have excellent eyes, but this dependence on a purely personal vision seldom accompanies a freedom from national prejudices, which Gibbon deemed indispensable, together with 'age, judgement, a competent knowledge of men and books'. Copious reading enhanced my enjoyment.⁵⁸⁷

For Acton, good literature is presented as one of the most effective ways to counter narrow, prejudiced thinking about a place. He lists the literary influences that contributed to his fascination with China, among them: Waley's translations of Chinese poems; Giles's translations of *Chuang-tzû* (*Zhuangzi*) and the *Liao Chai* (*Liaozhai Zhiyi*)

⁵⁸⁷ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, pp. 275 - 276 (Faber) .

and (James) Legge's Classics.⁵⁸⁸ Acton also lists 'Père Wieger's history' and the 'fascinating volumes of Bland and Backhouse' as sources of literary inspiration.⁵⁸⁹ Acton's memoir reveals that he was, even prior to visiting China, acutely aware of the kinds of prejudice towards China that a person might encounter in late 1920s and early 1930s Britain, or even within the foreign community living in Beiping (Beijing) around that time. He recalls his decision to hire a Chinese chef to cook meals for him and act as a valet after he returned to London from Paris in the early 1930s at which point he claims that he 'banished European impediments and ate with chopsticks'.⁵⁹⁰ Chong Sung, as the chef is called, educates Acton about China, passing on propaganda pamphlets issued by the KuoMingTan (KMT) in English. For Acton, in raptures over his chef's cooking, the experience evidently brings him a step closer to leaving England in favour of China. 'I was half in China, and as time went on I wished to be wholly in China. For if one Chinese could render existence so agreeable what couldn't some four hundred million do'.⁵⁹¹ And later Acton adds that Chong Sung had unconsciously 'watered a seed long dormant within me: an innate love of China beyond rational analysis and an instinct that I had some vocation there. Until I went to China my life could not be integrated and I knew it'.⁵⁹²

Acton suggests that it is these encounters with China - both literary and with the Chinese community in London - that drove him to quit Europe and to seek new forms of art and beauty in Asia (Acton visited Japan before he reached China). If the arousal of Acton's aesthetic sensibilities ignited his interest in China, other factors in Britain also motivated him to quit Europe. Kirstin Mahoney comments that Acton sought to escape the 'vaunted virility of masculinist modernism' and was deflated following the poor sales of his early fiction.⁵⁹³ He also had no intention of conforming to familial and societal

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 275.

⁵⁸⁹ Georges Frederic Leon Wieger was a French Jesuit priest, doctor, missionary and sinologist. It was not until after the death of Sir Edmund Backhouse in 1944 that his biographer suggested that a major source for *China Under the Empress Dowager* was a forgery, most likely by Backhouse himself.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 195 -196.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p.196.

⁵⁹² Ibid., p. 199.

⁵⁹³ Mahoney (22 minutes, 58 seconds).

pressures to settle down and start a family. While these factors help to understand Acton's decision to move to China, what kept him there was a far more meaningful attraction that grew as his knowledge, understanding and intellectual appreciation of Chinese society and culture increased.

6.4 Prejudice and Popular Fiction

The chapter in Acton's memoir about the months he spent in London prior to his departure is notable not only because it deals with the source of his interest in China but because it reveals the anti-Chinese sentiment that could be encountered - quite commonly Acton suggests - in English society at the time. Acton, for example, admits that he could 'tempt few friends to dinner' once Chong Sung took up a position, because they associated Chinese food with 'snakes and scorpions'.⁵⁹⁴ He goes on to recount:

These friends viewed Chong Sung with suspicion and stared into my eyes to see if I were smoking opium. When they came to visit me they trod gingerly, sniffing the air, peering about for an adjacent chamber of horrors. Sometimes I detected a shiver. That boggy-man [sic] of fiction, the villainous heathen Chinee with long fingernails and dangling queue, had not yet been effaced by Pearl Buck and Lin Yu-t'ang. Even Anita [a local friend from Chile] said that she felt uneasy in Chong Sung's presence. The feeling was reciprocated by Chong Sung, and I had some difficulty persuading him to cook a special dinner in her flat. He was mollified by Arthur Waley, who wrote an elegant Chinese couplet in praise of his cooking.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 196.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 198.

Acton here interprets, with perceptiveness and playfulness, how Chinese people were still frequently viewed in Britain (and the West) and he holds accountable the powerful influence of works of fiction on the popular imagination, both positive and negative. Acton also signals his belief that the era of Buck (Peak Buck) and Yu-t'ang (Lin Yutang) marked a turning point in terms of the West's, and in particular American and British, perceptions of China.

When Acton returns home on a visit from China, he equally mocks his friends in the European community (who appear to have picked up the scent of the 'lurid stories') when they express their concerns about his life and wellbeing in China.

My myth preceded me to Europe, for what could keep me so long in the land of Dr. Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril unless some secret vice, some enslavement of the senses.⁵⁹⁶

No consideration about the extremes of public prejudice about China that persisted in early 1930s Britain would be complete without reference to the 'yellow peril incarnate' of Sax Rohmer's master-villain. Yet Acton, in his memoir, presents himself as someone eager to do battle against these kinds of negative literary representations and 'national prejudices', even if it means a degree of social ostracisation.

Acton is pro-China even before he sets foot on Chinese soil. He is driven by an appreciation of traditional China, as conjured in the imagination by the translations of Waley et al. And Acton's enthusiasm only increases after moving to China and he aspires to rally others. In a panglossian moment, Acton declares that through his ambitious programme of translations he eventually 'hoped to introduce English readers to a whole library of popular Chinese literature and I worked on each book in turn until Hitler's war'.⁵⁹⁷ Acton's evident delight in the idea that he had, potentially, a lifetime's work to do in China, makes his exclusion from the country all the more poignant.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 380.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 365.

Yet despite his hope to elevate Chinese culture in the eyes of general readers via translations of Chinese poetry and plays, the more Acton came up against mainstream perceptions of China in the West, the more disillusioned he became:

I was to discover that for many Europeans *Chu Chin Chow*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Mikado* and *The Geisha* were representative of both China and Japan, and that they could not distinguish between the citizens of either country.⁵⁹⁸

On a visit back to Europe and to London, in 1936, Acton's disillusionment grew further. He comments that: 'nobody took more than a superficial interest in China'.⁵⁹⁹ He goes on to admit that hopes he had harboured about a new wave of appreciation for Chinese theatre sweeping Britain, after rumours of the success of the play *Lady Precious Stream* had reached him in Beijing, were dashed on his return to London. Acton notes:

Chinese novels and plays and poems! Their [his friends'] indifference told me plainly that I would have to rest content with the pleasure these translations had given me personally. Yet I had confidence in my pale distant star. The success of *Lady Precious Stream*, rumours of which had encouraged us in Peking, had been a mere flash in the pan. What could I say to Arlington, who thought our *Famous Chinese Plays* would vie with Noel Coward's and to H. H. Hu who thought that *The Hall of Everlasting Life* would be snapped up by the first theatrical producer in London. We had worked so hard together that I hated to disappoint them.⁶⁰⁰

Eight years later, Acton was still having to 'rest content' with the personal pleasure his work had given him in the face of British readers' and reviewers' antipathy to Chinese theatre. A review of an essay that Acton had written about Chinese theatre for Lehmann

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 387.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 389.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 391.

in *New Writing* and *Daylight* (Autumn 1944, Hogarth Press), commented only that: 'The Chinese theatre is not, one feels, as interesting as Mr Acton would have us believe'.⁶⁰¹

Acton's interactions with China were lasting and meaningful and his time spent living, working and studying in the country were a time that he later mourns. His fervent belief that through cultural and aesthetic appreciation can come greater closeness and understanding between two nations, remained unshaken. Although several of his books and translations are related to traditional China, Acton was equally engaged in the 'real China', not least through his teaching duties at Peking National University (as a lecturer on English literature). The ideas that Acton sought to share with Penguin Book's Anglophone readers in 'Small Talk in China' are concerned with Chinese literature through the ages but he puts special emphasis, at the end of the essay on the talents and achievements of the country's young writers.⁶⁰² For Acton, as for the American journalist, Emily Hahn, the potential consequences of the war against Japan in China brought with it a pressing need for the West to know and understand the predicament of 'living China' both to engage the West's sympathies and rally its support. Both writers also evidently believed that English and Chinese literature - especially fiction - had a unique power to achieve (or scupper) this lofty aim.⁶⁰³

6.5 Redrawing Responses to China

To return to the divisions of writers described in Hua Hsu's 1930s and 1940s America, Acton's (thwarted) ambition to introduce English readers to a range of popular Chinese literature as well as his subsequent admission of the significant impediments to such an endeavour, place him very much in a camp with Chi-chen Wang (at the point when he sought to publish Lu Xun's short stories). Acton, like Wang, expressed his acute

⁶⁰¹ 'Book Chronicle' *The Listener*, 14th December 1944, p. 665.

⁶⁰² *TPNW 15*, p. 150.

⁶⁰³ See Emily Hahn's essay 'The China Boom' for her account of powerful and disappointing fiction written about China. (Online source)
<http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/tien-hsia.php?searchterm=022_boom.inc&issue=022> (viewed: 16.2.17)

concern regarding popular narratives about China in the West and sought to do battle with them. Acton's memoir, expresses hope that the era of Buck and Lin (Yutang) has ushered in a new sympathy for China which to an extent, 'effaced' the preceding era when Fu Manchu and the 'villainous heathen Chinese' dominated popular (Western) imagination.⁶⁰⁴ Acton, through his own translations, critical work and fiction, aspired to move that dialogue along, and to bring the greater complexities and delights of Chinese literature (both traditional and modern) alive in the West. His despondency in the face of Western 'indifference' to such Chinese literature in translation which he encounters on a brief return to Europe (and Britain) show not only that he knew what he was up against but also an underlying belief that success was far from guaranteed. Just as Wang, in promoting Lu Xun's vision of China to the West in the introduction to the writer's translated short stories, 'had to at least reckon with Buck', Acton's memoir suggests that he ultimately recognised as false his once held belief that a greater sympathy for China ensuing from Buck and Lin's works would pave the way for an interest in Chinese literature (in Britain) which described a more complex and sophisticated version of the country from the pens of its own writers.⁶⁰⁵ Both Wang and Acton confronted what Emily Hahn knew, that Western readers held 'their little warped romances ... dear to them' in terms of representations of China (and a great many other countries that she had travelled to).⁶⁰⁶ That to battle them would bring, as it had for Hahn a sense of 'mystification and discomfort'.⁶⁰⁷ Lehmann knew this too and he depended on Acton to help him attempt to make the case and to bring modern Chinese literature alive for a wider readership. Arguably, although for different reasons and although the conditions today are greatly different, these kinds of hurdles, to the popularization of Chinese literature in the West, still exist today. Julia Lovell is among a number of academics in the field to acknowledge that Chinese literature even now 'plays to an empty house' while, by contrast, Japanese literature has a solid readership in the West, even though

⁶⁰⁴ Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 198.

⁶⁰⁵ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, pp. 170-171.

⁶⁰⁶ Hahn, 'The China Boom'.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

both are read in translation.⁶⁰⁸ To a great extent, this makes the endeavour and the effort, by figures such as Acton, Wang, Lehmann and the *TPNW* cohort of supporters in matters relating to modern Chinese literature all the more laudable.

⁶⁰⁸ Julia Lovell, 'Great Leap Forward' *The Guardian*, 11th June, 2005.
<<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jun/11/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>> (Last accessed 6.12.19).

Chapter 7: Ye Junjian, ‘a double bridge’, Lehmann’s Literary Source and *TPNW* Contributor

7.1

Ye Junjian and Chinese Anglophone Short Stories

The post-war *TPNW* as critical accounts have noted had a different feel to the wartime issues. One account noted that the magazine's pages inevitably reflected ‘the national mood of post-war exhaustion’ after 1945.⁶⁰⁹ Certainly, without the war which had so rallied readers and writers to its pages and united the instincts and approaches of writers around the world, sales began to slip and had halved between 1947 and 1949 (although by the standards of most literary magazine’s they remained comparatively high). After the war, Lehmann continued to publish material relating to the war which at least one subscriber noted in 1947 was off putting.⁶¹⁰ And even if certain readers wanted less of it, war coloured the national imagination long after the fighting stopped. One feature of post-war *TPNW* was a greater emphasis on ‘the arts’ more broadly which reflected a less elite approach to culture. The growing cultural influence of America on English literature also becomes evident in the post-war issues of *TPNW*.⁶¹¹ Nevertheless, as the publication of stories authored by Ye Junjian show, Lehmann remained committed to publishing Chinese stories in his magazine, even when the glue of war no longer adhered the content of *TPNW* in the same way. Although one of Ye’s stories takes place during the Japanese war, its predominant theme is the tension

⁶⁰⁹ John Whitehead in the introduction to Ella Whitehead (ed) *John Lehmann’s ‘New Writing’, An Author-Index*, p 27.

⁶¹⁰ Cited in Chapter 1 from ‘A Report on Penguin World’ by Mass Observation, November 1947.

⁶¹¹ American writers and critics published in post-war *TPNW* included: Bernard Evslin (*TPNW* 27), Lionel Trilling (*TPMW* 35), Nelson Algren (*TPNW* 36), Harry Duncan (*TPNW* 37), Saul Bellow (*TPNW* 38), Paul Bowles (*TPNW* 29) and Tennessee Williams (*TPNW* 40).

between traditional and modern China and the implications of these often competing forces on the future of the country. For these reasons and because of Ye's crucial role in Lehmann's China venture, Ye, his short stories and their publication history in Britain, his biography and his relationship with Lehmann which had a considerable impact on both men are appraised here, in a chapter to themselves.

Ye was among several modern Chinese writers who came to prominence in the West in the 1930s and 1940s 'who were simultaneously translators themselves' and, as Qian Suoqiao has noted 'translation was indeed a defining element in Chinese modernity'.⁶¹² This chapter will therefore consider the ways which Ye's experience as a translator in China as well as his status as a writer who adopted the English language for his novels and stories in the 1940s, can be interpreted with the conditions and forces described in Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, in mind. Casanova's model which foregrounds the role of translators but also critics and literary gatekeepers, is particularly apt in assessing the value of Lehmann's 'consecration' of Ye which endowed Ye with literary capital such that he could, to great effect, shape responses to China (and specifically modern Chinese literature) in Britain.

Overall, as this chapter will demonstrate, Ye's contribution to shaping perceptions of China in the minds of *TPNW* readers throughout the 1940s has barely been acknowledged but can hardly be overstated. John Lehmann, because of the complexities of the translation process never gave Ye the credit that he was due. As a result, four of the Chinese stories published in *TPNW* might never have been attributed to Ye (in so far as he originally translated and sent them from China to Lehmann in London) had he not published a collection of the short stories himself in 1946.⁶¹³ It is doubtful that Lehmann would have encountered these stories at all if it hadn't been for Ye's efforts sending them via 'the precarious routes over the Himalayas and on the high

⁶¹² Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan, Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity*, p. 3.

⁶¹³ The four Chinese stories which appeared in Ye's *Three Seasons and Other Stories* (1946) were: 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road', 'The Third-Rate Gunner', 'Mr Hua Wei', and 'Half A Cartload of Straw Short'. Ye was credited as the translator of the four stories in 1990 in Whitehead (ed), *John Lehmann's 'New Writing'*, p. 100. However, the translation history of these stories is even more complex than this would suggest.

seas' during the war.⁶¹⁴ What Ye and his co-translator Donald M. Allen (a translator of Japanese for the American military during WWII and later an editor, publisher and translator of contemporary American literature) sent to Lehmann in December 1939 was a manuscript containing a collection of 'twenty stories written during the two years of the war [against Japan], for the most part by the younger authors of China' which the pair had translated into English and given the title *People of China*.⁶¹⁵ In the letter which Allen sent to Lehmann, under separate cover, he commented that he viewed the collection as a 'sequel' to that of Edgar Snow, published by G. G. Harrap under the title, *Living China* (1936) even though only two of the authors appeared in both collections.⁶¹⁶ Although Allen could not have known it at that time another similarity between *Living China* and the stories from Ye and Allen which Lehmann published in his journals would be the role of Xiao Qian as an additional translator. Ye and Allen hoped that Lehmann would either help them to find a publisher in the UK, or publish the collection at Hogarth Press.⁶¹⁷ While the whereabouts of the original MSS are unknown, it was certainly the source of several of the stories which appeared in *FONW* and later *TPNW*.⁶¹⁸ But it was not until February 1946 when the first of Ye's own short stories was published in *TPNW* (and in Great Britain for the first time) that his name appeared in print in the journal.⁶¹⁹ By then, Lehmann and Ye had been in communication for almost a decade and Ye had already made a significant contribution to *TPNW* readers' understanding of what modern China was thinking. At the very least, Ye's translations and later his own writing, revealed the preoccupations of some of China's finest and most exportable young writers as they navigated the politics and the human toll of the war with Japan. Ye's final

⁶¹⁴ Yeh (tra.) *Three Seasons and Other Stories*, p. 135.

⁶¹⁵ Typed letter from Allen (in Hong Kong) to Lehman (at Hogarth Press) dated 10th November 1939, (HRC/Lehmann/Allen).

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ Correspondence between Lehmann, Ye and Allen in the HRC demonstrates that 'Along the Yunnan-Burma Road', 'Mr Hua Wei', 'The Third-Rate Gunner' and 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' were in the original MSS of *People of China*.

⁶¹⁹ Ye's first story to be published in *TPNW* was in 1946. However, Lehmann first published one of Ye's stories in 1938, in *New Writing (New Series 1)*, Autumn 1938 (London: Hogarth Press, 1938). The story was entitled 'How Triumph Van Went Back to the Army'. It had been translated from Esperanto into English by C. Lehane.

contribution to *TPNW* came in 1949 (*TPNW* 38) with the publication of his short story 'The Three Brothers' a neat but grim tale about family duty and the corrupting power of money. Its British debut was featured alongside the works of Edith Sitwell, Denton Welch (published posthumously) and James Stern.⁶²⁰ It is the only piece of Ye's writing or translation for *TPNW* that makes no mention of war or of Japanese aggression and focuses instead on domestic Chinese concerns. Although Ye was never a lone voice in Lehmann's ear on matters relating to China during his years of association with *NW*, *FONW*, and *TPNW*, there were only a handful of others who were at once so in tune with the young writers of China at that time, with the ability to translate their stories and who were part of Lehmann's network of friends at the heart of British literary society (Chapter 8.2 considers this cohort in more detail).⁶²¹ Two other unofficial advisers to Lehmann, whose expertise on matters relating to contemporary Chinese literature arguably ranked higher than Ye's, were Harold Acton and the Chinese writer, lecturer and journalist, Hsiao Chi'en (Xiao Qian). Indeed when Donald Allen made enquiries, in a letter to Lehmann as to why he and Ye had never been credited, or paid, for their translations, despite the stories having been published twice by Lehmann in *FONW* and *TPNW*, Lehmann replied:

The reason that nobody's name was mentioned as translator, is because the versions which reached me had to be entirely revised by Harold Acton and Hsiao Chi'en ... It was in agreement with them that I decided to send the fees for these stories to the China Relief Campaign, as it seemed so extremely unlikely that we could get any money through to Chungking.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ *TPNW* 26 (1945), 'About the Contributors'. Denton Welch, Lehmann informed his readers on publication of his first story in *TPNW*, was born in China of Anglo-American parents and spent 'a year in China ... and wrote an account of it in his first book'.

⁶²¹ Yeh (tra.) *Three Seasons*, p. 135. Ye alerts readers to the fact that the authors whose works he translated, he 'happened to know quite well'.

⁶²² Typed letter from Lehmann to Donald M. Allen (at the University of Wisconsin, USA) dated 30 January. No year is provided but it is probably 1942 or 1943. The letter lists the four stories that Lehmann published from the original MSS of twenty. (HRC/Lehmann/Allen).

Such letters point to the complexities of the translation and publishing process for Lehmann. In a typed letter to Acton dated 23rd February, 1941, Lehmann commented: 'I have looked through the Chinese stories you have revised from my MSS, and I think you have improved them enormously. I am grateful to you'.⁶²³ Evidently while Ye's original impetus was vital in getting the Chinese stories to Britain, it took Acton and Xiao's re-translation before Lehmann had the confidence to publish them.

A typed letter from Dorothy Woodman (at the CCC) shows that Lehmann was true to his word and expresses thanks for the 'ten guineas' towards the campaign (the fees that had been due to the Chinese writers and their translators).⁶²⁴ This outcome suggests that it was easier for Ye to get published than to get paid in the early years of the war, as an unknown Chinese writer. Nevertheless, Ye benefitted from Acton and Xiao's translation and re-editing efforts because when he published the stories as a collection after the war, it was Acton and Xiao's version that he used, with Lehmann's permission.

7.2 Ye and Lehmann

The extensive correspondence between Ye and Lehmann in the Harry Ransom archive, which continued for many decades, suggests that these early editorial hiccups did little to deter Ye and he continued to send Lehmann stories that he had translated and later on, his own stories written in English, several of which were published by Lehmann and for which he was fully credited. The professional relationship between Lehmann and Ye was reciprocal. Ye delivered writing and ideas to Lehmann that he would not otherwise have had access to and equally, Lehmann was instrumental in introducing Ye to the literary world in London during the years he lived in Britain (1944-1949) and helped to get Ye's work published in English and the rights to his work sold abroad (notably France). Lehmann's endorsement and encouragement of Ye's writing, mostly through *TPNW*, is something the Chinese writer acknowledged repeatedly in the forewords or

⁶²³ Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton dated 23 February 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

⁶²⁴ Typed letter from Woodman to Lehmann dated 27 October 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Woodman/CCC).

notes which accompanied his own publications and later in newspaper articles.⁶²⁵

Although, strangely, Ye's Chinese memoirs have much less to say to about Lehmann. What emerges too, from careful analysis of the cross-cultural interactions between Lehmann, in his position at the beating heart of the literary community in London in the late 1930s and 1940s, and Ye, as he sought to convey something of China's soul to the West (partly as an official working for the British Ministry of Information but more concertedly as a writer) is the nature of a dialogue, albeit today the rather fragmentary remains of a dialogue, that sought to bring East and West to a greater depth of understanding and appreciation through the medium of short fiction. That is not to suggest that Lehmann wholehearted endorsed everything that Ye submitted to him. Plenty of Ye's short stories were rejected (as Chapter 8.5 considers) as well as an article about literary developments in China over the previous two decades which he had hoped would run alongside the short stories that he and Donald Allen had translated. However, Lehmann's rejection letters were usually accompanied by words of encouragement and a suggestion that Ye keep sending fresh ideas (as was the case with a great many writers in whom Lehmann detected talent and therefore sought to nurture). When Lehmann introduces Ye to *TPNW* readers for the first time in 1946, he describes him as a 'young Chinese writer', who had 'served in the Chinese army' and had been 'beaten-up by the Japanese' while in Tokio [Tokyo] but who has recently travelled to England after taking a job lecturing on China for the Ministry of Information and who is 'now doing research work in English literature at King's College, Cambridge'.

⁶²⁶ It is easy to see why Ye appealed to Lehmann as a contributor for *TPNW*; he was young, in active service, wrote in English and was studying literature at Lehmann's *alma mater* (although Lehmann attended Trinity College). However, Lehmann's brief biography omits - either deliberately or because Lehmann did not know - that Ye's work for the army in China was largely behind a desk in the war time propaganda office. As

⁶²⁵ Ye, *The Ignorant and The Forgotten*, p. 4. Ye offers 'grateful thanks to John Lehmann'. Ye, *Three Seasons and Other Stories*, p. 135. Ye comments he is 'indebted to John Lehmann' for his 'encouraging suggestions and interest in Chinese writing'. When Ye returns to Britain in the 1980s, several newspaper articles cite him thanking John Lehmann.

⁶²⁶ *TPNW* 26, 'About the Contributors', p.2.

Ye states in an unfinished autobiography that he dictated to his son (in English) prior to his death, the department that he worked for during the war against Japan was the 'Third Bureau of the Military Commission' but it 'had nothing to do with military affairs'.⁶²⁷ As Chapter 4 identified, the third office was set up following the United Front agreement, administered by the Communists, and concerned principally with propaganda. Ye's role was at least partly, to act as a liaison for foreign writers and journalists visiting or moving around China during the war against Japan. Lehmann does not mention Ye's translation work for *TPNW* in the brief author biography, but he does acknowledge that he first published one of Ye's stories in 1938 in *New Writing*. This admission signals to readers that Lehmann and Ye had been in contact well before Ye's arrival in Britain during World War II.

7.3 Ye and Julian Bell

Ye and Lehmann were first introduced through Lehmann's great friend, Julian Bell who from 1935 to 1937 taught English literature at Wuhan University.⁶²⁸ Ye had quickly become Bell's favourite student as a diary and a collection of letters that he sent back home to his mother in 1936, show.⁶²⁹ An article about Ye by Michael Scammell, in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1981, cites from a letter that Bell wrote to Lehmann, introducing him to his new friend:

⁶²⁷ Citation from Ye's unpublished 18-page autobiography entitled 'The Account of My Life' dictated by Ye to his son, (Nienlun Ye), p. 5. A copy of this account was provided for research purposes by Nienlun on 1 August 2017. The account is in English. It was transcribed by Ye's son from a recording.

⁶²⁸ Ye Junjian, 'O "This England"', *PEN Broadsheet no. 12*, Spring 1982, p. 1. KCA (KCHR/2/78). In the article, Ye commented: 'It was John who initiated me into the English literary scene by publishing my stories in his ably edited *New Writing*. Of course without Julian Bell, who was my teacher and great friend when I was a student of English literature at Wuhan University, I would not have come to know John, to whom Julian gave me an introduction long before I went to England'.

⁶²⁹ KCA (JHB/3/2, Julian Bell's diary/notebook from China). In the notes, Bell made a list of all the foreign writers Ye had read, including: (G. Eliot, Balzac, Maupassant, G. Sand, A. France (little), Zola, Wells, Wilde, Shaw, Dostoyevsky/Turgenev, Chekhoff, Gogol, Pushkin, Gorki, Ivanoff among others. Bell describes Ye as 'handsome' and 'very intelligent indeed'. Patricia Lawrence cites a letter that Ye wrote to Vanessa Bell (10 Jan 1936) in which he enthuses over his friendship with Ye. Lawrence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p. 48.

I will, if I get the chance, send you some things from one of my students [Ye], a really most remarkable young man. He writes, incidentally, in Esperanto, and has just published a book of short stories ... He's not got a penny in the world - is now in Japan teaching English - and wants to see life ... He himself is utterly charming and also, extremely good looking.⁶³⁰

Bell and Ye travelled frequently together in 1936 including trips to Chengdu and Tibet, before their destinies divided and Bell went off to the Spanish Civil War where he was killed fighting the forces of General Franco and Ye went to Tokyo, Japan, to teach (a well trodden path for Chinese 'intellectuals').⁶³¹ Ye's letters to Bell that have been preserved from that period reveal, in a fragmentary and one-sided way, a high degree of warmth, openness and brotherliness between the two men that had evidently emerged from an initial connection over literature.⁶³² Ye comments, in his brief (unpublished English-language) autobiography, that he and Bell 'found we had very much in common in our literary taste, also ideologically'.⁶³³

The letters between Bell and Ye are sent from Chongqing, Wuhan, Shanghai and finally Tokyo (sometimes referred to as Tokio) as Ye makes his way slowly out of China to teach English in Japan. The topics of discussion reveal both Ye's immaturity, he was after all just twenty-two in 1936 and Bell would have been twenty-eight, but also the extent to which Bell had evidently fired Ye's imagination and encouraged him in his writing and had sought out publishers and editors who could be of use to him. In this role, Bell was evidently the older brother. Many of Ye's letter to Bell begin with the salutation 'My dearest teacher' which indicates a degree of fondness and respect as well as formality. The subjects that Ye and Bell discuss in their correspondence include:

⁶³⁰ Michael Scammell 'A Chinaman in Bloomsbury', *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 July 1981, p.769. A copy of the article is found in KCA (LPW/8/1-8).

⁶³¹ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p. 48. Ye and Bell made a trip to Tibet with Derek Bryan, Vice-Counsel in Wuhan Foreign Services and Hansen Lowe a geologist. In their book *Journey to A War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939), Christopher Isherwood and W.H Auden published a photograph of Ye, with the caption 'Intellectual (C. C.Yeh)'.

⁶³² KCA (CHA/1/125/1-2) Ye's letter to Julian and Vanessa Bell between 1936-1938.

⁶³³ Ye, 'The Account of My Life' p. 4. Unpublished.

girls, romance, work, travel, the future, politics, war, revolution, all alongside the more mundane irritations and excitements of everyday life. It is difficult to imagine Ye having any Chinese friends, as he darted across China and Japan in 1936, with whom he could so easily share such intimate details of his life. At the end of his stay in Japan, Ye wrote to Bell pleading to him to send ‘the French letter’ as he cannot find them in the shops and he fears that his recently de-flowered Chinese student girlfriend (in Tokyo) may become pregnant. Alas, at the start of March 1937, she does and Ye shares with Bell the grim details of seeking a private abortion in Tokyo where the procedure was illegal.

⁶³⁴ Other details in the letters reveal that it was Bell who introduced Ye to the editors of the Shanghai-based literary journal *T'ien Hsia Monthly* where Ye (as Mar C) and Jack Chen's translation into English of ‘Half A Cartload of Straw Short’ first appeared in 1938. They also show that in early 1937, Ye began reading the *Times Literary Supplement* and was eager to read ‘English literary magazines extensively’ particularly any that Bell could recommend.⁶³⁵ Here is clear evidence of Ye's growing fascination with English literature. Another revealing reference in one of Ye's letters to Vanessa Bell sees him use the phrase ‘old Cathay’ which suggests an awareness, presumably gained from Julian Bell, of the terms used to describe China by the West.⁶³⁶ In the handwritten letter, Ye writes that the ‘citizens in the old Cathay ... are too easy to be crashed by the modern imperialist’ (sic) which suggests that he looks down on the citizens who cling to old Chinese culture and are being swept away by the superior foreign forces (perhaps both military and scientific) at large in the modern world. It also suggests that Ye sought to distance himself from the citizens of old China.

Ye makes repeated references to Russian literature and Russia in the letters, subjects he has evidently discussed at length with Bell. For example, Ye mournfully recalls his plans to go to Russia with Julian, in a letter to Vanessa Bell after her son's death.⁶³⁷ Ye's memoir (in Chinese) also refers to the translations of nineteenth-century Russian literature by Constance Garnett (Constance Clara Black) that he greatly

⁶³⁴ KCA, (CHA/1/125/2) Letters dated 24/12/36 and 6/3/37.

⁶³⁵ Ibid. Letters dated 1/9/36 and 20/2/37.

⁶³⁶ Ibid. Letter dated 4/11/37. This letter is handwritten in English on thin Chinese paper.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

enjoyed, and whose son, David, the Bloomsbury Group writer and publisher, Ye befriended in Cambridge shortly after her death.⁶³⁸ The letters to and from Bell provide clues as to Ye's inclination towards Communism in China in these years. And this position appears to have hardened by Christmas Day 1937 when Ye types a letter to 'Mrs Bell' informing her that he plans 'to join the 8th Route Army (formerly the Red Army), which is famous for its skill in the guerrilla warfare' [sic].⁶³⁹ In sharing his plan to contribute to the Chinese resistance with Vanessa Bell, Ye must be aware that he is writing to the mother of a son whose own commitment to anti-Fascist resistance left him dead on the battlefields of Spain. Perhaps Ye hopes that she will draw the comparison or merely that she will understand a young man's desire to defend his revolutionary ideals. In a subsequent letter to Mrs Bell, Ye writes to inform her that he has found more congenial wartime employment. In an airmail letter dated 20 February 1938, Ye writes that he has been doing translation work for the leftist American journalist (and Eighth Route Army specialist) Agnes Smedley.⁶⁴⁰ Ye's letter contains a copy of a speech recently given by Smedley, which he encloses for Mrs Bell to publish in the West. Then, from Hankow (Wuhan) in May 1938 Ye writes to say he has started work in the 'political department of the Military Council' (the bureau in charge of wartime propaganda).⁶⁴¹ It was through his work for this department that Ye met Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden as they galloped across parts of China reporting on the war, on a commission from Faber & Faber that would become the part essay, part poetry collection, *Journey to a War* (1939).⁶⁴² Ye's Chinese memoir recalls that he was standing beside Isherwood

⁶³⁸ Ye Junian, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2019) p. 489. 叶君健全集, 第十七卷, 散文卷(二), (北京, 清华大学出版社, 2010), p. 489. Ye also notes that David Garnett's writing influenced his own.

⁶³⁹ KCA, (CHA/1/125/2). Letter dated 25/12/37.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² In the same letter, Ye notes that it is W. H. Auden and C. Isherwood who encouraged him to write a story about his time under arrest in Japan and they also provide an introductory letter to Kingsley Martin (editor of *The New Statesman* and *Nation*) whom they suggest might be interested in publishing such a story.

when he wrote the poem 'A Dead Chinese Soldier' and immediately translated it and had it published in a wartime 'publication'.⁶⁴³

The friendship with a family spanning two generations of the Bloomsbury set of writers and artists meant a great deal to an ambitious and talented young writer and translator who understood the value of it. Ye's association with the group - even though he by no means exclusively associated with them and eventually would have to seek out literary contacts and publishers beyond its confines to get his own work published - remains an overlooked aspect of his legacy today and arguably theirs. The role of teacher and guide to British culture and literature that Julian Bell took on with Ye was in many ways later taken up by Lehmann who became, to a large extent, although not the only one, Ye's mentor in matters of writing and publishing in English. Although Ye and Lehmann's personal friendship never reached the same levels of intimacy (in an entirely non-sexual sense) what sprung from their interactions was a curiosity for and an openness and willingness for transcultural dialogue at a time when both sides had much to gain from it. In an introduction written for a recent exhibition of photographs relating to Ye Junjian, held at King's College, Cambridge, in July - August 2015, Alan Macfarlane suggested that Ye formed a 'double bridge' between the past and the present in China and between China and the Western world'.⁶⁴⁴ Macfarlane points out that Ye 'brought news of China to the West during the Second World War ... and took the West back to China through his translations (from twelve European languages)' later in his life.⁶⁴⁵ At the opening ceremony to the exhibition the Chinese Ambassador to Britain, Liu Xiaoming, commented that Ye 'won over immense sympathy and support from the British public' both as a speech-maker during the war and through his influence in British literary circles.⁶⁴⁶ Yet despite the role that Ye played as a writer in Britain, both

⁶⁴³ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, pp. 401 - 402. The memoir also notes that the poem and the issue of the 'newspaper' the translation was published in have since been lost.

⁶⁴⁴ Preface to an exhibition of photographs relating to Ye Junjian by Alan Macfarlane 'Yeh Chun-Chan and World War II, A Chinese Member of the Bloomsbury Group'. Online source: <<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/files/news/yeh-exhibition.pdf>> (Last accessed 11.9.17)

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Liu Xiaoming, then Chinese ambassador to Britain, at the opening of the Ye Junjian exhibition on 21 July 2015 at King's College Cambridge. Online source: <<http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/ambassador/t1283058.htm>> (Last accessed 03.11.16).

officially and independently and despite Cambridge University's acknowledgement of his contribution to China-Britain cultural relations, there exists almost no academic research in English about Ye or the time he spent living and working in the UK. As a result, Ye's unique position of influence in shaping British perceptions about China during the war and in the years that followed through the novels, short-stories, articles and translations that he published in English (not least those in the pages of *TPNW*) remain forgotten. His work however is ripe for rediscovery. It is beyond the scope of this research to consider the complete body of Ye's work in English (which would include his novels as well as the great many articles and reviews he contributed to journals and magazines in Britain throughout his lifetime). However, the significant contribution that Ye made to *TPNW*, as a translator and writer, provides valuable insight into how readers' responses to the country were being moulded during the war. It is in no small part because of the contributions that Ye made to *NW* and to *TPNW* that Chinese writers shared, for a decade, a space where their writing could sit comfortably alongside some of the finest names of twentieth-century English literature.

At the point when Lehmann first began communicating with Ye, the young Chinese writer already wrote almost fluently in English (as his letters to Julian Bell show) as well as Esperanto: a clear signal of his international, cosmopolitan outlook as a writer. Ye's letters to Julian and later to Vanessa Bell make no secret about his strong desire to visit Britain and particularly the Bell family and to circulate in British literary circles. In order to understand what led Ye, the impoverished third son of a shop apprentice from the mountainous regions of Hubei Province, to follow in the path of acclaimed Chinese writers and poets who travelled to Britain, from Lao She to Xu Zhi Mo and Lin Yutang, it is necessary to consider, in as much clarity as the sources allow, the biographical details of Ye's life before his arrival in Britain in 1944. The only published sources in the English language about Ye's life and career, include: a four-part documentary broadcast by China Central Television (CCTV) in 2012, newspaper articles, publishing materials and correspondence and a biography of her

own life written by Ye's wife.⁶⁴⁷ The brief, unfinished, unpublished autobiography that Ye dictated (in English) before his death, is a valuable addition to these sources. The manuscript 'The Account of My Life' provides a potted history of Ye's life from his birth in a village in the Dabie mountains of Hubei, central China, to the years he spent in Britain. It is a useful appendix to Ye's official memoir (published in Chinese but selectively translated for the purposes of this research) in so far as it provides a very consolidated account of Ye's life up until 1949. The English-language account is interspersed with details about the shifting political landscape in China, the impact of the war on his young life and the many literary friendships that Ye cultivated while working and studying in Britain. It is worth noting that the recording was made by Ye in English, presumably because he intended to write, or to enable someone else to write, about his life for Anglophone readers.

7.4 Ye's Biography

The following sketch of Ye's life is taken from 'The Account of My Life' unless otherwise stated.⁶⁴⁸ No biography of Ye's life has yet been published in English. Ye was born in 1914 in Huang'an County (now Hong'an), Hubei Province, some way north of Wuhan, in central China. His family, including his two older brothers and his sister were poor and the region was isolated from the rest of China. When Ye was growing up, Hong'an became one of the first revolutionary (Communist) bases in China and Ye recalls how he came into contact with many children who attended a middle school founded by Dong Biwu (one of the founding members of the CCP and a former president of China) while still living as boy in Hubei. It later emerged that the school had been secretly training red recruits and teaching children to spread Communist propaganda in the county. Today, Hong'an is famous (in China) as the birthplace of hundreds of People's Liberation Army generals and two former leaders of China. From a young age, Ye

⁶⁴⁷ The four-part documentary about Ye Junjian, 'A Writer Who Reached Out to the World', was broadcast by CCTV in China from 20-23 March 2012. Ye's wife wrote: Yuan Yin and Nienlun Yeh (trans.), *Flying Against the Wind, Marriage of a Bloomsbury Chinese Literati* (Bloomington, Indiana: Authorhouse, 2011). This book was self-published.

⁶⁴⁸ Ye, 'The Account of My Life' (unpublished).

witnessed a nascent Communist party attempting to rise up, first through underground training and later in armed combat against the Nationalists. Ye's eldest brother was co-opted into the Peasant Union in his village because he could read and write and produce propaganda materials. When the Nationalists finally fought back and reclaimed the village, Ye's brother was arrested and eventually executed. Ye's family had no land because wealthy landlords had requisitioned everything, which they leased back to the farmers, and so his father and brother left the countryside to work as shop apprentices in the provincial capital, Wuhan. Ye was educated at the village school, where he studied the Confucian classics. As there was little prospect of work in the rural area, Ye's family decided to send him to Shanghai with his second eldest brother and enrol him in a missionary school. As Ye had never studied the 'new' subjects of maths, physics, chemistry or English, in order to gain entry into a middle school he first had to attend, and pass, examinations at an elementary (primary) school. As he was already fourteen years old by this stage, he recalls the humiliation of studying with much younger children who teased him mercilessly about being 'tall, thin and poor'.⁶⁴⁹ But Ye also comments that the experience motivated him to work hard to master the new subjects and quickly move up. His studies paid off and he began skipping years until finally he was admitted to Wuhan University (1932-1936). Ye recalls discovering that Chiang Kai-shek's regime had been recruiting students from Wuhan university into a secretive society, 'The Blue Shirts' (after Mussolini's Black Shirts) who were asked to spy and report on the ideology of their peers. Ye comments that he kept a low profile during this time, spending most of his days in the library reading English literature, with 'excursions into French and Russian' literature. But he became friends with several student activists who secretly attended pro-Communist meetings. One such friend, Li Rui (later a senior CCP politician) recalled that during that time, Ye was 'not too political' and that he was interested in 'literature and humanism' was 'against autocracy' but for

⁶⁴⁹ Nienlun Ye (Ye's son) in the documentary, 'A Writer Who Reached Out to the World', part 1, at 10 minutes 41 seconds, (Last accessed 30.4.17).

‘democracy and science’.⁶⁵⁰ Even as a student in an increasingly activist environment, Ye was resistant to the student politics and the secret societies that began to spring up on both sides of the political divide. His instinct to remain apart from the politics of the moment stayed with him throughout his life and would inform his writing and shape his career.⁶⁵¹ It was at Wuhan University, in his third year of study, that Ye met Julian Bell. Ye describes the first two years as a university student as ‘the most miserable time in my life’. But, on meeting Bell whom he described at that time as ‘not much interested in politics but quite progressive in his ideas’, Ye’s outlook begins to change.⁶⁵² The two became ‘close friends’ and Ye describes how:

We found we had very much in common in our literary taste, also ideologically. I had nothing to do with Bloomsbury writers but I admired their language, their English style, Virginia Woolf for instance, commanded great admiration [from me].⁶⁵³

Bell helped to pay for Ye to go to Japan to teach. But the venture ended in near disaster when Ye was arrested after writing an article about the need for ‘resistance against the Japanese invasion in China’ and beaten by the Japanese police.⁶⁵⁴ Ye recalls that the Japanese police had ‘censored Bell’s letters’ to him which had provided them with enough information to arrest Ye and put him in prison for three months. On his release, Ye returned to Shanghai and then in August 1937, to Wuhan (just two days before the Battle of Shanghai). Ye notes that Wuhan, at that time, had become ‘the center of political and cultural activities’ following the occupation of Nanjing by the Japanese invading troops.⁶⁵⁵ Shortly after his arrival in Wuhan, Ye began working in the

⁶⁵⁰ Documentary, part 1, ‘A Writer Who Reached Out to the World’, part 1, at 14 minutes 32 seconds, (Last accessed 30.4.17). Li Rui later became vice-director of the Organisation Department of the Communist Party.

⁶⁵¹ In an interview with Nienlun (Ye’s son) as part of this doctoral research on 1 August 2017, he commented that Ye was never a member of the Chinese Communist Party.

⁶⁵² Ye, ‘The Account of My Life’ (unpublished), p. 4.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 4 - 5.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

third bureau of the Military Commission, which as well is being in charge of domestic propaganda, sought to raise support and sympathy for China's plight from the international community. The bureau came under the political department of the Military Commission, under Chen Cheng (one of the main commanders in the National Revolutionary Army) and deputy-director, Zhou Enlai (a Communist). Guo Moruo was the director of the third bureau. Ye comments that the bureau was engaged in 'publicity' and as Ye 'spoke and wrote English' to a high standard, Guo drafted him into the office. Ye's official rank was 'major' although he never fought in the field. Ye recalls that it was 'my duty was to write in English, to receive visits of foreign correspondents and foreign intellectuals' [sic].⁶⁵⁶ He also worked as an 'interpreter for Guo Moruo and Zhou Enlai (who had an office in the bureau in Wuhan no. 1 middle school)' and wrote and broadcast speeches in English.⁶⁵⁷ Ye commented that he was one of only a handful of Chinese intellectuals who spoke English and other foreign languages and who was working for the Communists. Most of the Chinese intellectuals who spoke English were returnees from America or Britain, his account notes, 'and the majority worked for the Nationalist government'.⁶⁵⁸ It was whilst engaged in this work that Ye encountered many newspaper men and women and foreign writers, including: W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, the photographer Robert Capa, as well as the American leftist journalist, Agnes Smedley. Ye's Chinese memoir suggests that foreign visitors to China preferred to go through the third bureau to seek information about the war because it was not a source of KMT propaganda and carried information about the liberated areas and CCP resistance against the Japanese.⁶⁵⁹ Ye suggested that through his work in the third bureau he also 'gathered a lot about the cultural situation in the West' and he provided his guests with information about Chinese cultural, political and military affairs.⁶⁶⁰ Ye commented that this was: 'The start of my lifelong career. Since then I have never been

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, p. 400.

⁶⁵⁸ Ye, 'The Account of My Life' (unpublished), p. 5.

⁶⁵⁹ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, p. 398.

⁶⁶⁰ Ye, 'The Account of My Life' (unpublished), p. 6. Also, Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, p. 402.

able to shift from the work of cultural exchange between East and West, sometimes officially but sometimes spontaneously on my own'.⁶⁶¹ When it became clear that Wuhan would fall to the Japanese forces, the third bureau was moved to Chongqing and from there, Ye was advised to leave the bureau and transfer to Hong Kong to continue his translation work. In Hong Kong, Ye edited a weekly political and social affairs magazine, and later on co-edited a war of resistance literary journal in English, *Chinese Writers*, with the backing of The Federation of Chinese Writers, then in Chongqing. The memoirs of the Polish born writer, journalist and one of the very few foreign-born members of the CCP, Israel Epstein, recall how he assisted Ye editing the magazine.⁶⁶² The journal's editors selected the work of contemporary Chinese writers and 'the talented and sensitive Ye' translated them into English.⁶⁶³ Ye's memoir in Chinese recalls 'what we were doing was like a branch of the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists' and he notes that the organisation sent them 500 yuan to help with the printing costs of the first issue.⁶⁶⁴ Ye's memoir stresses that the editors in Hong Kong were given complete freedom over the content of the magazine although the Federation made suggestions about the editorial committee.⁶⁶⁵ Mao Tun's [Mao Dun] essay in the first volume which put forward a case for why wartime short stories such as 'Mr Hua Wei' and 'Chabanche Mackay' (the title under which 'Half A Cartload of Straw Short' was first translated) were a positive sign in wartime literary development undoubtedly inspired Ye (and Allen) to push ahead with their translations of these works.⁶⁶⁶ As Chapter 8 considers, *Chinese Writers* bears more than a passing resemblance to Lehmann's *NW* journals. However, *Chinese Writers* shut down after just three issues due to lack of funding.

At this point, Ye was working closely with Donald Allen (his co-translator whose name also appears alongside 'Cicio Mar's in a submission to *Story* magazine in

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Israel Epstein, *My China Eye, Memoirs of a Jew and a Journalist*, (San Francisco, Long River Press, 2005), p. 122.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, pp. 408 - 409.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 409.

⁶⁶⁶ *Chinese Writers (Zhongguo Zuoji)*, August, 1939, Volume 1, Number 1, p. 17.

America) and Epstein who went on to become a naturalised Chinese citizen.⁶⁶⁷ Both Allen (then a member of the American Communist Party) and Epstein were part of the China Defence League (they had inaugurated the branch in Guangzhou) set up by Soong Ching-ling, Sun Yat Sen's widow, to publicise and enlist support for China's cause in 1938, during the war against Japan. In one of his memoirs, Epstein recalls of this period:

Don, Ye and I, in our [Don and Epstein's] rented apartment on Hong Kong's Robinson Road, worked on the texts, typed them on stencils and mimeographed them to be sent out for pre-publication or for reprinting abroad.⁶⁶⁸

Epstein's account of that time reveals that while working as a journalist and finishing his first book about the first two years of the war against Japan (for which he was paid £35 after taxes by Victor Gollancz) he was simultaneously but 'more quietly' working on the English-editing of translations of CCP documents under the aegis of Liao Chengzhi (the Hong Kong representative of the CCP) but under the ultimate control of Zhou Enlai.⁶⁶⁹ The documents were chosen 'by Yan'an' for international circulation.⁶⁷⁰ They included Mao Zedong's *On Protracted War* and one of the other translators was Ye.⁶⁷¹ During this time and through his contact with Chinese writers and English-speaking translators as editor-in-chief of *Chinese Writers*, Ye also began selecting Chinese stories for publication abroad in magazines including: *Story*, in America, Lehmann's *NW* in London and the Soviet journal, *International Literature*, which was published in multiple languages. Ultimately, many of these stories became part of the MSS 'People of China'.

What is evident from Ye's biography and the published texts themselves is the extent to which the Chinese stories that appeared in *TPNW* emerged through his links

⁶⁶⁷ Epstein, *My China Eye: Memoirs of a Jew and a Journalist*, p. 122.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid. Ye's memoir recalls that he was living in Kowloon.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 119 - 121. Epstein's book entitled *The People's War* was published by Victor Gollancz in 1939.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid. Note that it is Ye's translations of Mao Zedong's works and other Leftist propaganda which (when provided as evidence by Epstein) helped to protect Ye to some extent during the Cultural Revolution.

with the official propaganda office and showed a strong bias towards leftist Chinese writers. At this early phase in the war, the Chinese stories that Ye translated were a small part of a wider body of translation work that he undertook to promote not merely leftist but pro-Communist ideas. That is not to suggest that the literary qualities of the works were not crucial. Ye describes the transformation of Hong Kong in early years of the war (prior to Japanese occupation) into a 'cultural centre' (where previously it had been 'an underdeveloped culture') due to the influx of writers and intellectuals fleeing Japanese encroachment on the mainland and a resultant flourishing of literary activity as bookstores, publishers, newspapers, journals and magazines relocated.⁶⁷² As Ye notes, only from Hong Kong, because it was easily accessible and was an important channel to maintain the flow of information between China and overseas could he press ahead with efforts to expand the 'influence of Chinese literature' in the Anglophone reading world.⁶⁷³ Ultimately, it was the stories that were endowed - in the eyes of its British literary editor - with the most convincing literary qualities that were published in *TPNW*.

When Ye left Hong Kong, it was meant to be for a temporary return to China as a professor of English at Chongqing University (where Ye met his wife, Yuan Yin). However, Ye found himself unable to return to Hong Kong because the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, America and Britain had declared war on Japan and Japan had seized the island. The easy contact that Ye had enjoyed with the West was cut off at this point, although he continued to translate Chinese short stories into English and attempted to send them to editors with whom he had already made contact. During this time, Ye embarked on translations of Western literature into Chinese and set up a small publishing house to print the works. Ye recalls that his position as editor was unpaid but that he managed to persuade many Chinese professors to translate the works of Huxley and Dickens among others. Ye himself translated plays by Ibsen and Louis MacNeice's translation from the Greek of Aeschylus' 'Agamemnon' as well as Tolstoy from French into Chinese. It is interesting to note that Ye's translation of 'Along the Yunnan Burma

⁶⁷² Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p. 406 and p. 408.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

Road' by Bai Pingjie would later be published alongside the writing of MacNeice in *TPNW* 5 (1941), such was Ye's rapid elevation into the milieu of English literary society in the 1940s. It was while Ye was honing his English language talents, that he received a request from the Ministry of Information (MOI) to travel to Britain and embark on a lecture tour to educate the military, the general public and just about anyone he could reach about China's war of resistance against Japan. Ye already knew the head of the Chinese (anti-Japanese) section of the MOI, whom he had encountered on a trip to China with a delegation of students in 1938.⁶⁷⁴ From 1944 when Ye arrived in Britain, until the end of the war, he gave more than 600 speeches in factories, barracks, town halls and military camps, across the country. The speeches were part of the MOI's efforts to raise British morale, with stories of China's war of resistance, ahead of the Normandy Landings. While touring the country, Ye stayed with many different families and would presumably have gained an invaluable sense of what the people of Britain wanted to know most about China. When Ye arrived in London, one of the first people to greet him was John Lehmann, another was Dorothy Woodman. Lehmann threw a party for Ye at his flat and introduced him to many of the *NW* cabal, including Stephen Spender with whom Ye maintained a friendship well into the 1980s. Ye recalls: 'Actually the party ... it was a crowd of contributors to *New Writing* including artists as well as writers and poets'.⁶⁷⁵ Among the other leading lights of British literary society with whom Ye made contact was Kingsley Martin and Woodman (at the CCC and whose *A.B.C of the Pacific* had by this stage been published as a Special by Penguin Books in 1942).⁶⁷⁶ Ye regularly contributed articles and reviews to *The New Statesman and Nation* throughout his time in Britain. Another writer with whom Ye struck up a close friendship was J. B. Priestley. In a documentary interview, Nienlun Ye (Ye's son) suggests that Priestley referred to Ye as the 'Chinese member of his family' and regularly invited Ye to

⁶⁷⁴ This was Bernard Floud, who, as part of an international delegation of students from Oxford University visited Yan'an in 1938. Floud later worked for the MOI in Britain and invited Ye to London in 1944. Allegations about Floud's links to the KGB emerged in the 1960s but according to other sources Floud refused to do any spying later in his life. Floud killed himself in 1967.

⁶⁷⁵ Ye's unpublished biography.

⁶⁷⁶ W. H. Auden and C. Isherwood had left Ye a letter of introduction to Kingsley Martin on their trip to China in 1938.

spend weekends with his family at his home on the Isle Of Wight while Ye was studying at Cambridge.⁶⁷⁷ During World War II, Priestley's broadcasts on the BBC - *The Postscript* - drew, at its peak, an audience of 16 million. Only Churchill was more popular with listeners. Ye comments that he found much in common with Priestley because of the work that he had carried out for the MOI.

At the end of the war, in reward for more than 600 speeches that Ye gave to soldiers, factory workers, women's institutes and other groups for the MOI, he was granted a scholarship to study English literature at Cambridge. It was during this time that Ye began to write longer works of fiction and to publish the body of work that he had started to build up in English. By the time Ye graduated from Cambridge and returned to China he had published two novels in English, a collection of his translations of contemporary Chinese short stories and a collection of his own short stories that had largely been written in English as he toured the country. Ye's short stories and his first novel in English were respectively a book society recommendation and a book society choice and his writing received glowing reviews in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Listener*, *The Observer*, *The New Statesman and Nation* and *Life and Letters*, among others, as this chapter will subsequently examine.⁶⁷⁸ After Ye returned to China, immediately after the creation of the PRC, he founded the magazine *Chinese Literature*, which published Chinese literature in translation, mostly in English. Ye worked alongside Sidney Shapiro, Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, among other well-known translators in Beijing at that time. During the Cultural Revolution, Ye was protected to some extent by Zhou Enlai but his wife's account of this period reveals that he was denounced by Red Guards for his translations of foreign books and Chinese stories and forced to clean the toilets in the offices of Chinese Literature.⁶⁷⁹ Ye continued to write books in Chinese, secretly and was eventually rehabilitated after the death of the Gang of Four. From the

⁶⁷⁷ CCTV documentary. Part 2, 'A Writer Who Reached Out to the World'.

⁶⁷⁸ Chun-chan Yeh (Ye), *They Fly South* (London: Sylvan Press, 1948), mentions his previously published works and recommendations.

⁶⁷⁹ Yuan Yin (Nienlun tr.), *Flying Against the Wind*, p. 106 -109. Presumably the Red Guards did not look closely at the content of the books and stories that Ye wrote in English. It was enough that he had made them at all.

early 1980s, Ye spent as much time as possible travelling in Europe to promote cultural ties between East and West and to rekindle his friendships with writers and editors. Ye is most famous in China for translating Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales from Danish into Chinese, work which he began while a student at Cambridge and for which he was awarded an honorary medal. In 1988 Faber & Faber published Ye's trilogy *Quiet Are the Mountains*, which included *Mountain Village* as well as two sequels; *Open Fields* and *A Distant Journey*, which were written in the 1980s in Chinese after Ye re-visited Hong'An county and the village where he grew up. Stephen Hallet and Michael Sheringham (former professor at Peking University and owner of the Arthur Probsthain Oriental and African bookseller in London) translated the sequels for Faber & Faber.

7.5 The Short Stories

7.5 a) 'The Dream' (*TPNW* 26)

By time *TPNW* began publication in November 1940, China had been at war with Japan for more than three years and Britain had been at war with Germany for little over a year. In four of the short stories translated by Ye for *TPNW* and one of his own submissions ('The Dream') the war against Japan guides and shapes the actions of the characters whether they are building roads, giving speeches, taking up arms for the first time as guerrilla fighters or staggering through the blasted countryside trying simply to survive. Ye's position in China's wartime propaganda office provided him with a unique position from which to observe officialdom at work during the Japanese invasion but Ye's roots in the poor, rural community of Hong'An ensured that his interest never strayed very far from the plight of the common man during the war. Indeed, all of the wartime stories translated or written by Ye, except 'Mr Hua Wei', are preoccupied with the impoverished and the downtrodden be they labourers, peasants or roving musicians. As Chapter 4 outlined these were common themes in modern Chinese literature, particularly in the early years of the war against Japan. Despite this unity of theme, the stories employ a range of literary devices from satire, humour and allusion to

straightforward narrative realism, to explore their subject. The underlying politics of the stories leans strongly to Left, suggesting if not an outright allegiance to Communism, a greater degree of sympathy towards the CCP's policies of resistance during the war against Japan than those of the Nationalists. Ye's selections and stories for *TPNW* are broadly aligned with his own Left-leaning but rarely very strident and sometimes deliberately neutral politics. Ye's story 'The Dream' is no exception to this general political trend. The story appeared in *TPNW 26* (1946) and had been written, in English, as Ye toured Britain for the MOI. Ye's literary ascendancy becomes, to some extent, measurable in this volume of *TPNW*, as readers encounter him alongside the works of Denton Welch, Henry Reed, Julian Maclaren-Ross and Edwin Muir, in what is considered the last of Lehmann's wartime editions (pulled together not long after VE Day).⁶⁸⁰ The story is the first of Ye's own to reach a Penguin reading public and it was the first time that the story had appeared in print in Britain. However, shortly after publication in *TPNW*, 'The Dream' appeared in a collection of Ye's short stories published by Sylvan Press in London. An author's note to the first edition reads:

All the stories except Triumph Wang's Career ... were written in various hotels during the first part of 1945 when I was on a lecturing tour in Britain for the M.O.I [Ministry of Information]. My timetable was a rather crowded one. Every day I gave two lectures (sometimes three or four) and had to travel on the average 150-200 miles. In the case of factory workers I sometimes had to be on the platform in their canteens at 1am for the night shift. This occupation actually prevented me from doing anything else. I should never have produced any story during this period, let alone written in a foreign language, had it not been for the encouragement of many friends. In this connection I must express my grateful thanks to John Lehmann, editor of *Penguin New Writing* and *New Writing*.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸⁰ Whitehead (ed), *John Lehmann's New Writing*, p. 27. Whitehead defines *TPNW 27* as 'the first post-war number'.

⁶⁸¹ Ye, *The Ignorant and the Forgotten*, Author's Note. Note the name 'Triumph Van' has become 'Triumph Wang' in this edition.

As well as acknowledging Lehmann's endorsement of his work, Ye credits Robert Herring, the writer, poet and editor of *Life and Letters Today* (also *Life and Letters*) and Katherine Griffiths (executive editor of *The Geographical Magazine* (issued by the Royal Geographical Society) for their interest in his work, and Arthur Waley, Beryl de Zoete, Christopher Isherwood, John Hayward, Mulk Raj Anand, Stephen Spender and his supervisor (at Cambridge) George 'Dadie' Rylands for their invaluable criticism. Ye's note provides valuable insight into the elevated literary circles in which he was already moving by 1946.⁶⁸²

'The Dream' takes as its central theme the personal account of a man (who narrates the story in the first person) who has fled the Japanese occupation of Wuchang (Wuhan) in Hubei Province, to arrive sweltering and exhausted on the banks of the vast Tungting (Dongting) freshwater lake in north-eastern Hunan Province. From the outset, the reader is made aware that this tale is no timeless, chimerical encounter with the human cost of war, happening at any-place in China. The action takes place in Hunan Province around October 1938. The narrator/actant's opening description of walking 'in suffocating heat' for a whole day, is reminiscent of the dust, heat and exhausted band of travellers fleeing the war in Zhang Tianyi's *Hatred*. But the mood of the two tales quickly diverge as the narrator's personal discomfort, the blisters, sweat and suffocation in 'The Dream', give way to 'a sigh of relief' and a 'light breeze, fresh and cool' as he comes to the banks of the lake.⁶⁸³ There are no such moments of relief in Zhang's tale. On the banks of the lake, the narrator comments 'there were no refugees, no congestion on the roads, and no Japanese aeroplanes overhead. That war at least was behind'.⁶⁸⁴ The lake may have had personal significance for Ye as a symbol of repose. In a book review (in English) two years later, Ye mentions the 'beautiful Tungting lake' in Hunan as part of

⁶⁸² Ye's Chinese memoir is peppered with references to his literary friends and associates in Britain, including: Val Baker, Harold Acton, Cyril Connolly, Evelyn Waugh, the Sitwells, David Garnett, Walter Allen and V.S Pritchett and Mary Hutchinson (the short story writer and society hostess).

⁶⁸³ *TPNW* 26, p. 85.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

a reflection on 'The Hunanese' as represented by the writer Shen Congwen.⁶⁸⁵ The lake also has meaning in traditional Chinese culture as the possible birthplace of Dragon Boat racing. It is one of several cues in the narrative which deliberately conjure ancient China. Hunan Province is also revered in contemporary China as the birthplace of Mao Zedong. As a collection of Ye's short stories published later in the same year reveal, Ye frequently combined traditional China and modern China in his writing.⁶⁸⁶ The narrator's moment of respite at the lake is short-lived as he is forced inland in search of people, food and shelter. He is lured into a nearby village by the sound of a girl singing a song which he recalls from his days as a cowherd roaming the central plains of China. There he meets an old man, a 'foolish looking vagabond' and his two daughters, Violet and Spring whose songs and dancing have moved some villagers to tears.⁶⁸⁷ The girls are described in highly traditional Chinese simile as being 'like a lily in the wind' and 'like a branch of weeping willow' respectively.⁶⁸⁸ The narrator, who confesses to playing the erhu, an ancient two-stringed Chinese instrument, joins the band of wandering musicians and moves from village to village with them, playing for money. However, they find that, because of the encroaching Japanese - whole villages have been burnt, women and children and cows have been killed in the bombing - streams of refugees have left almost every village deserted and so the musicians receive no money and cannot buy food. Overall there is a sense of abandonment and total upheaval in the story. Villages and temples are repeatedly described as: lonesome, desolate, empty and silent.⁶⁸⁹ One evening while the musicians are sleeping rough in a 'desolate' temple, the narrator disturbs a sleeping bird which flaps its wings three times. Spring comments that this is an omen that one of them will have a good dream that will come true. She confesses to want only 'to be a student, to be able to read and write' and she chides her

⁶⁸⁵ Chun-Chan Yeh, 'The Hunanese', *The New Statesman and Nation*, 19 June 1948, p. 509. Ye is reviewing Shen Tseng-Wen's (Shen Congwen), *The Chinese Earth*, Ching Ti (Jin Di) and Robert Payne (trans.) (London: Allen & Unwin, 1947).

⁶⁸⁶ The stories Ye published as *The Ignorant and the Forgotten*, demonstrate the breadth of his range, with some set in modern China and some in eighteenth-century China.

⁶⁸⁷ *TPNW* 26, p. 86.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85 - 97.

sister, Violet for only pretending to want the same.⁶⁹⁰ Ultimately, the old man's desperation for food leads him to hand over his eldest daughter (Violet) to a rich landlord as a second wife, in return for a bag of rice. This is surely a comment on the backward and unjust nature of traditional China, especially for women. The narrator leaves Spring and her aged father to go and join the guerrillas fighting the Japanese. When 'The Dream' was published, *TPNW's* circulation was almost at its peak. By the end of that year (1946) however, Allen Lane wrote to Lehmann urging him to 'clear his mind of delusions' and 'face facts now' over the future of the publication.⁶⁹¹ In November of the same year, *TPNW* moved to quarterly publication. John Whitehead comments that both *New Writing*, *Daylight* and *TPNW* 'were showing signs of exhaustion' after the war.⁶⁹² While Whitehead expressly exempts Ye's tale, among a handful of others, from this indictment, his observation points to a widely acknowledged shift of instinct and focus which began at *TPNW* shortly after the war. 'The Dream' certainly marks a significant change in tone and content from the bold, urgent, politically pointed or at times angry representations of China that Lehmann had published while WWII was raging across Europe and the Far East. There are still glimpses of familiar themes in Ye's story: refugees, stolen wives, murdered children, bombed villages and at the story's conclusion the narrator concludes, just as Dumb Wang calculated in Yao's 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short', that there is nothing to be done but to 'join the guerrillas' in fighting Japanese.⁶⁹³ But ultimately the war is a backdrop to the central concern of the story which appears to be the irreconcilable chasm between China's past traditions and its future as a modern nation. This tension is teased out in the narrative by the interactions and dialogue between the two sisters Violet and Spring. Violet, whose name seems to deliberately summon a link with the Purple Forbidden City and China's ancient past, is a girl who urges the narrator to 'look at the moon' (a highly symbolic gesture in traditional Chinese poetry).⁶⁹⁴ She is chided by her sister for only pretending to want an

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 90.

⁶⁹¹ Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p. 180.

⁶⁹² Whitehead (ed), *John Lehmann's 'New Writing'*, p. 21.

⁶⁹³ *TPNW* 26, p. 95.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 89. The Forbidden City is also referred to in Chinese as 'Zijin Cheng' or Purple Forbidden City.

education in a dialogue which seems to hint that she represents traditional China.⁶⁹⁵ It is therefore telling that by the story's conclusion she has been carried off theatrically in a sedan chair to meet an uncertain fate 'crying wildly'.⁶⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Spring, a girl who wants nothing more than 'to read and write', aligns herself with the desires of the modern citizens of China.⁶⁹⁷ As the narrator states, in the only shred of hope in the bleak tale, amid the grim reality of war: 'When our country is liberated, independent and free, we shall have schools free for all. And everybody will be able to read and write songs'.⁶⁹⁸ In the final lines of the story, Spring announces that she has had a happy dream in which, Violet married 'a handsome young student and now could read and write songs'.⁶⁹⁹ However, a 'wilder and wilder' look in Spring's eyes noted by the narrator as he departs, signals to readers her dawning realisation that no such future awaits Violet. Spring attains some degree of enlightenment by the story's conclusion and there is a sense that she has the chance of a better future. Ye's story appears to be commenting both that the old ways of the past are cruel and crushing but also suggest that a dream for a better post-war future is a necessary part of the strategy to win the war.

Jeremy Lewis sets out in his biography of Allen Lane, how, from 1940 onwards, major publishers, including, specifically Penguin Books, and a great number among the thinking classes of Britain began to turn their thoughts to 'the possibility of a new world order when this mess [the war] is over'.⁷⁰⁰ Lewis notes that 'journalists, academics, politicians and well-intentioned middle-class reformers busied themselves envisioning the New Jerusalem'.⁷⁰¹ Lewis cites Lehmann's editorial in *TPNW* 4 (March 1941) in which he comments on 'a new consciousness stirring'. Lehmann had written:

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 90 - 91.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁰⁰ Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p. 191. He cites a letter written in 1940 by Allen Lane to Elsa Lanchester about a switch in emphasis away from international affairs and to Britain's future.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 194.

A consciousness that, not merely as a matter of self-preservation for the moment, but in order to equip ourselves for a far more strenuous future when the results will be far worse if we do not avoid the dismal, sleep-walking mistakes of the past, the old ways of life and the old slogans will have to be scrapped.⁷⁰²

Lewis also cites Harold Laski, who argued that the way to victory 'lies in producing the conviction now among the masses that there are to be no more distressed areas ... no vast denials of genuine equality of educational opportunity'.⁷⁰³ J. B. Priestley is cited too, outlining the often expressed anxiety in Britain at that time, about the shape of the new world after the war. The observations and comments by these writers (and a broadcaster) in early 1940s Britain seem in many ways to chime with Ye's implicit condemnation in 'The Dream' of the 'old ways' and the need for people to believe in a better, new, future which rejects the 'sleepwalking' ways of the past, after the war. In Ye's story, that 'new' is free education for all (for Laski it is 'equality of education' among other things). As Ye knew some of them well, the thinkers whose ideas and comments Lewis notes as prominent on this theme (J.B Priestley and Lehmann in particular), it is difficult to believe this was entirely a coincidence. It would seem that influential thinking about the war, how to win it and the future of Britain, which Ye is sure to have encountered as he toured Britain in the final years of WWII, resonated with his inevitable anxieties about the future for China once the fighting ceased. What ultimately unites the narrative climax in Ye's story and the direction of social reform in Britain, is the strongly held belief that post-war society must confront head on the inequality (and the hierarchical class system) of the past. In China, as in Britain this instinct is at the heart of the politics that goes on to fundamentally shape the lives of people in Britain and China after 1945.

7.5 b) 'Three Brothers' (TPNW 38)

⁷⁰² TPNW 4, p. 8.

⁷⁰³ Lewis, *Penguin Special*, p, 193.

Ye's final contribution to *TPNW* was published in 1949, in volume 38 alongside an interesting roster of Western writers including: Denton Welch (the piece was published posthumously as he died in December 1948), Edith Sitwell, James Stern (the Anglo-Irish short story and non-fiction writer) and a young Saul Bellow. Almost all of the stories, including Ye's, were being published for the first time in Britain marking the full evolution of *TPNW* from a magazine focused on republishing works from Lehmann's other journals to one featuring mostly original (to UK readers) works. 'Three Brothers' had almost certainly been written in English as Ye himself remained in Britain until the founding of the PRC called him back to China in late 1949. By this point, *TPNW*, was in its final stages. Just two more issues would follow. The editor's foreword accompanying volume 38 is a tribute to Welch in which Lehmann imagines the heights that Welch might have reached as a writer had he survived. Gone is such a marked sense of Lehmann reaching out to the world with his publication. The stories in volume 38 are instead rooted firmly in the 'post-war' period. Ye's story certainly makes no mention of the war, of Japan, of refugees or of China's suffering as his earlier translations and writing so pointedly had. And at this stage of Lehmann's venture circulation had slumped from 80,000 (1947) to 40,000 (1949).⁷⁰⁴ Despite making some gloomy comments about 'a general decline in quality' of *TPNW*'s output during the post-war period, John Whitehead, singles out Ye's story (among others) as one of the 'good things' that came along in *TPNW*'s dotage.⁷⁰⁵ A note in Ye's Chinese memoir suggests that the story came to be published because Isherwood wrote 'a passionate letter and picked a story of mine' and sent it to Lehmann on Ye's behalf when he visited Britain in 1948.⁷⁰⁶

For *TPNW* readers who had been exposed to Chinese stories about the horror, hypocrisy, politics, huge societal shifts as well as the sense of unity and hope for the future resulting from the war with Japan, Ye's tale about three brothers stands in stark contrast to everything that had come before. The setting, the dialogue and the

⁷⁰⁴ John Whitehead comments that *TPNW*'s post-war period was marked by: 'a general decline in the average quality of the work' in his introduction to Whitehead (ed.) *John Lehmann's 'New Writing'*, p. 27.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p. 402.

characters appear to have emerged from Confucian China rather than modern China and the story's central themes of family responsibility and the fickleness of fortune could have been plucked from a Chinese novel written two centuries earlier. 'Shall we make some tea?' is the opening line of the story, as two brothers sit peacefully together by a 'brazier' and contemplate their good fortune. One brother is counting his wealth on an 'abacus' and little 'bell-shaped cups' are placed on the table.⁷⁰⁷ Once the hot water has been poured, the tea leaves send up a 'fresh scent of tea blossoms in spring drizzles and dew on blue mountains' conveying a sense of tradition, order and calm, evocative of old China.⁷⁰⁸ The story recounts the shifting fortunes of three brothers, born into poverty, their father an itinerant musician. Over two decades since their childhood, two of the brothers (Law-ta and Law-yi, roughly translated as old elder one and old number one) have amassed a fortune, first selling vegetables, later items from salt to matches in a 'joint firm'.⁷⁰⁹ The story is recounted by a third person narrator, almost as a story-teller would have recounted it. It is not long before the wealthy brothers' peaceful, comfortable, existence is shattered. The reader learns that the youngest brother (Law-san, or brother number three) has recently returned after a long absence and requested money because he wants to marry. Unlike his elder brothers and contrary to the advice of his dying father, the youngest Law has remained a musician 'entertaining coolies on the flotillas on the river' with a gang of 'Bohemian comrades'.⁷¹⁰ His two elder brothers (particularly the middle brother) refuse to help and they depart 'as enemies'.⁷¹¹ Shortly after this encounter, the rich brothers are visited by a band of masked thieves who murder, probably accidentally, the night watchman of the town and attempt to break into the brothers' home to rob them. The bandits eventually flee because their leader has been knocked unconscious by the second brother, who throws a brick at his head from a balcony. By the end of the story, the thief-master is identified as the youngest brother. He has died from his head wound, murdered by his own brother. Ultimately, the

⁷⁰⁷ *TPNW* 38, p. 68.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

rich brothers are so racked by guilt and remorse that they spend their entire fortune on a lavish funeral for their departed kin. Shortly after the funeral, the brothers' shop is closed and 'only once' an old market gardener is said to have seen them in the 'attire of strolling players' near the river, although the gardener adds that he could not be sure it was them.⁷¹²

While the two wealthy merchant brothers are not the usual downtrodden peasants, so often featured in Ye's wartime translations and earlier short story, their wealth only serves to highlight the inequality between them and the youngest brother. The plot explores the liberating but ultimately the corrupting power of money. Readers' sympathies are pushed towards the youngest brother, who although poor and Bohemian had (readers learn when a letter is discovered on his body after his death) no intention of harming his elder siblings when he attacked their house. He simply wanted to 'borrow' the amount of money needed for his nuptials.⁷¹³ Poverty may make men desperate but money makes them selfish and blind, are perhaps the universal truths Ye's fictional account explores. Just as Lehmann's editorials for *TPNW* after the war placed less emphasis on all that was globally uniting in literature, Ye's story too is premised on ideas about domestic life and the family. The story also contains several elements of autobiography, not least that Ye himself was one of three brothers, one of whom - the eldest - was killed. Before his death, at the hands of the Nationalist government who executed him, Ye's eldest brother, like his father, had worked as an apprentice in a shop. His father had died, impoverished, of over work. There is also a line in the story that appears to link it very definitely with 'The Dream'. The narrator recalls: 'Twenty years earlier they were the starved children of a destitute strolling player'.⁷¹⁴ How far they had come. And how far had Ye come, in Britain? Shortly after 'Three Brothers' was published, Ye returned to China and did not set foot in Britain

⁷¹² Ibid, p. 84.

⁷¹³ Ibid, p. 82.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid, p 69.

again until the early 1980s. Dorothy Woodman was the last person in Britain to wave him off on the boat from Southampton that carried him back to China.⁷¹⁵

7.6 Ye's Aesthetics and the Anxiety over Modernism

When, in the spring of 1946, after Ye had assembled his own collection of short stories for publication, his Chinese memoir notes that he set about seeking a publisher. By this stage Ye was well acquainted with both Lehmann and Leonard Woolf and he considered sending his stories to the Hogarth Press.⁷¹⁶ However, the memoir notes that Ye ultimately decided against this idea because 'on second thought, Hogarth Press focused on works of modernism' whereas Ye felt that his stories did not conform 'in terms of subject matter or writing style'.⁷¹⁷ Ye concluded that it would be 'difficult' for Hogarth if he sent his stories to them.⁷¹⁸ Instead his friend the writer Chiang Yee wrote a 'passionate letter of recommendation' to the publisher Methuen.⁷¹⁹ But Methuen declined to print the stories because although 'well-written' were not quite 'their style'.⁷²⁰ Instead Methuen recommended that Ye seek out a more 'eclectic publisher' for his collection. Ye interpreted Methuen's letter of rejection as a sign that his work was neither sufficiently mainstream, nor was it sufficiently 'modernist' for a large British publisher. With the aid of the Welsh short story writer and editor Denys Val Baker, Ye eventually made contact with Sylvan Press.

Ye's interpretation of his early publishing travails are telling because he evidently believed that one of the factors that would determine his success as a Chinese writer in the literary centre of London was whether or not aspects of his work embraced (or not) literary modernism. In this sense, Ye saw himself as a kind of double minority in 1940s

⁷¹⁵ Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p. 511. Ye notes: 'When I left, she was the only one who came to see me off'.

⁷¹⁶ Whitehead, *John Lehmann's 'New Writing'*, p. 24. Lehmann handed in his notice at the Hogarth Press in January 1946. Ye may have been unaware that Lehmann had terminated his partnership with Leonard Woolf or may have been somewhat muddled over the precise date that he first began weighing up his publishing options.

⁷¹⁷ Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p. 476.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*

Britain. It is also telling that Lehmann published Ye's stories in *TPNW*, which underscores the eclectic mix of aesthetic styles in the journal's contributions that often took it outside the dictates of literary modernism.

7. 7 Ye's Legacy in Britain

As soon as Ye began publishing his works under his own name (Yeh Chun-Chan) abandoning the Esperanto pen name that he had often hidden behind when publishing stories and translations during the early years of the war against Japan, a steady stream of reviews started to flow from the typewriters and pens of critics in Britain and America. The first wave of reviews were written in 1946 and 1947 following the publication of two books: the collection of Ye's own short stories and the collection of stories by Chinese writers that he had translated.⁷²¹ Following the publication of his first novel in English, *The Mountain Village* (1947), and his second work of fiction, *They Fly South* (1948) came another flurry of reviews. Xiao Qian had written favourably about the stories Ye contributed to *NW* in an article for *The Listener* in 1942, although Ye was not credited as the translator.⁷²² Similarly Harold Acton heaped praise on many of the stories that Ye had originally translated for *NW*, in the essay 'Small Talk in China' but neither Ye, nor Acton's name were linked to the translations and so neither are credited for the work.

Several of the writers and critics who gave favourable reviews to Ye's first two collections could fairly be described as part of Lehmann's *NW* coterie, including Rosamond Lehmann (the novelist and John Lehmann's sister) Edwin Muir (the poet, novelist and translator) and Walter Allen (the literary critic and novelist), who all contributed (at least once) to *TPNW*. This is not to imply that their appraisals of Ye's stories and translations were partisan, they were all after all writers or critics (or both) with their own reputations to consider. But it is questionable whether Ye would have received the same level of exposure as a completely unknown Chinese writer, without the backing (by publishing his works) of Lehmann. Rosamond was one of the first to

⁷²¹ *Three Seasons and Other Stories* and *The Ignorant and The Forgotten*.

⁷²² Hsiao Ch'ien, 'China's Literary Revolution', *The Listener*, 11 June 1942, pp. 756 -757.

review *The Ignorant and The Forgotten* (the collection of Ye's own stories) in September 1946. In a glowing account of the book, full of superlatives, she singles out 'The Dream' for particular attention and concludes by stating Ye's book 'cannot be too highly recommended':⁷²³

Last [in the review] a collection of stories by a young Chinese writer, Chun-Chan Yeh, which lift the reader on to a rare plane of pleasure and refreshment. Not a vulgar line, not a banal image, not a word of dialogue without revealing human point. It seems nearly impossible to believe that a foreign writer, even such a brilliantly intelligent student as Mr Yeh must be, could attain such a rich and flexible command of the English language; All [the stories] are the produce [sic] of an extraordinary pure poetic imagination; and though nearly all of them are melancholy or tragic stories of the Japanese war, their simplicity, humour and compassion, their exquisite ethical and aesthetic values, carry us far from the sphere of our sorrow.⁷²⁴

Of 'The Dream', she writes that it is the 'most moving' in the collection. The following month, Walter Allen, the novelist, critic, literary journalist and *TPNW* contributor (whom Ye mentions as a friend in his Chinese memoir), wrote what is arguably an even more emphatic endorsement of Ye's talent as a writer in a review for *The Spectator*, in which he compares Ye to Turgenev and Tolstoy. The review begins:

Mr Chun-Chan Yeh must be counted as a most distinguished recruit to the number of foreigners writing in English. For their matter alone the nine stories that make up *The Ignorant and the Forgotten* would be important, but in addition, Mr Yeh writes beautifully, with a freshness and a delicate lyricism reminiscent of

⁷²³ Rosamond Lehmann, 'New Novels', *The Listener*, 19 September 1946, p. 386. She is reviewing *The Ignorant and The Forgotten*.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

Turgenev. His theme of course is China, in most instances China at war against Japan. But he is not a propagandist; he is a poet.⁷²⁵

And in case readers were left in any doubt as to whether they should rush out and buy Ye's book, Allen adds that the stories leave behind them, as E. M. Forster has said of *War and Peace*, 'an effect like music'.⁷²⁶ In summation, Allen concludes that if the MOI was 'instrumental in bringing him from China it did better than it knew, for it has given us an artist of rare sensitivity'.⁷²⁷ That Ye's writing is publicly held to rise above 'propaganda' is significant. Following the years that Ye spent working in the propaganda office in China and for the MOI in Britain, and given the subject matter (the downtrodden people in times of war) the propaganda label could have been a difficult one to shake. But Allen dispatches it extremely effectively.

Not all of the reviews that Ye's work received in Britain were as glowing. Edwin Muir (who contributed to *TPNW* in 1946 and was written about in 1949) had reviewed 'Mr Hua Wei' and 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' in *Folios of New Writing* in 1941 and dismissed the two Chinese stories as 'both broadly comic, but in no way remarkable'.⁷²⁸ Muir preferred Harold Acton's 'informative' article on the state of the novel in China.⁷²⁹ It is worth noting that Muir's comments were made five months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. And, even though the review does not directly reflect on Ye's reputation, as he is not credited for the translation, it provides some perspective on the range of views towards works by Chinese writers throughout the 1940s.

As well as Ye's own stories, his collection of translations received some critical acclaim in 1947 in *The Observer* newspaper and the journal *Life & Letters*. Angela Milne (the niece of A. A. Milne), noted in a review of *Three Seasons and Other Stories*, that Ye 'writes as well in English as (so to speak) he thinks in Chinese'.⁷³⁰ Her brief review

⁷²⁵ Walter Allen, 'Fiction', in *The Spectator*, 18 October 1946, p. 22.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Edwin Muir, 'New Novels', *The Listener*, 31 July 1941, p. 175.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Angela Milne, 'New Novels, Breakdown', *The Observer*, 21 December 1947, p. 3

concludes: 'The other enemy, Japan, is at hand throughout the book, which with its author's notes tells us much about modern Chinese fiction.'⁷³¹ Another review of the same collection in 1949 (the reviewer writes about the book alongside Ye's second novel, *They Fly South* which was published that year) singles out the stories 'Half a Cartload of Straw Short' and 'The Third Rate Gunner' for the 'humour in both [that] flows along gently and never descends to the slapstick or the grotesque as it might easily have done'.⁷³² Eric Walrond, the Afro-Caribbean writer and journalist, then bows to Harold Acton for his appraisal of Mr Hua Wei as 'a universal type'.⁷³³ In addition, 'Along the Yunnan Burma Road' is described by Walrond as a 'vivid sketch'.⁷³⁴

The reviews of Ye's two English novels, *The Mountain Village* and *They Fly South* are too numerous to include in detail and for the purposes of this research, as the books were not published by Penguin and could never have appeared in *TPNW*, are not strictly relevant. However, a review of *The Mountain Village*, which appeared in the *TLS* in 1947 is of note because the reviewer sets out neatly for readers the kinds of prejudices against Chinese literature that Chinese writers, in her view, must overcome before they are likely to appeal to English tastes:

Regular novel readers tend, sometimes to fight a little shy of tales about modern China. Such stories too often have the monotonous sprawl of the Chinese landscape itself, they imitate, in their style, the repetitions of the seasons; the simple virtues of the characters, and their simple vices, make their conduct all too predictable; their immemorial wisdom, in its English versions, too often approximates to platitude. Mr Chun-Chan Yeh's story, however, refreshingly disappoints these starchy expectations.⁷³⁵

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Eric Walrond in 'Reviews of Books', in Robert Herring (ed) *Life & Letters Today (and the London Mercury)*, Volume 61, No. 142, June 1949, pp. 257 - 259.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Possible authors of the piece are listed as (Elizabeth L. Sturch, Mrs G. S. Fraser or Mrs H. Marie) *The Times Literary Supplement*, 19 July 1947, p. 361.

Here we also see the first evidence of Ye's shift towards being considered, not simply a Chinese writer, but a writer with rather more in his armoury. When Ye left Britain to return to China, an article (written many years later) commented that he 'looked as though he was set to become an English writer but his heart, and subject matter, were in China',⁷³⁶

When considering Ye Junjian's unique position in 1940s Britain to shape and mould ideas about China through his short stories, translations, novels, broadcasts and his network of literary friendships, the contribution that John Lehmann made in getting him there is striking. It is a contribution that Ye himself repeatedly acknowledges in his publications from that decade as well as in the interviews he gave to British newspapers and magazines when he returned in the early 1980s. As well as publishing Ye's translations from the mid-1930s onwards and his stories in the 1940s, Lehmann appears to have supported and encouraged Ye in his writing, introduced him to a network of writers, editors and other friends who helped Ye to disseminate his ideas and writing more widely and, very significantly, elevated Ye's literary standing, or 'consecrated' his powers to borrow a term from Pascale Casanova. By publishing Ye's translations and short stories in *TPNW*, Lehmann asked readers to consider them as examples of contemporary fiction, on a par with - or at least comfortably sharing a literary space with - some of the finest authors of that generation in Britain and elsewhere. That Ye's work could stand comfortably alongside the most talented writers of that generation is noted by John Whitehead in a bibliography of *New Writing*, in which he singles out Ye, alongside: 'MacNeice, Day Lewis, Edith Sitwell, Plomer, E. J. Scovell, Stern, Hopkinson, Mucha, Sansom and Welch.'⁷³⁷

When seeking to assess the 'value' of Lehmann's endorsement of Ye as a writer, we need only compare Ye's privileged position (being featured in, or as a contributor to, almost every literary, political and news publication of note at that time) with that of other

⁷³⁶ Michael Scammell, 'A Chinaman in Bloomsbury', *TLS*.

⁷³⁷ Whitehead (ed) *John Lehmann's 'New Writing'*, p. 27.

Chinese writers who never found the same kind of literary backing.⁷³⁸ Two writers in particular offer useful comparisons: S. I. Hsiung, who enjoyed a large measure of success in his lifetime and H. T. Tsiang who languished in near total obscurity as a writer. S. I. Hsiung, or Hsiung Shih-I, was the writer and playwright whose adaptation of an old Chinese play performed just off the West End, and later on Broadway, ran for more than 1,000 nights between November 1934 and 1936. The play was *Lady Precious Stream (LPS)*. In her book about the lives of S. I. Hsiung and his wife Dymia, who was also a writer, Diana Yeh observes that, following the notable success of the play in London and having 'caught the attention of literary and social circles' Hsiung wrote to T. S. Eliot asking him to contribute a preface to Hsiung's new work, *The Western Chamber*. Eliot declined, with great tact, and further snubbed Hsiung by declining an invitation to attend a performance of *Lady Precious Stream*. As Diana Yeh notes: 'There were ... limits to the circles that he [Hsiung] was able to penetrate'.⁷³⁹ Yeh draws a comparison between Hsiung and other Chinese writers and poets who had moved in literary circles while living in Britain:

Try as he might, and despite mixing with other Chinese writers and poets such as Ye Junjian, Ling Shuhua and Xu Zhimo ... who had found or would later find favour with them, Hsiung could not attract the interest of Eliot or his literary associates in the Bloomsbury group. It is likely they viewed Hsiung's work as too populist - a derivative, inauthentic piece of commercial drama, as Hsiung had admitted it was, rather than a serious work of art.⁷⁴⁰

While it could not be argued that Hsiung's rejection by Eliot and his failure to win plaudits from the Bloomsbury group of writers had any bearing on the reception of *LPS*

⁷³⁸ Publications which Ye contributed to, or had work reviewed by, or had work published in during his lifetime include: *Penguin New Writing*, *Life & Letters Today*, *The New Statesman & Nation*, *The Times*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Observer*, *The Listener*, *The New York Times* and *The Spectator*.

⁷³⁹ Diana Yeh, *The Happy Hsiungs, Performing China and the Struggle for Modernity* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), p. 51.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

in Britain, it is worth considering that none of Hsiung's other works (*The Romance of the Western Chamber* and *The Professor of Peking* included) enjoyed the same success.⁷⁴¹

The decades long struggle for recognition by the Chinese writer, H. T. Tsiang, as he attempts to convince a mainstream publisher in America in the early 1930s to print his pro-Communist fiction, is the central concern of Hsu's, *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific*. Hsu considers Tsiang's ambition to write a novel 'somewhat like *The Good Earth* only much better' and goes on to explore how, while Buck enjoyed unqualified success, Tsiang wandered New York City, 'hawking copies of his self-published novels to anyone who would listen to his harried sales pitch'.⁷⁴² Hsu notes in particular the rejections Tsiang received from the big publishing firms including: Jonathan Cape, Harrison Smith and Alfred Knopf. In part, Hsu's story depicts the journey of a writer struggling and ultimately failing to gain recognition. China 'experts' of the day ignored him, preferring instead to take their cues from Pearl Buck, Lin Yutang, Alice Tisdale-Hobart or the journalism of Carl Crow. There is a particularly intriguing observation by Hsu in the chapter 'Theoretical China' in which he states: 'When figures like Lin Yutang or Hu Shih entered the fray, it was often due to the patronage of American thinkers and writers'.⁷⁴³ What Hsu notes here appears to strike at the heart of Ye's association with Lehmann (and Bell, before him). It was in many ways because of Lehmann's 'patronage' that Ye could be considered, not just talented but also 'authentic' in his representations of China to the West. In some ways, Ye's reputation in Britain can be usefully compared to Lin Yutang's in America although Ye never represented the small Chinese community in Britain in the same way that Lin did for the much larger Chinese community in America. As Chapter 5 on the Chinese writer, Kenneth Lo, noted his ambitions to achieve in Britain what Lin achieved in America fell considerably short in the 1940s. Both Lin and Ye were 'endorsed' Chinese writers, with a talent for writing in English, for translation and seen by readers as an authentic voice on matters relating

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 93 - 94.

⁷⁴² Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p 10 and p.196. H. T. Hsiang made the remark about *The Good Earth* to a journalist. Hsu provides the source Rion Bercovici, 'Novelist', Talk of the Town, *The New Yorker*, 6 July 1935, p. 10.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., p. 47.

to China and as interpreters of China in the West. In terms of their politics and their style of writing Lin and Ye share little common ground but as examples of successful Chinese writers, writing in English in the West in the 1930s and 1940s, their careers, in terms of how they came to be recognised, have notable similarities. That Ye returned to China just as the fruits of his years in Britain had started to pay off, in the form of generous reviews and recommendations for his works, while Lin remained mostly in America publishing books for the rest of his life, may account today for why one writer is remembered as one of the most influential (middlebrow) writers of his generation while the other has since been almost entirely forgotten.

After just five years in Britain, Ye was not merely an acclaimed Chinese writer but well on his way to becoming an English writer. Ye's short stories had made a Book Society recommendation and his first novel a Book Society choice. At this point, his memoir notes, he had begun to feel out of touch with modern China and that the subject matter of two novels he had planned to work on 'were too far away from reality [in China]'.⁷⁴⁴ One was about the life of a traditional upper-class Chinese family. The second was about the lives of Chinese intellectuals during the revolution. Moving in elevated circles in Britain had cut him off from the proletariat as a subject matter.

Instead, Ye hurried back to China, to support the victorious Communist revolution. When Ye returned to Britain, first in 1982, to lecture at Cambridge and to rekindle his friendships with those writers and editors from his past who were still alive, his connections with Lehmann and with the Bloomsbury group of writers and artists were repeatedly referenced in newspapers and magazines and in the posters put up ahead of his talks at the university. Ye himself contributed an article to the PEN Broadsheet in 1982 in which he lists the very many literary friends and associates who had offered friendship, criticism, advice or encouragement to him as a younger writer.⁷⁴⁵ The list reveals how far and wide Ye's endorsement spread: John Lehmann (of course), Arthur Waley, Cyril Connolly, Stephen Spender, Vanessa and Quentin Bell, Leonard Woolf, 'the Keyneses', Frances Cornford, E. M. Forster, Dorothy Woodward, Kingsley

⁷⁴⁴ Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p. 510.

⁷⁴⁵ Ye was a founding member of the PEN China Center in Beijing.

Martin and J. B. Priestley.⁷⁴⁶ It was, at least partly this network, and Ye's place as a Cambridge Kingsman, that enabled him to return to England later in life. A year before Ye made the journey to Britain in 1982, the article by Michael Scammell in the *TLS* had laid the foundations for Ye's return with the comment: 'In my view it would be good for both English and Chinese literature if Mr Yeh were to come back.'⁷⁴⁷ Most of the reports from this time focus entirely on Ye's past, even though he had not quite finished with British publishing. When, in 1988, Ye's trilogy *Quiet are the Mountains* was published by Faber & Faber in English the reviews were not effusive.⁷⁴⁸ One particularly damning summation from D. J. Taylor opined:

And, like every other writer operating in the shadow of ideology he has been avid, if not to please, then certainly not to offend censorious political masters. Reading the second part of his trilogy I was left with the abiding impression of an author glancing warily over his shoulder.⁷⁴⁹

Taylor also noted that by 1988, Ye's celebrity in the West 'lies somewhere around the small-to-negligible mark'. Depressing evidence, perhaps, of what happens to a talented writer forced for too many years to tread a careful line in his writings, for fear of the consequences. And there had been major consequences for Ye as a result of his time in Britain and his allegiances with foreign writers. Despite Epstein's support, Ye was forced to clean the toilets of the magazine that he had edited during the Cultural Revolution. By the time of Ye's final visit to Britain, Lehmann had died the year before and what was once a powerful network of literary associates had pretty much dried up.

⁷⁴⁶ Yeh (Ye), 'O, 'This England', PEN Broadsheet. no. 12, Spring 1982, p. 1. (KCHR/2/78). Among the international Vice-Presidents of PEN at that time are: Rosamond Lehmann, V. S. Pritchett and Andre Chamson. They were all *TPNW* contributors.

⁷⁴⁷ Michael Scammell, 'A Chinaman in Bloomsbury', *TLS*, p. 769.

⁷⁴⁸ Ye's trilogy included *The Mountain Village* and two sequels (*The Open Fields* and *A Distant Journey*) written after Ye returned to his home county after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

⁷⁴⁹ D. J. Taylor, 'Slogans in Chinese whispers' 1988, no publication provided. Copy contained in (KCA LPW/8/2 LP).

7. 8 Ye Junjian in *The World Republic of Letters*

Leaving aside some of the specific shortcomings of Casanova's model of international literary space, there are instances within *The World Republic of Letters* which are strikingly relevant to understanding some of the forces at work in Ye's literary career. The most notable example is Casanova's definition of the way in which translation, and translators, consecrate texts into (and out of) a 'dominant' language in the literary world and the effect this has on a 'dominated' writer's international standing.⁷⁵⁰ Casanova cites August Strindberg, Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett among others as examples of writers for whom translation performed a vital function for their reputations (or their literary credit) beyond national confines. Casanova writes: '...the literary credit that attaches to a language independently of its strictly linguistic capital, makes it possible to consider the translation of dominated authors as an act of consecration that gives them access to literary visibility and existence [she calls this *littérisation*].'⁷⁵¹ She goes on to comment that 'literary transmutation is achieved by crossing a magic frontier that allows a text composed in an unprestigious language ... to pass into a literary language'.⁷⁵² Casanova defines the process of '*littérisation* as any operation - translation, self-translation, transcription, direct composition in the dominant language - by means of which a text from a literarily deprived country comes to be regarded as literary by the legitimate authorities.'⁷⁵³ Within these descriptions, Casanova seeks to underscore how crucial the act of translation (in its many guises) is in the consecrating of texts as literature in her republic. What, for the purposes of this thesis, becomes apparent, in her description of *littérisation* is the extent to which Ye, who began first translating the works of other writers, before translating his own stories from Esperanto into English and then writing stories directly in English after moving to Britain, employed in just a few years, almost all of the 'gamut of strategies' that Casanova describes as

⁷⁵⁰ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 116.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 136.

being available to dominated writers to solve the problem of 'literary destitution and invisibility'.⁷⁵⁴ Frustratingly however, China and Chinese writers are not the subject of any detailed analysis by Casanova, although at one point she defines languages of 'broad diffusion' such as Chinese as having 'great literary traditions but being nonetheless 'little known and largely unrecognized in the international marketplace'.⁷⁵⁵

In the careers of many of the aforementioned writers taken as examples in this part of Casanova's study, she comments that 'looking at the successive stages of their consecration, it is possible to detect all the ways in which the conditions for achieving visibility laid down by the consecrating authorities cause texts to be transformed'.⁷⁵⁶

Casanova also points out that, which 'dominant language' didn't matter so much to Strindberg or Joyce, adding: 'What mattered to each of them was advancing to the status of a writer - a practitioner of literature - through the adoption, directly or via translation, of a language that was considered to be the incarnation of literature par excellence.'⁷⁵⁷ Casanova's Gallocentrism leads her to insist that the French language occupies the most lofty position, but in Ye's case, this would refer to London (which Casanova terms 'the other great capital of world literature') and English.⁷⁵⁸ For Ye, his incarnation was in no small part facilitated by Lehmann (it is after all not much good being translated into English if you are not then published in English) who was undeniably a hallowed member of the 'consecrating authorities' of English literature.

Casanova's study goes on to comment that despite the crucial role of translation and translators in the processes of consecration, these forces are 'always passed over in silence, forgotten, or simply ignored'.⁷⁵⁹ This she suggests is because literary historians favour examining the particular (and typically dehistoricized) history of an individual author, or giving a general account of the development of a national literature, or else reviewing the history of the different interpretations 'readings' of a given text over

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 136.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 256 - 257.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 136.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 136 - 137.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., p 117.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 142.

time and so the processes of consecration and *littérisation* get forgotten.⁷⁶⁰ It is the intention of this thesis and this chapter in particular, not to forget or to ignore or to silence these processes but instead to reveal when, with whom and how they occurred for a Chinese writer (indeed several Chinese writers) who sought to publish works in a British literary magazine in late-1930s and 1940s Britain. From the moment that Ye began translating the works of others, to his first translation of his own work, and his subsequent shift into writing in English, it is possible to envision how, with the consecration bestowed on him by Lehmann and to an extent Acton and even Xiao Qian, he became a Chinese writer on an international level. Ultimately this helps to understand the less obvious and easily visible means by which *TPNW* and Lehmann shaped responses to China and what the magazine and its editor achieved for Chinese literature and Chinese writers but most significantly, for Ye.

In Ye's case, after China opened up in the late 1970s and he was able to return to Britain and to London in the 1980s, it was his previous consecration by London that smoothed his path to once again operating on an international level. By then, he was no longer promoting his own fiction but the work of other Chinese writers and his own translations of foreign texts (most successfully Hans Christian Anderson). Overall, Ye's example suggests that the literary capital that he had accumulated in a 'dominant' language in the 1940s had not entirely dwindled to nought by the 1980s when he sought to return and publish his works again as most of the news coverage from that time shows.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

Chapter 8: John Lehmann, Chinese Writers and Chinese Writing

8.1 John Lehmann: Redrawing Readers' Responses to China

This chapter is an appraisal of Lehmann's China venture in the broadest sense as it will include consideration of the networks of contacts that he sought to cultivate in relation to China as well as the behind the scenes editorial work that he carried out while editor of the *NW* journals. Through Lehmann's correspondence with Chinese writers and his other contacts in relation to China it is possible to build up an impression of the kinds of stories that he sought to publish in *TPNW* and why, while also assessing the kinds of materials that he rejected, or kept out of the magazine. Overall these enquiries provide valuable insight into Lehmann's approach to China and to Chinese writers and their stories. This chapter will also consider, not merely the value of Lehmann's endorsement for their careers as individuals but also the influence of the *NW* venture as a whole in literary circles in China from the late 1930s onwards.

While an evaluation of the published stories, author biographies and other relevant materials - which have been the subject of this thesis so far - has been essential to any understanding of Lehmann's venture and the ideas relating to China that it put in front of readers, it only provides a partial impression of the shaping and curating that went on for more than a decade to assemble the finished product. In short, there is a great deal that the published materials themselves cannot, and do not, reveal about the work that went into creating *TPNW* and bringing its Chinese stories to

publication. The published texts, for example, do not provide details about the context and conditions surrounding their publication. They give only scant indication about the limitations and/or impediments which might have existed for a British publisher in the 1940s seeking to print work from and about China. Equally, the stories do not provide any explicit comment as to why Lehmann may have liked them or found them fitting for *TPNW* or his readers around the globe. And, what of the significant number of stories, poetry, essays and other contributions from and about China that were submitted to Lehmann but which never made it into the pages of the journal, including several by Chinese writers whose work Lehmann had already published? While Lehmann's own memoirs and editorials as well as critical analyses of the man and his work over the past 70 years since the final issue of his *NW* venture, provide valuable insight into his aims and intentions as an editor between 1936 -1950, just a small portion of these materials relate specifically to China or the Chinese stories or writers themselves (or the Russian, French, Czechoslovakian, American or other 'foreign' contributors with whom Lehmann was in either direct or indirect contact). Lehmann's biographer is explicit about deliberately skirting the subject of foreign writers and/or translators for 'reasons of space' while simultaneously acknowledging the great contribution that Lehmann made in publishing their works.⁷⁶¹ Wright comments that Lehmann's contribution (to foreign writers) 'was so pronounced that when foreign authors spoke of Lehmann it was as if, according to the novelist Lettice Cooper, they spoke of England'.⁷⁶² As Chapter 2 (2.3) has considered, recent scholarship has suggested that Lehmann's understanding of the global (specifically in the interwar period) was 'circumscribed' and 'limited' and 'governed by his own immediate social and literary circles'.⁷⁶³ However, without a more comprehensive analysis, of Lehmann's approach to his foreign contributors and their writing, a valuable perspective on his work is lost. This thesis argues that without a clearer awareness of Lehmann's international venture, his achievement, namely to

⁷⁶¹ Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, preface, xi.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ Battershill, 'This intimate Object', p. 99.

'conceive of literary cultures across national borders' and his creation of a literary space to accommodate this, is too easily dismissed.⁷⁶⁴

There exists, in piecemeal form, a narrative worthy of telling concerning the conditions that permitted, or prevented, stories about China reaching the great numbers of *TPNW* readers and the role that Lehmann played in supporting and encouraging the careers of a number of Chinese writers at a time when few editors or publishers across not just Britain but Europe, were open to such a venture. The evidence for this is to be found in the unpublished sources that reside in the John Lehmann archive where his correspondence along with documents and photographs relating to his lifetime's work as an editor, are housed.⁷⁶⁵ Attention to scribbled notes in the margins of the many letters (relevant to China) that Lehmann sent out and received, contributes to an understanding of the breadth, depth and authenticity of his China venture. In particular these hitherto unpublished sources reveal the sourcing, cutting, editing, translating, re-translating, revising and re-thinking of the stories that was required to find and present the finest works by Chinese writers to *TPNW* readers. This chapter considers not only the Chinese stories that Lehmann did print, but, in the spirit of Hua Hsu's *A Flying Chinaman* 'the losers', here referring not only to individuals whose work failed to reach publication but also to those stories and ideas that were edited out because they were deemed unsuitable, unpalatable, too much like propaganda or insufficiently 'charming', to cite one of Lehmann's own watchwords.

As well as the editorial business of *TPNW*, the unpublished sources shed light on the network of contacts and advisors Lehmann consulted on matters relating to China as well as the advice that he sought from rival publishers about the appetite for Chinese stories from the reading public in the late 1930s and 1940s. And while Lehmann's readers themselves could not know it, there is a strong argument to be made, that their 'China' was shaped as much by what they did not see - or did not get to read - as by what they did. Put another way, if the published stories were, as Lehmann would

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ At the HRC, Austin, Texas. Note that Lehmann's family papers are held at the Princeton University Library, New Jersey.

certainly have hoped, the pinnacle of the China work that he published, they were also only the tip of a proverbial iceberg in terms of the wider body of work and effort (be it editorial-related, network building or information gathering) that could be defined as Lehmann's China venture as a whole.⁷⁶⁶ The unpublished sources reveal much about the raw materials with which Lehmann had to work, and to a great extent they present the impression of a collage of materials, which after Lehmann's expert scissor work, or cutting and shaping, eventually became the neat, intelligible, carefully curated Chinese stories that were finally set before his readers.

This chapter then considers what the unpublished sources (correspondence, editorial notes, scribbled responses) relating to *TPNW* reveal about his approach and dedication to Chinese fiction, to Chinese writers and to the network of Chinese sources that he sought to build up during his decade at the helm of the journal. It will also consider the editorial standards which Lehmann applied to works by 'foreign writers' [in the sense that English was not their first language] compared to, for example, submissions from better-known or, for Anglophone readers, more easily accessible British and European writers (who may also have written in a second language but whose writing in style and content would have been more familiar to *TPNW* readers).

Lehmann's communication with other editors and China watchers also provides some context about the wider publishing market for Chinese stories during the late 1930s and 1940s and the extent to which stories from China were perceived as 'the vogue' by the mid-1940s as the country's relationship with Britain shifted during the course of the Second Sino-Japanese War and WWII.⁷⁶⁷ The writers and their biographers also testify to a publishing market (and readership) that while difficult to break into, became increasingly open and encouraging of their work. This chapter will conclude by examining the influence and inspiration of Lehmann's *NW* journals on Chinese writers in China via the example of one briefly published magazine in English and plans for another, in Chinese. This is an unacknowledged aspect of Lehmann's

⁷⁶⁶ Lehmann's biographer described his overall workload as one that 'would hardly be countenanced today'. Wright, *A Pagan Adventure*, preface, xi.

⁷⁶⁷ Typed letter from Dorothy Woodman (at the CCC) to Lehmann on 20 September 1944, (HRC/Lehmann/Woodman/CCC).

venture that while beyond his control (and which he declined to have any direct editorial involvement with) nevertheless enriches any understanding of Sino-British trans-cultural crossings of the late 1930s and 1940s and the role Lehmann, *NW* and later *TPNW* played in these exchanges.

8.2 John Lehmann's China Network

In order to examine how Lehmann and *TPNW* shaped readers' responses to China and what this might tell us about the literary crossings between Britain and China during the 1940s and the dynamics of global literature during that decade it is essential to appraise Lehmann's network of 'experts' on matters relating to Chinese fiction. Due to wartime conditions both in China and at home, Lehmann's network of China contacts shifted considerably as Chinese writers or China 'experts' moved in and out of his reach. This group is also inevitably coloured by Lehmann's association with Eton, Cambridge and the Bloomsbury Group of writers, artists and critics, but certainly not entirely.

Correspondence between Lehmann and his China cohort show that he sought to cultivate a network beyond the limited confines of this literary circle. Of particular interest is how and when Lehmann built this network and precisely who he reached out to and what it might have meant to the Chinese writers who became central to it. This research has already considered Lehmann's links to Leftist political and literary movements, which had an interest in China (mostly through the prism of anti-imperialism, Soviet Russia, the advance of Communism and the defeat of Fascism). As Chapter 7 (7.2) has already noted, Lehmann's friendship with Ye Junjian, which stemmed from their mutual friendship with Julian Bell, undoubtedly influenced Lehmann's approach and access to Chinese literature from the late 1930s onwards. But, several years earlier when Lehmann returned to the UK from Austria to commit to his duties in the day-to-day management of a literary journal (and more than two years before Ye and Donald Allen presented him with their MSS of twenty short stories translated from the Chinese) Lehmann was already investigating potential sources of contemporary Chinese fiction for publication. These attempts to seek out the few

individuals in Britain (or Hong Kong) in a position to guide him towards modern short fiction in translation that could provide his readers with a glimpse of what was 'happening to the creative mind of modern China' suggest an editor who was deliberate in and dedicated to building up his network.⁷⁶⁸

The first such fishing letter in Lehmann's archive appears in the summer of 1937, shortly before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese war. It is perhaps little surprise that one of the first individuals whom Lehmann sought to contact as a possible source of modern Chinese short fiction for his *NW* journal was Edgar Snow (via his publisher George G. Harrap & Co in London). Snow's collection of modern short stories translated from the Chinese and accompanied by an essay about the Chinese literary movement by Nym Wales (the pen name of Snow's wife Helen Foster Snow), was eventually published in 1936 in Britain following rejection by several publishers. It was published the following year by John Day in America where the book received 'excellent' reviews.⁷⁶⁹ As Quentin Pan in the Shanghai-based, English-language weekly, *The China Critic*, pointed out at the time, Snow's book, *Living China* was a revelation because, 'nobody ever takes any notice of the Living China'.⁷⁷⁰ Pan was an American-trained evolutionary biologist, sociologist and eugenicist and a founding editor of the journal. Echoes of Pan's lament can be found in the clarion call to readers in the concluding remarks of Emily Hahn's article about China books, published the following year (1938) and outlined in Chapter 1 (1.2). Pan went on to comment in the review that Snow remained unique among foreigners interpreting China, because (note he is partly paraphrasing Snow's own words here) he 'is not satisfied with reading the "interpretive" books on China'. Pan further commented that Snow:

Wants to know what the Chinese talks and writes about himself in Chinese ... or especially how he [the Chinese writer] articulates it in the imaginative literature

⁷⁶⁸ Snow, *Living China*, introduction, p.11. Snow's interest was one that Lehmann was also very much alive to.

⁷⁶⁹ Hamilton, *Edgar Snow: A Biography*, p. 52.

⁷⁷⁰ Quentin Pan, 'Book Review' (Living China by Edgar Snow) in *The China Critic*, volume XVI no. 5, 4 February 1937, pp. 115 - 116.

he writes for others like himself - exclusively for Chinese eyes and appreciation, and not with the notion of pleasing foreign readers or of catering to foreign prejudices, or of feeding the Western avidity for the 'exotic', the 'quaint' and the 'picturesque'.⁷⁷¹

Similar instincts appear to guide Lehmann's interest in Chinese fiction albeit that his focus on writing in translation related to war and conflict (at the time he was editing *TPNW*) complicates the process of seeking out works that were written 'not with the notion of pleasing foreign readers'. Many of the stories that Lehmann published on China were, after all, translated and sent abroad with the express purpose of eliciting a response from foreign readers (even if the extent to which the stories may have been written with this in mind originally remained obscure). In June 1937 Lehmann wrote to Snow, with the aim of tracking down further stories by the writer T'chang T'ien-Yih (Zhang Tianyi), whose story 'Hatred' had appeared in the first issue of *NW* (Spring 1936) to considerable praise and was republished in *TPNW 1* (1940). In the letter, Lehmann stressed 'I am anxious to include another Chinese story in No.4 (or No.5) and would like to see more work of his, plus any by the new generation that you think might suit us.'⁷⁷² Evidently recommendations from the Snows were forthcoming as Lehmann published Chou Wen's 'The Three of Them' (translated from the Chinese by Chia Wu and Nym Wales, Shih Ming's (the pen name of female writer, translator and journalist Yang Gang) 'A Meeting' and Ms Ting Ling's (the female writer Ding Ling) 'One Day' in *NW 5* (spring, 1938); a bumper issue for China stories. All of these Chinese authors had either had other work translated by one of the Snows or been published in *Living China*. Nym Wales' excellent short biography of Shih Ming and details about Chou Wen's short story remain in Lehmann's archive.⁷⁷³ A typed letter from Lehmann to Jack Chen at the end of 1937 also refers to the 'two or three stories' [Lehmann] obtained from Mrs Edgar

⁷⁷¹ Ibid, p. 115.

⁷⁷² Typed letter from Lehmann to Snow dated 5 June 1937 (HRC/Lehmann/Snow).

⁷⁷³ Typed notes, undated, including a one page biography of Shih Ming and an introductory note about Chou Wen's short story. (HRC/Lehmann/Snow, Mrs Helen Foster).

Snow.⁷⁷⁴ However, these three stories were never re-published in *TPNW*. Only Shih Ming's short story related to war or conflict but its setting in the 1920s may not have been sufficiently contemporary for Lehmann in the 1940s. It is worth pausing for a moment to note that despite a number of highly successful female Chinese writers publishing short works or novels during the war in China (some of which were already available in translation) and the publication of the English translation of Hsieh Ping-ying's (Xie Bingying, born Xie Minggang) autobiography of a female Chinese soldier by George Allen & Unwin (1943), suggesting a market for such literature, no stories by Chinese female authors ever appeared in *TPNW*.⁷⁷⁵ Lehmann similarly under-represented female writers in Britain and elsewhere in *TPNW* possibly because of the magazine's strong war focus, which privileged accounts of those in the forces to those at home (although Lehmann certainly published both types of account and women were far more engaged in the Home Front during WWII than they had been in WWI). Jenny Hartley is among those who have noted that women's fiction in wartime also suffered from relative critical neglect up until the early 1990s.⁷⁷⁶

By the time Lehmann wrote to Jack Chen on 30th December, 1937, China and Japan were at war, the China Campaign Committee (CCC) had swung into action, the British Left was galvanised to raise awareness of the country's plight and Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, had brought the West the first serious and detailed account of Mao Zedong and the red base areas in northern China. Chen, whose arrival in Britain as the curator (and one of the artists) behind a travelling exhibition of anti-Japanese, woodcuts, drawings and cartoons, had been flagged in the *Left Review* a month earlier. No sooner had Chen stepped on British soil with the exhibition as it made its way from Russia to Europe and the US, the CCC had thrust him on stage to address 'a vast audience' in Trafalgar Square.⁷⁷⁷ Lehmann's letter to Chen states: 'I am very anxious to

⁷⁷⁴ Typed letter from Lehmann to Jack Chen (% Donald Kitchin), 30 December 1937, (HRC/Lehmann/Chen).

⁷⁷⁵ Tsui Chi translated *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl* (1943) and Gordon Bottomley wrote a Preface. He was also the author of *A Short History of Chinese Civilization* (1943) to which Laurence Binyon wrote a preface and the Puffin picture book, *The Story of China*. He was close friends with Chiang Yee.

⁷⁷⁶ For example, Jenny Hartley's *Millions Like Us*, (London: Virago, 1997), pp. 2 -3.

⁷⁷⁷ Patrick Wright, *Passport to Peking*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 66.

include Chinese stories and other creative work in the next number of *New Writing*' and he asks Chen for suggestions.⁷⁷⁸ Chen may have been too caught up in the CCC whirlwind of speaking engagements, article writing and exhibition work to respond. The following year, shortly after W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood returned from their travels through China for Faber & Faber, Lehmann wrote to John Alexander (a British diplomat), explaining, 'Wystan Auden tells me that you have some very interesting reportage or stories about China which we could use in *New Writing*.'⁷⁷⁹ Here is a snippet of evidence that Lehmann's old friend was looking out for him while traipsing across China. Quite whether Alexander provided any material for Lehmann's consideration remains unclear but in early 1939, Lehmann typed a letter to the Hong Kong bank building on Queen's Road Hong Kong, addressed to Wen Yuan-Ning Esq, in which he mentions meeting Mr and Mrs Alexander before stressing that he 'should be very glad to get in touch with you and your circle of writers'.⁷⁸⁰ Wen was the editor of *T'ien Hsia Monthly (THM)* and he had been a contributing editor for *The China Critic* before that. He had studied at King's College, Cambridge and had employed Harold Acton at Peking University. *THM*, which took the precaution of moving from Shanghai to Hong Kong in the summer of 1937 after coming to the attention of the Japanese authorities, featured creative works by Chinese writers in translation (and Chinese writers who wrote in English) as well as works by well-known foreign writers living in China from Emily Hahn to Randall Gould. Nevertheless, there is no response from Wen catalogued among the materials in Lehmann's archive so it is not possible to determine if he ever wrote back.⁷⁸¹ And, by the end of the same year, Lehmann had gained access to a new and plentiful source of Chinese stories, (albeit that they needed considerable editorial attention before they could be published) courtesy of Donald Allen and Ye Junjian, and so it is probable that his search for literary sources became less urgent. It

⁷⁷⁸ Typed letter from Lehmann to Chen (C/O Donald Kitchen) dated 30 December 1937, (HRC/Lehmann/Jack Chen). It is interesting to note Lehmann's repeated use of the word 'anxious' in letters to Chen and Snow among others, which suggests both the seriousness of his intention and an urgency about the project.

⁷⁷⁹ Typed letter from Lehmann to J. Alexander, 22 December 1938, (HRC/Lehmann/Alexander).

⁷⁸⁰ Typed Letter from Lehmann to Wen Yuan-ning 15 February 1939, (HRC/Lehmann/Wen Yuan-ning).

⁷⁸¹ The archive referred to is the HRC.

is significant to note that the letter which accompanied Ye and Allen's MSS of twenty stories, reveals that the translators considered the collection a 'sequel' to Edgar Snow's *Living China*, although just two authors appear in both volumes.⁷⁸² Allen's comment suggests that the success of Snow's short story collection had inspired not only Lehmann but also Chinese writers - or more precisely translators - working from inside China, as it was evidence to them of an emerging market for their wares.

Ye and Allen were crucial to the flow of Chinese stories that appeared in *NW* and *TPNW*, but even though lines of communication with Hong Kong remained open in the early part of 1940 the situation on the mainland was quite different. From China, the flow of correspondence became instead a source of stress and a complication. In November 1940, Lehmann wrote to Ye in Chongqing, 'I felt rather despairing about letters ever reaching you' and he writes in the same letter 'I do wish you could collaborate more actively at the moment, but I feel sure that you in Chungking will realise how the constant air raids slow things up.'⁷⁸³ Lehmann's evident frustration at the prospect of long-distance editing - editing that, as this chapter will subsequently examine, he clearly felt was needed - is just one of the reasons that he appears so reluctant to put any of the batch of stories in front of readers. When Ye moves to wartime Chongqing and Allen leaves Hong Kong for America this further frustrates the publishing process. Nor is Lehmann persuaded to rush to publication after receiving an article by Ye 'specially written for your magazine [*NW*]' charting the development of Chinese literature over the previous two decades.⁷⁸⁴ Lehmann responds to Ye's letter rejecting the essay which although 'very interesting does not really fit into the wartime New Writing, I'm afraid, as it's now gone back to mainly creative work'.⁷⁸⁵ Given that just over a year later, Lehmann publishes Acton's critical appraisal of contemporary Chinese literature, an additional explanation for rejecting Ye's essay, a rather dry

⁷⁸² Typed letter from Donald Allen to Lehmann on 10 November 1939, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁷⁸³ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar) on 1 November 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

⁷⁸⁴ Hand-written letter from Ye (C.C Yeh) to Lehmann, 12 February 1934, (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/C.C Yeh). This letter is almost certainly mis-dated as it refers to an article that was sent in 1939 and the letter was almost certainly sent in that year too.

⁷⁸⁵ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar), this letter is entirely undated but is probably from January 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

politico-historical trot through of the literary movements in China containing very little detail about specific authors or their work, is that it was unlikely to bring Chinese fiction to life for Lehmann's literary-minded readers.⁷⁸⁶ What then, emerges from the early correspondence between Ye, Allen and Lehmann is that without direct access to each other (or between Lehmann and the Chinese writers themselves), Lehmann is evidently unsure about how to proceed with the manuscript of 'People of China'. However, at the behest of Ye and Allen, Lehmann begins to tout the MSS around to other publishers as a complete work. Essentially what emerges from the correspondence between Lehmann, Ye and Allen around this time, is Lehmann's awareness that he lacked the skill or expertise to assess and edit the Chinese stories himself and that his network at that point in time did not include anyone who could assist him. In the absence of access to the Chinese writers themselves, or the translators, or anyone who could act as an intermediary, the project effectively stalled.

It was not until 4th April 1941 that Lehmann wrote to Ye, to say that 'Harold Acton and I have been working together on some of the stories which you sent me last year, and we are going to publish several of them as reviewed in *Folios of New Writing* and the *Penguin New Writing* as well'.⁷⁸⁷ The letter goes on to comment:

He [Acton] has also written an excellent article about modern Chinese writers which I shall also publish in *Folios*. It has taken a long time, I am afraid, but it was not until I had met Harold again after his return from your country that I felt confident enough to go ahead. He has such an excellent knowledge of China and is also a good writer himself, so proved the ideal collaborator.⁷⁸⁸

To Lehmann's great (but never publicly acknowledged) benefit, Acton had returned to Britain in 1939 an 'expert' in select areas of Chinese culture, including poetry and drama, specifically Peking Opera. He had also taught at Peking (Beijing) University and

⁷⁸⁶ The essay was instead published in *New Masses* in the USA on 30 January 1940, under 'Cicio Mar'. The author, C.Mar is described as the 'editor of *Chinese Writers Monthly*', p. 23.

⁷⁸⁷ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 4 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

had direct experience of the literary scene and access to a number of Chinese writers. By 1940 Acton had begun working on the batch of stories sent from China by Ye and Allen. Acton did not, however, work alone on the editing and re-translating of the Chinese stories. A letter from Acton to Lehmann six weeks earlier, commented:

Hsaio and I have been very carefully through them [the stories] ... We found a number of mistakes and have made several alterations. As the stories are taken from *Ti I Nien* (One Final Year) a Chinese anthology which is widely read, it is as well to avoid howlers.⁷⁸⁹

It is unclear whether Acton is accurate in his identification of the source of the stories. Most of them had appeared in literary journals in China although it is certainly possible they had also been collected into an anthology. As well as introducing Acton's co-editor for the first time, the Hsiao here referring to Xiao Qian, the letter also appears to justify Lehmann's decision to hold back on publication of the stories until an 'expert' eye had been cast over them and they had been checked for both quality of translation and expression. Correspondence between Acton and Xiao held at the Beinecke Library (Yale University) reveal that the pair first met in Peking (Beijing) and were both in contact with Julian Bell in China.⁷⁹⁰ Four days later, Lehmann responded to Acton: 'I have looked through the Chinese stories you have revised for my MSS, and I think you have improved them enormously. I am very grateful to you.'⁷⁹¹ In Acton and Xiao, Lehmann found a Chinese 'shadow committee' which enabled him to maintain his assiduously high benchmarks for quality of writing (no matter where it originated from around the world) and to trust in the quality of his translations.

8.3 Lehmann and Xiao Qian: Cross Cultural Literary Friendship

⁷⁸⁹ Handwritten letter from Acton to Lehmann, 19 February 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

⁷⁹⁰ Beinecke Library Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Harold Acton papers Series II. Correspondence, Request Box 3, Folder 188, Xiao Qian (1940-1941).

⁷⁹¹ Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton, 23 February 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

Shortly after congratulating Acton on his rendering of the Chinese stories, Lehmann wrote to request ‘the address of your nice Chinese friend? I should so like to see him again and discuss the Chinese writers’.⁷⁹² This is surely a reference to Xiao Qian, with whom (archived letters show) Lehmann struck up a lively correspondence around this time and invited to a series of parties and a night at the Café Royal, or ‘Royal Café’ as Xiao put it.⁷⁹³ In just a few months Xiao was absorbed into Lehmann’s outer network of literary friends and introduced to a great many of them. It was a friendship that would see Lehmann review Xiao’s books, smooth his entry into King’s College, Cambridge and aid in the selling of the French rights for his books.⁷⁹⁴ From the moment that Xiao was introduced to Lehmann, the connection opened up a world of trans-cultural possibilities for the Chinese writer. He wrote to Lehmann with an ambitious plan to resolve copyright issues that might aid in the circulation of European works of literature in China, and he praised *NW* (which he points out is read in China) for introducing relatively unknown British and European writers to Chinese (Anglophone) readers. Xiao also proposed uniting his ‘friends in China doing editing work’ with Lehmann for ‘future collaboration’.⁷⁹⁵ Such was Xiao’s optimism over the possibility of a literary alliance between China and Europe (in particular Britain) that he signs the letter off: ‘Post-war China and Post-war Britain will be boundlessly close and brotherly. So much we can do to substantiate this tie! When I saw the recent *New Writing*, I also saw a new horizon.’⁷⁹⁶ While his letter may suggest an almost naive optimism about the future for Britain and China, his enthusiasm is undoubtedly genuine.

⁷⁹² Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton, 4 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

⁷⁹³ Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, undated (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch’ien).

⁷⁹⁴ French rights contained in a typed letter from Lehmann to Helene Bokanowski in Paris, 14 December 1945, (HRC/Lehmann/Helene Bokanowski). Bokanowski worked for a French literary agency that was seeking to improve the standard of intellectual exchange between France and foreign countries (by acquiring the rights to and publishing the work of foreign authors) and she sought out Lehmann as a key contact in Britain. Lehmann passed Ye’s collection of stories to her and Xiao’s *The Spinners of Silk*.

⁷⁹⁵ Handwritten letter from Xiao to Lehmann, un-dated except for ‘Sunday’ but it is almost certainly 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao (Hsiao Chien)).

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

That Lehmann's publication [*New Writing* at this stage] and Lehmann himself held an exalted position of influence in the eyes of writers such as Xiao, one of a handful of contemporary Chinese writers seeking entry into the realm of English literature in this period, is evident in subsequent correspondence. In one letter Xiao implies that Lehmann is the centre, or at least a centre, of Chinese writing in Europe. Following a party with Lehmann and Acton, among others, Xiao outlines for Lehmann how Chinese writers perceive his magazine. The letter merits citing at length:

We in China truly admire the cosmopolitan spirit of *New Writing*. I am sure my friends at home appreciate beyond words the attention you constantly paid [sic] to the works of Chinese writers.

Outside of your valuable pages the fate of modern Chinese literature in Europe so far has not been very good. Sinologues refuse to regard China as anything other than a heap of bones and stones. I hope the tide will soon change. In point of fact, our present output is negligible. But they are faithful records of the agony, the paradox, the struggle of the new generation. At present I am just preparing a book which I hope will serve as a skeleton map of this field. I hope I can have it finished by next Xmas. Herewith I am enclosing a copy of the rough outline of its content. If it will ever be lucky enough to appear in print, I shall not fail to send you a copy for your kind criticism.⁷⁹⁷

Xiao's words here call to mind Lettice Cooper's declaration that for foreign writers, when they spoke of Lehmann, they spoke of England.⁷⁹⁸ What this letter also demonstrates is the extent to which Xiao believes, quite rightly, that Lehmann is part of a growing band of literary-minded editors in Britain who are actively engaged in helping readers to make the imaginative leap that will allow them to perceive of China as a living, breathing and

⁷⁹⁷ Handwritten letter from Xiao to Lehmann on 27 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao/Hsiao Ch'ien).

⁷⁹⁸ Cited in 8.1 of this chapter.

bleeding country, rather than 'a heap of bones and stones'. Essentially Xiao outlines Lehmann's unique position as one of the very few editors who could help to turn the tide of interest in Britain (and the West) away from ancient China and traditional Chinese literature and towards modern Chinese writing which confronted the realities of life for the hundreds of millions of Chinese people living in the country.

Xiao's enthusiasm for Lehmann and his publications surely derives from the belief that he has found a kindred spirit in the quest to bring modern China to the forefront of the Western imagination, a quest that would only gain greater momentum and urgency and a degree of official sanctioning as China's struggle against Japan gained greater global significance during the course of WWII. Evidently, Xiao was also carefully crafting a letter to an editor whom he hopes would publish, or at the very least review and critique, his writing, but he is perhaps not overstating the dearth of publications across Europe at the time that would have been willing to publish and promote modern Chinese literature in translation and is therefore underlining the value to Chinese writers of journals such as *NW*, *FONW* and later *TPNW*. Certainly there were very few magazine editors in 1941 who could at once appreciate and promote the work of Chinese writers and simultaneously bring them literally (in print) alongside the English writers, who previously they may only have admired from afar. For reasons that will be examined presently, Lehmann only ever published one piece of work by Xiao, a critical essay about Ibsen in China, even though a collection of Xiao's short stories were offered to Lehmann ahead of their publication in book form. In a letter to Lehmann shortly before his article about Ibsen was published in *Daylight* (1941), Xiao wrote to express his 'grateful amazement at the miracle' Acton and Lehmann had performed in their editing of his article. He signs the letter off: 'Long live the Daylight!'⁷⁹⁹

The correspondence between Lehmann, Acton and Xiao, strongly highlights not only the role that both Acton and Xiao played in bringing the Chinese stories to publication but also the nature of Lehmann's friendship with Xiao. As this chapter will consider, the support and encouragement that Lehmann extended to Xiao and his

⁷⁹⁹ Handwritten letter from Xiao to Lehmann, 22 October 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao/Hsiao Ch'ien).

career was very much a precursor to his treatment of Ye after he moved to Britain in 1944. That Lehmann extended similar support first to Xiao and then to Ye suggests a pattern of behaviour towards young, unknown foreign writers in whom he detected a seam of talent; one that went beyond merely publishing their stories. It can be argued that a similar pattern of behaviour was extended to the working-class British writers whose stories and reportage Lehmann began publishing in *NW* (and continued to publish or re-printed in *TPNW*). Presumably Lehmann's approach as editor would have been extended to other foreign writers whose work he published, particularly if he happened to have direct access to them in Britain. In the introduction to his anthology of short stories from WWII, Dan Davin (himself a writer published in *TPNW*) compared Lehman's literary temperament with that of his nearest rival, Cyril Connolly, editor of the journal *Horizon*.⁸⁰⁰ Davin notes:

Connolly judged the health of literature by his own pulse and temperature. Lehmann studied the charts of others, attended the clinics, as it were, and patrolled the wards. It was this wider sympathy and receptiveness that made *TPNW* the most truly representative of all wartime publications, the one most hospitable to talent from all over the world, whether already famous or still obscure.⁸⁰¹

Davin suggests that it was Lehmann's highly engaged style of editing, an approach that extended to readers as well as writers, that was one of the qualities that set him apart and ultimately provided a more inviting platform for foreign contributors whose work would inevitably require greater editorial input because of the complexities of translation as well as unfamiliar themes and literary style. Jeremy Lewis notes in his biography of Connolly notes that he would sometimes pass foreign writers to Lehmann and cites him

⁸⁰⁰ *Horizon* is frequently compared to *TPNW* as both literary publications had a similar lifespan and shared many writers.

⁸⁰¹ Davin (ed), *Short Stories from the Second World War*, p x.

commenting 'Perhaps you would like a Turk for something'.⁸⁰² Although Connolly did publish foreign writers, he was certainly less dedicated to seeking them out and nurturing their talent.

For both Xiao and Ye, Lehmann was an early but significant step on the publishing ladder in Britain. And, even though Lehmann was by no means the sole source of support to their careers, his endorsement, as this research will show, was absolutely key to their subsequent mutual success when they were seeking to have work published in the English language. That Lehmann's approach to Xiao, both as a writer and friend, has so many parallels with his supportive attitude towards Ye, makes their friendship worthy of a more detailed evaluation even though Xiao's work was never published in *TPNW*. It is worth noting that Lehmann's instinct towards writers such as Xiao and Ye was never purely altruistic. He hoped that a commitment would flow both ways and that as the writers' careers developed they would contribute loyally (but not necessarily exclusively) to his journals, although, as this chapter will demonstrate, Xiao never did.

By the time Xiao arrived in gloomy wartime Britain in 1939, to teach Chinese at the University of London's School of Oriental Studies (then relocated to Cambridge) and as a journalist for the Chongqing *Ta Kung Pao* (*Dagongbao* or *The Impartial*) a leading liberal newspaper which relocated during the war, his work had already appeared in print in Britain. As a former student of Edgar Snow's at Yanjing University, where Snow taught journalism, Xiao had assisted in the translation of contemporary Chinese fiction for *Living China*, as well as contributing his own story 'The Conversion' to the collection. Xiao's early writings had been featured in the Sunday literary supplement of the *Ta Kung Pao*, where he went on to succeed Shen Ts'ung-wen (Shen Congwen) as editor from 1934-37. Xiao was a friend of Ye's and the writers had both been in Hong Kong at the same time and Xiao wrote of his excitement at Ye's arrival in Britain in 1944.⁸⁰³ After moving to Britain, both Ye and Xiao were absorbed into elevated literary circles,

⁸⁰² Jeremy Lewis, *Cyril Connolly: A Life*, (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 337. First published by Jonathan Cape, 1997.

⁸⁰³ Typed letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann 5 April 1944, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

published work in English that was enthusiastically reviewed, went on to study (English literature) at King's College, Cambridge with Dadie Rylands and played highly active roles in educating the British public about the significance of China's war effort for the Allies.

As this research will demonstrate Lehmann's supporting and supportive role with regards to both Xiao and Ye extended beyond merely publishing their stories, although this is not to understate the significance for a relatively unknown writer of merely appearing in one of Lehmann's journals. Appearing in print in *NW* (and also in *TPNW* for Ye) proved to be valuable literary capital for both writers.

By the end of 1941, Xiao had penned an article 'The New China turns to Ibsen' for Lehmann's *Daylight* journal.⁸⁰⁴ Lehmann paid £4.4s for the piece which Xiao described with perhaps excessive modesty as 'a bad job of mine'.⁸⁰⁵ It was shortly after the article about Ibsen appeared that Xiao successfully negotiated a book deal with George Allen & Unwin for *Etching of a Tormented Age*, a survey of contemporary Chinese literature (published in 1942) and began contributing articles to the BBC's *Listener* magazine (1942).⁸⁰⁶ In other correspondence with Ye, Lehmann commented that he had reviewed Xiao's book (*Etching of a Tormented Age*) for a 'weekly'.⁸⁰⁷ Xiao quickly became an authority on the literature of his country, found a market for his own work and struck up a friendship with George Orwell at the BBC. Xiao's friendship with British writers and editors including E. M. Forster, Orwell, Kingsley Martin and Dorothy Woodman has been documented.⁸⁰⁸ However, what Lehmann's professional

⁸⁰⁴ Lehmann (ed), *Daylight*, p. 7.

<http://www.modernistmagazines.com/magazine_viewer.php?gallery_id=56>. *Daylight* was originally set up by Lehmann with Czech writers in exile. Only one volume of *Daylight* as a standalone journal was published before it was merged with *NW* to become *New Writing and Daylight* after 1941.

⁸⁰⁵ Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, 22 October 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

⁸⁰⁶ Hsiao Ch'ien's article 'China's Literary Revolution' appeared in *The Listener*, 11 June 1941, pp. 756 - 757.

⁸⁰⁷ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 5 March 1942, (or possibly 1943 as no date is provided), (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Chun-chan Yeh).

⁸⁰⁸ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, p. 178 (E.M Forster and Xiao Qian) and Xiao's memoir, *Traveller Without A Map* (refers to his friendships with Kingsley Martin and Dorothy Woodman). *The Independent* newspaper refers to Xiao's 'close friendship' with George Orwell, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/happy-ending-to-long-struggle-for-words-1439878.html>> 20.11.1994 (Last accessed 16.7.20)

endorsement, friendship, support, encouragement and criticism, might have meant to Xiao during the years he remained in Britain, has not been acknowledged and was never aired in the Chinese writer's memoir, *Traveller Without A Map*, (first published in English in 1990).⁸⁰⁹ Instead, Lehmann is mentioned only fleetingly as one of several people Xiao encountered at the meetings of the English PEN Club. Xiao describes Lehmann as 'one of the many British authors' he met through the organisation, not even accurately acknowledging that Lehmann was primarily an editor and publisher.⁸¹⁰ Yet the correspondence that flowed between Xiao and Lehmann from 1940 and throughout the war suggests that Lehmann's endorsement of Xiao's writing meant a great deal to him. Early on in their correspondence Xiao sent a rough outline of a book that he was planning and Lehmann met the plan with approval and encouragement.⁸¹¹ After completing a book of short stories in November 1943, (published as *The Spinners of Silk* in 1944) Xiao wrote to Lehmann, first to alert him of Stanley Unwin's interest in the book and also to comment that Lehmann had 'priority' should he like any of the stories. When Lehmann expressed an interest, but commented that Xiao had failed to give him enough time to publish any of the stories in his journal before they appeared in book form, Xiao wrote back from King's College, Cambridge:

I felt genuinely flattered when you wrote that my stories were just a bit too late for the Folios and the Penguin New Writing. For it never occurred to me that they would be good enough for either; do let me know what you feel about them in standard after (underlined) you have read them. I shall be more than content at that, for it will give me courage to bring out the book.

⁸⁰⁹ Hsiao Ch'ien (Xiao Qian) and Jeffrey C. Kinkley (tra.), *Traveller Without a Map* (London, Sydney, Auckland: Hutchinson, 1990).

⁸¹⁰ Xiao, *Traveller Without A Map*, p111. One possible explanation is because after 1944 Lehmann became so closely associated with Ye and back in China after 1949 Ye and Xiao fell out very badly and were never friends again. Hence Xiao did not want to be associated with Lehmann.

⁸¹¹ Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, 27 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

So, you see, I am not really conceited enough to be disappointed. I was going to say 'perhaps' I might hold up the proofs for the New Writing' how silly! Everything hinges on how they strike you really. I hope you will not hesitate to thrash me as a friend. Do say 'that isn't done' or 'this is cheap', for I still can save my face by saying, I did them ten years ago, though I know that I had [sic] hardly grown since then.⁸¹²

Xiao here evidently placed great emphasis on Lehmann's opinion by stressing the extent to which Lehmann's judgement of his work is the only one that matters to him. For Lehmann, however, this was the moment when the endorsement and support that he had given to Xiao failed to pay off in ways that he had evidently hoped for. In a rare moment of anger expressed in his correspondence with Xiao, Lehmann states that he is 'peeved' that Xiao failed to pass his stories to Lehmann in a timely manner that would have enabled him to publish them in any of his journals.⁸¹³ Despite the friction between the two men, they continued to correspond and Xiao introduced Lehmann to George Yeh (at the Chinese Ministry of Information) in London and invited him to other events relating to China. In a subsequent letter, Xiao apologised profusely to Lehmann for tracking him down at the office of the *Geographical Magazine* (where Lehmann worked part-time as an advisory editor) because he was 'anxious to see' him again, presumably because Xiao was still intent on getting Lehmann's critical response to his work.⁸¹⁴ Then, rather dejectedly, Xiao wrote to Lehmann to say that he would send him a copy of the stories when it came out 'so that I can hope to hear your opinion about them'.⁸¹⁵ By 1942, Xiao had the backing of a major publisher and was one of the foremost lecturers for the CCC.

8. 4 Modern Chinese Literature so Little Known in Literary Circles

⁸¹² Typed letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, 19 November 1943, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien)

⁸¹³ Typed letter from Lehmann to Xiao Qian 17 November 1943, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

⁸¹⁴ Hand-written Letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, 9 December 1943, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

⁸¹⁵ Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian to Lehmann, 9 December 1943, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

It was Xiao's article in *New Writing* that first alerted Eric Blair (better known by his pen name George Orwell) to Xiao's status as a mouthpiece for modern Chinese literature. Orwell, at that time was employed as a talks producer for the BBC's Eastern service, supervising cultural broadcasts to India to counter propaganda from Nazi Germany designed to undermine Imperial links. In a letter sent to Xiao, Orwell invited him to become a speaker, while admitting:

I delayed writing to thank you for the copy you sent me of *Etching of a Tormented Age* until I should read it. It interested me very much, it also has brought home to me how complete my ignorance of modern Chinese literature is. I wonder if you would agree to do two talks for us on this subject about the end of April ... We are having a series of talks on contemporary literature and we are starting off with six talks on English literature, followed by four on Russian and two on Chinese.⁸¹⁶

Evidently, by inviting Xiao to contribute, Orwell was seeking ways to dispel his ignorance and it may be assumed that of his many thousands of listeners. In a subsequent letter, responding to Xiao and outlining the preferred content of his talks, Orwell (whose short story set in Burma appeared in the first volume of *NW*) wrote: 'Yes, I have seen certain Chinese stories in *New Writing* and they were what first gave me the idea for these talks'.⁸¹⁷ Here it is possible to witness the direct dissemination of ideas about China through Lehmann's journals. For an influential thinker and writer such as Orwell, the right idea, in the right kind of journal, was extremely enticing. And *NW* (referring to *Folios of New Writing* here) was just such a journal. Orwell was not alone as a fêted man of British letters who confessed to a degree of ignorance in relation to modern China in the 1940s. In 1943, E. M. Forster too, admitted to Xiao that China was

⁸¹⁶ Peter Davison, Ian Angus and Sheila Davison (eds) *All Propaganda is Lies 1941 - 1942*, in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, Volume 13 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998) p. 223. This letter is dated 13 March 1942.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235. This letter is dated 19 March 1942.

a 'subject beyond his scope' for the purposes of a new novel.⁸¹⁸ Xiao and Forster corresponded extensively before Xiao left Britain in 1944, although only a small portion of the letters have survived. Despite Xiao's attempts to persuade Forster to make China the subject of a new novel, Forster responded in a letter to Xiao that he was 'too old to 'take on' China or write *A Passage to China* as Xiao and others had urged him to do.'⁸¹⁹ Another literary figure whose understanding of China, in particular Chinese philosophy, is presented as highly circumscribed is Cyril Connolly, Lehmann's friendly rival. Despite alighting on a Chinese metaphor to explain what he saw as the two camps of English writers since the 1920s in his 1938 critique of English literature, *Enemies of Promise* (one camp were the 'mandarin style' writers and the other camp wrote in 'the new vernacular' style) Ye Junjian's Chinese memoir suggested that Connolly's ideas about China were highly 'subjective'.⁸²⁰ Ye also noted that Connolly's interpretation of Lao Tzu's (or Lao Zi) Tao de Ching (Daode Jing, 道德经) which he had read in translation, 'changed the nature of "Tao" (or dao, the way)'.⁸²¹ Ye commented: 'It was not Lao Tzu's "Tao" but his [Connolly's] own creation ... but it was appealing and fresh to me and I almost became an admirer'.⁸²² Connolly's appropriation of Chinese literary history in his work suggests an awareness and interest in the literary development in the country since 1912 but it ultimately fails to reflect any genuine knowledge or understanding about the source.

Evidently knowledge about China, particularly modern China and its literature, remained patchy in British literary circles. Lehmann at least had the sense to engage the help of Acton and Xiao, to avoid the kinds of accusations that could have been levelled against Connolly. The relatively limited understanding of modern Chinese literature among general readers explains, at least partly, why during the 1930s and

⁸¹⁸ Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*, pp. 176 - 177.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid p. 177. Xiao hoped that Forster would apply his humane and understanding approach to China and sought to persuade him of the need for such a novel.

⁸²⁰ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, p. 485. Ye's memoir also recalls Harold Acton's merciless impersonations of Cyril Connolly speaking in garbled French even in the company of French speakers who were utterly fluent in English (Ibid).

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Ibid.

1940s, introductions to the genre (by Acton, Wales, Payne Yuan et al) were so vital to the dissemination of Chinese stories. This is not to undermine the very considerable contribution that academics such as I.A Richards and William Empson and a great many writers and artists in Britain and China who had been engaged in trans-cultural flows of creative, philosophical and academic ideas since the early twentieth century had made to Sino-Western understanding and appreciation, but merely to highlight that knowledge about modern Chinese literature and contemporary China remained relatively limited outside of a small body of people in 1940s Britain (even as demand for such literature increased as the following subsection of this thesis (8.5) will consider.

Overall what an analysis of the correspondence between Acton, Xiao, and Lehmann reveals is a strengthening of Lehmann's network of contacts relating to China to the point that he is able to commission, edit and publish short stories from the country with some degree of confidence. When Xiao departed Britain in 1944 to report on the war in Western Europe, Ye arrived from China and to a great extent took up the baton from Xiao (although Ye was never called on to translate for Lehmann) and benefitted from a very similar form of endorsement by Lehmann that went beyond merely publishing Ye's short stories.

Lehmann's correspondence with a variety of would-be and actual Chinese writers, or literary 'experts', reveals that he was actively seeking to build up a network of China sources from 1937 onwards and that Lehmann was in many ways as valuable to some of them as they were to him for their careers and in the cause to elicit greater sympathy and understanding for China and its people in the Anglophone West. While the main protagonists of Lehmann's China network are undoubtedly Acton, Xiao, Allen (Donald) and Ye, there were a great many other editors, publishers and stalwarts of wartime literary London with whom Lehmann corresponded and discussed matters relating to modern Chinese literature, including: Kingsley Martin, Dorothy Woodman (who also sent Lehmann copies of *China at War* and the odd Chinese story for possible inclusion in *TPNW*), Victor Gollancz, Robert Herring (editor of *Life and Letters Today*), Chinese students passing through Oxford or Cambridge universities, diplomats such as

Archibald Clark-Kerr and George Yeh as well as a wider group of Chinese writers and artists. The introduction to George Yeh (George Kung-chao Yeh, also known as Yeh Kung-chao and Ye Gongchao, 葉公超) then at the Chinese Ministry of Information and later the Minister of Foreign Affairs, suggests Lehmann's proximity, at times, to China's wartime propaganda machine and that modern (or any) literature about China was the subject of great official interest and monitoring. However Yeh (George) had a particular interest in literature, having been educated in the US and UK (at Cambridge University) and having taught English literature at Beijing's Tsinghua University. Yeh (George) was already linked to Penguin Books when he met Lehmann and was involved in the publication of the Puffin picture book, *The Story of China*, (1945) which sought to convey ideas about China to a younger readership.⁸²³

8.5 Chinese Stories Become 'Rather the Vogue'

A useful marker when considering the newness of modern Chinese literature to the Anglophone West is the work that is considered to be 'the first contemporary Chinese novel to be translated into English', namely *Village in August*, the debut novel by Hsiao Chün (Xiao Jun or Tien Chun 1907-1988).⁸²⁴ This account of a band of fighters engaged in China's struggle against Japanese invaders in the mountainous north, describes guerrilla fighting and Japanese atrocities and was the first nationally successful Communist novel to embody the theme of Japanese resistance. It was translated by Evan King (who several years later made the first, and what would become the most controversial translation of Lao She's *Rickshaw Boy*) and featured an introduction by Edgar Snow. It was published in 1942 (the original Chinese version had been published in 1935) by Smith & Durrell in New York and in the same year by Collins in London. King, however, was not the only, nor was he necessarily the first, translator of Hsiao Chün's landmark work of leftist wartime fiction. In a typed letter from Hong Kong to John

⁸²³ Tsui Chi and Carolin Jackson (illustrations), *The Story of China, The Story of China* (West Drayton, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1945). The editor of the Puffin series was Noel Carrington who went on to publish a collection of modern Chinese short stories. Noel Carrington was a good friend of the writer Chiang Yee.

⁸²⁴ Fairbank and Crispin (eds), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 13, Part 2*, p. 455.

Lehmann in November 1939, Donald Allen commented: 'We [Allen and Ye] are now working on a translation of the best Chinese novel of recent years - it deals with the conditions and resistance of the peasants in Manchuria.'⁸²⁵ In case of any doubt over the precise identity of the novel, in a letter to Lehmann a month later, Allen names the novel as 'August Village' and adds: 'Work on the latter [the novel] is progressing well and we hope to have it published in England and American by spring.'⁸²⁶ Evidently, for reasons that remain unclear, their translation was never published and instead King's version earns the distinction. Nonetheless, Allen's letters to Lehmann enable this research to position him and Ye as unacknowledged frontrunners in a relatively new quest to shift perceptions about China and the Chinese people in the imagination of Western readers via the voices of the country's own people as expressed in its modern literature. In the early years of WWII, existence on that literary frontier in China (or Hong Kong) was tough and success, as Allen and Ye hoped to kindle a market that barely existed and enthuse readers who were almost entirely ignorant of the new literature, proved elusive at the start. In 1945, Evan King saw fit to change the conclusion and invent characters for an unauthorised version of Lao She's novel to increase its appeal to a Western readership. His version of *Rickshaw Boy* was a success although Evan's translation of *Village in August* was more faithful to the original.⁸²⁷

Edgar Snow's anthology of contemporary Chinese short stories was one of a handful of similar collections that had already been published prior to 1939, when Ye and Allen sent the MSS of twenty Chinese stories to Lehmann for his consideration (at the Hogarth Press) or his help in their search for another British publisher. In a letter Ye and Allen suggest 'Harrap' or 'Gollancz' as possible alternatives. Yet, when Lehmann, true to his word, approached two major British publishers in 1940 (both were left-leaning

⁸²⁵ Typed letter from Allen (Donald) to Lehmann, 10 November 1939, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁸²⁶ Typed letter from Allen (Donald) to Lehmann, 29 December 1939, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁸²⁷ C. T. Hsia 'Communist Fiction' in *A History of Chinese Fiction 1917-1957*, Third Edition, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 273. Hsia notes, that *Village in August*, was launched by its American publishers in 1942 as 'China's Great War Novel' and 'with a warm endorsement by Edgar Snow; the translation was by Evan King, who did a fairly accurate job except for his deliberate editing of a few passages whose connotations of international Communism might have shocked the American public'.

and, Lehmann may well have thought, would have been open to publishing literature from China) the MSS was roundly rejected. The contents of one (un-dated) telegram that must have been sent to Ye: 'Regret Penguin decline book.'⁸²⁸ Then, in March 1940, Lehmann receives a letter from Victor Gollancz in which he states: 'My dear L ... I'm afraid that I cannot see much possibility of selling more than a very few hundred of People of China'.⁸²⁹ Evidently a stand alone anthology of short stories by Chinese writers about the people (and frequently the common people) fighting China's war of resistance, translated perhaps somewhat imperfectly, remained a hard sell in these early years of WWII, even to a British publisher such as Gollancz known for his left-wing political sympathies and who had already published *Red Star Over China* and Agnes Smedley's *China Fights Back* through the Left Book Club. In his monograph on art and commerce in the British short story (1880-1950), Dean Baldwin cites Victor Gollancz discussing the generally poor sales of short story collections in Britain in the mid 1930s.⁸³⁰ In a letter, Gollancz commented: 'We reckon that short stories sell between a quarter and a sixth of an established author's novels.'⁸³¹ Evidently the boom in wartime short stories had yet to emerge.

That several of the Chinese stories from 'People of China' were published in *NW*, *FONW* and later *TPNW* (following considerable improvement to the translations) is testament to Lehmann's determination to print stories from China. Even so, two years after the rejection letters from Penguin Books and Victor Gollancz, Lehmann wrote to Allen (Donald) to update him about the publication history of the stories from 'People of China' and comments:

⁸²⁸ Telegram from Lehmann to Ye, undated and C/O *Literature Monthly* in Hong Kong. The date is almost certainly the end of 1939 or early 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/CCYeh/Cicio Mar).

⁸²⁹ Letter from Gollancz to Lehman, 18 March 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Gollancz).

⁸³⁰ Dean Baldwin, *Art and Commerce in the British Short Story 1880 - 1950* (London and Vermont: Pickering & Chatto, 2013) p. 101.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

The Chinese over here are anxious to have a volume of Chinese stories from New Writing published in London. It seems a little doubtful whether this will be possible, but I will let you know if there are developments.⁸³²

When Lehmann penned his letter to Allen in 1942, the market for Chinese stories in Britain (short or long) remained patchy, inconsistent and unpredictable. As memoirs of writers such as Chiang Yee and Ye who published fiction in English in the 1940s, (hence without the added hurdle of translation) testify, the market was rarely easy to navigate or anticipate.⁸³³ However, as the course of World War II shifted and particularly after America and Britain declared war against Japan, perceptions of China and Chinese people in Britain shifted. As Da Zheng has noted with reference to Chinese stories, the course of war influenced people's reading habits: 'When war unfolded in various parts of the world, readers were attracted to great writers in foreign lands for knowledge and understanding of those places'.⁸³⁴ This accounted equally for the higher demand of books about China by foreign writers such as those offered in the Penguin Specials series of short polemical works, and many of Gollancz's LBC titles. Other forces in Britain were also at work on perceptions of China, not least highly vociferous and influential organisations such as the CCC which had been pressing the British Government to aid China since shortly after the outbreak of the Second Sino Japanese War. Equally, from 1937 onwards, a number of magazines and journals (other than Lehmann's several *NW* periodicals) featured and/or reviewed modern Chinese literature including: *The New Statesman & Nation*, the *TLS*, *The Listener*, *Life & Letters Today*, *Time & Tide*, *Left Review*, *Reader's Digest*, as well as shorter-lived publications such as *Asian Horizon*. During this period (spanning roughly a decade from 1937) several of the group of well-acquainted Chinese artists and writers who had been living in Britain

⁸³² Typed letter from Lehmann to Allen (Donald) 3 June 1942, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁸³³ Zheng, *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*, preface xvii, notes that Chiang Yee (who became a top-selling author for Methuen) found 'the literary market in which he ventured, competed and eventually survived was unfamiliar, unpredictable, suspicious and occasionally hostile'. As this thesis has noted, Ye Junjian also expressed the difficulty that he had finding a suitable publisher for his first short story collections in 1946 (Chapter 7.6).

⁸³⁴ Zheng, *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*, p. 127.

developed a new and (at times even prosperous) market for their wares.

Correspondence in the Penguin Books archive, for example suggests that Chiang Yee, was in such demand for his illustrations that he was forced to take out an advertisement in *the Times* newspaper to stop further approaches for his work.⁸³⁵ While not without some difficulty, both Xiao and Ye successfully published short story collections. Tsui Chi, the writer and translator authored a book about Chinese civilization and was subsequently invited to write the history of China for Puffin readers.⁸³⁶ Kenneth Lo found an early taste of literary recognition after appearing in print in *TPNW* as well as in newspapers. This was a period when Chinese writers such as Ye, Xiao and Jiang (Yi), Lo and fostered friendships with the literary elite including E. M. Forster, George Orwell, J. B. Priestley, John Hayward and (prior to her death) Virginia Woolf. Evidently the presence of Chinese artists and writers in Britain gave editors greater access to their work making the process to publication easier. By publishing Chinese stories in *TPNW*, and by supporting the Chinese writers to whom he had access, Lehmann was certainly part of the movement to bring Chinese stories, whether modern Chinese literature or Anglophone Chinese literature more into the mainstream in Britain.

In a letter to Lehmann from Dorothy Woodman from the CCC in September 1944, thanking him for the contribution to the China fund (the proceeds from Acton and Xiao's share of the translation fee for several Chinese stories which they suggested be donated to the CCC) she commented that China stories are 'rather the vogue' at the moment.⁸³⁷ Woodman, through her literary connections (her partner Kingsley Martin was the editor of *The New Statesman & Nation* and she was a friend to many of the Chinese writers and artists who both lived and passed through Britain in the 1930s and 1940s), was in a position to know. Woodman had also been involved in the successful

⁸³⁵ Letter from Chiang Yee to Noel Carrington (Penguin Books archive, Bristol University, author files DM1107/PP15 and PP36).

⁸³⁶ Tsui Chi (and Carolin Jackson, illustrator), *The Story of China*. Other attempts to encourage younger readers to discover more about China included a short story competition for ages 7-17 sponsored by the P.E.N Club. An advertisement in *Time & Tide*, 23 October 1943 (p. 866) commented: 'The object is to bring our children into closer awareness of our Chinese Ally, whose country, history, traditions and characteristics are almost unknown to the younger generation.'

⁸³⁷ Typed letter from Woodman to Lehmann, 20 September 1944 (HRC/Lehmann/CC/Dorothy Woodman).

discussions with Allen Lane and Noel Carrington at Penguin Books about the publication of *The Story of China*. The following year, Noel Carrington published a collection of *Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* (including ‘Half A Cartload of Straw Short’ under the new title ‘The Half-baked’ as well as stories by Zhang Tianyi, Lu Xun, and Shen Congwen) edited and translated by Yuan Chia-hua and Robert Payne under the Transatlantic Arts imprint, a small publishing venture set up to further Anglo-American goodwill.⁸³⁸ This suggests that publishing a collection of Chinese stories in Britain, which had been viewed as a venture almost certainly doomed to failure by Gollancz and Allen Lane in 1940 was by 1946, quite viable. By 1948, Dorothy Woodman introduced Ye to readers of the inaugural issue of her *Asian Horizons* magazine as ‘well known in this country as the author of “The Ignorant and the Forgotten” and “Mountain Village” which suggests that towards the end of the decade Ye was not merely published but also popular.’⁸³⁹ Evidently ‘the vogue’ had persuaded Woodman that there was a gap in the market for a magazine devoted to Asian affairs and culture. Overall, this publishing history appears to vindicate Woodman’s comment that the stories of China had become ‘the vogue’ towards the end of WWII. Certainly, this pocket of flourishing publishing activity is evidence that China’s modern literature (in translation and via Anglophone Chinese writing) had attained a degree of popularity by the end of the war and that several of the Chinese writers - had they chosen to remain in Britain instead of returning to China - had every opportunity to make successful careers in this country. And in a broader sense, this evidence runs counter to the narrative that modern Chinese literature has always been neglected by readers in Britain (and the West) which is considered in the concluding remarks to this thesis (9.1).

8.6 Lehmann Shaping and Cutting Chinese Short Stories

If, as Woodman suggested British publishers were more than ever inclined to publish stories from and about China in the mid-to-late 1940s and British readers were

⁸³⁸ This was the same collection noted by Henry Reed for its ‘valuable introduction’ to the country’s literature (Chapter 6.2 of this thesis).

⁸³⁹ Dorothy Woodman (ed) *Asian Horizon*, Volume 1, no.1, Spring 1948.

demanding them, there nonetheless remains a considerable amount of Chinese literature - or aspiring literature - including short stories, poems, and plays, that never found a readership. As this chapter will subsequently consider Lehmann alone rejected a significant amount of material by Chinese writers, which suggests that if 'the vogue' was in swing by 1944, the hurdles to publication were still considerable.

In order to examine in more detail the instincts that guided Lehmann's selections and rejections in terms of Chinese writing there is no better resource than his own editorial comments. Beyond the published material, the prefatory entries and the critical surveys that Lehmann published either under his own name or under a pseudonym, his approach to the Chinese material that crossed his desk can be deduced from the correspondence he kept with authors and editors and the notes that Lehmann himself or his secretary Barbara Cooper scrawled in pencil before formal acceptance or rejection letters were formulated. Through these editorial asides as well as the formal letters, it is possible to build up an impression of the work that went into shaping the journal in terms of its China output.

8.6 a) Lehmann's Standards for Chinese Writing

A crucial starting point when seeking to evaluate Lehmann's approach to Chinese (and potentially other foreign) writing is the acknowledgement that literary standards for foreign writers (either those whose work was translated or those from distant parts of the world that Lehmann's readers would have been less familiar with) compared with all other writers in Lehmann's journals were not necessarily the same. Evidence of this imbalance is supplied in correspondence between Lehmann and Acton in the midst of World War II when Acton was serving as a Pilot-Officer in the Royal Air Force. In the letter, Lehmann accepts a story written by Acton (presumably 'The Monopolist' which was eventually published in *TPWN* 22 in December 1944) but rejects a Chinese story than Acton had presumably either helped to translate or helped to edit. Of the Chinese story, Lehmann wrote:

I find it rather too simple and slight for me to use in New Writing, the other Chinese stories had such strength and I think contributions from China and India need to be rather strong to stand out in a publication like NW. In an anthology with lots of others it would be different.⁸⁴⁰

What Lehmann suggests here is that the bar for contributions from China and India is somewhat higher than for those from, to borrow a phrase from Casanova, better 'endowed' (literarily speaking) nations. Lehmann's words here evoke the forces that Casanova describes in *The World Republic of Letters* when the literature of a 'periphery' language begins to jostle up against the literature (and by necessity language) of the centre. By directly comparing literary works of China (and India) with presumably British and European works, Lehmann acknowledges an imbalance in the literary playing field which suggests that periphery languages must work harder (hence the conditions of 'rivalry and competition' noted by Casanova) and which is skewed in favour of the centre. However, as this and Lehmann's other letters suggest, his decision not to publish certain materials in his journals is frequently taken in order to ensure the wider dissemination and appreciation of modern Chinese literature across his Anglophone readership. As the following subsection of this thesis will show, at the very least, Lehmann sought not to put modern Chinese literature 'at a disadvantage' via the works that he published in his journals. This then suggests that while Lehmann acknowledged the skewed world pitch, he sought, via his journal to make it appear to readers more even than it actually was.

8.6 b) Lehmann and 'That Special Chinese Quality'

In Chapter 1 (1.2), this thesis noted Lehmann's open-minded and questioning approach to China and Chinese writing as expressed in a letter to Donald Allen in 1940. That same letter concluded with the admission that Lehmann did not 'quite know why'

⁸⁴⁰ Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton, 21 January, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton). No year is supplied on the original but I would suggest 1942 as it appears to be a response to Acton's letter to Lehmann dated Sunday, January 1942.

contemporary stories from the country appealed to him.⁸⁴¹ What Lehmann was surely alluding to was that his limited experience of the literature of contemporary China precluded him from being able to define why he liked or did not like the substance or form of it. Lehmann certainly never considered himself an expert on China or Chinese literature. As previous chapters have examined, he relied instead on ‘bridges’ such as Acton and Xiao Qian and to a lesser extent Donald Allen in the publishing process. Moreover, as this chapter will demonstrate, the scribbled notes and correspondence from Lehmann, suggest that as an editor he had a far stronger sense of what he did not like than precisely what he did in terms of the stories from modern China.

With this in mind, and by considering the many MSS (of prose, poetry and more) from China that Lehmann rejected, it is possible to garner a sense of what (in terms of Chinese writing) Lehmann sought to keep out of his journals. As this research has previously examined, Lehmann (in his role at Hogarth Press) was among a handful of publishers who declined to print the MSS of wartime short stories by Chinese writers ‘People of China’ (in its entirety as a collection) from 1939 onwards.⁸⁴² When he wrote to Ye and Allen in January 1940 to explain his decision to select a handful of what he considered to be the best stories for publication (rejecting the majority of the others and any idea that he would publish the MSS as a complete body of work in Britain), he stated:

In general, I am inclined to feel that the stories are at a disadvantage in England because they are written so close to your great struggle over there. The intelligent English public which reads *New Writing* is, as you know, very soon bored with anything that smacks of propaganda, even in a good cause; and many of these stories which I feel sure are excellent when read by people taking part in China’s war, would seem too thin and too simple to rank as literature over

⁸⁴¹ Typed letter from Allen to Lehmann, 11 January 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁸⁴² Lehmann was the general manager and a part-owner of The Hogarth Press 1938-1946. In early 1946 he launched his own publishing house, John Lehmann Ltd.

here. I hope you won't mind my saying that frankly. I think it might even be a disservice to the obviously very lively movement which is growing up in China to publish the collection as it stands [in the whole].⁸⁴³

Evidently as a unified body of work, the twenty Chinese stories in translation read too much like propaganda. As chapters 4 and 7 have identified, this is hardly surprising given that the stories were sent by one translator who was working covertly for the CCP (Allen) and the other who was, or had recently been, an employee of the united front propaganda office and who was heavily engaged with the publication of war of resistance literature in English (Ye). However, it could equally be inferred from Lehmann's comment that the stories he did eventually publish were those least like propaganda. Several of the stories that Lehmann ultimately published are after all considered among the finest wartime short stories from China - albeit that Acton and Xiao evidently steered Lehmann's choices. Xiao had certainly occupied a seat of some authority in Chinese literary circles as the editor of *Ta Kung Pao* newspapers' literary section as well as publishing his own works and translating the works of other writers. After Lehmann signalled that he had a mind not to publish Ye and Allen's stories from China, he went on to acknowledge explicitly that the desired effect of publishing China stories in his journals was to elicit a new or renewed sympathy for China in his readers. Lehmann comments: 'The more a story can stand on its own legs as literature, apart from its values in connection with the war, the more likely it is to please English readers - and therefore increase sympathy for China.'⁸⁴⁴ This letter emphasises the fine line that Lehmann felt he should tread as the wartime editor of literary journals, between seeking out work that was likely to increase sympathy for China (or at least work that could demonstrate sufficient literary quality to disguise its political intent) and keeping propaganda out of his pages. It is worth noting that Lehmann's instinct for this fine line had been honed and sharpened to good effect in the previous decade when literature and politics and propaganda had become so strongly entwined. Ultimately, though, it is

⁸⁴³ Typed letter from Lehmann to Allen (Donald) 11 January 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

a story's literary qualities that he stresses will determine its success or failure in the eyes of his readers.

When Lehmann was selecting stories from Ye and Allen's first batch of twenty, he comments in a letter to Acton that he is going to make 'small cuts' where 'a slightly priggish note creeps in about the National War, which would grate on English ears'.⁸⁴⁵ In the same letter, he rejects a story that is 'too moral and lacks that special Chinese quality that I like so much about the others'.⁸⁴⁶ Here, Lehmann makes the first of many references in his correspondence about modern Chinese literature, to the 'special Chinese quality' that is never fully defined by him and which is evidently highly subjective but which may be approximated to those stories to which he ascribes a more literary and therefore more lasting, value.

As well as seeking a second translator for the stories by Chinese writers that Ye and Allen sent to Lehmann from Hong Kong, which suggests that the material was not immediately suitable for him to publish, Lehmann rejected several of Ye's own stories, including one strongly linked to the war against Japan and set in Manchuria. After reading 'Manchurian Nights' about a rag-tag group of peasants navigating war-torn China and evading Japanese guerillas, Lehmann commented:

I think you showed me before in an earlier version. As it stands I think it is moving and effective. I would be glad to use it. But it needs a certain amount of re-writing, as the English idiom isn't always quite correct.⁸⁴⁷

Even though the tale certainly qualifies as wartime literature, it is the expression that evidently puts Lehmann off. This suggests that Ye's early attempts to write stories in English were not always wholly successful. Lehmann is even more reluctant to publish 'Winter Fantasy' (a love story set in traditional China), which he comments is a 'very difficult one for me to publish in New Writing' undoubtedly because it is not sufficiently

⁸⁴⁵ Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton, 23 February 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁷ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 17 November 1944, (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh).

contemporary and it is too much like a romance in content.⁸⁴⁸ Neither of these two stories ultimately appeared in *TPNW*. A scribbled note on the back of Lehmann's typed letter to Ye rejecting 'Winter Fantasy' expresses Lehman's editorial dilemma, that the stories' unfamiliar 'idiom and setting' makes them 'difficult to judge' although they are both deemed to be 'rather interesting' especially *Manchurian Nights* and the 'impression of the desolation of the Chinese people under the Japanese oppression'.⁸⁴⁹ Lehmann's comments may equally belie his preference for stories which expose the suffering of the people. Lehmann also rejects Ye's story 'Departure' in 1948 and a short story sent in April 1941 that Ye describes as 'romantic' and more influenced by works from the nineteenth century which immediately indicates why it would not have appealed to Lehmann for *TPNW*.⁸⁵⁰

Other stories that passed across Lehmann's desk include two by Xiao in the winter of 1944. Presumably having overcome his disappointment at Xiao's failure to offer up a collection of stories in a timely way for publication in *TPNW*, Lehmann subsequently appears to accept a fresh story for inclusion in the magazine. He wrote:

[I] can't make up my mind ... [there is] something very attractive about both, but equally there is something rather disappointing. From the point of view of an English audience ... the better of the two ... is the one about the Captain. It is not a bit complimentary to the Chinese soldier or the way China runs its war ... but if you don't mind that I would like to keep for publication in NW.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid. Handwritten note in pencil attached to Lehmann's letter (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh).

Both stories are published in Ye's collection *The Ignorant and The Forgotten* (1946). Ye's memoir comments that 'Winter Rhapsody' (a re-worked title of 'Winter Fantasy') first appeared in Britain in Readers Digest as part of a Christmas special. Ye comments he was asked to provide 'a love story'. Among those who worked on the story to make it suitable for publication were John Hayward, who from 1946-57 would share a flat with T. S. Eliot and become the self-styled Keeper of Eliot's archive.

⁸⁵⁰ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 6 April 1948, (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh) and Typed letter from Ye (Yeh) to Lehmann, 20 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh).

⁸⁵¹ Typed letter from Lehmann to Xiao Qian, 15 December 1944, (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

This letter is evidence of Lehmann's bias towards stories that would elicit sympathy for China and which were broadly in support of the country's war effort. Perhaps the fact that the story was never published in *TPNW* can be explained by Lehmann's noted antipathy towards stories that painted the common people (or in Britain the working classes) in a negative light. These letters also suggest that even stories by Chinese writers which Lehmann liked and accepted for publication, sometimes never appear in his journals. If Lehmann had more materials than he was able to publish from Chinese writers this appears to endorse Woodman's comment about 'the vogue'.

A number of other submissions from Chinese writers and poets were turned down by Lehmann, his archived correspondence shows. In response to a collection of poems from Liu Wu Chi (Liu Wuji, 1907-2002) whom Ye introduced to Lehmann, the editor wrote: 'I'm afraid that I didn't feel that in their English version they were entirely successful. I am so sorry. What a nuisance this translation business is. I am sure it is the same trouble that makes the story you sent me by Hsiang Yi seem rather weak.'⁸⁵²

Then, in September 1944, a story by a 'Mr Yu' passed to Lehmann by Woodman got rejected. A hand-scrawled message on the original letter comments: 'I was moved by this story of a Chinese couples hospitality to a starving foreigner ... but the translations needs revising: there are one or two incoherent sentences.'⁸⁵³

After the war, Lehmann rejected a further three stories by Ye, including ones referred to in a hand-scrawled note as the Chinese writer's 'Master the Cosmopolitan Gentleman' series.⁸⁵⁴ The note comments that the stories 'have not the charm of Three Brothers'.⁸⁵⁵ It was around this time that Lehmann began regularly to comment on the increasing intervals of *TPNW*'s publication and his secretary, Barbara Cooper, sent Ye notice that his story was being held over for a subsequent volume of the magazine, after

⁸⁵² Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 5 March 1942, (HRC/Lehmann/CCY).

⁸⁵³ Note scribbled on a typed letter from Woodman to Lehmann, 20 September 1944, (HRC/Lehmann/CCC/Dorothy Woodman).

⁸⁵⁴ Handwritten note on a typed letter from Barbara Cooper (Lehmann's secretary) to Ye, 11 April 1948 (HRC/Lehmann/C. C. Yeh).

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

pagination has been reduced.⁸⁵⁶ Already, this signals that the window of opportunity for Ye and other Chinese writers to publish works in *TPNW* had begun to close.

In order to be published by Lehmann as a writer - particularly for relatively unknown authors - they had to be willing to be rejected and or very actively edited. These standards were applied as much to foreign writers as to British ones (such as William Sansom for example) although Lehmann's knowledge of European, British writers put him on much firmer ground in his appreciation.⁸⁵⁷ Even writers whose stories had already been published by Lehmann and in whom he evidently detected talent, saw their subsequent contributions rejected, including stories by Ye, Xiao and Lo and a number of translations that Acton and Xiao had worked on.

Correspondence shows that Lehmann had a strong sense of the features of a story most likely to put him off. His list of grounds for heavily editing or axing stories from China includes contributions that are: 'too priggish', 'too light', 'too moral', 'too much war', 'too negative about the war effort', 'too weak' or 'not strong enough'. By contrast, when Lehmann is minded to publish Chinese stories, he tends to attribute their success to that 'Chinese quality' or 'Special Chinese quality' or their 'natural liveliness and character of their own'.⁸⁵⁸

Ultimately what Lehmann appeared to seek out from Chinese writers were the stories that withstood the translation process and were still able to convey their Chineseness. He undoubtedly selected stories with leftist political undertones (or in some cases overtones) but the aesthetics had to suggest a uniquely Chinese quality in the writing which could convey some truth or idea about China or Chinese people or the uniquely Chinese way that writers were approaching and handling their wartime material. As Acton had identified in his article published in *TPNW 15*, the finest Chinese

⁸⁵⁶ Typed letter from Ye, to Cooper, 17 August 1949 (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh/Cooper).

⁸⁵⁷ Lehmann's editorial approach to relatively unknown writers in whom he detected talent, including William Sansom, is noted in Tolley (ed), 'Letters from The Editor' in *John Lehmann a Tribute*, pp. 123 - 139. The second book of Lehmann's memoir also comments on his editorial approach towards Sansom. Lehmann, *I Am My Brother*, pp. 166 - 167.

⁸⁵⁸ There are numerous references in correspondence from Lehmann, describing 'the Chinese quality' of the stories he appreciated. Lehmann's comment about stories with 'a natural liveliness' appeared in a typed letter to Donald Allen from Lehmann in January 1940 (no future date supplied), (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

writers were no mere imitators and while foreign influences were certainly commonplace in late Republican fiction, it was the instances where Lehmann could most strongly detect the Chinese qualities in the literature that attracted him the most. And, while he acknowledged the element of propaganda in the Chinese stories that he published during the war, if a story failed as literature it would, in Lehmann's eyes, be unlikely to elicit sympathy for China from his readers, which was always Lehmann's endgame.

8.6 c) The 'Innocence' of the Chinese Peasant

In one of Lehmann's rejection letters to Ye in 1948 regarding the story entitled 'Departure', he commented that while the story 'was very well done' he thinks that 'the theme of the innocence of the Chinese peasant had been, perhaps, a little overdone in recent years'.⁸⁵⁹ Calling the high watermark on this theme in Chinese writing in 1948, is somewhat surprising not to mention a deep irony given how much the glorification of China's peasants was a feature of fiction in the post 1949 era. Although discussions around portrayals of the Chinese peasantry as naive in literary fiction had been prominent in Chinese literary circles since before 1928 (for example in Qian Xiangcun's essay about Lu Xun's early short stories).⁸⁶⁰ However, Lehmann's comment assuredly refers to those Chinese stories that had already been published in *TPNW* (or *NW*) and other English language journals and his sense of fatigue with the theme in Britain in the late 1940s. The theme had certainly been central to the majority of the wartime stories published in *TPNW* by Chinese writers (except 'Mr Hua Wei') and was also the predominant characterisation of the villagers in Ye's novel in English (*Mountain Village*) and evidently a major part of the narrative in at least one other short story that Ye passed to Lehmann (but which was rejected). That Lehmann wanted no more of this theme in his journal by 1948, suggests a significant shift in his overall approach towards China that is no doubt also a reflection of the shifting political situation inside China and perceptions of China in the West. With the war concluded and Japan defeated, the once

⁸⁵⁹ Typed letter from Lehmann's secretary to Ye, on 6 April 1948 (HRC/Lehmann/C.Yeh).

⁸⁶⁰ Qian Xingcun, 'The Bygone Age of Ah Q' in Denton (ed.), *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, p. 286.

naive peasant masses of China were no longer perceived as being at the mercy of oppression and nor were they perceived as particularly innocent. This was certainly the case by 1948 when swathes of northern China began to fall under the control of the peasant armies of the Communist party and the British government was forced to reassess its foreign policy and political allegiances.⁸⁶¹ These were years marked by uncertainty as China moved closer to total 'liberation' by the CCP, when Joseph Stalin sent advisors to China to aid with reconstruction of the country, and Britain and America united against the Soviet Union at the start of the Cold War. It was a period not long before the innocent peasant masses became instead the enemy of, and the principal threat to, Western democracy.

8.7 The Impediments to Publishing Chinese Stories

At the end of WWII, correspondence in Lehmann's archive suggests that Chinese writers still considered him a sympathetic ear with a genuine concern for the plight of Chinese writers. A handwritten letter to Lehmann from Chin K'an at Oriel College, who introduces himself as a Chinese literature student who 'left Chungking in August to study at Oriel College Oxford and arrived in England in October 1945', promises: 'If you and your Penguin New Writing are interested in the fate of Chinese writers, as I imagine you are, I will do my best to tell you what I know'.⁸⁶² He goes on to convey news about the great hardships imposed on Chinese writers (inside China) following the end of the war and the resumption of civil war: 'The more progressive writers in Chungking, Chengtu and Kunming are perpetually under the threat of persecution. They live in fear and poverty. And now since the war against Japan was over, and the reactionary power need not show anymore a war-of-resistance joint policy, I am afraid their case is worse still than before'.⁸⁶³ We can assume that 'the more progressive' writers suffering and

⁸⁶¹ David C. Wolf, "To Secure a Convenience': Britain Recognizes China - 1950." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1983, pp. 299–326. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/260389.

⁸⁶² Handwritten letter from Chin K'an to Lehmann, 23 November 1945 (HRC/Lehmann/Chin K'an).

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*

being persecuted and killed in the final years of China's civil war were those on the political Left whose writing Lehmann had supported in *NW* and *TPNW*. As well as political persecution and worse, as Chi-chen Wang noted in the preface to the wartime stories of China in 1947, Chinese writers in post-war China found it increasingly difficult to find a market for their wares and when they did, they were paid very little and many of them were starving. These factors undoubtedly account for a dearth of stories coming out of mainland China into Britain in the post-war period. Meanwhile the 'vogue' which emerged in Britain was largely supported by Anglophone Chinese writers living in London or Oxford or Cambridge and therefore operating in less debilitating conditions. After the war, the Chinese community in Britain shrank considerably, not least as the tens of thousands of seamen who had served on allied ships during the war returned, or were sent, home. Lehmann's network of Chinese contacts also contracted. Xiao left Britain while Acton returned to Italy after the war. In post-war Britain, Lehmann also found himself repeatedly squeezed (editorially) by Allen Lane who moved to reduce both pagination and frequency of publication for *TPNW*. Lehmann's correspondence with writers, including Chinese writers around this time reveal him writing (via a secretary) increasing numbers of letters in which he apologises for cutting back or holding over stories.

Yet for those few Chinese writers who made the journey to Britain after the war, Lehmann evidently remained an important point of contact. The Chinese poet Pien Chih-lin (Bian Zhilin, 卞之琳, 1910-2000) for example insisted on visiting Lehmann from Oxford in 1948. His letter stated: 'It is very kind of you to let me come and visit you' which suggests that the meeting was made under his insistence.⁸⁶⁴ Ye then remains the only Chinese writer whom Lehmann publishes after the war and his final story appears in 1949, by which stage the prospects of Lehmann publishing stories from mainland China have shrunk dramatically.

⁸⁶⁴ Handwritten letter from Pien Chih Lin to Lehmann, 10 December 1948 (HRC/Lehmann/Pien Chih Lin). It is not possible to know whether this meeting took place as there is no response to the letter in Lehman's archive in the HRC.

8.8 Lehmann's *New Writing*, Literary Translation and Trans-cultural Influences During World War II

From the very first volume of *New Writing* in 1936, Lehmann included a story by a Chinese writer. As a result of his journal's evident interest in and sympathy towards the literary movement in wartime China (and as the correspondence with Xiao Qian testifies) Lehmann's journal was both read and admired inside China by well-known writers and in literary circles. However, correspondence in Lehmann's archive suggests that the influence of the *NW* magazine extended beyond merely garnering a small, elite Chinese readership. This evidence suggests that *NW* also inspired a group of China's 'best young writers' to publish a magazine of translated works (many of them contributions from *New Writing*) from Free China in 1941. In addition, *NW* appears to have been the inspiration, in form more than content, for China's war of resistance magazine in the English language, published in 1939.

As Chapter 3 (3.2) previously set out, shortly after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chinese writers and artists, under the leadership (but not necessarily active management) of Lao She, began The All China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists in Hankow (Wuhan) on March 27, 1938. It published several literary journals in Chinese but also provided the financial backing for an English-language publication in Hong Kong, called *Chinese Writers Monthly (CWM)* as its members sought to reach out to Anglophone countries such as Britain, to generate sympathy for the struggle against Japan.⁸⁶⁵ Charles Laughlin describes *CWM* as one of the 'regional branch' magazines of Wenxue (an abbreviation of the full Chinese name of the All China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists which was translated into English as The Federation of Chinese Writers, in *CWM*).⁸⁶⁶ The magazine's editorial

⁸⁶⁵ *Chinese Writers (Zhongguo Zuoji)*, August, 1939, Volume 1, Number 1.

⁸⁶⁶ Charles Laughlin, 'The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists', in Kirk A. Denton and Michel Hockx (eds.) *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2008), p. 388.

duties were carried out by editor in chief, Ye Junjian but with a formidable editorial board which included: Tai Van-chou (Dai Wangshu, managing editor) and Lao Sheh (Lao She) Shelley Wang, Hsu Chih (Xu Chi), Wang Pin-ling, Yao Pun-tse and Kung Rosen. Ye's Chinese memoir recalls meetings in which a group of Chinese writers gathered at the house of Xu Dishan (professor of Chinese literature at Hong Kong University) in Mid-Levels, Hong Kong, at a time when the island had become a flourishing cultural centre after an influx of writers and artists following the fall of Wuhan. Ye wrote: 'It was mostly me and Lou Shuyi and Dai Wangshu ... what we were doing was like a branch of the All China Resist Association of Writers and Artists ... just we didn't have a proper board'.⁸⁶⁷ The journal only published three issues after running out of funding but it is significant for the purposes of this research because its format and to an extent the content were heavily influenced by *NW*. The first page of the magazine, in Issue 1 (August 1939) carries an advert and introduction to *NW (New Series)* which is described as a collaboration between Lehmann, Isherwood and Spender which publishes stories and poems 'by international authors'.⁸⁶⁸ The issue contains advertisements for China Motion Pictures Corp and *T'ien Hsia Monthly* which suggests that it sought to align itself with publications and institutions that had a cosmopolitan outlook and the global circulation of ideas as a core instinct. The first issue also carried an advertisement providing details of the work of the China Defence League and a scathing review of Pearl Buck's novel (*The Patriot*, Methuen, 1939) which 'entirely mis-represents the Chinese Communists', all of which are suggestive of a strong leftist agenda.^{869 870} It featured an 'Among Our Contributors' section much like the one which appeared in Lehmann's journals and published stories, sketches, poetry and illustrations. A review section at the back of the first issue saw A. T. Tang evaluate the latest issue of *NW* (New Series, II, spring 1939) which is hailed for its efforts to produce the 'best of

⁸⁶⁷ Ye, *The Complete Collection*, volume 17, prose (2), p 409.

⁸⁶⁸ *Chinese Writers (Zhongguo Zuoji)*, August, 1939, Volume 1, Number 1, p. 1.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 45. 'Book Reviews' section. Pearl Buck is reviewed by Anne Mae Cheng.

⁸⁷⁰ Laughlin, 'The All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists', p. 380. Laughlin comments that aspects of the Federation's literary engagement during the war had their precursor in the League of Left Wing Writers earlier in the 1930s and he defines the 'broad influence of the leftish vision of literary practise - cultural intervention through literature'.

to-day's progressive writing whether it be the work of an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German in exile, American, Spaniard, Russian, Indian or Chinese'.⁸⁷¹ Tang commented:

Writers as well-known as W. H. Auden and Bertolt Brecht appear side by side with the newly discovered. New in the best sense- progressive - expressing the aspirations, hopes, fears and revulsions of the people New Writing signifies much to us in China who are working with these same problems. Here we read of the struggle against all the evil and decay that fascism embodies and we realize again how closely our same fight in China is kin to that in Europe, America and Eastern Asia.⁸⁷²

Undoubtedly Ye had some hand in this review as his story 'How Triumph Van went back to the Army' had been published in that issue of *NW*. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that Lehmann's journal was a major inspiration for the English mouthpiece of the biggest organisation of Chinese writers that the country had ever seen as it sought to convey ideas around the world.

Examining the content of *CWM* also provides essential evidence of this pivotal period in Chinese literature (and for China's relationships with the West) when contemporary writers sought, for the first time to represent their own country's plight abroad. *CWM*'s evident approval for *NW*, in particular its stories about China by Chinese writers, as well as a scathing review of the work of foreign writer on matters relating to China, suggest that Chinese writers had had enough of reading representations of their country and their people by foreign (here meaning non-Chinese) writers. Anna Mae Cheng's review in Issue 1 of *CWM* for example, decried, Buck's 'lack of adequate knowledge' of China not least because the country is so 'long unvisited' by Buck.⁸⁷³ According to correspondence between Ye and Lehmann, in Issue 2 of *CWM*, Isherwood and Auden's interpretation of China's struggle against Japan, *Journey to a*

⁸⁷¹ *Chinese Writers (Zhongguo Zuoji)*, August, 1939, Volume 1, Number 1, p. 46.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

War (Faber & Faber, 1939) is also given a poor review, which prompts Ye to apologise and clarify that he was not involved in the editing of the magazine any longer.⁸⁷⁴ What a careful reading of the content and reviews of *CWM* must conclude is that by the late 1930s, Chinese writers were strongly engaged in an at times official, at times unofficial movement to represent themselves and their own people in the West. And that representations of the Chinese people and their country by foreign writers at times grated most painfully and they wished to convey this back to the West. Surprisingly, Ye's memoir notes that despite the scathing review of her work and an attempt to dismantle her position as an authority on China, Pearl Buck sent money to subscribe to *CWM*.⁸⁷⁵ Shortly after *CWM* folded, Ye wrote to Lehmann to offer up the MSS of short stories by Chinese writers to be published in Britain. And ultimately, what began as a magazine (*CWM*) to showcase the works and ideas of Chinese writers in the West, became for Ye a lifelong commitment.⁸⁷⁶

The publication and circulation of *CWM* was just a small part of a wider trans-cultural circuit for Anglophone publications which flowed to and from China and Britain from the late 1930s onwards. But this is not the full extent of *NW*'s inspiration as a publishing model inside China. In September 1941, a letter to Lehmann from Ye in Chongqing declared that the journal had inspired a 'several of our best young writers' to make plans to 'put out a quarterly somewhat like *New Writing*, publishing almost exclusively translations from foreign contemporary authors.'⁸⁷⁷ Ye wrote:

We shall take a lot of materials from *New Writing* and for this reason we hope to make you [Lehmann] our advisory editor just acknowledgement (sic) of your fine work done for your magazine. I think you'll have no objection for that. The quarterly is in Chinese and to be issued by the Culture and Life Publishing

⁸⁷⁴ Handwritten letter from Ye to Lehmann, 12 February 1934. As previously noted this letter was written in 1939 and was mis-dated, (HRC/Lehmann/C.C.Yeh).

⁸⁷⁵ Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, p. 410.

⁸⁷⁶ On his return to the PRC, Ye was appointed editor of *Chinese Literature* magazine (which published Chinese writing in translation, in English and other languages).

⁸⁷⁷ Typed letter from Ye to Lehmann, 19 September 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

Co-operative, which is our writers own firm and has published most of our contemporary best literary books.⁸⁷⁸

The publisher to which Ye's letter refers had been launched in Shanghai as the Shanghai Culture and Life Publishing Company (上海文化 生活出版社) in 1935 by the writer and political activist Ba Jin (the pen name of Li Yaotang 1904-2005). During the course of the war against Japan, Ba Jin moved the publisher from Shanghai, Guangzhou, Guilin and finally to Chongqing, to evade Japanese occupation. Lu Xun had been a supporter of the venture and his later works were published by the imprint but as well as China's 'best literary books' it published translated works by foreign writers. That the publisher planned to establish a magazine suggests a strong interest in contemporary foreign works and the plan to model this around Lehman's *NW* journals suggests that its Leftist, anti-fascist and international approach to literature would find a readership in China as readily as it had in Britain and elsewhere around the world. It also suggests that the writers involved with the publisher (not least Ba Jin but presumably a number of other influential Chinese writers) admired *NW* which points to the magazine having an influence well beyond British borders (one that is entirely invisible in sales figures or subscriber numbers). However, in December 1941, a response from Lehmann to Ye declined the offer on the grounds that he would not put his name to anything that he could not see or edit himself (and for that to happen would have been almost impossible).⁸⁷⁹

Nevertheless, several translations into Chinese of works by *NW* authors had already taken place by 1940. A letter from Lehmann to Ye in November of that year commented for example that 'Spender and Rickwood are delighted to hear that they are appearing in Chinese'.⁸⁸⁰ The following year, as access to foreign publications to China became increasingly difficult, Ye wrote an impassioned letter to Lehmann arguing the vital role of *NW* in wartime. Ye commented that whether or not the fascist powers win:

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 10 December 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

⁸⁸⁰ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 1 November 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh/Cicio Mar).

The continuation of New Writing is almost an absolutely necessary thing. It is in this magazine now that the younger generation of European literati can find a place to express themselves. Most of the finest literary periodicals on the European continent, I think, must have come to a hopeless suspension.⁸⁸¹

As China became cut off from Britain and even more so from Europe, the content of these letters suggests that the ideas and format of *NW* became increasingly valuable to Chinese writers during the war.

The great numbers of foreign books translated into Chinese during the Republican period is well documented. In an article about English fiction and drama in translation in China, for example, Shouyi Fan comments that: 'in *The General Catalogue of Publications* (1987) during the Period of the Republic of China (1911-1949): Foreign Literature collects some 4404 titles, including works of translation of world literature and studies of foreign literature. The majority of authors were British and American'.⁸⁸²

But translating books, frequently involved a significant time-lag which became even longer in wartime, making it difficult for Chinese readers to access contemporary foreign works. Equally magazines which published contemporary foreign literature and which made an art of balancing political and aesthetic concerns while also charting current literary trends and developments, struggled to get through to China during the war. Yet this writing was, in a sense, more sustaining and morale boosting for Chinese writers seeking to interpret their experiences in wartime and produce literature from them and therefore very highly valued and it is this aspect of the circulation of *New*

⁸⁸¹ Typed letter from Ye, to Lehmann, 21 May 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

⁸⁸² Shouyi Fan, 'Translation of English Fiction and Drama in Modern China: Social Context, Literary Trends and Impact' in *Meta*, Volume 44, Number 1, March 1999, (The Theory and Practice of Translators in China), p. 170. Online at: <<https://doi.org/10.7202/002717ar>>. The article notes that the overall numbers are somewhat skewed as many titles were translated more than once. Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, for example, was translated seven times.

Writing which the letters between Lehmann and the Chinese writers strongly brings to light.

This is not to suggest that the traffic went only one-way. It is probable that *T'ien Hsia Monthly* was among a number of English-language magazines that were being sent to Lehmann from China and Hong Kong. There is a direct reference to this kind of unofficial magazine circulation in a letter from Lehmann to Ye in which Lehmann comments that he gets 'copies of *China Today* from Hong Kong and sends them *New Writing* in exchange".⁸⁸³ *China Today* was a monthly pictorial published in Hong Kong which ran captions in English, French and Russian as well as Chinese. All three of these publications (*China Today*, *T'ien Hsia*, *New Writing*) were advertised in the first issue of *CWM*.

⁸⁸³ Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, 1 November 1940, (HRC/Lehmann/Yeh/Cicio Mar).

Ch. 9: Conclusion

9.1 The Forgotten Vogue for Modern Chinese Literature

Many of the major anthologies of modern Chinese literature published (in English) since the 1960s, begin with a lament about its failure to gain a broad Anglophone readership. The preface to C.T. Hsia's seminal *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction 1917-1957* begins: 'At a time when modern China has become in this country [America] a subject of intensive study, it is a matter of some surprise that its literature has been permitted to suffer comparative neglect.'⁸⁸⁴ In 1997, the introduction to one of the most comprehensive selections of twentieth-century Chinese authors available in English, from Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, began:

Classical Chinese poetry and the great traditional novels are widely admired by readers throughout the world. Chinese literature in this century has not yet received similar acclaim. Some works have been unjustly neglected, through lack of knowledge or good translation, but many may never gain a wide readership abroad purely on the basis of literary appeal.⁸⁸⁵

In the introduction to a more recent appraisal of modern Chinese fiction, McDougall comments further: 'it is still worth considering how very little still is known about Chinese writers and readers, and how unreliable or untested much of the information we have about them is.'⁸⁸⁶ And, in a 2005 newspaper article in the *Guardian* newspaper, Julia

⁸⁸⁴ C.T. Hsia (ed.), *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction 1917-1957*, second edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971). The same preface appears in the first edition of the anthology, published in 1960.

⁸⁸⁵ Bonnie S. McDougall and Kam Louie, *The Literature of China in the Twentieth Century* (London: Hurst & Co, 1997), introduction, p. 1.

⁸⁸⁶ Bonnie S. McDougall, *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003), introduction, p. 1.

Lovell declared that Chinese writers of fiction from Shen Congwen to Qian Zhongshu and Mo Yan 'languish in near-total obscurity' in the Anglophone reading world, even when compared to their Japanese counterparts who must also overcome the considerable hurdle of being read in translation.⁸⁸⁷ Nor is the bleak verdict for modern Chinese literature in the West only a recent phenomenon. Edgar Snow in *Living China* (1937) gathering material for his collection of modern Chinese short stories, expressed uncertainty as to whether contemporary China would produce any 'great literature' and fell back on the premise that if it did not, there must at least 'be much of scientific and sociological interest' to justify its translation and publication in English.⁸⁸⁸

This thesis began with these stark, if to an extent justified, generalisations strongly in mind. Yet with each proceeding year of my research which has probed not only the publication of Chinese short stories in a literary journal in Britain in the 1940s (including the genesis of the stories, the writers, the content, the editor, the readers) but also the shifting geopolitical conditions of the period and its implications for the publishing market and reading habits, a significant counter narrative has emerged. By tracing the shifting publishing conditions, the stance of specific literary editors and the careers of individual Chinese writers and their writing in Britain, from the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, through World War II and in post-war peacetime, this thesis has defined and described a period marked not by its neglect of modern Chinese literature but for the ascendancy of China's modern literature in Britain both critically and in terms of readership and influence. In the final stages of World War II, in September 1944, Dorothy Woodman's observation that Chinese stories in Britain had become 'rather the vogue' was an acknowledgement of just how far the country's modern literature had come from 'neglect', albeit that the vogue was relatively short-lived and would be comprehensively swept away after 1949.

Between 1939 when no editor would consider publishing the MSS of 'The People of China' and 1944 when the stories of China had become 'the vogue' we can trace a

⁸⁸⁷ Julia Lovell, 'Great Leap Forward', the *Guardian*, 11 June, 2005.

⁸⁸⁸ Joseph S.M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt (eds.) *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*, second edition, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) Introduction, xxi.

period of development in British literary history whereby a cohort of Chinese writers, British editors and publishers, successfully introduced a more nuanced understanding and knowledge of modern China, as narrated by the country's own people.

At the outset of this research project, as the introduction notes, the publication of Chinese short-stories in a Penguin publication appeared to be strikingly ahead of its time, and so it has proven at its conclusion. John Lehmann began searching out short stories about China from 1937 onwards when few publishers (and even fewer literary editors) were attempting to promote the work of modern Chinese writers. His efforts considerably pre-date the heyday for Chinese stories as identified by Woodman and his interest outlasted the wartime period which had helped to create the conditions that were so favourable for the publication of stories from and about China by Chinese writers.

This thesis has appraised not only the conditions that led to Chinese writers becoming increasingly read and increasingly popular in Britain during the 1940s but specifically the unique contribution that *TPNW* and Lehmann made to the promotion of modern Chinese literature (and Anglophone Chinese literature), especially the work of the Chinese writers with whom Lehmann had prolonged contact during and after WWII. This is not to suggest that Lehmann was the only literary editor with an interest in China and in publishing fiction from the country throughout the 1940s. As this thesis has noted there were others who shared his interest including editors at: *NS&N*, *Readers Digest*, *The Listener*, *The Times Literary Supplement*. There were also other publications, including *Left Review*, *Life & Letters Today*, which had begun publishing modern Chinese stories prior to *NW* and *TPNW*. However, where Lehmann's publication had the edge over the majority of these publications, was in promoting Chinese stories, not as merely newsworthy or topical, but in his ability to persuade readers of the inherent literary value of contemporary Chinese writing.

And while this thesis has focused on the way that the increasing popularity of modern Chinese literature in Britain manifested itself in *TPNW*, Woodman's comment signals that the prevailing fashion permeated more widely. Woodman herself was

directly involved in helping Chinese writers in Britain publish news reports (including Kenneth Lo's original seaman story), magazine articles, childrens' books, as well as short stories (both Chinese stories in translation and Anglophone Chinese stories).⁸⁸⁹

This suggests that 'the vogue' went beyond works published in literary periodicals and included readerships well beyond the scope of *TPNW* (and therefore, beyond the scope of this thesis) and has potential for further inquiry.

9.2 Representations of China in *TPNW*

In *The Chan's Great Continent, China in Western Minds*, Jonathan Spence sweeps through roughly 700 years of history to consider the ways that China has been shaped in the Western imagination. Spence describes the observations made in novels, plays, poetry, diplomatic reports and letters home as 'sightings' (there are 48 of them considered in detail throughout the book) and his aim in gathering them together is 'to give a sense of the 'multiplicity of intellectual and emotional attitudes that Westerners have brought to their attempts to deal with the phenomenon of China'.⁸⁹⁰

Where Spence's work is helpful is in situating *TPNW* in the great body of Western fiction about China, is to make clear the kind of representations that *TPNW* is not concerned with.⁸⁹¹ There are, for example, no visions of 'the exotic East' in *TPNW*, the writing is not concerned with the 'invention of Chineseness' often defined as Chinoiserie.⁸⁹² There is equally no sense of the 'timeless yellow peril and Oriental cruelty that Westerns could trace back to the early tales of Mongol conquests... or...to the Boxer Uprising of their own time'.⁸⁹³ And almost entirely absent are representations

⁸⁸⁹ Woodman worked on a Puffin book childrens book, she sent Lehmann short-stories by Chinese writers for his consideration, she brokered the deal between Kenneth Lo and the Kemsley Newspapers.

⁸⁹⁰ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, introduction xi.

⁸⁹¹ Here, I make the assumption that because Lehmann so actively curated *TPNW* and selected the kind of fiction that it published and because of its Anglophone readership, the magazine undeniably shaped China in the Western imagination.

⁸⁹² Anne Witchard (ed) *British Modernism and Chinoiserie* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017) p 2.

⁸⁹³ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, p 141.

which Spence defines as the ‘American exotic’ which he detects in works by Ezra Pound, Eugene O’Neill, Pearl Buck and John Steinbeck.⁸⁹⁴

In a reading of Spence’s account of the many ways that China has transfixed the West, the content of *TPNW* would enter the narrative as a ‘radical vision’ of China from around the time that ‘new political forces’ began emanating from China after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and around the time of the formation of the CCP in 1921.⁸⁹⁵ This is the year in which Ralph Fox’s ‘Conversation with a Lama’ in *TPNW 1*, took place, which was simultaneously around the time of the Mongolian revolution. In the chapter ‘Radical Visions’, Spence notes that ‘the revolutionary period’ of Chinese history as constructed in Western literature would also include ‘the first great purges of the CCP by the Nationalist forces’ in 1927 and was followed by the period of ‘rural guerilla socialism, and the anti-Japanese war’.⁸⁹⁶ While Spence notes that the ‘radicalization of China sightings crossed many national and perceptual boundaries’ he chooses the writing (fiction, plays and reportage) of André Malraux, Bertolt Brecht and Edgar Snow, among others, to convey the radical visions of China prevalent in the West from around 1917 and into the 1930s.

This thesis begins by evaluating a representation of China, by Fox, that is firmly rooted in the beginning of this period of radicalization. Fox’s short story which is an account of a conversation that took place between a Mongolian lama and Fox himself, sees a representative of the East and one of the West mulling the revolutionary history of Mongolia, particularly the role of the Soviet Red Army and China. It would fit neatly alongside Spence’s other examples of ‘radical visions’. The short story is also an indication of the source of both Fox’s and Lehmann’s initial interest in ‘the East’ and specifically China. For both men who had strong Communist sympathies, the East (especially China) offered fascinating potential as a site for Marxist revolution. The appearance of the story in *TPNW 1*, in 1940, not long after the neutrality pact between

⁸⁹⁴ Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent*, Chapter 9, ‘American Exotic’, pp 165 - 186.

⁸⁹⁵ Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent*, Chapter 10, ‘Radical Visions’, pp 187 - 205. The chapter spans the period of political upheaval from roughly 1917 (the Russian Revolution) to the Second Sino-Japanese War.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union - a time when the British Left became greatly disillusioned with Russia - may suggest a moment when China became, for Lehmann and others on the political Left, something of a proxy for their revolutionary hopes.⁸⁹⁷ Ultimately however, Fox's death in 1936 meant that his ambition to write a longer work expanding on the ideas in 'Conversation with a Lama', (perhaps somewhat in the vein of Malraux, Brecht or Snow) were never realised. And, by the time Fox's story was published for the second time by Lehmann, the course of world events had shifted to such an extent that such 'radical visions' had less to offer contemporary readers. As Spence aptly comments, these 'radical visions' of China which had been prominent in the 1920s and 1930s, were 'wearing a bit thin' by the early 1940s.⁸⁹⁸

Certainly from the mid 1930s onwards, Lehmann had begun to seek out alternative visions, more appropriate as reflections of both contemporary Chinese writing and Western preoccupations with China (especially those on the political Left which Lehmann was more alert to). Lehmann was strongly aware that Leftist interest in China had shifted from an interest in the country's revolutionary potential, to its ability to wage anti-fascist war against Japan. He was equally attuned to the role that culture (specifically literature) had - and would - play in the changing image of China in the West.

As this thesis has previously noted, from the 1930s onwards, it had become evident to observers and governments in the West and in Asia (Emily Hahn, Jack Chen, Professor Shelley Wang, Xiao Qian among them) that representations of China had become a matter of vital - and political - urgency. For the British left this was reflected in a 'new emphasis on culture'.⁸⁹⁹ Buchanan neatly summarises the cultural as well as political influences at work on British imaginations in relation to China and subsequently goes on to detail that ways that Leftist organisations such as the CCC later sought to harness the growing cultural appreciation of China in Britain, and put it to political use. His summary is of particular interest:

⁸⁹⁷ The neutrality pact was signed in Moscow on 23 August 1939.

⁸⁹⁸ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, p. 205.

⁸⁹⁹ Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left 1925 - 1976*, p 78.

In literature, the American writer, Pearl Buck's immensely popular novel *The Good Earth* (1931) had introduced a mass readership to Chinese rural life, while the West End success of Hsiung Shih-l's plays *Lady Precious Stream* (1935) showed how traditional narratives could be reworked for a modern audience. Above all the 1935 Royal Academy exhibition [at Burlington House] represented a turning point in the popular appreciation of Chinese art, and for many stimulated a lifelong interest. This transformation was encouraged by a Chinese government that understood the value of 'cultural diplomacy'. By 1935 the Japanese intelligence was alarmed at the upsurge in activities - or, in its view propaganda - promoting Chinese art and literature in Britain. However, this development also reflected the central importance given to the arts in the anti-fascist politics of the period. Fascism was regarded as the enemy of culture, while culture was the core of national resistance.⁹⁰⁰

As the publisher of a literary magazine with 'New' in its title and a manifesto pledge to promote works by foreign writers, Lehmann was equally aware that contributions about China by the 1940s had to convey something of the realtime, highly urgent and potentially devastating, situation in China (which from the time of the Second United Front in China, was no longer primarily concerned with whether the Communists or the Nationalists took control of the country).

As Chapter 3 examined, Lehmann alighted on a selection of five short stories by Chinese writers which were radical in another way: they were amongst the earliest examples of Chinese writers shaping and redrawing their own country in Western minds, via its modern literature. These stories then amount to one of the significant ways that *TPNW* redrew representations of China in the West (via published stories).

Overall these five stories, which are strongly linked by their own set of characteristics as well as by their political and aesthetic themes, might helpfully be defined as Leftist visions of anti-Japanese struggle. What prompted Lehmann's interest

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

in these stories is not what they reveal about China's potential for revolution but what they convey about the country's efforts to defeat Japanese forces. By 1941 what interested Western observers (and Lehmann's readers) was China's role as an ally and its part in the global war.

Archived correspondence examined in this thesis between Lehmann and his network of Chinese writers demonstrates that he sought, through the stories that he published and his editorial stance, to elicit sympathy for China's resistance of Japanese aggression. It was an instinct guided by his politics but equally by his contact and friendships with Chinese (and some British) writers. In order to achieve this, Lehmann sought out good quality short fiction that would bring China - and specifically the Chinese people - to life for his readers. It was an approach that shared much with the spirit of Emily Hahn's call for the West to see China as 'a living sister' and not 'a dead ancestor', - or in Xiao Qian's words, 'a heap of bones and stones'.⁹⁰¹ By publishing the modern fiction of China by living writers, Lehmann hoped to encourage his readers to make this imaginative leap.

And what better way to bring China to life, than to depict the Chinese people - soldiers, civilians, peasants, labourers, foremen and officials - engaged in a very real battle for survival, the outcome of which had grave consequences for the West. It was after all only via the people acting in unity that the Japanese might be defeated. And it was almost certainly with an awareness of this in mind that propagandist writers in China (which given the membership of the All China Resistance Association of Writers and Artist meant many of them) such as Ye and Allen, sent an MSS entitled 'The People of China' to Lehmann in 1939.

But more than mere depictions of the people of China, the wartime stories of China published by Lehmann in *TPNW*, are united by their depiction of the shifting consciousness of the people, to convey a sense that they are awakening (as well as uniting against a common enemy). The effect of publishing the stories for Anglophone readers, was to impress upon them the awakening of the people, the development of

⁹⁰¹ Hahn, 'The China Boom' (online source) and Xiao Qian in a letter to Lehmann on 27 April 1941, (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao/Hsiao Ch'ien).

society and the ways in which it was becoming more humane, more tolerant (even towards hapless and seemingly hopeless peasants) more egalitarian and by implication less hierarchical, less barbaric and less inefficient. The stories equally suggest that the modernisation of Chinese society was taking place, not merely via technological advancements and in practical ways, but in the minds of the Chinese people. That the stories also present characters who are flawed, and in the process of change (with plenty of room for improvement) prevents them reading too much like propaganda, although the obvious political motivation for sending the stories to Lehmann to publish in Britain, was to convince the West that China was an ally worth protecting.

There is a marked shift in the tone, style and content of the Chinese stories published in *TPNW* that were written by Chinese writers from outside of China. Lo's short story about a Chinese seaman for example is far less overtly political in its content. Instead, Lo in his re-telling of the real-life saga of Poon Lim, pushes against Sinophobic stereotypes that he would have encountered in Britain. As a Chinese diplomat who negotiated on behalf of the Chinese seamen who served on British ships during WWII in their disputes with the shipping companies and the British government, Lo was acutely aware of British prejudice towards (in particular) this small and highly transient community. Taking aim against newspaper reports about marauding, rioting Chinese seamen, Lo by contrast depicts Poon Lim as the archetype of competent seaman, who is orderly, calm, and psychologically equipped to withstand hardship and ingenious enough to survive against the odds.

The two stories contributed by Ye and published after WWII were written as Ye travelled around Britain with the MOI and were originally written in English. Ye stayed with many families around Britain at this time and was therefore a writer much closer to understanding Anglophone readers' interest in China. These post-war stories are both more reflective and more backward looking. In 'The Dream', Ye comments on the chasm between traditional China and an anticipated future in which a better future might include free education for all. By 1946 when 'The Dream' was published it was not how the Chinese people resisted Japanese aggression that preoccupied Ye but the direction

of the county in the aftermath of war. His final contribution to *TPNW* and the final short story from China in *TPNW* ('Three Brothers') represented a significant shift as the dialogue, setting and characters appear to have been summoned from Confucian China. Modern China is notably absent. His memoir notes at this time that he felt too far from China - out of touch with present-day China and that his ideas for novels all harked back to the past. This, he notes, hastened his return.⁹⁰²

9.3 China Discourse, Chinese Archetypes and the Example of *TPNW*

We need only read a few key pages of Harold Isaacs' study *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* to grasp the power of literary fiction to influence public thinking in the absence of widely available expert knowledge.⁹⁰³ Isaacs' work highlighted the ways that ideas about China gleaned largely from Pearl Buck's novel *The Good Earth*, permeated the minds of Americans, including senior and therefore influential public figures. According to Isaac's study, Buck was by far the most influential writer about China such that, for middlebrow American, her portrayal of 'deeply philosophical earth-turning peasants' created China for scores of Americans.⁹⁰⁴ And when matters of policy or law were at stake, it is not difficult to see the dangers of ideas formed from a hodgepodge of fantasy and partisan history or to understand why those Chinese writers who knew enough of America to encounter the ubiquitousness of such ideas, sought to push (sometimes angrily) back against them.

Hua Hsu's *A Floating Chinaman, Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific*, considers the example of precisely two such writers who in very different ways, took against Buck's easy sentimentality, including the largely unpublished H. T. Tsiang and the academic and Lu Xun translator Chi-chen Wang. The example of Wang, a professor of Chinese literature and language in American, is particularly relevant to this thesis for

⁹⁰² Ye, *The Complete Collection, volume 17, prose (2)*, pp. 510.

⁹⁰³ Harold Issacs, *Scratches on Our Minds, American Views of China and India* (Armonk, New York: M.E Sharpe, 1980), pp. 155-158. Originally published (New York: John Day, 1958).

⁹⁰⁴ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 168.

his approach to promoting Chinese writing which he hoped would be ‘a gentle pushback against ... ready made narratives’ about China conjured by Buck and her ilk and which Hsu’s study examines in detail.⁹⁰⁵ Hsu comments that one of the major effects of Buck’s work (beyond what Buck herself could ever have imagined) had been to replace the ‘mythical, exotic Orient’ with a new set of stereotypes which ultimately ‘brought China no nearer to the American people’.⁹⁰⁶ By contrast, Wang hoped to bring, through translations of Lu Xun’s short stories and essays, ‘texture and complexity to the mythic, windswept China that sat in the imagination of the average American’.⁹⁰⁷

Where Hsu’s work is of relevance to this thesis is in making explicit the kinds of ‘competing Chinese archetypes that had cluttered the American imagination’ in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century and the kinds of representations of China that writers such as Tsiang and Wang took up against. Such archetypes were very much present in British fiction around the same time and this thesis similarly considers the ways that a group of writers and one editor: Lehmann, Acton, Ye, Allen, Xiao and Lo sought to redraw these ‘scratches’ on the British imagination.

As Hsu notes, Wang’s introduction to Lu Xun’s short stories, reveals his awareness of the kinds of completing ‘Chinese archetypes’ that his own work sought to redefine:

First came the ugly caricatures and demeaning stereotypes: movies, pulp novels...Then came the ‘sympathetic and flattering’ correctives, from the mellow Chinese philosopher-peasant to the clever and perpetually underestimated Chinese American detective. But despite the kind intentions that animated some of these works, Wang felt that these overly sentimental gestures had failed to render the Chinese experience with any true complexity.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁵ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 167.

⁹⁰⁶ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p. 167. Hsu is here citing Wang CC in his introduction to Lu Xun’s short stories and essays.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

This thesis has examined correspondence between Lehmann, Acton, Ye, Allen Xiao and Lo (among others) which situates them, to a great extent, in a camp with Wang. The *TPNW* cohort were equally engaged in an effort to shift the discourse about China (in late 1930s and 1940s Britain), to restore some 'complexity' and bring China closer to readers (through fiction and criticism). Rather than Charlie Chan, they were confronting Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, *Chu Chin Chow*, or later *Lady Precious Stream*, in the British middlebrow imagination. And, while *The Good Earth*, both as a novel and film, in Britain had been a success, the story tapped rather less into the British psyche. It did not, for example, arouse nostalgia for the lost pastoral harmony of pre-depression America – Buck's fiction about China therefore never dug down quite so deeply in the British imagination. What certainly did exist in Britain was the sweep of representations of China in novels and films from the thrills and threat of Yellow Peril literature to the more sympathetic yet exoticised representations of the likes of Ernest Bramah.

By contrast, given the circulation of *TPNW*, this thesis has demonstrated that Lehmann had greater success circulating more nuanced representations of China, by Chinese writers. Evidently publishing Chinese stories in a magazine, where they could be read alongside a curated selection of British and European works, made them an easier sell to readers, whereas, for example Wang's collections of translations had to stand alone. Hsu suggests that Wang hoped his translations of Lu Xun's stories and essays would act as a 'gentle pushback' to representations, such as Buck's. By contrast, this thesis argues that Lehmann's pushback was politically motivated and urgent. And while many of the Chinese stories in *TPNW* feature peasants, (Hsu's notes the particular distaste that both Tsiang and Wang felt for the 'earth-turning philosopher of Buck's stories), the peasants in the Chinese stories in *TPNW* are portrayed as awakening (if not fully awakened), part of the shifting consciousness of Chinese society, so vital for the country's survival.

It is significant to note that years after war, when Ye sent Lehmann a story for his consideration in 1948, that it was rejected on the grounds that the theme of the innocence of the Chinese peasant had been 'a bit overdone'. His comment suggests

that by the end of the 1940s portrayals of Chinese peasantry or images of the 'innocence' of the common people - did not ring true anymore. What had appealed in wartime, would do so less with the emergence of the Cold War.

Hsu's study notes too that the 'excitement for all things Chinese' in 1940s America rarely extended to the Chinese living in America, and its Chinatowns. Equally, this thesis notes, Kenneth Lo's efforts to highlight the plight of the Chinese seamen in Britain never gained a response from a publisher nor any further interest from Lehmann beyond a single story. Lo - like Tsiang in Hsu's narrative - had to resort to self-publishing. The muted response to Lo's seamen stories (*Forgotten Wave*) does appear to identify representations of China that remained beyond the limits of Lehmann's and any wider British interest. And arguably still do today.

9.4 The Broader implications of This Thesis

9.4 a) A Reappraisal of Lehmann, *TPNW*, the International Venture, Acton, and Chinese Writers

At the conclusion of this thesis, it is Lehmann's political, personal, professional and aesthetic interest in modern Chinese literature and his efforts to conceive of the modern literature of China not as a derivative product (of, for example, a Euro-American original) but as a full partner in modern literary movements, one that he as editor of *TPNW* was also engaged in shaping, that stands out.

By foregrounding his approach to Chinese writers and Chinese writing, this thesis has reappraised Lehmann's contribution to world literature as the editor of *TPNW* and put back into his legacy the contribution which his own biographer and subsequent critical accounts have almost entirely overlooked - his 'internationalist project'.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁹ Battershill, 'This Intimate Object', p. 96.

Due to the high sales of the magazine and its influential readership and the great many well-known writers who contributed to its pages, Lehmann certainly ensured that modern Chinese literature reached a wider and highly literary readership in ways that it had rarely done before. Lehmann's efforts to promote modern Chinese stories equally inspired others to attempt the same, most notably when George Orwell aired several radio broadcasts on the subject of the modern literature of China after reading Lehmann's journals.

Given the sharper critical understanding of Lehmann and *TPNW* that has come about as a result of this research project, this thesis has reappraised (albeit only in relation to China) Lehmann's international venture as it manifested itself in *TPNW*. Through archived correspondence between Lehmann and his network of Chinese and British (and American) writers this thesis has traced the extent and influence of Lehmann's international venture (as it relates to China) to conclude that it stretched well beyond that which a tally of its foreign subscriber numbers or international circulation figures (or lack of) might otherwise suggest.

By piecing together a narrative from archival materials, this thesis has been able to delimit Lehmann's China venture and conclude that the editor's efforts to promote modern Chinese literature and its writers in the 1940s (sourcing, editing, translating, building up of networks, corresponding) were genuine, deliberate, and due to Acton and Xiao, better informed than his own background and experience might otherwise suggest. His efforts also went considerably beyond merely publishing stories, to supporting the careers of the Chinese writers, those with whom he came into direct contact in Britain, including Ye and Xiao and to a lesser extent Lo. In Britain, Lehmann became a hub for Chinese writing. This status had repercussions for his influence in China as it signalled to Chinese writers there, his openness and interest in and sympathy for their plight (in wartime but also in post-war China when conditions for many Leftist writers worsened). As Chapter 8 noted, Lehmann's journals inspired Chinese writers in China (as much as those few in Britain), as a model in form and content for a wartime resistance journal. Stories from *NW* in Britain were also translated

and circulated inside China and Lehmann was invited to edit a Chinese version of his journals (an offer he declined).

This thesis has only considered the international venture of *TPNW* in relation to - China but this approach could also certainly be applied to Lehmann's Russian and Czech contributors who, from his travels in both countries he had stronger links with and a better knowledge of the countries' language, history, politics and most significantly, contemporary literature.

This thesis has importantly resurrected from the footnotes of 1940s literary history the Chinese writers Ye and Lo, and their very different positions in relation to the publication and promotion of Chinese stories in Britain, while acknowledging and examining the editorial and publishing conditions which shaped their early careers in Britain. Ye is a particularly salient example of a Chinese writer whose time in Britain merits greater critical interest, not least because of the success of his published works and the literary circles within which he moved. However, as Ye became an Anglophone Chinese writer (during his time in Britain) his writing fell between a gap - it was not modern Chinese literature, nor were his stories and novels quite English literature, another reason that his oeuvre has been almost entirely overlooked until this study. Even though Lo's literary strivings resulted in failure, the study of his attempts has provided an important contribution to ideas about the limits of British interest in China. We can now restore Ye and Lo to literary history alongside their better-known compatriots (and friends) Chiang Yee, Xiao Qian and Shih-I Hsiung.

That Lehmann relied on Harold Acton as a bridge to Chinese literature, without whom *TPNW* may never have published the wartime short stories, is an aspect of Acton's expertise that has hitherto been overlooked. This thesis has also noted that Acton and Lehmann shared an approach to modern Chinese literature, to hold it up as an equal to literature in the West and capable of its own innovation. Acton's contribution to *TPNW* strongly pressed the case for modern Chinese literature and conveyed his strong appreciation and understanding of its development, its innovative qualities and its finest writers. As this thesis has noted, that Acton was cut off from China during the war,

meant that his hopes for further ambitious translation projects were never fully realised even though he continued to write about aspects of Chinese culture from afar for many years after.

9.4 b) Lehmann's International Venture and English Literature

From the outset, this thesis has deliberately steered away from considering the stories in *TPNW*, in terms of whether or not they might be considered modernist (either as representative of Chinese or British modernisms). *TPNW* published a variety of aesthetic styles, genres and forms from around the world but the principal object of knowledge in this research has been how the Chinese stories in *TPNW* redrew China for the magazine's Anglophone readers, not the ways in which *TPNW* writers engaged with literary modernism.

There were certainly writers publishing in *TPNW* whose works have been defined as modernist (Henry Green is just one example) and, as *TPNW* was published throughout the late 1940s traditional literary chronology places it in a literary period often defined as late-modernist (in Britain). At its conclusion, this thesis runs somewhat counter to critical accounts of the literature of the 1940s, particularly the work of Jed Esty and Marina Mackay, who identify a diminution (rather than decline) of Britain in the post-war national consciousness and writers' aesthetic responses to this.⁹¹⁰ Esty's work, as MacKay summarises, 'identifies in the late work of the canonical modernist writers Forster, Eliot and Woolf an "anthropological turn", an interest in Englishness as just one culture among others (rather than as the universal culture)'.⁹¹¹ For Esty this inward, or 'Anglocentric turn' was one whereby the modernist generation 'absorbed the potential energy of a contracting British state and converted it into the language not of aesthetic

⁹¹⁰ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island, Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Marian MacKay *Modernism in World War II* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁹¹¹ MacKay, *Modernism in WWII*, p 17.

decline but of cultural revival'.⁹¹² Along somewhat similar lines, MacKay concludes about writing during WWII, that 'late modernism saw diminution as an aspiration rather than a form of political retreat'.⁹¹³

Focussing mainly on canonical modernist writers Esty's study traces England's 'historical shift from a cosmopolitan to a provincial literary culture' although, towards the conclusion he notes that second-generation modernists (he names Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell and to an extent W.H Auden) had a very different aesthetic response.⁹¹⁴ Esty states that while Woolf et al could be described as 'cultural revivalists' the others (Greene et al) take a bleaker view, 'typically associated with the ebb of British power'.⁹¹⁵ While several of these second generation modernists, whom Esty comments took 'imperial decline to imply national decline' were published by Lehmann, his own approach could not be described as inward looking, or Anglocentric.

⁹¹⁶

Esty equally acknowledges that if 'there was an Anglocentric and anthropological turn among intellectuals beset on remaking England into a knowable community, it was a largely discursive event'.⁹¹⁷ So, what of Lehmann's part in the conversation? Throughout this period, Lehmann steadfastly published and promoted the works of foreign writers and held them up alongside the works by British and a great number of other world literatures, as equals. Lehmann continued to do this well into the post-war period. As one of the most successful literary editors in operation, his approach to literature is surely significant. Lehmann's approach could not be described as entirely inwards looking, or Anglocentric. More than that, Lehmann looked beyond the pantheon of Western modernism, which Shu-Mei Shi is among the critics to note 'usually systematically denied a membership ... to the non-White non-West'.⁹¹⁸ And, as

⁹¹² Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, p. 19 and p. 8.

⁹¹³ MacKay, *Modernism in WWII*, p. 156.

⁹¹⁴ Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, p. 225.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid* p. 215.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid*.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 165.

⁹¹⁸ Shu-mei-Shi, *The Lure of the Modern, Writing Modernism in Semi-Colonial China 1917 - 1937* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001) p. 2.

Battershill notes in her appraisal of *NW*, that present-day scholarly attention to the global nature of literary modernity was ‘prefigured by deliberate moves by people like Lehmann to conceive of literary cultures across national borders’.⁹¹⁹ He was ahead of his time.

9.5 The Bridges Crumble

By 1949, *TPNW* was in its final year of publication, and the ‘bridges’ - those who had translated, interpreted and written about China for Lehmann and who had been the main support for his China venture had largely moved on. Acton had returned to Italy, Xiao and Ye either had or would shortly return to China and Lo put his literary aspirations aside and opened a business selling prints of Chinese fine art, although he remained in Britain. *TPNW* too was in its final stretch as circulation figures in the post-war period slumped and the final issue was published in 1950. The beginning of the People’s Republic of China, marked in Britain and for Lehman and *TPNW*, the end of a decade of open-minded inquiry and brotherliness between the networks of writers and editors which this thesis has appraised. It would be 30 years before such literary friendships could be reignited.

But the legacy of these writers, their instincts as interpreters of the East for the West remain. Ye, is today best remembered as the translator of Hans Christian Anderson, Xiao Qian, with his wife, translated *Ulysses*, Harold Acton continued to produce a significant body of work in relation to China. Lo too, was able to position himself as an expert of Chinese cooking and his career blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s, when the renewed interest in China in the West extended to wanting to cook and eat Chinese food. Their careers suggest that these writers remained committed to a better understanding between East and West throughout their lives. And if Lehmann’s legacy in relation to his China venture in *TPNW*, is to be summed up, it is to conclude

⁹¹⁹ Battershill, ‘This Intimate Object: Imagining the World of John Lehmann’s *New Writing*’, p. 99.

that in 1940s Britain, he (and only a handful of other editors and publishers) had realised that, to quote Lu Xun:

“It is always better for the Chinese to write about Chinese subject matter, as that is the only way to get near the truth.”⁹²⁰

⁹²⁰ Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman*, p 169. Hsu is citing Lu Xun from Hilary Spurling, *Burying the Bones: Pearl Buck in China* (London: Profile Books, 2010) p 216 - 217.

Appendix A

Penguin (Fiction) Books Relating to China (1930s, 40s and 50s)

Author	Title	Year of Publication
Acton, Harold	<i>Peonies & Ponies</i>	1950
Beauclerk, Helen	<i>The Green Lacquer Pavillion</i>	1937
Bramah, Ernest	<i>The Wallet of Kai Lung</i>	1936 (Bodley Head)
Bramah, Ernest	<i>Kai Lung Unrolls his Mat</i>	1937
Bramah, Ernest	<i>Kai Lung's Golden Hours</i>	1938
Bridge, Ann	<i>Peking Picnic</i>	1938
Bridge, Ann	<i>The Ginger Griffin</i>	1951
Hsiung, Shih-I	<i>Lady Precious Stream</i> (the play was published with Ronald Gow's <i>Gallows Glorious</i> and Gordon Daviot's <i>Richard of Bordeaux</i>)	1958
Linklater, Eric	<i>Juan in China</i>	1958
Maugham, Somerset	<i>The Painted Veil</i>	1952
Merwin, Samuel	<i>Silk: A Legend</i>	1942
Rohmer, Sax	<i>The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu</i>	1938 (Crime Series)
Suyin, Han	<i>A Many Splendoured Thing</i>	1959
Suyin, Han	<i>Destination Chungking</i>	1959
Welch, Denton	<i>Maiden Voyage</i>	1954
West, Keith	<i>Ma Wei Slope: A Novel of the T'ang Dynasty</i>	1954
Wherry, Edith	<i>The Wanderer on A Thousand Hills</i>	1940

Penguin Children's Books, Puffin and other imprints (1930s, 40s, 50s)

Chi, Tsui (illustration by Carolyn Jackson)	<i>The Story of China</i>	1945
Haslund, Henning	<i>Tents in Mongolia</i>	1943
Yee, Chiang	<i>Lo Cheng, the Boy Who Wouldn't Sit Still</i>	1942
Yee, Chiang	<i>The Story of Ming</i>	1944

Pelicans (Non-Fiction, 1930s, 40s, 50s)

Latourette, Kenneth Scott	<i>A History of Modern China</i>	1954
Galbraith, Winifred	<i>The Chinese</i>	1942
Liu, Wu-Chi	<i>A Short History of Confucian Philosophy</i>	1955
Willetts, William	<i>Chinese Art Vols 1 & 2</i>	1958

Penguin Specials (1930s, 40s, 50s)

Pringle, J.M.D	<i>China Struggles for Unity</i>	1939
Mowrer, Edgar Ansel	<i>Mowrer in China</i>	1938
Woodman, Dorothy	<i>An A.B.C of the Pacific</i>	1942
Thompson, P.W, Doud, Harold and Schofield, John	<i>How the Jap Army Fights</i>	1943

Travel Writing (1930s, 40s, 50s)

Kingdon Ward, F	<i>The Land of the Blue Poppy - Travels of a Naturalist in Eastern Tibet</i>	1941
David-Neel, Alexandra	<i>My Journey to Lhasa</i>	1940

Please note this list is not exhaustive. It was used in the preliminary stages of this research.

The Rake's Progress : The Novelist

By RONALD SEARLE



1. **ADVENT** Son of a North Country tailor. Writes authentic novel in dialect on the backs of old envelopes between teabreaks. Sacked.



2. **TRIUMPH** Book published. Immediate Success. Acclaimed Fyfes Literary Luncheon. Mobbed in W.H. Smith's, Clapham



3. **GLORY** Second novel chosen as Book at Bedtime. Bats for Authors at National Book League Cricket match. Stage rights of 1st book bought for Wilfred Pickles



4. **TEMPTATION** Name unfamiliar to John Lehmann at PEN Club party. Thenceforth tormented by desire to get into New Writing. Moves to Paris



5. **DOWNFALL** Critical analysis of J.P. Sartre rejected by London Magazine and Encounter. Sales of third novel sink to 750 copies*
* Including British Commonwealth



6. **RUIN** Psychopathic treatment for Schizophrenia. Emigrates to Australia. Revered

Appendix B

Punch magazine, 'The Rake's Progress: The Novelist', by Ronald Searle, 28 April 1954.

Appendix C

The *New Writing* series dates, number of publications and publishers (below):

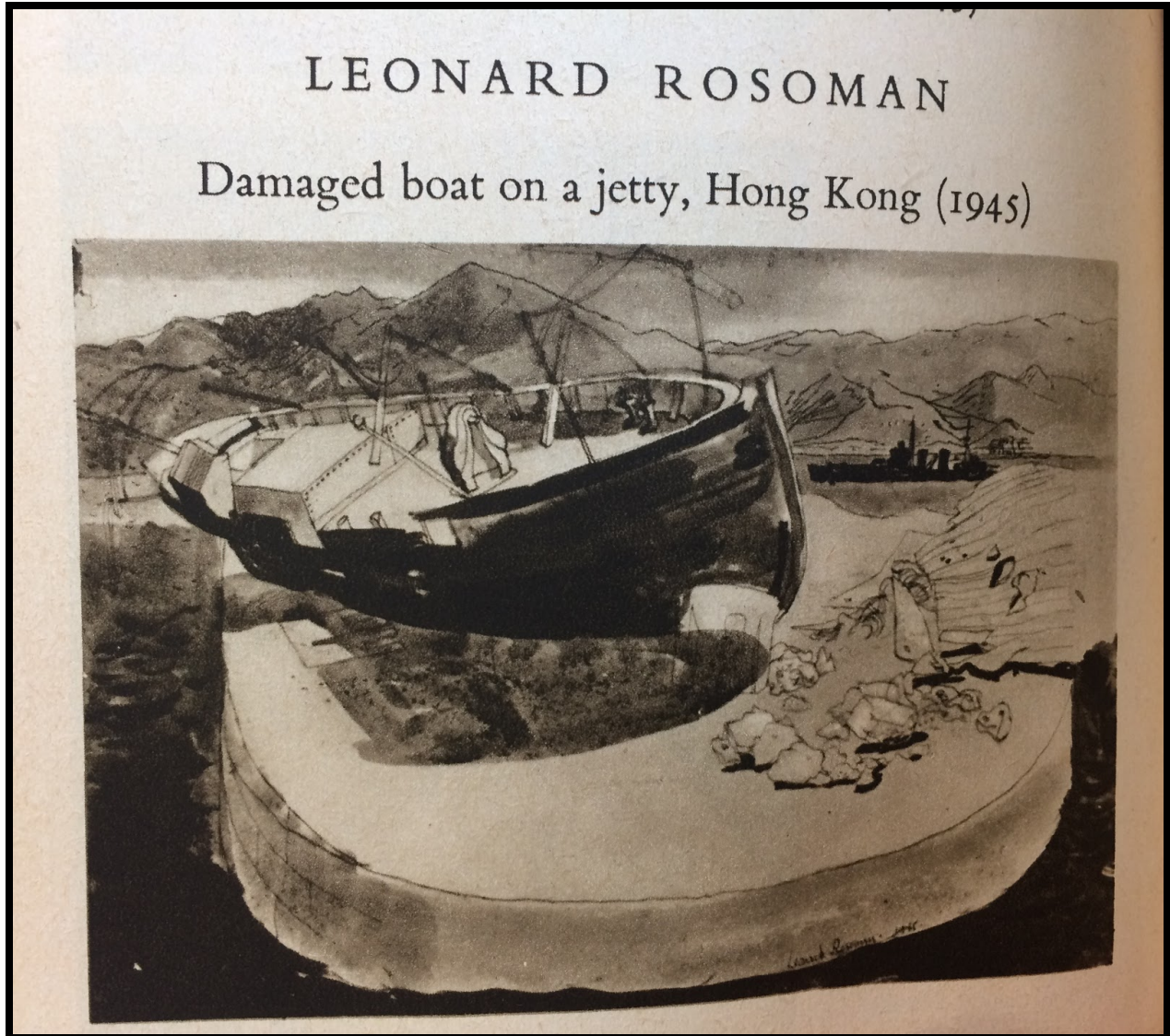
<i>New Writing</i>	(Spring 1936-Spring 1938)	5 Issues
<i>New Writing</i> (new series)	(Autumn 1938-Christmas 1939)	3 Issues
<i>Folios of New Writing</i>	(Spring 1940-Autumn 1941)	4 Issues
<i>Daylight</i>	(1941)	1 Issues
<i>New Writing and Daylight</i>	(Summer 1942 - 1946)	7 Issues
<i>The Penguin New Writing</i>	(1940 -1950)	40 Issues

The Publishers:

<i>New Writing</i> 1 & 2	John Lane, The Bodley Head
<i>New Writing</i> 3 & 4	Lawrence & Wishart
<i>New Writing & Daylight</i>	John Lehmann
<i>The Penguin New Writing</i>	Penguin Books
All other volumes	The Hogarth Press

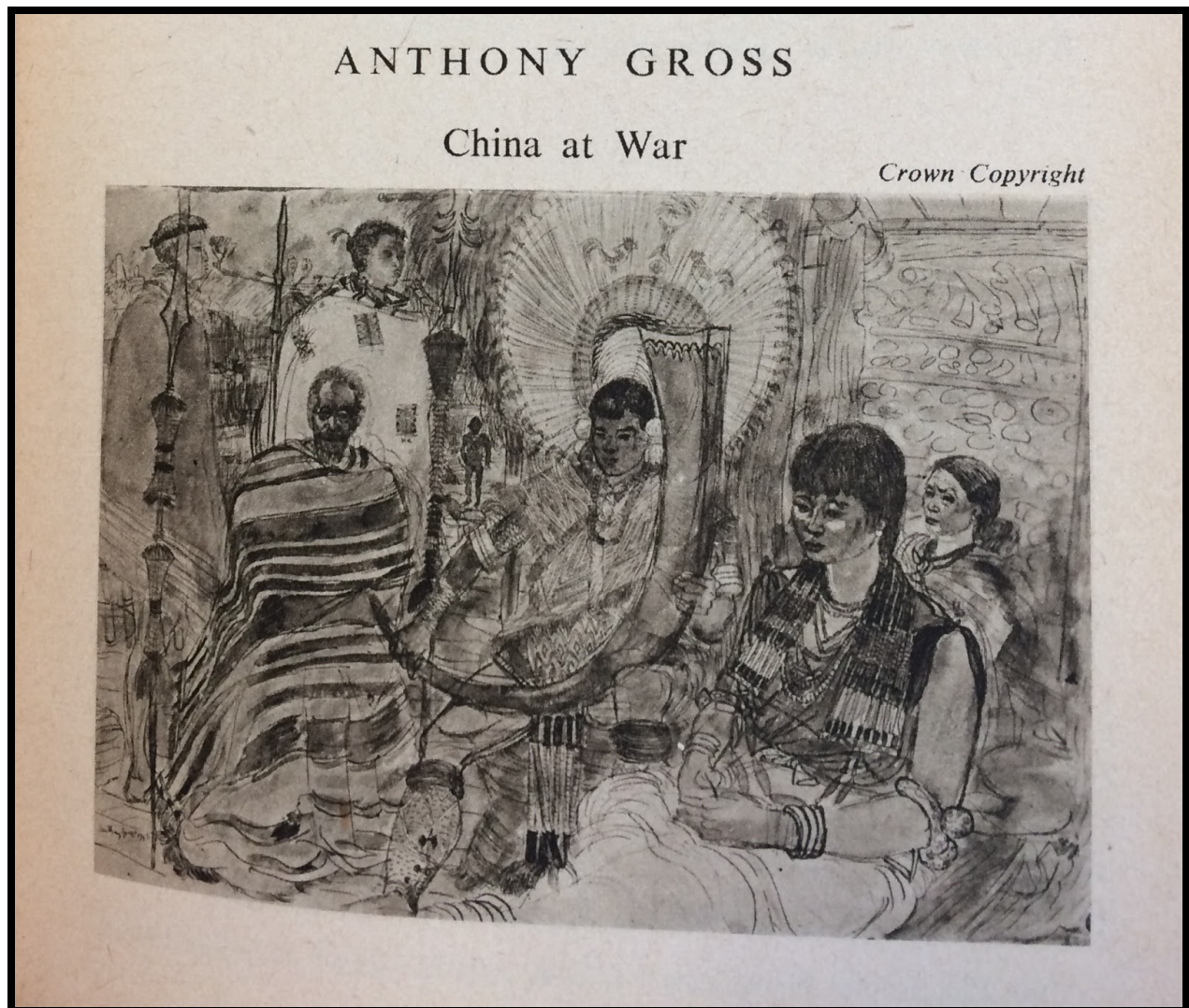
Appendix D

Leonard Rossoman 'Damaged Boat on a Jetty, Hong Kong' (*TPNW* 28, 1946)



Anthony Gross, 'China at War' (TPNW 29, 1946, published in 1947)

This painting was mis-labelled. It is from the collection 'Chins at War'.



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 Harry Ransom Center
 Kew Archive
 King's College, Cambridge
 London Metropolitan Archives
 Penguin Books Archive, Bristol
 Smithsonian

Beineke

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Harry Ransom Center

1937

Typed letter from Lehmann to Snow dated 5 June 1937 (HRC/Lehmann/Snow).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Jack Chen (% Donald Kitchin) dated 30 December 1937 (HRC/Lehmann/Chen).

1938

Typed letter from Lehmann to J. Alexander dated 22 December 1938
(HRC/Lehmann/Alexander).

1939

Typed Letter from Lehmann to Wen Yuan-ning dated 15 February 1939
(HRC/Lehmann/Wen Yuan-ning).

Typed Letter from Cicio Mar to Lehmann dated 9 August 1939 in the (HRC/Lehann/Yeh
Chun-chan/Cicio Mar).

Typed letter from Donald Allen to Lehmann dated 10 November 1939
(HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

Typed letter from Allen (Donald) to Lehmann, dated 29 December 1939
(HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

Hand-written letter from Ye to Lehmann, dated 12 February 1934
(HRC/Lehmann/Ye/C.C Yeh). This letter is almost certainly mis-dated as it refers to an
article that was sent in 1939 and the letter was almost certainly sent in that year too

Telegram from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar), undated and C/O *Literature Monthly* in Hong
Kong. The date is almost certainly the end of 1939 or early 1940
(HRC/Lehmann/Ye/CCYeh/Cicio Mar).

1940

Typed letter from Lehmann to Allen (Donald) dated 11 January 1940
(HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar), this letter is entirely undated but is
probably from January 1940 (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

Letter from Gollancz to Lehman, dated 18 March 1940 (HRC/Lehmann/Gollancz).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar) dated 1 November 1940
(HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

1941

Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton dated 23 February 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

Handwritten letter from Acton to Lehmann, dated 19 February 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye (Cicio Mar), dated 4 April 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Ye/Cicio Mar).

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Handwritten letter from Xiao to Lehmann, un-dated except for 'Sunday' but it is almost certainly 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao (Hsiao Chien)).

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Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien) to Lehmann, dated 27 April 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

Typed letter from Ye to Lehmann, dated 21 May 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

Typed letter from Ye to Lehmann, dated 19 September 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

Handwritten letter from Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien) to Lehmann, dated 22 October 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

Typed letter from Woodman to Lehmann dated 27 October 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/Woodman/CCC).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, dated 10 December 1941 (HRC/Lehmann/CCYeh).

1942

Typed letter from Lehmann to Donald M. Allen (at the University of Wisconsin, USA) dated 30 January. No year is provided but it is probably 1942 or 1943. The letter lists the four stories that Lehmann published from the original MSS of twenty. (HRC/Lehmann/Allen).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Acton, 21 January, (HRC/Lehmann/Acton). No year is supplied on the original but I would suggest 1942 as it appears to be a response to Acton's letter to Lehmann dated Sunday, January 1942.

Typed letter from Lo to Lehmann dated 17 February 1942 (HRC/Lehmann/Xiao Qian). Note this letter had been mis-filed in the archive under Xiao Qian as Lo's name in Wade/Giles romanization is almost identical to Xiao Qian's (ie: Lo Hsiao Chien).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Ye, dated 5 March 1942 (HRC/Lehmann/CCY).

Typed letter from Lehmann to Allen (Donald) dated 3 June 1942 (HRC/Lehmann/Donald Allen).

Handwritten airmail letter from Acton to Lehmann dated 14 November 1942 (HRC/Lehmann/Acton).

1943

Typed letter from Lehmann to Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien), dated 17 November 1943 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

Typed letter from Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien) to Lehmann, dated 19 November 1943 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

Hand-written Letter from Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien) to Lehmann, dated 9 December 1943 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

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1944

Typed letter from Xiao Qian (Hsiao Ch'ien) to Lehmann, dated 5 April 1944 (HRC/Lehmann/Hsiao Ch'ien).

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1945

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1948

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