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A study of Cranf 1927: Woo Kwang Kien and Translation-cultural Capital

LISU WANG

Introduction

Before she was introduced to Chinese readers, Elizabeth Gaskell as a renowned writer had been a household name in England, America and other European countries, earning enough cultural capital, setting the stage for her canonization in other countries. Her novels offer a detailed portrait of the lives of many strata of Victorian society, with a wide range from the very poor to upper-class. Although Victorian England has been well known for the flowering of women writings and the birth of distinguished women writers in large numbers, the studies, for a long period, were confined to a few canonical women writers including George Elliot, Charlotte Brontë and the like. Gaskell had been highly regarded in the Victorian literary world, and yet her great significance to British literature has not been fully confirmed until this century when her readership expanded to far Eastern countries.

In China, the research on Gaskell can be roughly divided into two stages: 1921-1983 and 1984-present. In the beginning, scholars focused on the translation of Gaskell's works and her personal life and career as a woman writer, and it was not until the 1980s that her works received the attention of Chinese literary critics. In the early twentieth century, Liang Qichao and a group of progressive people, under the influence of advanced foreign ideas, tried to "wake up" people through the introduction of Western literature and to improve the political system and promote the development of China. Under the influence of this trend, China has set off an upsurge in translating Western literature. From 1912, entering an era of the Republic of China history, the country underwent a period of intense collision and integration between Eastern and Western cultures, which was also the first prosperous time of modern academic development. Gaskell's works came into the sight of Chinese people in that context. During this period, the first novel which attracted Chinese translators was Gaskell's Cranford. As early as 1921 Shanghai Taidong published the translation of Cranford under the title of The Kingdom of Women, translated by Lin Jiashu. At the time of Woo Kwang Kien's publishing and translating Cranf in 1927 the May 4th New Literature Movement was having a strong influence. An important "new" feature of the movement lay in the application of modern Chinese, but the modern Chinese at that time was actually a vernacular with obvious westernization. Advocates of new literature intended to transform Chinese by introducing westernized language, in order to expand the expression and influence of the Chinese language. Afterwards, other Cranford versions as well as three short stories published during this period, 1929 Cousin Phillis, 1929 Hand and Heart, 1931 The Old Nurse's Story, and 1937 Women's Forbidden City (Cranford), all bearing this similar language feature, which greatly helped Chinese readers to understand a foreign writer's works. Among them, the import and translation of the semi-Gothic The Old Nurse's Story also marked an orientation transfer in the publishing market: from politic-controlled to market-orientated, following the popular editorial policy in the 1930s, to deal with "ghosts and demons" and to

view the magazine as the purveyor of superficial popular entertainment; because the strange stories from overseas are somewhat paralleled with a similar genre in traditional Chinese literature with a ready audience. At present, though the academic circle has been involved in the translation and acceptance of foreign literature in the early twentieth century, the quantity of indepth and specific case studies is still small, and there is a lack of interpretation of the modern value of these historical resources. So, the situation is undoubtedly not conducive to following academic research and literary innovations beyond history. As the initial flourishing stage of foreign literature in China, this period has such special significance that if we do not understand and sort it out, it will affect the accuracy of future academic reviews as well as research history.

Scrutinizing the existing literary research on *Cranford*, we can find there has been comparatively little study concerning its early Chinese translations, especially to see Woo's version as one of the earliest critics that also portends how Chinese readers gradually accept this British writer over the past century. Woo's biography and the historic background of his *Cranf*, therefore, are as significant as a comparative study among important versions of *Cranford* in Chinese. Hence, this essay will attempt to fill in the gap by interpreting Gaskell's translations as both translation and literary criticism. Interestingly, the prefaces of the early Chinese translations of Gaskell are important platforms for readers to learn who is Gaskell as an introduction and also for the critics to present their opinions both on the woman writer and her writings, even though some later translations do not even possess a preface.

In addition to the main narrative, there are three elements respectively playing important roles in the translation of Gaskell's works: preface, translator's notes and sometimes, an added summary at end of each chapter. For example, in the 1927 translation, Cranf, Woo introduced in the preface Gaskell's lifetime and works in detail and praised her for being especially good at describing trivial matters, and this judgment has laid the foundation for Chinese research focus on the narrative techniques in *Cranford* till nowadays. "Gaskell is especially praised by Charles Dickens, T·Carlyle and W·S·Landor," Woo says, "and she attains to the perfection of easy, natural and unaffected English narratives," which is similar to the Chinese novel Rulin waishi— Unofficial History of the Scholars (儒林外史). Rulin waishi, authored by Wu Jingzi in the 1750s during the Oing dynasty, is a vernacular classic of Chinese literature that satirizes scholars in the Ming dynasty. Such comparison sets the tone for Woo's comments in the body part in his *Cranf*. Whereas in his preface to the 1937 Zhu Manhua's version, The Forbidden City for Women (Appendix A), Wang Tiran further pointed out that compared with Austen who uses light materials and Eliot who features more serious topics, Gaskell's writing and style are a compromise between them ("except for Mary Barton, the woman writer's maiden work"). So, Wang believed that Gaskell played a connecting role in the Victorian era of British women writers. In addition to the above comparison between Gaskell and her peer women writers, next to help his Chinese readers to better understand the book Wang suggested a contrasting reading between Cranford and another Chinese classic, A Dream of Red Mansions, since "the story is a broadly humorous satire," which is "neither sentimental nor easy," and very different from traditional Chinese legendary romantic tales. In the preface for the short story *The Old Nurse's*

Story translated and published in the middle of the two Cranford versions in 1931, the translator Liang Yuchun who is also an eminent scholar, compares Gaskell with Charles Dickens again, summarizing that while they are both depicting the low-class people, Dickens always tries to be funny and Gaskell is more faithful to the reality. Yet the reality described by her is not so cruel because of her soft and delicate tones. (Liang's comment: "Gaskell is the first British woman novelist who depicts the life of the poor in a very vivid way, and she has created very wonderful novels in which she boldly portraits the conditions of industrial workers...Gaskell pays her female observation and consideration to speak for the poor and the ordinary"). Liang further introduces that Gaskell's most famous works are Mary Barton, and North and South, but he particularly thinks that *The Old Nurse's Story* is another great success in, for the first time, describing a maid's feelings. Therefore, Liang Gaskell's main achievement lies in her sympathy for the poor, and more importantly, in her wisdom and keen observation as a woman writer. However, in this paper I would like to argue that, in addition to these prefaces above, the "translation cum criticism" in Woo's Cranf should be deemed as one of the earliest critics on Gaskell in China too, due to the various roles played by the translator in this version. Unlike Xu (1985) who uses the mature modern Chinese language and is a professional translator, Woo adopted the kind of language that was still in development and his successful translator's notes have made the 1927 version more well-received when compared with Zhu's (1937). That is why I believe Woo's Cranf deserves a careful study at present.

The import of foreign literature commenced from the late-19th-century "Westernization Movement" (洋务运动) in Qing dynasty, after the New Culture Movement between 1915 and 1923, with the goal of reforming the political system in China. From around 1930, with the enhancement of democracy consciousness, translations of foreign literary works began to flourish, and the literature of Victorian writers started to appear regularly. Under the influence of this ideological trend, China witnessed an upsurge in translating Western literature. It is under this background Gaskell entered the Chinese people's vision. During this period, Cranford firstly attracted the attention of Chinese translators: as early as 1921, Taidong Publishing House in Shanghai had issued Lin Jiashu's translation of Cranford—The Women's Kingdom in Classical Chinese. The novel was translated by Woo Kwang Kien and Zhu Manhua in 1927 and 1937 respectively, each under the titles of Cranf and The Forbidden City for Women. Among them the 1927 version of *Cranford* was published by such an authoritative press—the Commercial Press, which might be one of the reasons why it received much attention from the audience from then till today. But there is more to explore in understanding modern readers' fondness for this edition as it has been reprinted so many times later, even by Joint Publishing House in a collection in 2018. Advocates of new literature intend to transform Chinese by introducing westernized language, in order to expand the expression and influence of the Chinese language (Zhang 2017, 11). In summary, during this period, Gaskell's translation works include:

- 1921, Cranford, the Kingdom of Women, Lin Jiashu, Taidong Publishing House.
- 1927, Cranf, Kwang Kien Wooo, The Commercial Press.
- 1937, Women's Forbidden City, Qiming Bookstore.

1929, *Cousin Phillis*, Xu Zhuoli, Chunchao Bookstore. 1929, *Hand and Heart*, Hu Zhongchi, Modern Book Store. 1931, *The Old Nurse's Story*, Liang Yuchun, Beixin Bookstore.

Cranf 1927 by Woo Kwang Kien

Since according to the National Library of China, the earliest 1921 version of Cranford-the Kingdom of Women by Taidong Publishing House is currently not available for readership because the existing copy is too fragile and not complete, my reading starts with the 1927 version *Cranf* published by the Commercial Press. Generally speaking, this 1927 translation might have been popular at the particular period for the following reasons. At first, the Commercial Press established in Shanghai is a major force behind the early-twentieth-century boom in the publication of works: translated, reworked, or original foreign literature in particular. Secondly, Gaskell is not traditionally deemed as a "progressive" in Western culture, especially since some Cranford ideals echo ancient Chinese Confucianism positively. Moreover, the translator Woo is a compromise himself. At that time, there were mainly two literary trends in China: the traditional Chinese scholars firmly believed in the moral burden of intellectual practices, or say, Confucian values, so they preferred to reframe foreign works in a Confucian context and to rediscover traditional Chinese values. While the other group, some progressive literal societies advocated for a fundamental intellectual rejuvenation—they had been influenced by the enlightenment and rationalism trends, which is also called "total westernization" (Huang 65). Woo's translation perfectly mediates these two ideas, which can be seen from both the linguistic characteristics of his translation and the translator's notes in *Cranf*.

It is widely accepted that the manipulation of ideology (like Confucianism) as well as the ever-changing nature and development of communication media can affect the reception of the translated texts. In the case of Cranford studies, the influence of ideology firstly manifests in those versions' different linguistic characteristics. With the differences between westernized vernacular Chinese and mature modern Chinese, the three Cranford versions show the development of the modern Chinese language: Woo Kwang Kien's Cranf in 1927, Zhu Manhua's the Forbidden City for Women in 1937, and 1985 Xu Xin's version published with the original name Cranford. As viewed from the overall result, Woo's and Zhu's translations are rich both in classical Chinese elegance and Western style, embracing deep personal emotions, while Xu's shows well-developed Chinese language quality. As to the representation of the original linguistic features, Woo's and Zhu's translations partly translate the original text as the early modern Chinese that is full of expressions with Western characteristics. On the other hand, Xu's version with authentic modem Chinese and flexible approaches, represents Gaskell's linguistic features in a perfect way. As far as the character images are concerned, Woo's translation sees the greatest changes, Zhu's comparatively less and Xu's the least. This comparison shows that social and cultural contexts can impose a great influence on the strategies taken by translators when translating foreign literary works; so it is crucial to examine the cultural capital of Woo when we read the 1927 Cranf.

Woo Kwang Kien and Translation-cultural Capital

Being the founder of China's early translation and education, Woo's emphasis on the readers' receptive ability and enlightenment in bilingual expression is commendable. As the earliest Chinese *Cranford* version in existence, the historical value and research value of Woo's *Cranf* cannot be denied, yet previous studies on Woo and his translations seem to neglect it. His translation method in *Cranf* reflects the idea of westernization in the Chinese translation circle at that time. The Chinese language has changed through time, which is inevitably demonstrated in Woo's translation: the language in *Cranf* has the characteristics of the vernacular language that has not yet been completely evolved. But critics believe this feature precisely appealed to the aesthetic orientation of readers at that time, since history has given different characteristics to the language in different periods. They also argue that literary works, especially those classic works, will constantly produce new translations to meet the requirements of readers in different times, and at the same time, it will in turn promote the continuous development of translation. That Woo's *Cranf* has satisfied the aesthetic needs of its audience showcased his linguistic ability in an era of language transition, which in turn also makes that translated text a valuable material in history and literature studies.

The idea of the May 4th New Literature Movement is embodied in Woo's translation, which is a straightforward literal translation under Lu Xun's idea of "translate the original meaning as it is, do not tempt to sacrifice credibility for textual fluency" (Wu 12). As a person who lived in this era and was deeply influenced by the movement, Woo naturally could not avoid the influence in his translation, and that also determined the objective existence of this westernized language characteristic in his translation. However, Woo is more famous for his adaptation of a more flexible strategy, which includes a combination of both free translation (sense-for-sense-translation) and literal translation (word-for-word translation). Nowadays a translator advocates that the use of free translation can not only faithfully convey the ideological content of the original work to the readers, but also accurately restore and reproduce the artistic style of the original work in the translation, even better reconstruct the artistic conception of the original work and reproduce the verve of the original work; while literal translation enables many unique foreign cultural points in the original work to be preserved, the translation can also reflect the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, achieve the aims of reproducing foreign cultures, and enhance understanding and promote the exchanges between the East and the West.

A translator's starting point in the translating field is called "cultural capital" by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Forms of Capital*, and it is closely related to the translator's motive, social trajectory, and choice and strategy. The manipulation of cultural capital is the process when the translator or/and the patronage employs the materials to be translated and their translation strategies in order to reproduce culture in the target language and pursue the acceptance and profit of translations (Xiao 52). This provides a new angle to elucidate the interactive relationship between translation behavior and cultural capital. Using Bourdieu's social theory,

Xiao Xian discusses the manipulation process of the cultural capital elements in the translation industry, which particularly coincides with early translators of foreign works (53).

Woo's educational background, overseas studies, and his experience as a government commissioner in Europe, America, Japan and other countries constituted his cultural capital. Cultural capital, in turn, contributes to the formation of the translator's habits. Woo's flexible translation strategy is first and foremost, attributed to his solid writing skills. He came from a poor family and studied in a private school in his hometown in Canton Province when he was a child. In his youth, Woo was enrolled in Tianjin Beiyang Naval Academy and lived on the boarding fees provided by the school. In 1886, recommended by his teacher Yan Fu, Woo was sent to Greenwich Royal Naval College to study shipping administration with excellent scores. After graduating, he went to the University of London for further study and finally returned to China in 1892. During his stay in England, Woo became interested in Western literature, philosophy and history.

After being recalled to China, Woo wrote a letter to thank his tutor Karl Pearson, which says:

I will ever be grateful to you for your instructions &c; & am proud to say that though I have been with you for a comparatively short period, yet I feel I am a good deal wiser...In the future I will devote some time to natural Philosophy, & hope you will not be surprised to find, someday, your old pupil ask for your help from thousands of miles away. (Appendix B)

He goes on to relate details of his journey passing through Paris, and sailing from Marseilles, before telling Pearson that his voyage will take him through the Suez Canal:

I will pay particular attention to the tides & see how far they agree with the 'Theory of Long Waves in Shallow Water.' (Appendix B)

From this letter we can get some insight into how Woo is well versed in many different fields of study. Woo bears a fascinating character—quite articulate, cosmopolitan, gently humorous, but also very keenly intellectual. The letter shows him as an intelligent translator combining skills and training in many different areas, which then went on to shape his approach to cultural translation.

After returning home, Woo taught at his alma mater and conducted in-depth research on the history of ancient Chinese literature and philosophy. In 1911 with Zhang Yuanji, Woo established the China Education Association in Shanghai. Zhang is the founder of the Commercial Press, and he greatly encouraged Woo in translating foreign literature (Bi 15). Till the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, Woo served as a consultant to the Ministry of Finance and started to work as a public officer, yet he remained keen on translation. Over the next decades, Woo presided over translating and writing a series of teaching materials on advanced subjects such as electricity, acoustics, optics, mechanics and magnetism. His detailed

and accurate translations have won high praise from the industry and led to a large number of publications, due to his valuing of the readers' receptive ability and enlightenment in bilingual expression. For instance, to prevent readers from feeling bored when reading, he omitted and changed some text to avoid typical word-for-word translation. Furthermore, Woo tried not to alienate the readers who were still loyal to classical Chinese literary works by subtly integrating ancient and beautiful Chinese poems into his translation works, so those readers had a chance to accept new things and thus greatly opened up the eyes of some scholar-officials who used to indulge in the splendid culture of ancient China.

The 1927 Cranf was not Woo's first translation of foreign literary work. His primary success was his 1907 version of *The Three Musketeers* (Xia Yin Ji 侠隐记) by Alexandre Dumas, which is now called a pioneering work in the May 4th vernacular movement (Bi 107). Many scholars advocated Woo's *The Three Musketeers* not only due to his language usage, but also his indifferent attitude to political and utilitarian circles: he is totally reader-oriented and does not cater to the main ideology of political orientation. Mao Dun, a famous Chinese writer, spoke highly of Woo's translation. In 1924 and 1926, Mao segmented and added comments and punctuations to Woo's The Three Musketeers version in order to conform it to the new reading habits. This version was quickly recognized by readers, and then reprinted and issued by the Commercial Press as supplementary reading materials for public schools' textbooks, as was Woo's version of Jane Eyre. Mao suggested that despite the omissions and changes in Woo's books, the main characters in the original texts were preserved, and sometimes the translation was even more concise and lively than the original, which made it more accessible for general readers (Deng 20). Hu Shi, who later became the Minister of Education, agreed with Mao, saying that "the vernacular language used by Woo is not the ones from the old novels, but a special vernacular that can best convey the manners of the original book...its value is one hundred times higher than Lin Shu's translations... therefore I admire his most" (21). Such praise became famous in the translation circle at that time. There were many criticisms and comments on Woo's translation language and methods in reviews, newspapers and periodicals from 1920 to 1945, reflecting his great influence at that time. But some opponents pointed out some disadvantages too, accusing Woo's translation of "avoiding difficulties, reducing complexity to simplicity, not understanding the original text in total, and sometimes wrongly deleting translations" (Huang 109). However, the value of Woo's translation cannot be denied; since more and more scholars start to realize his significance in translation history, a collection of Woo's works has been reprinted in 2018.

A brief comparison of style: Woo's and other two Cranford versions

In general, the 1927 and 1937 versions symbolize the popularization of the vernacular and common spoken Chinese, i.e., the widely used "she" ("她"in modern Chinese) and a much richer usage of punctuation marks in the 1937 version. It is also interesting to notice the difference between vertical typesetting (in 1927 *Cranf* and the 1937 *Women's Forbidden City*) and horizontal typesetting (for example, in 1931 *The Old Nurse's Story*). Generally, the book design

in the Republic of China captures distinctive features of the time. With both new perspectives borrowed from the West and traditional Chinese elements, the format of a book is presented with the idea of typography. As in an important social transition period, the book format was gradually free from the traditional mode, showing different and phonemic forms in contemporary books. On the basis of the traditional vertical typesetting, sometimes the horizontal type or the combination of these two (see title page in 1929 *Cousin Phillis*, Appendix D) were used with increasing popularity, so that readers would be able to feel the culture of the age while gaining access to books and text (Lei ii). Yet both Woo (1927) and Zhu (1937 Appendix C) adopted the vertical typesetting, consistent with the format of traditional Chinese books, which resonates with the two translators' investment in reader's accessibility.

Using data from his quantitative analysis of different *Cranford* texts, Zhang Qi illustrates a trend of clarity in their styles. For example, the translated text in modern Chinese contains more explanatory words, such as "because," "due to," "lead to" and more conjunctions (Zhang 2013, 34). The increase of these connectives can be seen as an emphasis on the logical relationship between sentences, which helps readers to better understand the text and also explains a difference between the Chinese and English language: English sentences rely on connectives or prepositional phrases to show the relationship between sentences, while Chinese tend to hide the relationship between sentences. Another obvious change is the decrease in the use of personal pronouns in translated texts from English to Chinese both in quantity and frequency. According to the data, the number of personal pronouns in the Chinese versions fluctuates but decreases overall (34). This decrease is largely due to the translator's clarification of the characters referred to by personal pronouns, i.e., using clear and precise names to indicate the characters in translation. Zhang believes this choice clearly points out the characters and achieves the effect of clarity. The decrease is also reflected in the translation of kinship, such as when referred to Peter Jenkyns in the Women's Forbidden City, the English word "brother," which is mistakenly translated into "his" "elder brother" by Zhu Manhua (35) while Peter should be the "her" "younger brother."

As mentioned above, the preface, translator's notes, and summary of each chapter are three elements respectively playing important roles in the translation of foreign works. Since I have discussed the roles played by the use of a preface, particularly significant as a literary critic platform, more attention will be paid to the translator's notes hereafter. Woo's success *Cranf* largely lies in his linguistic characteristics and the translator's notes in *Cranf*. And I would also like to argue that given Woo's notes in *Cranf*, with his approach of "translation cum criticism," he should be deemed as one of the earliest critics of Gaskell in China.

The translator's notes and summary of each chapter are the greatest features in Woo's *Cranf*—the latter could be seen as a type of translator's notes. Woo has translated nearly 100 million words, but he never wrote a book to put forward his own view of translation (Deng 20). This is also an important reason why this prolific translator, who pioneered the vernacular translation field, has been marginalized in understanding the history of translation. But his

thoughts on translation are completely and systematically reflected in his unique translator's notes: they are not only translation and interpretation but are often supplements that explain the plot as well as some words in the text, and his literary criticism. This feature indicates Woo's multiple identities in the field of literary translation.

Usually, translators' notes are used to explain all information unfamiliar to the target language readers. The functions include: 1) helping readers to understand smoothly and deeply; 2) reminding readers of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures; 3) and showing the translator's carefulness. The total number of notes in the Chinese Cranford versions is gradually increasing and helps reflect the clarity of the translation. However, the uniqueness of Woo's translator's notes lies in its large number, which not only far exceeds the translators of his generation, but even surpasses Zhu's version that was published ten years later. His notes cover a wide range of topics, for example, interpretation of Western myths and legends, biblical stories, explanation of Western literary classics, and introduction to social customs, etc. As an accompanying text, the translator's notes are mainly guided by the readers' expectations and mainstream ideology, which may have some influence on the target readers' understanding of the original content and the author's intention. The above categories are used in every translated novel, but the boundaries between them are not clear, and a note often contains multiple usages. Previous scholars who only saw Woo's notes as supplementary interpretation of the text have listed out the following five kinds of translator's notes according to different objects: interpreting names and objects, allusions, culture, plot and specific words (Huang 109). Yet, mediating between Chinese Confucianism and "total westernization," Woo plays a more than ordinary role in his translator's notes.

Since Woo was one of the few translators who mainly adopted a literal translation method that is loyal to the original works and does not delete the text easily in the late Qing Dynasty, so he states in the notes any changes that needed to be made to the original works. In a word, Woo's translator's notes are an important means of translation supplement, with various functions. It can serve both readers and researchers and can also construct the translator's identity. These supplementary explanatory notes can greatly facilitate readers' understanding and reduce the difficulties caused by cultural differences. At the same time, the existence of the translator's notes also shows the translator's identity, actively participating in cultural mediation, thus establishing a bridge between readers and the original culture.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Cranf* published in 1927 offers modern readers an opportunity to understand the initial flourishing stage of foreign literature in China. Its translator Woo Kwang Kien, who has adopted "translation cum criticism" in this version, should be deemed as one of the earliest critics of Gaskell in China. Meanwhile, with Woo's cultural capital infused into his work, *Cranf* has satisfied the aesthetic needs of its audience, showcasing his linguistic ability in an era of language transition, which in turn also makes that translated text a valuable material in history

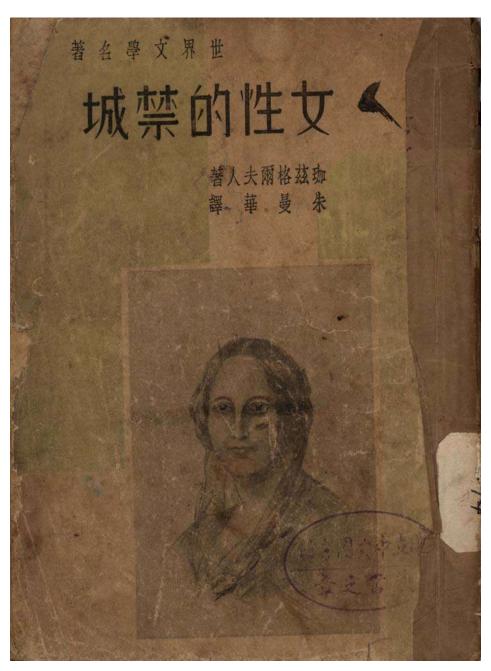
and literature studies. My future studies will also demonstrate Woo's notes in *Cranf* not only as a supplementary interpretation of the text, but also as his literary criticism, which leaves room for a more detailed categorization and analysis of the translator's notes.

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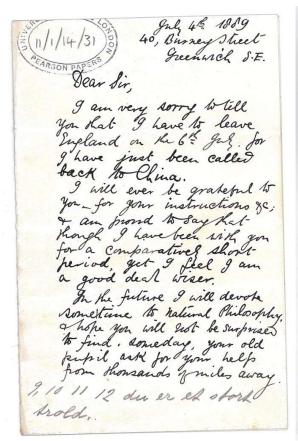
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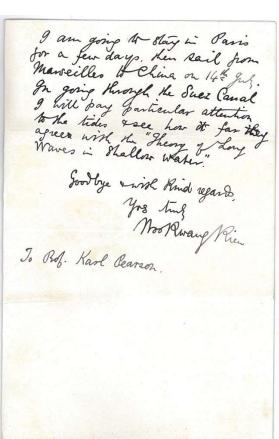
Appendices

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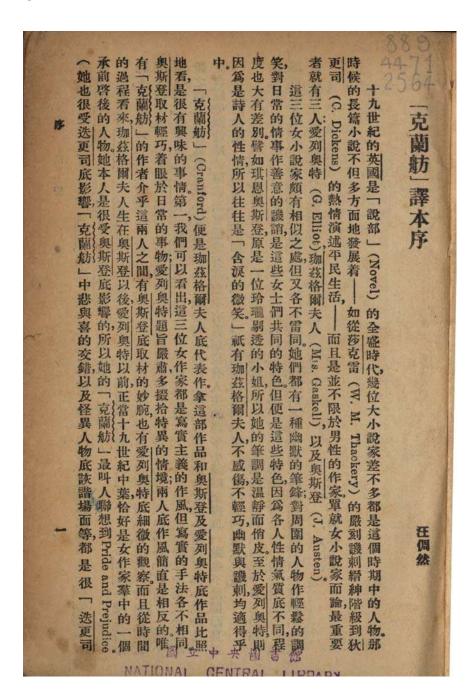
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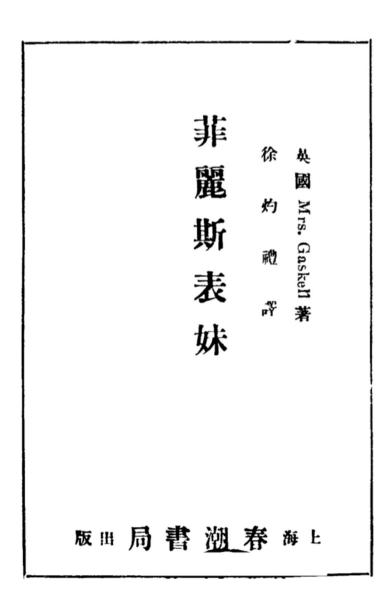


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