

New Frontiers in Translation Studies

Feng Cui  
Defeng Li *Editors*

# Medio-translatology

Concepts and Applications

 Springer

# **New Frontiers in Translation Studies**

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Defeng Li

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Editors

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*In memory of  
Professor Tianzhen Xie (1944–2020)*

# Contents

<b>Introduction: A Brief Account of Tianzhen Xie’s Journey with Medio-translatology</b> .....	1
Feng Cui and Defeng Li	
<b>Medio-translatology as An Approach of Translation Studies</b>	
<b>Medio-translatology and the Latest Development of Translation Studies in China</b> .....	13
Qiyi Liao	
<b>The Functions of Translations: Medio-translatology as a Paradigm</b> .....	27
Ying Zhang	
<b>The Chinese Context and Significance of Medio-Translatology</b> .....	39
Binghui Song	
<b>Comparative Literature Approach to Translation Studies</b> .....	49
Mingjian Zha	
<b><i>Yijie Xue</i> or Transcreation Studies: A Chinese Approach to the Study of Translation</b> .....	65
Shaobin He	
<b>“Creative Treason” as a Key to Medio-Translatology: Circulation and Controversies</b> .....	79
Hongjun Lan	
<b>Case Studies</b>	
<b>“Creative Treason” as Meaning Production: The Construction of Meaning Tunnels in Lin Shu’s Translation</b> .....	97
Xiaogang Liu	

**The Chinese Montesquieu in Yan Fu’s Translation of *The Spirit of Laws* ..... 111**  
Chiyuan Zhuang

**Understanding Lu Xun: A Cultural Probe into Lu Xun’s “Hard Translation” ..... 125**  
Feng Cui

**Translation of Charles Baudelaire in China from 1949 to 1976 ..... 147**  
Jiyong Geng



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# Introduction: A Brief Account of Tianzhen Xie's Journey with Medio-translatology



Feng Cui and Defeng Li

**Abstract** Medio-translatology, a theory of translated literature proposed by Tianzhen Xie, has been influential in translation studies in China over the past 30 years. This introductory chapter offers a brief account of the journey Xie took in his development of medio-translatology, so as to provide the essential background information needed for the reading and understanding of the ensuing chapters tackling various aspects of the theory.

**Keywords** Tianzhen Xie · Medio-translatology · Background information · Translation theory

Medio-translatology, a theory of translated literature proposed by Tianzhen Xie, has been influential in translation studies in China over the past 30 years. Together with the Variational Translation Theory (Huang and Zhang 2020) and Eco-Translatology (Hu 2020), it has generally been considered to be one of the three major translation theories developed in China by Chinese translation studies scholars in the twenty-first century. We, as editors of this volume, deem it highly desirable to introduce this theory to the translation studies community beyond the Chinese border and therefore have put together this collection of articles. In this introductory chapter, we thought it fitting to offer a brief account of the journey Xie took in his development of medio-translatology, so as to provide the essential background information needed for the reading and understanding of the ensuing chapters tackling various aspects of the theory.

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This introduction takes references from the preface of *A Translation Study Beyond Translation* (超越文本 超越翻译) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2014) written by Professor Tianzhen Xie.

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Professor Tianzhen Xie became interested in translation, especially literary translation, early in his career. He first got involved in translation during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) when he began translating internal documents for Shanghai Translation Publishing House without any recognition or monetary benefits; however, these documents were largely political and economic texts, having little to do with literature. Some translations he did during this period were later published in various academic journals. For instance, one of the economics papers he translated was published in *Zhai Yi* (摘译), an internally circulated journal published during the Cultural Revolution, while an essay commemorating Lenin was published in *Remembering Lenin* (回忆列宁) by the People's Press after the Cultural Revolution ended. The end of the Cultural Revolution also saw Xie returning to Shanghai International Studies University for his graduate studies. He later became a teacher in his alma mater and continued his interest in translation and rendered into Chinese many literary works, such as *A Collection of Pushkin's Essays* (普希金散文选), *The South American Way* (南美洲方式) and *the Sulphur Spring* (硫磺泉). It was only during the 1980s when Sihe Chen and Xiaoming Wang, two prominent Chinese literary critics, started a column *Rewriting the History of Literature* (重写文学史) in *Shanghai Literary Theory* (上海文论) that Xie began his attempt at researching (literary) translation. Chen and Xie developed a rather close collaborative relationship since then and gradually Xie adopted a unique perspective on the role of translation in Chinese literature. So, when Chen invited Xie to contribute an article on translation and literature, the latter wrote the article “Finding a Home for the Abandoned Child: on the Status of Translation in Modern Chinese Literature” (为“弃儿”找归宿——论翻译在中国现代文学史上的地位) (1989), the first-ever exploration of the issue of translated literature in the context of Chinese literary studies in China.

The article was widely discussed among Chinese scholars of translation studies as well as literary studies after its publication and *Baokan Wenzhai* (报刊文摘), an influential Chinese *Reader's Digest* claiming to have over a million readers, later even carried an article summarizing the discussions. It should be noted, however, that while the article itself was acclaimed, Xie's views on the status of translated literature were challenged. In response to the challenges and questions, he published over ten articles to explain, elaborate, and expand his views, including “The History of Translated Literature: Exploration and Practice” (翻译文学史: 探索与实践) (2013a), “Translated Literature is Part of Chinese Literature” (翻译文学当然是中国文学的组成部分) (1995), “On Creative Treason in Literary Translation” (论文学翻译的创造性叛逆) (1992), and “Translated Literature: A Literature to be Recognized” (翻译文学——争取承认的文学) (1990). Nevertheless, many scholars remained unconvinced that translated literature could be considered as a part of the entire Chinese literature because it has a foreign root. Some translation scholars also questioned the concept of “creative treason”, as they believed that translation should be faithful to the source text. Xie then decided to explore these issues in greater detail in his monograph, *Medio-translatology* (译介学) (1999). Contrary to many of his predecessors, Xie did not restrict his discussions to the more traditional perspective of translation as a linguistic transformation. Instead, he explored the transmission, acceptance, and impact of translated literature after entering a new culture and the factors behind

it. In essence, Medio-translatology pushes the boundary of the studies of translation beyond the text and the act, and analyses translation through a cross-cultural communicative lens.

*Medio-translatology* was soon accepted for publication by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. At the same time, Xie received a fellowship from the Canadian Government to visit the University of Alberta as a Senior Visiting Scholar for half a year. It was at the University of Alberta when he first came across numerous research articles on contemporary Western translation theories especially those on the so-called Cultural Turn in contemporary translation studies. Due to the fact that China had been closed to the outside world for decades and very few Chinese scholars had the opportunity to travel overseas back then, Xie became one of the first Chinese academics to come in contact with the cultural theories of translation (Bassnette and Lefevere 1990). This encounter provided him with a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issues around translated literature and laid a firm foundation for his future research on translation and comparative literature.

Comparative literature is multidisciplinary across language, literature, culture, philosophy, and so on. Xie recalled him being extremely excited the first time he read these books or articles: *The Nature of Translation: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Literary Translation* by Holmes (1971), "Beyond the process: Literary Translation in Literature and Literary Theory" by Lefevere (1981), "Polysystem Theory" (1979) and "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem" (2004) by Even-Zohar, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* by Toury (1980), and *Translation Studies* by Bassnett (2002). He resonated with the theories put forth by these scholars and aligned his views on *Medio-translatology* with the development in translation studies then. The research experience during his half-year stint at the University of Alberta further cemented his academic interest in medio-translatology.

After returning to China, Xie became more proactive in participating in various academic activities in the Chinese translation studies community. He was more vocal with his perspectives, even when they were opposed vehemently by other scholars. In his view, it was not a problem that Chinese scholars of translation were "slower" than their Western counterparts in their understanding of the theories about translation; the fact that Western translation scholars being "faster" did not mean that they were necessarily correct in their understanding and that the Chinese scholars could only follow without discrimination. To him, the most critical issue for the Chinese scholars of translation studies then was to apply the cultural theories in translation studies and rid themselves of the complacency that had come with some small successes they had before. He strongly recommended that his Chinese colleagues be mindful of developments in translation studies on the international front and approach translation research with an open mind and exercise rigor when exploring new theories of translation.

In the subsequent years, Xie published several articles that were critical of Chinese translation studies, including "On the Misconceptions in Translation Studies and Theories in China" (国内翻译界在翻译研究和翻译理论认识上的误区), "On the Modernisation of Translation Studies" (论译学观念现代化) (2004), and "On the Research Subject of Translation Studies" (翻译本体研究与翻译研究本体) (2009a).

This was then followed by several books he edited or (co-)authored on this topic, namely *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (比较文学与翻译研究) (1994), *New Vision of Translation Studies* (翻译研究新视野) (2003a), *Introduction to Medio-translatology* (译介学导论) (2007), *A History of Translated Literature in Modern China (1898–1949)* (中国现代翻译文学史 (1898–1949)) (2004) and *A History of the 20th Century Foreign Literary Translation in China* (20世纪外国文学翻译史) (2007). During the same period, Xie also undertook the compilation of the *21st Century Anthology of Chinese Literature* (21世纪中国文学大系). Through this project, he managed to secure a position for translated literature in the realm of Chinese literature on the whole. Through these essays, edited volumes, and monographs, Xie further refined his theory of medio-translatology; he discussed and analyzed issues ranging from the ownership of translation, the differences between the history of literary translation, and the history of translated literature, to the future development of medio-translatology. The recent two decades have witnessed an increased interest in medio-translatology; many more teachers and graduate students have studied translation through the lens of medio-translatology. Medio-translatology has also been placed on the forefront of social science research by the Chinese government; it was designated, alongside *Dissertations on Marxism-Leninism and Contemporary Foreign Dissertations* (马列文论与当代外国文论), as one of the eight major research topics (八大课题) endorsed by the government in 2006, and further designated, together with *Innovations in Western Theories in Literature* (外国文学学科理论创新) and *Research Frontiers in Contemporary Western Literature* (西方当代文学思潮与外国文学若干前沿问题) as an important topic for research in the 11th Five-Year Plan for Philosophy and Social Science Research (十一五国家哲社规划).<sup>1</sup>

With the elevation in the status of Medio-translatology in the academia, Xie accorded more attention to the development of teaching resources for this theory. He wrote several textbooks, such as *A Brief History of Translation in China and the West* (中西翻译简史) (2009b) and *An Overview of History of Translation in China and the West* (简明中西翻译简史) (2013). He also argued for the development of translation as a profession in his articles such as “Exploring the History of Translation in China and the West” (中西翻译史整体观探索) (2010), “Focus on the Essential Goal of Translation and Translation Studies—Interpretation of the Theme of International Translation Day 2012” (关注翻译与翻译研究的本质目标——2012年国际翻译日主题解读) (2012), and “From Servicing the Translation to Servicing the Language” (从翻译服务到语言服务). He also continued to refine his theory of Medio-translatology and published an updated version of his earlier work *Medio-translatology*, which was then followed by a new book entitled *Invisibility and Appearance: From Traditional Translation Theory to Modern Translation Theory* (隐身与现身——从传统译论到现代译论) (2011). He also put together a collection of his research articles and published a volume called *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (比较文学与翻译研究 (复旦版)) (2011) while his proses

<sup>1</sup> This was laid out as a mid- to long-term strategic plan in the 11th Five-Year Plan for Philosophy and Social Science Research by the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences.

on translation and translation research were published in a collection called *Haishang Yi Tan* (海上译谭) (2013b).

To recap, Xie started his academic journey in translation through comparative literature. He focused on the ownership and nature of translated literature before moving on to translation history and the history of literary translation. He was among the first to push forth the idea that the ownership of translated literature lies not with the source culture but with the target culture. He also proposed that the history of literary translation was no more different from the history of literature as a field of study. Like in the latter, studies of the history of literary translation should focus on the creator (author and the translator), the text, and the act of creation (in this case, translation) as the essential subjects. In doing so, Xie highlighted a clear distinction between the history of translated literature and the history of literary translation.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Xie shifted his focus from comparative literature to translation studies, and he took a particular interest in the cultural theories of translation. He found that understanding translation through the lens of the “cultural turn” would reveal the cross-cultural communicative function of translation and expand the scope of translation studies. He wrote a host of articles discussing the cultural turn in translation, such as “Three Breakthroughs and Two Turns in Contemporary Western Translation Studies” (当代西方翻译研究的三大突破与两大转向) (2003b), in which he summarized the development of translation history in the West and highlighted the importance of the cultural theories of translation. In three other articles, namely “Author's Meaning and the Meaning of Text—Hermeneutics and Translation Studies” (作者本意与本文本意——解释学理论与翻译研究) (2000), “The Birth of the Translator and the Death of the Author” (译者的诞生与原作者的“死亡”), and “Polysystem Theory: A New Approach to Translation Studies” (多元系统理论: 翻译研究领域的拓展) (2003c), he examined the relationship between translation and hermeneutics, deconstructionism, and the polysystem theory. Realizing the lack of understanding about the cultural theories of translation among Chinese scholars, many of whom opposed it for its seeming abandonment of translation itself, Xie wrote another article “On the Research Subject of Translation Studies” (翻译本体研究与翻译研究本体) to kick start a discussion among Chinese translation scholars on the topic. He argued that the subject of translation should not be solely the language in the target text; instead, such research should uncover and unveil the patterns of the linguistic transformation in the process of translation. He also pointed out that since translations do not exist independently in a vacuum, the act of translation should not be a simple act of linguistic transformation; instead, it should necessarily involve the translator and the reader, and therefore should be affected by the relevant socio-cultural and historical contexts. For Xie, only when all these issues are adequately dealt with can translation studies be considered as an independent academic discipline.

Xie also took a considerable interest in Chinese and Western history of translation and professionalization of translation, but his strongest interest remained on the development, explanation, and elucidation of his Medio-translatology.

Unfortunately, just as Xie was ready to further develop his medio-translatology theory, he passed away in 2020 after a courageous fight with his illness. In commemoration and celebration of his achievements in comparative literature and translation studies, we invited ten scholars to share their understandings about Medio-translatology and each to contribute a chapter to this edited volume. They were either Xie's close colleagues or former graduate students and they were all well-established translation studies scholars in China with particular expertise in different aspects of the medio-translatology.

In all, this edited volume consists of two parts. The first part comprises six chapters on the development and the framework of medio-translatology. After 1979, an important trend in the development of translation studies in China—the advancements from the sole intrinsic study in language to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary—from words and sentences to social culture, and from physics to metaphysics. Through a constant interrogation and challenge of such an outmoded conception of translation, is now accepted in China as an important academic field of translation studies with its scope and methodology. As such, medio-translatology exerts a profound influence on many scholars and researchers with a keen interest in translation studies. In chapter one, **LIAO** reviews the developments of Medio-translatology in China and explains how this theory may change the way we study and understand translation. He points out that Medio-translatology approaches translation through the lenses of comparative literature and cultural studies, and it attaches more importance to the cultural aspect of translation and the theoretical dimensions of translation studies. He believes that this theory has had tremendous influence on translation studies in China in its scope of research and research methodology. **ZHANG** summarizes Xie's contributions to the field of translation studies through his strong advocacy for Medio-translatology as an analytic framework. She notes that in the past 10 years, the Chinese government has been keen to make the world understand China better through translations of Chinese literature. In response to the national strategic policy of "Chinese culture going global", many Chinese translation scholars have begun to devote themselves to research on translation of Chinese literature via the lens of Medio-translatology.

Medio-translatology is an outcome of the intersection of two disciplines, namely Comparative Literature and Translation Studies. **SONG** traces the origin of Medio-translatology and explores this theory as an analytic framework. He argues that the emergence of Medio-translatology and the ensuing heated discussions among Chinese translation scholars at the end of the twentieth century could be accounted for by these three reasons: (a) the convergence of Chinese and foreign translation theories at this juncture; (b) the re-examination and re-emphasis of the significance of numerous cultural translation practices; (c) the continuous improvisation and expansion of different theories related to Medio-translatology. **ZHA** believes that there is a close relationship between translation and comparative literature. He examines the nature and tenets of the comparative literature approach toward translation studies. In doing so, he seeks to elucidate the academic value and significance of Medio-translatology in translation studies. He predicts that the future of the comparative



literature approach to translation studies will further deepen the study of literature in translation.

While many people adopt the term of Medio-translatology, **HE** argues for the adoption of the term of, “Transcreation Studies” as an umbrella term for Xie’s theory on translation and literature. He further proposes that Transcreation Studies needs further delineation in the three ways. Firstly, it is an interdisciplinary field rather than a subordinate branch to comparative literature. Secondly, a concrete methodology should be established for future research. Thirdly, the approach has to expand beyond the sphere of literature.

“Creative Treason” is a key concept in Medio-translatology and it has been heatedly debated among Chinese translation and literary studies community. **LAN** explores the development pathway of “Creative Treason” as an academic concept in China in an attempt to study the transformations, displacements, and possible incommensurability between the old and new theoretical frameworks in translation studies.

The four chapters in the second part of this volume report several case studies to highlight the function, application, and importance of medio-translatology in translation studies. Lin Shu (1852–1924), an influential translator from the Late Qing and the Early Republic Period, did not speak any foreign language but successfully translated about 180 literary works by working with more than 20 partners. Not only did he interpret the internal structures of foreign novels with the “Laws and Norms” of Chinese ancient essays, such as foreshadowing, connection, and tonal modification, but also applied Chinese traditional ethics, such as loyalty and filial piety, to the interpretation of the behaviors and emotions of the characters in the novels. He sought to build a tunnel of meaning represented by “creative treason” to connect and mediate different cultures. **LIU**, using Lin Shu’s translation as a case study, explains that the understanding of a text hinges on the communication with the text based on one’s fore-understanding. He argues that Lin managed to build a meaning tunnel with “creative treason”, through which the East and the West could have effective communication.

Yan Fu (1854–1921) was one of the most influential scholars of his generation as he worked to introduce Western social, economic, and political ideas into China. He translated into Chinese works by T. H. Huxley, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Adam Smith, and many others in an attempt to show that the secret to Western wealth and power did not lie in Western technological advances, such as gun making, but in the ideas and institutions behind these technologies. His translations had a great influence on Chinese intellectuals at that time and centuries afterward. **ZHUANG** conducted an analysis of Yan Fu’s *Fayi* (法意) which is a Chinese translation of the legal and political masterpiece, *The Spirit of Laws*, written by French enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu to show how Medio-translatology may be applied in studies of non-literary translation. She argues that Yan Fu presented his ideas through his translation of Montesquieu combining the Western theory of government with resources from traditional Chinese thoughts and was influenced by the theory of evolution, Daoism, and Confucianism, among other schools of thought.

Lu Xun (1881–1936) is generally considered the greatest writer in the 20th-century Chinese literature. He was also an important critic known for his sharpness and unique perspectives. Throughout the past century, scholars focused on different aspects of Lu Xun. Between the 1920s and 1940s, scholars primarily conducted textual analyses of his writings; between the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the cusp of the Cultural Revolution, researchers explored his ideologies and philosophies; starting from the 1980s, people turned to the academic discourse about the relationship between Lu Xun and the Chinese and Western cultures and societies. However, little attention has been paid to his translations. CUI delves into Lu Xun's thoughts of "hard translation" (硬译) as the preferred method of translation. Through the lens of Medio-translatology, he finds that Lu Xun's choice of this translation strategy was closely related to the manipulation of political factors of his time.

Following the drastic changes in Chinese society after the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949, modernist literature became a taboo. But the translation, reading, and reception of Charles Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* continued in China. GENG adopts a medio-translatorial approach and examines the translation of Baudelaire in China between 1949 and 1976 to tease out the factors behind the dissemination of Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* in China.

Through the lens of Medio-translatology, the above four case studies explored some of the most significant translators and translation activities in China from the late Qing dynasty to the People's Republic of China. These discussions demonstrate how Medio-translatology can be used in such investigations and highlight the core tenet of the framework, that is, to explore the socio-cultural factors behind the translation activities. Translation theories that bring a Chinese perspective to the table are undoubtedly one of the most important components of contemporary translation studies. It is hoped that this book will attract the attention of more Western scholars to take notice of the work of their Chinese counterparts and engage with them in discourse and conversation about translation.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the contributors. Our thanks also go to Khoo Yong Kang, Arabella Gunawan, Lee Wei Liang, and Li Hongyu for their assistance in the vetting and formatting of the manuscript.

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# **Medio-translatology as An Approach of Translation Studies**

# Medio-translatology and the Latest Development of Translation Studies in China



Qiyi Liao

**Abstract** Translation Studies in China during the 1990s were still dominated by a paradigm of mimesis centered around verbal transference and translation techniques. Through a constant interrogation and challenge of such an outmoded conception of translation, Medio-translatology is now accepted in China as an important academic field of translation studies with its scope and methodology. As such, Medio-translatology exerts a profound influence on many scholars and researchers with a keen interest in translation studies. Medio-translatology approaches translation studies through the lenses of comparative literature and cultural studies and attaches more importance to the cultural aspect of translation and the theoretical dimensions of translation studies, thus changing the face of translation studies in China in terms of its scope of research, the conception of translation and methodology. By introducing new concepts and methodologies to relevant researchers, Medio-translatology gives renewed impetus to translation studies in China and, to some extent, helps set its agenda.

**Keywords** Medio-translatology · Translation studies · Conception and methodology

After 1979, an important trend in the development of translation studies in China—the advancements from the sole intrinsic study in language to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary—from words and sentences to social culture, and from physics to metaphysics. Reviewing the development of translation studies in the past few decades, it is believed that every scholar is influenced by the study of “Medio-translatology” (译介学). Tianzhen Xie was involved in translation studies through comparative literature. He questioned traditional translation concepts and research methods. This resulted in the creation of a theoretical system in Medio-translatology, which placed translated literature in a specific cultural time and space for investigation. Translation studies have since gone beyond the “in-place loop” (原地循环) research model (Shi 2011: 22), with Medio-translatology being an important

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driving and transformational force. Concurrently, Medio-translatology has changed the process and trend of translation studies in China.

## 1 The Historical Context When Medio-translatology Was Created

Around 1990, translation studies in China were either indulging in the interpretations and controversies of “Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Elegance” (信达雅) or wrangling over the translation of words and sentence pairs. Mainstream translation criticisms focused on text and translation techniques. The vast majority of the articles included in collections such as *Collection of Translation Theory* (1981) (翻译论集) edited by Liu Jingzhi, *Collection of Translation Theory and Translation Techniques* (1983) (翻译理论与翻译技巧文集) published by China Translation and Publishing Corporation, *Collection of Translation Research Paper* (1984) (翻译研究论文集) selected by the editorial department of *Translation Newsletter* (翻译通讯), *Collection of Translation Essays* edited by Luo Xinzhang, *A Hundred Schools of Modern Literary Translation* (1989) (当代文学翻译百家谈) edited by Wang Shoulan, and others, still focused on the translators’ hands-on experience and perceptual thinking in translation. Some scholars mentioned the need to observe translation and translation activities from the theories of linguistics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, philosophy, and cultural studies. However, after perusing, it is found that few articles genuinely go beyond the text and translation techniques, let alone having theoretical depth. This is few and far between the cultural and ideological aspects of translation studies.

In 1991, when Nanmu wrote a preface to Tan Zaixi’s *A Short History of Translation in the West* (西方翻译简史), he said, “I think that there is still room for discussion on whether translation has become an independent scientific discipline. The reason is as follows. Translation is similar to language and mathematics. It is neither subordinate to the economic structural base nor superstructures. It is neither natural science nor social science. Translation is a tool used by humans to exchange ideas and transmit information. Adding up all the marginal intersections of translation studies in various disciplines is not a sufficient reason to say that this subject, is an independent scientific discipline” (Nan 1991: 51). Nanmu’s view is quite encompassing. He denied the subject status of mathematics and translation, deemed translation as a “tool to exchange ideas and transmit information”, and did not distinguish between translation as a practical activity and translation research as a subject. With regards to some of the renowned translation concepts today, Nanmu also believes that there are “deficiencies” and pointed out that examples such as “language determines the thoughts and worldviews; the translation must not have additions, deletions, and modifications; viewpoints and metaphors such as the original author is the master, and the translator a servant; and the theory of ‘equal effect’ and ‘equal response’. All these are debatable” (Nan 1991: 52). The translation concepts mentioned above are, of course, debatable. However, the problem is that these opinions reflect the lack of

contact that China's translation field has with Western translation studies and that the Chinese's understanding is relatively superficial, limited to the level of traditional translation techniques.

Yang Zijian had a much clearer understanding of the status of translation studies during that period. "Looking at the two fields of language research and translation in our country, it can be said that there is an extensive history with an abundance of works. However, it is challenging to say which ones are more important theoretically. The tradition of underestimating theoretical research results in such a phenomenon. More precisely, the reluctance and inadequacy to conduct regular summaries and theoretical explanations of one's practice caused the difficulty in making major theoretical contributions" (Yang 1993: 12). He even cautioned translation researchers to "take some time to summarize and explore your actual work theoretically. Doing this can improve your theoretical thinking ability and make your actual work more effective" (ibid.).

Yang Zijian's criticisms foresighted the weak theoretical awareness in the Chinese translation field. It is undeniable that China's translation field's expectations and assumptions toward the translation discipline are relatively superficial, and the imitation paradigm essentially dominates the translation community. Translation is equated to skill and language conversion. The evaluation criteria are still constrained to the "Faithfulness, Coherence and Elegance" of the past century. Furthermore, most research results still focused on the faithful reproduction, style, and charm of the translated text, the translator's literacy and attitude, and other such tangible factors.

## 2 Broadening the Horizons of Chinese Translation Studies

It is in this academic environment that Medio-translatology began to enter the view of Chinese scholars. Tianzhen Xie enters from the marginalization of translated literature in modern literary history and questions the academic world's positioning and evaluation of translated literature. He, thereby, questions the traditional translation theoretical concepts. He believes that as early as the 1920s and 1930s, books such as Chen Zizhan's *The History of Chinese literature in the Last Thirty Years* (最近三十年中国文学史), Wang Zhefu's *The History of Chinese New Literature Movement* (中国新文学运动史), Guo Zhenyi's *A History of the Chinese Novel* (中国小说史) all regarded translated literature as "a part of Chinese literature to have a dedicated chapter". However, since 1949, translated literature no longer enjoys such status in various newly compiled works in the history of modern Chinese literature. It is only incidentally mentioned, and there is no in-depth discussion, and naturally, no dedicated chapter. Till today, there is no explanation for the ups and downs of translated literature in the history of modern Chinese literature. Individuals simply deny the existence of "translated literature", or never think that translated literature is a part of Chinese literature (Xie 1990: 56). At the same time, Tianzhen Xie began to question the nature of translation. He believes that "for a long time, people are biased against

literary translation. They always felt that translation is purely a technical skill of converting language symbols. Anyone can perform a literary translation so long as they can understand a foreign language and perform a search on a foreign language dictionary for unfamiliar vocabularies. This prejudice also affects people's view of literary translation and their translators. The former is seen as having no independent value while the latter is looked down upon as just 'a humble translation workman'" (Xie 1994: 176).

Tianzhen Xie feels that translated foreign literature should have an important and independent position in the Chinese literature system. Translated literature is "given a new form, thought or image", has an "independent existence that has an irreplaceable effect on the cultural life of humans" (Xie 1994: 178). Hence, the evaluation of translated literature rose to cultural significance. His unique ability of problem awareness and academic insights have given Medio-translatology an interdisciplinary research perspective right from the start. Medio-translatology goes beyond the narrow vision of the traditional translation field. Medio-translatology also proposed the cultural significance of translation that will only be accepted years later. Translated literature bestows literary work a refreshing perspective, allowing it to have a new literary exchange with an even broader audience range. Not only does it extend the life of a literary work, but also gives it a second chance in life (Xie 1994: 179–180). It is easy to discover that the nature of Medio-translatology is neither a mere conversion of a text nor a simple recreation of literary work. Instead, it concerns a type of literary or cultural research problem, such as the loss, deformation, addition, and extension of information in the original text's conversion process between native and foreign languages. As a form of practical activity of human cultural interaction, translation has a unique value and significance (Xie 1999: 1). This is a question that traditional translation scholars rarely ponder on and are unwilling to answer.

The creation of a theoretical system is first seen as questioning and criticizing traditional concepts. Tianzhen Xie's "On 'Creative Treason' in Literary Translation" (论文学翻译的创造性叛逆), "Enlightenment and Impact: On the Latest Development of Translation Studies and the Disciplinary Dilemma of Comparative Literature" (启迪与冲击——论翻译研究的最新进展与比较文学的学科困境), "On the Misconceptions in Translation Studies and Theories in Our Country" (国内翻译界在翻译研究和翻译理论认识上的误区), "How Do We View the Differences in Translation Studies by China and the West: The Academic Contention the Style of Study and Writing" (如何看待中西译论研究的差距——兼谈学术争鸣的学风和文风), "On the Modernisation of Translation Studies" (论译学观念现代化), and others, have all put forth a series of new concepts, thoughts and research approaches, which are recognized by many scholars. Fang Ping once spoke highly of the consciousness to "challenge social stereotypes" and a "broad academic vision" (Fang 1999: 9), and Zhu Hui said that *Medio-translatology* (译介学) has the practical significance of "criticizing traditional fallacies" (Zhu 2000: 59). Taiwanese scholars believe that one can easily "gain new concepts and even adjust the reading horizon" by reading Tianzhen Xie's *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (Lu 1995: 216). Medio-translatology made a strong impact on traditional translation concepts,



changing China's translation field's long-standing fashion in interpreting "Faithfulness, Expressiveness, and Elegance". Medio-translatology also changes translation studies' direction from technical discussions to theoretical explorations, thereby starting a new phase in modern translation research studies.

### 3 Enhancing the Academic Connotations of Translation Studies

Due to the close relationship between translation and real-life practice, as well as the tradition of practical reason in China's translation field, translation studies always had a very prominent tendency to emphasize practicality and practice. There is nothing wrong with emphasizing the practicality of translation and its positive significance in the theoretical summary. However, China's translation field has a deeply rooted indifference to theories and tends to hold theoretical discussion and construction in contempt. Tianzhen Xie points out sharply that "for a long time, there is a trend in China's translation field to deem translation research as meaningless, and that real ability is only acknowledged when one produces good translation works. Hence, many translators in China's translation field are proud of producing good translation works even though they neither venture deep into translation studies nor understand translation theories. Moreover, those translators that have written many translation research papers, but little excellent translation works are often met with disapproval and sneer. In this standard practice, even well-respected translators are affected. For example, a renowned translator once said, real-life practice is the most valuable aspect of translation, and I have always suffered in being fastidious but incompetent. It is not easy to be both an excellent literary theorist and poet or novelist, likewise for translation. I have seen people who write translation theory very pertinently, but the opposite when they translate. I often take this as a warning" (Xie 2001: 2).

Tianzhen Xie clearly states that there are three misunderstandings in China's translation industry. The first misunderstanding is mistaking the study of "how to translate" for the entire translation study. The traditional translation theories in China have almost always revolved around "how to translate". This can be seen from "following the original purpose", "no addition of ornate language", "according to the truth", "Five Losses of Source Texts" (五失本), "Three Difficulties in Translation" (三不易) till "Faithfulness, Expressiveness, and Elegance", "Spiritual Resemblance" (神似说), and "sublimation" (化境说) (Xie 2001: 2-3). The research and discussion of translation techniques are undoubtedly important. However, the discussion of translation techniques and summaries of translation experience must be raised to a theoretical level, and the patterns to be discovered. In addition, theoretical research must go beyond the "narrow level of pure language conversion" and "examine and study translation from the cultural aspect" (Xie 2001: 3).

The second misunderstanding is the attitude toward pragmatism in translation theory, one-sidedly emphasizing the guiding role of theory in practice and believing

that all theories should be useful in guiding practice. Otherwise, these theories will be ridiculed as “detached from reality” and an impractical “empty theory” (Xie 2001: 3). With the development and maturity of the discipline, the division will inevitably be “increasingly refined”. The experts who are mainly engaged or specialized in theoretical research will emerge as well. We should encourage scholars, especially those that have the interest and aspiration to engage in purely translation theoretical research. James Holmes once said that translation studies could be classified as a field of pure research and a field of practical application. The function of translation theory is to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted (Holmes 2000: 176).

The third misunderstanding is that China’s translation field is accustomed to emphasizing “China’s characteristics” or “self-forming system” while ignoring the “commonality” and “universal law”. Translation being a shared cultural interaction activity by humankind has its internal law. A more prominent trend of Western translation studies in recent years is to explore translational norms and translational universals, emphasizing the rise from individual to a whole, from the local to the global arena. To insist on “China’s characteristics” or “self-forming system” is to go against the development trend of translation studies in the academic community. Tianzhen Xie stated clearly that a one-sided emphasis on “China’s characteristics” or “self-forming system” may “result in the rejection and even repulsion to bring in, learn and draw on advanced translation theories from foreign translation academia. The blind arrogance and complacency under the pretext of “self-forming system” artificially elevate experiences to so-called theories, thus replacing the theoretical discussion in the strict sense” (Xie 2001: 4). Some scholars said that overstressing the characteristics will result in “getting caught in narrow nationalism” (Chang 2000: 224). Tianzhen Xie surpassed the “prevailing debates” then, (on whether the presence or meaning to translation theories), and the “dispute between Chinese and the Western powers”, (on whether the Western translation theory is universal and applicable to Chinese translation practice), making a breakthrough in the limitations of nationalism.

Tianzhen Xie feels that before the 1950s, no translation research in the world can be considered translation theories in the strict sense. From Barnes’ point of view, all the research done is “only applicable in the translation principles and practical history of literature” (Xie 2001: 5). This is what many translation theorists call the “pre-scientific” stage. Since then, Western translation theories have made considerable progress, and the field of research has also greatly expanded. Initiators of translation works, along with manipulators and recipients of texts, have become the objects of research. The theories discuss the fidelity and equivalence relationship between the texts, pay attention to the “spread and acceptance of translated works in the new cultural context, the ultimate purpose and effect of translation as a cross-cultural communication activity, and also the role translators play in this entire translation process” (Xie 2001: 4). “The focus of translation studies is on the results, functions, and systems of translation. Special attention is given to the restriction and

decision toward translation result and factors of translation acceptance, the relationship between translation and different genres of translated texts, the status and role of translation in the ethnic or country-specific literature, and the effect of interactions between translation and national literature” (Xie 2001: 4). The construction of translation theory and the development of translation studies require some scholars to “get rid of the ‘craftsman’s view’ as soon as possible” and become the “architect master” in translation studies (Xie 2003: 256). Tianzhen Xie’s discussion of the relationship between the “skill” and “learning” is incredibly rousing, and the changing of criticizing culture to find talk and discourse is undoubtedly targeted and of strong relevance.

#### 4 Opening a New Concept of Chinese Translation

In 2004, the *Chinese Translators Journal* published an editor’s note, stating that the dilemma facing Chinese translation studies is both “narrow” and “thin”. “Narrow” mainly refers to “the narrow research path, which is reflected in the lack of consciousness for innovation, going down the same road, lack of theoretical framework and breakthrough in the system” (Editor 2004: 1). On the other hand, “thin” refers to “the weak theoretical foundation, extreme lack in interdisciplinary knowledge”, and emphasizes the need for “new perspective, methods, and breakthroughs”. The editor’s comment states that “academic innovation requires a sense of exploration and courage. Suppose there is no courage and innovation in selecting a topic, staying in the comfort zone. In that case, it is impossible to have academic achievements”. (Editor 2004: 6) The first article published after the editor’s comment was Tianzhen Xie’s “On the Modernisation of Translation Studies” (Xie 2004: 7). The article demonstrates the development of translation studies in terms of research concepts. Also, it highlights Tianzhen Xie’s academic awareness of interdisciplinary and theoretical construction. More importantly, it is a response to academic innovation. Tianzhen Xie believes that “the cultural context of translation and the content of translation studies has changed. However, our translation studies concept remains unchanged, and our translation studies team does not have any substantial changes. Many of us still hold on to translation concept from decades, or even hundred years ago” (Xie 2004: 7–8) This means that translation is no longer seen as a simple act of conversion between two languages, but as a unique political, cultural, and literary activities in the target language society. The translated text results from the translator’s role in the society of the target language, and it plays an important role in the political, cultural and daily life of the target language society” (Xie 2004: 8). Tianzhen Xie also believes that the cultural context of translation has already moved on from the phase of oral communication and text translation to today’s phase of cultural translation. These changes profoundly affect and change the direction of translation studies. China’s translation theoretical and disciplinary construction will undoubtedly reach a “bottleneck”, as well as “stopping the further development of China’s translation studies”, if one does not understand the trends and developments

of translation studies worldwide, and “does not quickly modernize the translation concepts”. Thus, this will adversely affect our entire translation business (ibid.). This is a positive inspiration for translation studies.

It should be pointed out that the dissemination and influence of *Medio-translatology* drive the theoretical construction and innovation in the school of thoughts of translation studies. The conceptual system of *Medio-translatology* theory, translated literature, and the history of translated literature extensively and profoundly influenced mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other countries. Jia Zhifang positively affirmed Tianzhen Xie’s *Medio-translatology*, saying that it “has both theoretical height and a vast number of examples. It analyses and reviews translated literature as the object of literary and cultural studies, and in turn, derives an important conclusion directly related to the compilation of literary history and the interaction between Chinese and foreign culture... a new front of translation research from the perspective of comparative literature and culture is unveiled, opening a new field in China’s translation studies” (Jia 1999: 4). Hence, in China’s translation field, saying that *Medio-translatology* has originality is not a compliment by any means.

If we analyze Holmes’s epoch-making document “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” from the perspective of the development of modern translation studies, we will discover that the dissemination, acceptance, and influence of translation works do not seem to occupy their due place. Of course, we cannot demand that Holmes foresaw the development of translation studies today more than thirty years ago. Nevertheless, to date, the lack of a corresponding English term for “*Medio-translatology*” leaves Tianzhen Xie awkward when coining the term *Medio-translatology*. In the West, there are still no systematic and complete monographs related to *Medio-translatology*. From one aspect, this shows the difficulty in creating a new academic field, constructing a new school of thought or theory.

In the newly published *Introduction to Medio-Translatology* (译介学导论), Tianzhen Xie elaborated on the “major theoretical and practical value” of *Medio-translatology* for translation studies. (Xie 2007: 8) First, *Medio-translatology* expands and deepens the understanding of translation and translation studies. Second, the study of “Creative Treason” affirms and elevates the value of literary translation as well as the status of literary translators. Third, the argument for the attribution of translated literature. Fourth, the consideration of *Medio-translatology* on the compilation of translated literature history shows a vast academic space. (Xie 2007: 13–14) We will find that these statements are factual when looking at the topic selection of translation studies made by China’s scholars. Many scholars are inspired by terminology systems such as “Creative Treason” and “cultural misunderstanding”. These terminologies have become one of the most widely circulated and frequently used in the translation industry. Among those, *Medio-translatology* has become the most references Chinese document in China’s translation studies. According to the statistics compiled by some scholars, “*Medio-translatology* has been printed four times since its publication in 1999... the citation rate is among the top few in the domestic field of translation and comparative literature”. Also, “the number of citations by CSSCI publications exceeds 18 times per year”. The National Social Science Program Project Guide (国家社科项目课题指南), National 11th Five-Year Plan Philosophy

(国家“十一五”哲学), and Social Science Planning (社会科学规划) (2006–2010) also listed Medio-translatology as one of the key research topics. (Cai 2011: 575).

## 5 Expanding the Field of Translation Studies

After more than 20 years of continuous refinement, Medio-translatology gradually became an important analytical tool and theoretical guidance for translation studies. It has been continuously applied to the translation community's new research fields: the compilation of translation history and foreign cultural classics.

Firstly, Medio-translatology was successfully applied to the compilation of literary translation history. Some scholars pointed out that Tianzhen Xie “analyzed the nature, belonging and status of translated literature” for the first time, and “discussed the methodological issues of writing the ‘history of translated literature’ theoretically” (Zha 2000: 127). It is common knowledge that China has published many books on the history of translated literature or literary translation. Just in 2005 alone, four books on translation history and three translator monographs were published. However, overall, “the study of translation history is limited to the significance of documents and historical data” (Liao 2008: 51). This is also a universal issue in the compilation of translation history. Editors either lack the macro-theoretical framework, hence unable to discover or summarize the context and patterns of translation development from the vast historical materials, or lack the theoretical in-depth to comb through the historical materials involved. Some translation history has almost become a running account of translation events. Tianzhen Xie believes that “the history of translated literature”, which focuses on narrating literary translation events, is not strictly a history of translated literature, but a history of literary translation. The core of literary translation history is key translation events, and the history of literary translation focuses on the diachronic clues of translation events and historical processes. It pays attention to diachronic translation activities. It also pays attention to the cultural space in which translation events occur, the literary and cultural purpose of the translator's translation behavior, and the foreign writers and their works that entered the view of Chinese literature. The history of translated literature examines the translated literature in a specific era of cultural space, explains the cultural purpose of literary translation, the different translation forms, translation processes to achieve a particular cultural purpose, and the translation effects. It also discussed the relation and meaning of translated literature and national literature in a specific era. (Xie 2007: 162–163).

According to this guiding ideology, the *History of Modern Chinese Translation Literature* (1898–1949) (中国现代翻译文学史[1898–1949]) edited by Tianzhen Xie and Zha Mingjian possesses great significance (Xie and Zha 2004). There are a few reasons for it. First, the compilation of the history of translated literature is a historic attempt on the Medio-translatology theoretical system, clarifying the difference between “translated literature” and “literary translation”, analyzing the relationship between translated literature and foreign and local literature, the relationship

between translated literature and the diverse system of local culture. It also answers basic questions such as the nature, disciplinary status, and constituent elements of the history of translated literature. Second, this book successfully applied the combination layout of the ‘line’ and ‘surface’ to objectively describe the development clues of translated literature events, while emphasizing the spread, acceptance, and influence of translated literature in the Chinese literary system. Third, the recognition and affirmation of translators’ dominant status, literary societies, and “foreign writers clothed in China’s outer garment”. Fourth, the history of translated literature “is seen as a book on the history of cross-cultural literary exchange, literary relations and literary influence” (Geng 2007: 86). This attempt displays Tianzhen Xie’s “unique hermeneutic consciousness” and “theoretical foresight of historians” (Geng 2007: 85), and more importantly, changes the academic world’s understanding, evaluation, and positioning of translated literature, and established a new paradigm for the compilation of translation history.

In the current upsurge of “Chinese literary culture going global”, Medio-translatology has become theoretical guidance and ideological weapon in the translation industry. As early as 2008, Tianzhen Xie began to pay attention to and publish articles related to Chinese literature and culture going global. Through these works, Tianzhen Xie applied the basic principles of Medio-translatology to the foreign translation of Chinese cultural classics. He also systematically and comprehensively explained and demonstrated the nature, significance, approaches, characteristics, methods, and misunderstandings of the foreign translation of classics. Tianzhen Xie believes that the globalization of Chinese literature and culture is a cross-cultural project. We “must break out of the simple conversion between two languages and must examine and think through the problem of translation under the cultural and social background of different nationalities. Only then is it possible to “deeply understand the intricate and subtle relationship between the many factors behind translation and language conversion, grasp the essence of the question ‘how Chinese literature and culture go global’, and identify the crucial part of the problem” (Xie 2013: 47). At the same time, we must be aware of the difference between translating “in” and “out” and should not perceive taking “the reading habits and aesthetic tastes of the receiving group” into consideration as “fawning upon the Western readers”. It is necessary to understand the basic patterns of translation from mainstream to non-mainstream cultures and place importance on the “time difference” and “language difference” in cultural communication (Xie 2014: 5–8).

By combing through the history of Buddhist scripture translation, Tianzhen Xie emphasizes the need to “abandon the ‘self-centered’ thinking”, recognize the role of “adaptation” and “identification” in cross-cultural communication (Xie 2014: 8). He also emphasizes the need to “find common ground between the cultures of the source and target country, constructing the kinship between the two different cultures” (Xie 2014: 10), and “to allow Chinese experts, scholars, and translators to participate in the translation and introduction of Chinese literature and culture in English-speaking countries” (Xie 2014: 8). It can be said that based on the principles of Medio-translatology, Tianzhen Xie not only keenly discovers the biases and limitations of Chinese literature and culture in the current foreign translation, but

also analyses the reasons for the errors theoretically, and put forward constructive opinions and concrete and feasible translations strategies.

## 6 Conclusion

Tianzhen Xie has been studying comparative literature and translation since the 1980s. He published ‘Creative Treason’ in Literary Translation” in *Journal of Foreign Languages* in 1992, *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (1994) (比较文学与翻译研究) in Taiwan in 1994, *Medio-translatology* (1999), and *Introduction to Medio-Translatology* (2007). In recent years, he published *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (2011), *New Vision of Translation Studies* (2014) (翻译研究新视野), *Invisibility and Appearance: From Traditional Translation Theory to Modern Translation Theory* (2014) (隐身与现身——从传统译论到现代译论), *A Translation Study Beyond Translation* (2014) (超越文本 超越翻译) and other monographs and essays collections. These published works further enriched the theory of Medio-translatology. Medio-translatology has become a vital theoretical resource for domestic translation studies and comparative literature studies. An interesting phenomenon is that the French “Creative Treason” and other Medio-translatology-related thoughts were introduced into Japan earlier than China. However, these concepts “did not flourish and there are no ‘scientific names’ so far. The core concept of ‘Creative Treason’ has not been effectively popularized as well” (Gao 2016: 142). In China, Medio-translatology “takes roots and flourished rapidly”, becoming “an integral part of contemporary Chinese translology, attracting the attention of the entire humanities circle” (ibid.). The reason is that some scholars believe, “Japan lacks people like Tianzhen Xie who are dedicated to Medio-translatology research” (ibid.), which should reflect the truth. In the past 20 years or so, the concept of Medio-translatology caused many controversies. Some gave high affirmation and support, but others questioned or even opposed it. There are still different interpretations and understandings toward it (Wang 2017: 62–69). Tianzhen Xie responded to these challenges more systematically, pointing out some misunderstandings toward Medio-translatology (Xie 2012: 34–36). It is undeniable that Medio-translatology and the various controversies it sparks off have changed the academic circles’ understanding and definition of numerous core translation concepts, expanded the field of translation studies, and promoted the theoretical improvement of translation studies. Due to Tianzhen Xie’s multiple academic identities as a comparative literature scholar, translator, translation theorist, translation educator, planner, organizer, and builder of translation disciplines, his influence is far beyond that of a pure translator. He directed the attention of translation research and criticism “to the reality of translation, paying attention to the status, communication, role, influence, and meaning of translation in the context of the target language”, “highlighting and affirming the labor value of literary translators”, and “shifts the focus from the culture of the original language to the culture of the target language” (Xie 2012: 38–39). It can be said that Medio-translatology not only influences the thinking and methods of

many translation scholars but also changes the process and development direction of contemporary Chinese translation studies.

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# The Functions of Translations: Medio-translatology as a Paradigm



Ying Zhang

**Abstract** In memory of the late Professor Tianzhen Xie (1944–2020), this paper attempts to summarize his contributions in laying the foundation for China’s Medio-translatology studies. Tianzhen Xie pointed out in the early 1990s that translated literary works are not merely copies of the originals. He then proposed a new domain of studies called Medio-translatology, which focuses on the deliberately mistranslated parts caused by translators’ “Creative Treason” and the introductory functions of translations. This proposal of Medio-translatology has inspired others to conduct numerous descriptive studies, contributing to Tianzhen Xie being a pioneer in the Cultural Turns of Chinese translation. Over the past decade, Tianzhen Xie has continued to focus on the introductory functions of translations and offered many insightful views on how to promote literature to cultures where readers seldom read the translated works.

**Keywords** Medio-translatology · Creative treason · Introductory functions of translations

Translation studies in Mainland China went through developmental stages similar to global academia, but generally at a much slower pace. As a whole, translation studies in China were on hiatus from the 1950s to the 1970s (which happened to be the period wherein the global translation academia leaped toward the linguistic paradigm). In the 1980s, when Cultural Turn theories began to emerge as the main drivers in global translation academia, Chinese scholars were still only familiar with linguistic approaches. It was not until the mid-nineties that the Chinese scholars finally realized the limitations in the pursuit of linguistic equivalence and began to explore works by other theorists such as James Holmes, Andrew Lefervere, and Gideon Toury, among others. Therefore, we could say that the Cultural Turn in Chinese translation

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studies was primarily accomplished by Chinese scholars learning from contemporary translation theories. Among these Chinese scholars, Professor Tianzhen Xie was one of the few who primarily pointed out the limitations of linguistic theories in translation. With an academic background in comparative literature similar to André Lefevere, Xie proposed Medio-translatology (译介学) as a theory in translation in the late 1990s, which eventually became one of the most ingenious and influential theories in Chinese translation studies. The role and status of Xie in China are somewhat comparable to that of James Holmes, a pioneer who outlined a new research domain for Chinese scholars and a revolutionary who promoted the paradigm shift in China. This paper analyses Medio-translatology in terms of its paradigm value.

## 1 The Background of Medio-translatology: A Formalized Pursuit of Linguistic Equivalence During the 1980s

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the translation publishing industry within China was heavily regulated. When the only academic periodical *Fanyi Tongbao* (*Translation Report*) was suspended in 1954, the political environment drove translation studies to extinction, and this un-academic state remained till the end of the 1970s. Starting from 1979, several translation/language periodicals like *Fanyi Tongxun* (now *Chinese Translators Journal*) and *Wai Guo Yu* (*Journal of Foreign Languages*) started publications or were revived after a long hiatus, and this offered numerous academic platforms for scholars to engage in discussions, marking the start of contemporary translation studies in China.

The first few years of the 80s saw only discussions about the criteria of translating, focusing on issues like “what makes a good translation”, “how to translate well”, and “how should we set the standards”. These discussions were centered on the three principles proposed by Yan Fu (1854–1921), namely *xin* (faithfulness), *da* (fluency), and *ya* (elegance), and which principle is the most important. For example, some scholars criticized the principle of “elegance” as “harmful” as it could undermine the style of the original text (Chang 1981: 68), and some suggested replacing the principle of “elegance” with “relevance” (Liu 1984: 22). These discussions were conducted in a similar fashion, in which Chinese and foreign translators have talked for centuries and could be set in the research paradigm of philology (Lv and Hou 2006: 26).

With the introduction of Eugene Nida, Peter Newmark, J.C. Catford, and other typical linguistic translation theorists to China, there seems to be a better way to pursue translation standards. Scholars’ attempts to establish “a science of translation” became more frequent, which has set off an upsurge of discipline construction in China. Since then, many scholars have participated in the construction of this framework, as they have reached a consensus that the establishment of translation standards is the core task at hand before this discipline could be founded.

Due to the popularity of linguistic research paradigms from the mid-1980s to the early 90s, Chinese scholars' methodology of constructing translation standards, then, was based on the concept of linguistic equivalence. Most of them used mathematical models, showing a strong formulaic tendency (even when tackling literary translation issues). For example, Wu Xinxiang and Li Hong'an suggested a 15-level translation evaluation model: word-level/ phrase level /sentence level/ sentence cluster level/ text level, corresponding to language form level/ rhetoric level/ deep meaning level (Wu and Li 1984: 5). Mu Lei proposed a fuzzy-mathematical model for assigning numerical ratings to the three evaluation elements of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance" (Mu 1991: 68):

$$u = [\text{信}(u_1), \text{达}(u_2), \text{雅}(u_3)].$$

Zhang Chong proposed a mathematical limit formula based on Nida's "functional equivalence" including text, purport, and style (Zhang 1991: 41–45):

$$\begin{aligned} & \lim e[\lim t(T + x) \cdot \lim p(P + y) \cdot \lim s(S + z)] \\ & \rightarrow E \rightarrow T \rightarrow P \rightarrow S \end{aligned}$$

Although Chinese scholars have made a lot of achievements in the research of translation standard models, most of their studies remained at a framework design level and struggled to proceed theory-wise. These models were described as "lacking believability for being too mechanical and lacking operability for being too complicated" (Yang 1996: 8), which further hampered research and teaching aspects. Therefore, falling into a similar predicament of international translation studies in the 1970s, China's translation studies had entered a period of "silence" (Liu 1996: 6–7) or "stagnation" (Fang 1996: 4) and "adjustment" (Yang 1996: 8) in early 1990s.

In 1995, a paper "Out of the Dead End and into Translation Studies" (走出死胡同, 建立翻译学), published by Chang Nam Fung, pointed out that scholars who subsume the study of translation under linguistics have led the entire academic circle into a dead alley in their search for "the translation standard", for their research has been limited within a misguided premise:

All the translations that do not meet the so-called "standard" are considered "non-translation" or "translations not worthy of being called so", as if "translation" needed some license of approval. This conservative, more so dogmatic attitude tends to ignore a vast number of excellent translation works with research value and deviates from the reality of translation activities. While naturally, there is no inevitable relationship between whether a translation is successful or not and whether it conforms to certain translation standards. (Chang 1995: 1)

This paper was seen as a sign that the Cultural Turn of international translation studies has begun to influence Chinese translation studies and, throughout the next decade, has expanded the scope and boundary of translation studies in China.

As a scholar of translation with a background in comparative literature, Xie realized the limitations of translation studies much earlier, when he pointed out in 1989 that "translation literature has been ignored" (Xie 1989a: 10–15). In this sense, Xie

was forward-looking with paradigm significance, and his role as a pioneer in Chinese translation studies could be considered equivalent to that of James Holmes’.

## 2 The First Steps of Medio-translatology: A Focus on the Introductory Value of Translated Literature

Tianzhen Xie received a bachelor’s degree in Russian language from Shanghai International Studies University in 1968 and a master’s degree in Russian literature in 1982. After finishing his postgraduate studies, Xie participated in the establishment of *Comparative Literature in China*—the first academic journal about Comparative Literature in China—and the Chinese Comparative Literature Association, the first association of this academic circle in China. In the late 1980s, after having researched on comparative literature for nearly a decade, Xie began to realize the limitations and crisis of this discipline and published a paper, “Chinese Comparative Literature: Crisis and Turning Point” (中国比较文学: 危机与转机) (Xie 1989b: 47–50). His article criticized scholars of comparative literature for paying too much attention to comparisons and “forget[ing] the essence of literature” and pointed out that the lack of the study of translated literature “was the biggest gap in comparative literature research”. He soon noticed that there were similar gaps in translation studies. For some unsolved questions like “what is the relationship between the author, the translator, and the readers? Where lies the translators’ real responsibility?” The focus on the translated literature from perspectives of comparative literature would likely give some unique answers (Xie 1989b: 47–50).

After that, Xie published a series of papers related to translated literature such as “Finding a Home for the Abandoned Child: on the Status of Translation in Modern Chinese Literature history” (为“弃儿”找归宿——论翻译在中国现代文学史上的地位) (Xie 1989a: 10–15), “Translated Literature: Literature for Recognition” (翻译文学——争取承认的文学) (Xie 1990: 56–60), and “On ‘Creative Treason’ in Literary Literature” (论文学翻译的创造性叛逆) (Xie 1992: 30–37). In these papers, Xie pointed out that translation studies have seriously underestimated the value of translated literature. Scholars have always thought of translation as “just a purely technical transformation of linguistic signs”, and unfaithful translations are not worth studying. Even if they were faithful to the original texts, they are still considered to possess no independent literary value. For example, there was no independent entry for “translated literature” in most literary dictionaries, which shows just how much of an “abandoned child”—translated literature was to the Chinese literary community then.

Xie pointed out that the greatest value of translated literature is its function of cross-cultural penetration: “introducing the original work into a new cultural circle with totally different cultural traditions, aesthetic tastes and appreciation habits.” Therefore, the best-translated literature may not be a faithful work, but one that could give the original “a fresh do-over” and “brand-new life”, so that it can “conduct a

fresh wave of literary communication with a wider range of readers” (Xie 1990: 57–58).

One of the figures that fascinated Xie was Lin Shu, a well-known Chinese translator in the early twentieth century, who did not understand any language other than Chinese. Xie pointed out that though Lin Shu’s translation is not faithful to the original in many cases, his translations (almost paraphrase) of Alexandre Dumas’s *The Lady of Camellia* had achieved astonishing sales and significant social influence in early twentieth century China. “It was the first time, thanks to Lin Shu, that Chinese began to take an interest in western novels, and many foreign literary masterpieces were introduced, which in the long run broadened the horizons of the Chinese and promoted the birth of modern Chinese novels. Perhaps that is why Lin Shu’s translations still have the independent literary value today” (Xie 1990: 59).

Xie’s attention to translated literature not only indicated a blind spot in the field of translation studies but also turned the entire academic circle away from a fundamentally flawed research premise. His focus on the actual translation effect provided a starting point for descriptive studies in the early 1990s and marked his entry into the field of translation, where he would eventually develop the theory of Medio-translatology.

### 3 Medio-translatology: Research Around the Translated Literature

In 1999, ten years after Tianzhen Xie had begun his research on translated literature, he published a monograph named *Medio-translatology* (译介学), laying out the following concept:

The study of Medio-translatology is not a form of language research but literary or cultural research. It is concerned with the transformation of the original text and how the information contained within gets lost, deformed, added, or expanded throughout the translation process. It is concerned about the unique value and significance of translation (mainly literary translation) as a practical human cross-cultural communication activity. (Xie 1999: 1)

From this definition, Xie began to build a more comprehensive theoretical construct and formulated a different paradigm from other translation studies of that time: one that regards translation as a subject for literary or cultural studies, and one that accepts all results of the act of translating (i.e., all translated works) as a *fait accompli*. In this domain, Xie put forward two opposing concepts to highlight the difference between the two research paradigms—“literary translation” versus “translated literature”. He advocated that scholars devote themselves to studying “the history of translated literature” rather than “the history of literary translation”.

From the perspective of linguistics or the standards of traditional translation, “literary translation” only sees the conversions of language and text and regards the product as a mere copy of the original. However, from the perspective of Medio-translatology, scholars shall regard translation as a form of literary creation and recognize the importance of the translator’s own

creative input and the introductory functions of translated works in the target culture. On this understanding, translations should be called “translated literature” instead of “literary translation”.

In the past, only “history of literary translation” was available, which merely records the “when and how” a piece of work got translated. While a “history of translated literature” contains a much broader research scope: like sorting out important literary movements that may influence ways of translation, documenting the life and works of the translator, analyzing how translating the same work changed throughout different time periods, or describing the relationship between the “creative treason” in the translation and their readers’ responses and influences in a historical and cultural context. (Xie 1999: 208–294)

From Xie’s idea of writing a history on the translated literature, we could see that his focus was on the historical and cultural influences showed by different translation versions and “creative treasons” made by different translators. His work aimed to discuss the connection between the translation’s “treason” and its introductory effects, which he considered to be the ultimate research objectives of this field.

#### **4 Core Concept of Medio-translatology: “Creative Treason” as an Essential Component of Translation**

In 1992, Tianzhen Xie published an article entitled “On ‘Creative Treason’ in Literary Translation” in the *Journal of Foreign Languages*, in which he borrowed a view—“Translation is always a kind of ‘Creative Treason’”—from “Sociology of Literature” by French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit. Xie pointed out that this statement “hits the key issue of literary translation and puts forward a very constructive subject” (Xie 1992: 30).

“Translation is always a kind of ‘Creative Treason’” is an idea similar to Lefevere’s proposal that “translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text” (Lefevere 1992: vii), both showing a new understanding of the essential features of translation. Although the concept of “Creative Treason” was not invented by Xie, it was Xie who first introduced it to Chinese academia, refined its principles, and expanded upon this concept in the context of translation studies in China. Xie regarded Escarpit’s interpretation of “Creative Treason” in translation as “merely a change of language” to be overly simple. In his theory, the “treason” in translation is not only determined by the translator but also influenced by readers (including the translator) and the whole receiving environment:

No reader, or translator, can exist out of a historical era and social environment. This all-encompassing acceptance environment will affect how readers perceive literary works and can even trigger certain collective behaviors. Every reader, translator included, is also subjectively influenced by his personal world view, literary taste, and personal experiences. Therefore, as a literary and cultural medium, the translator’s “treason” in his interpretation is a reflection of the translator’s treason and the readers’ treason presumed by the translator in the context of his social environment. Therefore, from the perspective of translators, “Creative Treason” can be divided into conscious and unconscious types. In contrast, from the

perspective of translation work, “Creative Treason” can be divided into four types: idiosyncratic translation, mistranslation and omission, abridged & compilation, and adaptation. (Xie 1999: 130–173)

Xie’s extension and classification of “Creative Treason” have gone far beyond discussing the translator’s language proficiency or translation ability, considering the possible readers, the historical period, and the influence of culture on translation strategies. In this way, the rationale behind translation studies is no longer the equivalence between two texts but the introductory function that the translated work has achieved.

## 5 Rewriting the Translation History in China: Descriptive Case Studies that Echoed with Medio-translatology

Toward the end of the twentieth century, around the same time as Xie proposed his Medio-translatology, another group of Chinese scholars also advocated for the rewriting of the history of Chinese translation. For example, in 1996, Zou Zhenhuan, a professor at Fudan University, published a book called *One Hundred Translations Affecting Modern Chinese Society* (影响中国近代社会的一百种译作) (Zou 1996), covering 100 translated works that were not faithful but popular in early twentieth century China. Lawrence Wang-Chi Wong, a professor from Hong Kong, proposed the idea of rewriting the translation history of the late-Qing Dynasty, attempted to reorganize the chronology along with the text comparisons and pointed the focus on the study of “the impact and influence of these translations” (Wong 2001: 98–107). Eva Hung, another professor from Hong Kong, published a monograph on the translations of detective stories in Late-Qing China, claiming that “cultural impact of translations does not depend on the original work or the translation itself, but depend on how the cultural environment at that time understand and accept” (Hung 1999: 2–3).

The idea of rewriting translation history is an appeal to descriptive translation studies, which is consistent with the concept of Medio-translatology and jointly promoted the Cultural Turn in Chinese translation academia. These scholars in translation history provided some exemplary case studies for Medio-translatology, which in turn served as a research framework for these scholars.

For example, researchers of translation history tend to focus on a certain historical period, whereas Medio-translatology encourages scholars to follow various clues along with the introductory functions of translations, such as “people” (following a certain author or translator), “translated works”, “events related to translation”, “translation activities in specific regions or historical period”, and translation thoughts (Xie 1999: 256–276). In the following two decades, many case studies related to translation history have followed the above clues.

From 1994 to 2004, 36 journal papers were published with “Creative Treason” as their keyword and 22 papers with “Medio-translatology” as their keyword. From



2004 to 2017, there were 492 journal papers with “Creative Treason” as its keyword and 152 papers with “Medio-translatology” as its keyword. There are also more than 200 master’s theses and one doctoral thesis focusing on “Creative Treason”. The term “Creative Treason” has become “one of the most popular and frequently used core terms in contemporary translation studies” and the Medio-translatology has been praised as “the most influential and original translation theory in China” (Liao 2008: 47–52).

## 6 Translating Chinese Literature to the World: A Warning from Medio-translatology

Throughout the past decade, Tianzhen Xie has continued to focus on the introductory functions of translations and offered many insightful views on how to promote literature to cultures where readers seldom read the translated works.

When entering the second decade of the twenty-first century, Chinese translation researchers are faced with a national strategic research task: How to make the world understand China better by translating Chinese literature. Although the Chinese government has constantly sponsored several translation projects since the 1950s, and a considerable amount of Chinese literary works has been translated into other languages, Chinese literature still has very limited audiences, especially in the English world. In response to the national strategic policy of “let Chinese culture go global”, more and more translation scholars began to devote themselves to research in this field. Xie once again made outstanding contributions and further developed Medio-translatology.

Xie pointed out that when studying their literature translated into foreign languages, translation researchers always fall into the illusion of “language equivalence” again. Our researchers were expecting to find translators with the strong linguistic ability and serious attitude to reproduce both the literary language form and content of Chinese literature faithfully and beautifully. Xie reminded scholars who research the topic of “Chinese Culture Going Global” that they must face the time gap and language gap between China and western countries in cultural exchanges:

The so-called time gap means that western readers have only begun to take some interest in reading Chinese literature during the last two decades, while Chinese readers have been accepting and ardently consuming western literature and culture for more than a century.

The so-called language gap means that right now, there are far more Chinese who are willing to learn English and understand the western culture than Westerners who are willing to learn Chinese and Chinese culture.

Therefore, when translating Chinese literature and Chinese culture, we must remember not to be too hasty and not to pursue completed versions and faithful translation. Actually, we could consider starting from the abridged translations. (Xie 2013: 44–54)

Xie used the example of Mo Yan, a writer who won a Nobel Prize in literature for China in 2012, to suggest four research perspectives scholars need to consider

translating Chinese literature into foreign languages better. The first and the second are

The first is the question of “who will translate”. Although there are many professional Chinese translators with high foreign language proficiency, they may not be the best candidates. Native language translators may be much better when it comes to using “subtle words, intuitive expressions, and sublime literary taste”.

The second is the issue of “what is the author’s attitude toward the translator”. If the author puts too many restrictions on the translator, and any minor deletion or modification is regarded as a mistake, translators would become what John Dryden called “a slave laboring on another man’s plantation, dancing on ropes with fettered legs”. A work translated in such a manner is unlikely to be loved by readers. Mo Yan encouraged his translator Howard Goldblatt to boldly “adapt”, saying, “I do not understand a word of English, and you are a master of it. I chose you as the translator of my book, so it is up to you to do whatever you think fit for this translation.” (Xie 2014: 3–4)

Building on the second point, Xie made it clear that the translation of Chinese literature should also consider the issue of “translatability of the work itself”:

“Translatable” here is not “translatable” in a linguistic sense, but whether the “taste” or “charm” of the original text can be conveyed. For example, the work of Li Shangyin, a Tang-dynasty poet and one of the most famous poets even today is somewhat “untranslatable”. There are too many idioms, historical references, and allusions in Li’s poems, which resulted in his poems being “untranslatable” in a cultural sense. Mo Yan’s novels, thankfully, belong to the realm of the “translatable”, which are not only close to the literary standards of western society, but also in line with the expectations of the western world for Chinese literature. Perhaps it is one of the reasons that Mo Yan won popularity in the English world. (Xie 2014: 4–5)

Tianzhen Xie also mentioned that the issue of “who will publish” is also worth discussing. He believed that choosing publishing houses from the receptor culture is a better choice because they know the needs of the target readers better and have better channels to promote the translated works (Xie 2014: 4).

In short, Xie’s four suggestions for “Chinese literature going global” all remind scholars to avoid the inherent thinking of equivalence in the understanding of translation. These suggestions reinforce his most significant proposition in Medio-translatology: taking the translation effect as the primary consideration and taking the introductory function as the biggest research focus.

In the introduction of her book *The Turns of Translation Studies*, Mary Snell-Hornby cited Gerard Radnitzky for his classification of scholars and divided scholars working on an emerging paradigm into four categories. They are precursors (those who “although speak under the traditional framework but illuminate future paths”); pioneers (those who “openly rebel from the tradition and formulate the manifesto of the new”); masters (those who “sets the standard through which the disciples measure their success”), and disciples (Snell-Hornby 2006: 5). Judging from the historical development of translation studies in China, Tianzhen Xie has indeed played the role of a precursor and pioneer in the past three decades and has finally become a master who made significant contributions to Chinese translation studies.

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# The Chinese Context and Significance of Medio-Translatology



Binghui Song

**Abstract** It is vital to trace the origins of Medio-translatology from the perspective of academic history and study the relationship between contemporary culture and academia, to understand the main content and interpretative potential of Medio-translatology. The reasons why Medio-translatology came into being and received heated and widespread discussion in Chinese academia at the end of the twentieth century are as follows: (a) the interaction between Chinese and foreign theories, (b) the re-emphasis of the significance of a vast number of translation practices in China since modern times, (c) the continuous renewal of multidisciplinary theory, and (d) the constant expansion of disciplinary horizons. In this regard, Medio-translatology is both an individual theoretical event and a crucial link in the academic history of Chinese translation studies. An observation of Medio-translatology from both aspects will shed light on its characteristics and pertinence, and its multidisciplinary significance in Chinese academia.

**Keywords** Medio-translatology · Occurrence context · Multidisciplinary significance · Academic history

The influence of a particular theory or doctrine in academia depends on the following factors: the importance of problems involved in the theory or doctrine, the degree of innovation of the theory, and the logical rationality of the stated theory. The influence is also dependent on the degree of interpretation effect in research practice as well as the range of fields it covers. Conversely, the interpretation efficiency of a theory and the scope of influence are closely related to the degree of internal relevance between the theory and the context of academic culture in which it occurs. Thus, when understanding the core connotation of a particular theory and evaluating its interpretation potential, it is an important dimension to observe the theory from the perspective of academic history. It is also crucial to observe the relationship between the theory and cultures from their respective eras along with the academic context.

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Since the end of the last century, Medio-translatology is one of the influential theories in China's humanities academia for the past 20 years. Medio-translatology is a new academic field born from the intersection of two disciplines: Comparative Literature and Translation Studies. It is also the fruit of contemporary academic exchanges between China and foreign countries. In today's so-called "post-theoretical" era, it is rare to see the attention, discussion, and influence of Medio-translatology sparks off in related disciplines. Nowadays, it is natural to associate "Medio-translatology" (译介学) with the name of its pioneer and constructor, Tianzhen Xie in the Chinese academic discourse. Tianzhen Xie is the advocate of Medio-translatology and the builder of its foundation. In this regard, we can see Medio-translatology as an individual's theoretical formulation and achievement.

However, from another different angle, the emergence of Medio-translatology and the widespread and heated discussion at the end of the twentieth century was caused by the following reasons: (a) the convergence of Chinese and foreign theories in this time and space; (b) in the current era of cultural globalization, the re-examination and re-emphasis of the significance of numerous translation cultural practices particularly in China's cultural system proposed since modern time; (c) as well as the continuous improvisation and horizon expansion in different disciplinary theories related to Medio-translatology. In this sense, the formulation of Medio-translatology is not simply an event on an individual scale.

By analyzing Medio-translatology through different perspectives, we can find two different aspects of meanings even though Medio-translatology is a single subject. One is the personal theoretical innovation of Medio-translatology, and the other is the evolution and occurrence of the Contemporary academic trend in Medio-translatology. By observing the occurrence of Medio-translatology in different aspects, perhaps it is possible to present the characteristics and direction of Medio-translatology further, as well as the multidisciplinary significance in Chinese academics.

From the logical relationship of subject theory evolution, Medio-translatology is the result of the respective reforms of comparative literature and translation studies, subsequently the enlightening and influencing of each other, and finally merging. In traditional comparative literature theories, Medio-translatology belongs to a branch of influence study under comparative literature, which is the focus of Mesologie. As an integral part of the French school of influence study, Mesologie aims to explore the impact of national literature and to conduct empirical research on the approaches and causal relationship of the cross-cultural influence of literature.

Translation, under the text medium, is the most important medium that brings about the influence of different national literatures. From the perspective of traditional influence research, although literary translation is a vital channel for cross-cultural and cross-language, the channel is seen just to achieve influence. Additionally, the way itself is regarded as transparent. In other words, in the theoretical system of comparative literature before the mid-twentieth century, the understanding of literary translation as a cross-cultural practice is still at the stage of instrumental cognition. It shares the equivalence translation concept with traditional translation theories. The

cultural turn of Western translation theories is another vital source of thoughts in translation research studies for Medio-translatology.

Drivers of the cultural turn in translation studies during the 1970s include James Holmes, Itamar Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury, André Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, and other theorists. The use of different methodologies established a new model of literary translation research based on the synthesis of varying translation theories and continuous development in translation practice. Their theoretical expressions are different, but they share a mutual inclination. They tend to view translation as a dynamic system; they are descriptive rather than normative; they focus translation research on the results of translation practice and the function and system of translation. More specifically, they are interested in the restriction and determination of translation results and other acceptable factors, the relationship between translation and various types of translated texts, the status and role of translation in literature from specific ethnicity or country, and the effect of the interaction between translation and national literature.

The circulation of international academic thought is undoubtedly a cross-cultural academic phenomenon in the era of globalization. It is, thus, reasonable that it produced corresponding responses to different cultural systems. Naturally, cross-cultural travel and the revival of such academic theory will always have differences in the aspect of cultural “time” and “space”. The development of such academic theory occurring in the context and field is not uniform. In nature, the response of contemporary Chinese humanities academia toward the cultural shift in translation belongs to the academic trend in multidisciplinary fields. On the one hand, it is relatively falling behind time, a difference of about ten years. On the other hand, it is profound and creative. The full opening of China’s contemporary thoughts and culture began in the late 1970s. Although there was a certain lag in the understanding of contemporary Western thoughts and academics, a few sensitive scholars in the field of Chinese translation theory, including Tianzhen Xie, still paid sufficient attention to the Western academic trend.

Since the cultural turn of Western translation studies from the 1970s till today, Chinese humanities academia is deeply involved in this international academic trend. Additionally, because the trend successively triggered important driving effects on translation research, comparative literature, literary theory, national literature, and other related fields, Medio-translatology produced a deep and continuous influence in Chinese academia.

In the last ten years of the twentieth century, Tianzhen Xie established the theory of Medio-translatology. He successively published a series of books, such as *Medio-translatology* (译介学 1999/2013), *Introduction to Medio-translatology* (译介学导论 2007/2018), *New Perspectives in Translation Studies* (翻译研究新视野 2003/2014), *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (比较文学与翻译研究 2014) and *Beyond the Text, Beyond Translation* (超越文本 超越翻译 2014). The books systematically discussed theoretical questions like the new concepts of translation cultural research, the historical background and practical significance of Medio-translatology, the “Creative Treason” and the cultural belonging of literary translation, and the construction of translating literary history. These complete the

formulation of China's Medio-translatology, helping it mature into a complete and well-rounded framework. It has also evoked continuous interest and discussion in the academic community for nearly 20 years. The interest and discussion caused the translation studies in the discipline of comparative literature to be a continuous hot spot. It also caused the disciplines in translation studies, Chinese literature, and even foreign literature (in China) to have a broader range of influence.

Just by looking at the translation issues in China's humanities academia from academic conferences over the past ten years, we see that the disciplines and institutions that initiated and hosted the academic conference on translation issues have expanded from the field of translation and comparative literature to the field of Chinese literature and foreign literature, and even the joint organization of relevant disciplines. In short, be it academic achievements, theoretical contributions, or academic influence, Medio-translatology has become an emerging subject field in Chinese academics, which corresponds to the international translation study, with its key academic discourse.

Naturally, this is related to the full opening of China's society in the past 40 years and the trend of Chinese cultural academics gradually fully participating in the globalization process. However, a deeper reason is that in the modern era, the modern tradition of cultural and literal exchanges between China and the West is manifested in China's humanities research in the globalized era.

The trends in foreign academic thoughts are an important and even indispensable aspect that inspired the emergence of Medio-translatology in Chinese academia. However, China's native culture is also an essential condition for emergence. The condition includes not only the specific historical tradition and the realistic context in the sense of social community but also the stimulation and enlightenment of specific academic thoughts experienced by individual theory creators.

Referring to the earlier paragraphs, the practice of Chinese translation throughout the twentieth century in modern times is an undeniable fact in the history of Chinese culture. If the cross-cultural translation practice and its results (translated text) is the history of human culture, specifically, the widespread phenomenon in the history of human cultural relations, then so long as the exchanges are between different languages and cultures, it is the specific development of translation practice. The numerous translated works in Modern China and the significant role translation played in the construction of local literature and culture, lasted for a long time (naturally, there are ups and downs during the period). This phenomenon does not always happen in between any culture and in any historical period. It is related to the modern transformation that occurred since the end of the nineteenth century when Chinese culture is facing "changes unseen in three thousand years" (Li Hong-zhang). From a broader perspective, it is also related to the world's modernization, which resulted in the most direct and comprehensive interaction as well as the cultural collision of the East and West.

Its specific manifestations in the history of Chinese literature include numerous Chinese translated literature and cultural works, most of the influential writers and thinkers participated in the translation practice of Western literature and culture, and many of the representative figures have the dual identity of translator and writer.



Many writers, including Lu Xun, even started their literary career with translation and their translated texts even exceed the number of their written works. Local creative works and foreign literature have different but obvious correlations between trends, schools of thought, and styles. These cultural and literary traditions since modern times have long attracted the attention of new culture and literature people. It has also been reflected in the study of Chinese literature since the end of the 1920s.

In Chen Zizhan's *The History of Chinese literature in the Last Thirty Years* (最近三十年中国文学史 1930), Wang Zhefu's *The History of Chinese New Literature Movement* (中国新文学运动史 1933), Guo Zhenyi's *A History of the Chinese Novel* (中国小说史 1939) and Zhu Ziqing's Tsinghua University lecture outline *An Outline of Chinese New Literature Research* (中国新文学研究纲要 1982), each has a chapter dedicated to describe Chinese literary translation and explain the importance of foreign literary translation for the occurrence and development of Chinese New Literature. However, this academic tradition failed to continue during the 40 years of the 1940–1970s. Since the beginning of the 1980s, this tradition once again attracted the attention of researchers.

It received the attention of the scholars of Chinese literature, represented by figures such as Shi Zhecun and Jia Zhifang. It is not a coincidence that both Shi Zhecun and Jia Zhifang experienced the new culture of the May Fourth Movement and grew to become a writer, holds the identity of translator and Chinese literature researcher, and taught at two universities in Shanghai that have a profound humanistic academic tradition. In the middle and late 1980s, they expressed their understanding and emphasis on the importance of modern Chinese translation in the history of Chinese literature through their respective work almost simultaneously.

Shi Zhecun's job was to edit the translation volume of *Modern Chinese Literature Series* (中国近代文学大系). This series of modern literature has a total of 30 volumes and provides a whole picture of the development of Chinese literature in the "30 years of modern times". In his later years, Shi Zhecun (1905–2003) took the responsibility to edit the translated volumes (volumes 26–28, Shanghai Bookstore, Published in 1990–1991). The work itself shows his familiarity with the historical facts of the relationship between literary translation and Modern Chinese Literature. It also shows the importance placed on the work's meaning. In the preface of *Modern Chinese Literature Series—Collection of Translated Literature* (《中国近代文学大系·翻译文学集》序), he identified the 30 years in Modern history (1890–1919) as the "second peak of translation" (第二次翻译高潮, referring to Chinese translation) in the history of Chinese translated literature. He analyzed why modern translated literature was ignored by new literary figures that rose after the May Fourth Movement. He went on to affirm Zhao Jingshen, Zheng Zhenduo, and especially Qian Xingcun's (A Ying) work, in the sorting, uncovering, and research in this regard. He estimated that during this period, about 400–480 novels were being translated and published, which was twice the total amount of novels written. In particular, he summarized the three specific impacts of translation on Chinese literature, namely, the improvement of the literary status of novels and understanding the importance of a novel's social function, the changing of the language of Chinese literature, and

the changing of methods of a novel's creative writing, all of which introduced new literary styles like drama to the Chinese literary scene.

Jia Zhifang (1915–2008) undertook the role of the main editor for *Bibliography of Modern Chinese Literature* (中国现代文学总书目 1993). This large-scale bibliography was compiled over many years and even specially set aside a section for a bibliography of translated literature. The editorial work also reflects consistency with his view that translated literature and creative literature are “two hubs of a car, two wings of a bird” (“车之两轂, 鸟之两翼”), both are mutually dependent. Later, when Jia Zhifang wrote a preface for Tianzhen Xie's collection of academic essays, *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (比较文学与翻译研究)<sup>1</sup>, he mentioned, “As a researcher of Modern Chinese Literature, I especially admire Tianzhen Xie's analysis on the status of translated literature in the history of Modern Chinese Literature. Translated literature has played a huge role in the history of Modern Chinese Literature. Generations of modern Chinese literary writers beginning from Lu Xun have all benefited from translated literature. It is not exaggerating to say that there will be no Modern Chinese Literature from the May Fourth Movement if there is no translated literature. Translated literature should be an organic part of Modern Chinese Literature.” The quotation is proof of his inspiration and agreement.

Shi Zhecun and Jia Zhifang are two literary and academic predecessors who have a special relationship with Tianzhen Xie. The two were the earliest editorial board members of *Chinese Comparative Literature* (中国比较文学): Shi Zhecun was the first deputy Editor-in-chief, while Jia Zhifang was soon promoted from the editorial board to Editor-in-chief. Tianzhen Xie was the Editorial Director since the magazine's preparatory period and later succeeded Jia Zhifang as the Editor-in-chief. These are the people that contributed the most to this only domestic, comparative literature professional journal since its inception. In the academic activities organized by the editorial department of *Chinese Comparative Literature* and Shanghai Society of Comparative Literature (上海市比较文学学会) (formally established in 1993), the experience and evaluation of these two senior scholars on Modern times Chinese translated literature is undoubtedly an invisible source of academic thoughts.

Tianzhen Xie's opportunity in developing the Medio-translatology is more direct as compared to the two senior scholars mentioned above. His theory is directly related to the “Rewriting the history of literature” event in the research field of Modern Chinese Literature. To be more precise, the initial vocalization of the construction of Medio-translatology is classified under the national literature in the traditional subject classification and presented as part of the event.

In 1988, the journal *Shanghai Literary Theory* (上海文论) created a research column named “Rewriting the History of Literature”. Via the column, the columns' initiator and overseer intended to step forward from the existing vision and research framework of the history of Modern Chinese Literature. Relevant domestic scholars are invited to raise questionable inquiries and diversified interpretations of a series of

<sup>1</sup> Jia Zhifang wrote the preface in January 1994, and it was published in *Book Town* (书城) 1994, Vol. 8.

important writers, works, and literary phenomena in the history of Chinese modern and contemporary literature. The writers in the series include Liu Qing, Zhao Shuli, Guo Xiaochuan, He Qifang, Ding Ling, and Mao Dun. For the literary phenomena, other than the sectarian issues in the left-wing literary movement, modernist literary issues, and the re-evaluation of Russian literary theorists Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dubrovov's theory, there is also a paper written by Tianzhen Xie, "Finding a Home for the Abandoned Child: on the Status of Translation in Modern Chinese Literature history" (为“弃儿”找归宿——论翻译在中国现代文学史上的地位). These are published in the journal's sixth issue (November) of 1989.

The paper marks the beginning of the author's series of opinions on the status of Chinese translated literature, the creative definition of translation subjects, Chinese translation, and the writing of the history of national literature. As we see it now, it is also the start of his active construction of Medio-translatology, which is based on the development of comparative literature subject theory, the new resources of Western translation theory, and traditional resources of modern and contemporary Chinese translation literature.

In the previous Sinology, Lu Kanghua and Sun Jingyao's book *Introduction to Comparative Literature* introduced the French school of comparative literature theory and used the concept of "Medio-translatology". This is probably the earliest work using the concept of "Medio-translatology" in Chinese academics. However, due to the limitation of the book's style, the authors did not elaborate on this, and therefore, do not link the comparative literature theory of the French school with the historical facts of modern Chinese translation literature.

Indeed, future generations may be able to make the assumption that even if Tianzhen Xie's article was not published in the "Rewriting the History of Literature" column of *Shanghai Literary Theory*, Tianzhen Xie has already formed such ideas and thoughts. These ideas and thoughts would sooner or later be made public via other academic media. Nevertheless, the unfolding of history is often inseparable from specific random opportunities. Initiators and presiders of the "Rewriting the History of Literature" column, Chen Sihe and Wang Xiaoming are literary critics and historians who teach at Fudan University and East China Normal University, respectively. They are also friends with Tianzhen Xie for nearly two decades. The motivation for writing the article "Finding a Home for the Abandoned Child" and its publication in the column itself embodies the opportunity for friends to respond together, seek each other out, and communicate their understanding of their research fields.

To a certain extent, similar to the interactions of the academic predecessors, Shi Zhecun and Jia Zhifang, it is the specific historical context in which the Medio-translatology takes place. Looking closely, this kind of communication between individuals inevitably carries the element of randomness in history and individuals. However, if we zoom into it, this kind of randomness is a historical inevitability. Macro academic and cultural changes such as the exchange of Chinese and Western academic trends and reflections on localized modern traditions are the background for this randomness.

I have expressed my understanding of the related articles published before with regards to the understanding and analysis of the Medio-translatology theory. Most of these articles are included in my book *Modern Chinese Translation Literature in the Perspective of Literary History: Centring on Writers' Translation* (文学史视野中的中国现代翻译文学——以作家翻译为中心). This paper does not analyze the connotation and characteristics of Medio-translatology theory directly but describes some of the academic historical facts that I know. The reason for this is to avoid repetition and strive to recreate the historical happening scene of Medio-translatology initiated by Tianzhen Xie. In addition to providing some useful historical facts for the academic history of Chinese translation research, the paper also attempts to provide a dimension for the understanding of Medio-translatology through the context analysis of Medio-translatology.

I want to reiterate that just as the history of thought is more than just looking at the records of thoughts, the history of theories is more than the process of theories evolution. Similarly, a theory is not just a series of concepts, propositions, and logical systems. There must be a cultural motivation behind the concepts, propositions, and logical system. Through the analysis of the context and cultural motivation of a certain thought or theory, perhaps it is possible to understand the connotation and characteristics of this theory from another angle. It is also possible to put the theory to better use, improve and adjust the theory.

Based on such consideration, this essay tries to describe the specific context and process of Medio-translatology. This will perhaps allow one to understand its distinctive features and theoretical premises better, that is the difference between Medio-translatology and previous translation theories depends on viewing translation practices and their results as cross-cultural activities. Its effectiveness of the theoretical interpretation is prominently embodied in the following: A descriptive study of the historical and cultural effects of translation practice; Attention on the subject of translator outside the text and his cultural identity and position; Attention to the relevance between translation strategies and their cultural context; Attention to the distinction between translated literary text and non-literary text (technology, information), and more.

Through the happening of Medio-translatology and the systematic analysis of multidisciplinary resources such as comparative literature, translation studies, national literature, and the theory of literary history, one can understand the corresponding influence of Medio-translatology theory in these and related disciplines. The mutual inspiration of interacting with related disciplines in the process of self-reflection and renewal over the past 40 years caused the happening. Hence, it is within expectations and reasons that the emergence at this historic moment triggered the attention and discussion of these related disciplines and caused the corresponding impacts.

Finally, one can further understand and explore the shown or potential international significance of Medio-translatology in Chinese academics when we analyze using Genetics. This kind of localized cultural translation theory, especially when the cultural turn of translation studies is turned toward international academic trends, is based on the comparative literature theory. At the same time, adhering to the

theoretical basis of China's local translation practice and the cultural effects of its result, effective dialogue between China's problem awareness and international translation theory is constructed. This improves and develops the theory. Personally, this is exactly where the potential and direction of Medio-translatology can be further perfected, improved, and adjusted. Simultaneously, in the evolution of Chinese academic history, it also provides a positive case study for how contemporary Chinese humanities scholars construct their disciplinary discourse in the context of globalization.

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# Comparative Literature Approach to Translation Studies



Mingjian Zha

**Abstract** As a catalyst for the emergence of comparative literature, translation is an important research subject. The distinctive features of “translation studies in comparative literature”, the objective and aims of this research, and the new dimensions it brings to translation studies, however, remain to be clarified. By analyzing the relationship between translation and comparative literature, this paper expounds on the nature and tenets of the paradigm of the comparative literature approach toward translation studies. This paper distinguishes such an approach from the more general translation studies and discusses its mutual complementarities and mutual enlightenment with modern translation theories, thereby, elucidating its unique academic value and significance.

**Keywords** Comparative literature · Translation studies · Consciousness of literary relationship · Systems theories · Influence and reception

Translation studies have been relatively marginal in the field of humanities and social sciences for a long time due to how translation and translation studies were perceived as a field of study in the earlier years of establishment. Previously, translation was regarded only as a tool for communication, and translation studies stagnated on the level of language transformation research such as “how to translate” and “how to translate well”. From the 1970s, a “cultural turn” appeared in translation studies, expanding the space of traditional translation studies. Scholars of the humanities and social sciences have also “discovered” the research value of thought and culture in translation, thereby, resulting in a “turn in translation studies” in the field of humanities and social sciences. The ensuing emphasis on translation in different disciplines and the “cultural turn” in translation studies formed flourishing and diverse contemporary translation studies via a multifaceted coexistence of the two factors.

Among the rich and diverse contemporary issues in translation studies, the study of the comparative literature approach to translation studies is an important research paradigm. Why, then, has translation become the research interest in comparative

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literature? What aspects of translation studies has comparative literature touched on, how is it different from the usual translation studies, and what are the connections between these factors? These questions confused translation researchers. To this end, this paper begins by establishing the relationship between translation and comparative literature, explaining the research nature, object, scope, and purpose of the comparative literature approach to translation studies. Thus, revealing the unique academic value and significance of the comparative literature approach to translation studies in contemporary translation studies.

## 1 Translation in the Field of Comparative Literature

The cross-ethnicity and cross-cultural dissemination of literature are some of the necessary conditions for creating comparative literature. The cross-cultural dissemination of literature relies heavily on translation. Goethe's concept of "World Literature" was triggered by translation. Before Goethe mentioned "World Literature", his works have been translated and published in France and the UK, among other countries. His works on *Torquato Tasso* and *Faust* were also staged in Paris. The more direct ideological trigger of Goethe's proposal on "World Literature" is that he read the translations of Chinese works. He saw that literature of various ethnicities might converge with the increasing frequency of literature and cultural exchange. The concept of "World Literature" he put forward under this trend later became the theoretical origin of the establishment of comparative literature. In this sense, translation gave birth to comparative literature.

The Italian comparatist Franco Merregali pointed out that "(t)ranslation is undoubtedly the most important medium filled with characteristics in the literary communication between different languages" and "translation should be the priority research object of comparative literature" (Merregalli 1985: 409). Bassnett also emphasized that "(literary) history involves translation as a crucial means of enabling information flow, hence the need to position the history of translation centrally within any comparative literary study." (Bassnett 2006: 10) However, early studies in comparative literature only used translation as a clue to examine the spread and influence of literature. Taking translation as a particular research object and putting forward academic views on understanding and studying translation happened only after the 1930s.

The French comparatist Paul Van Tieghem discussed the study of "the text of translation and the translator" in Chap. 7, "Les intermédiaires", of his book *La Littérature comparée* (1931). He provided enlightening insights into studying translations and translators, believing that there are two aspects to studying translation works. First, comparing the translation with the original to see if there are additions or deletions, "analyzing how realistic the translation portrays the thoughts and styles of the original text, ... How does the translation portray (intentional or unintentional) the image of the author"; Second, comparing translations of the same work from different eras to "study the changes in taste and the different impact made by the same author across

generations”. Regarding the study of translators, the earliest proposal he made was to pay attention to the translated works’ “Preface” as it provides “the most valuable materials” such as “each translator’s thoughts and the translation system he adopts (or thinks he adopts)” (Van Tieghem 1937: 78).

The “the text of translation and the translator” issue raised by Van Tieghem’s *La Littérature comparée* created a precedent for translation studies in the field of comparative literature. Other comparative literature writers, such as France’s Marius-François Guyard, Pierre Brunel, Claude Pichois and André-Marie Rousseau, Germany’s Host Rüdiger, Romania’s Al Dima, Slovak’s Dionýz Ďurišín, and Japan’s Yukio Otsuka (大塚幸男) also emphasized the importance of literary translation studies. Almost all comparative literature books have dedicated chapters to discuss translation issues. For example, in his book *Principles of Comparative Literature* (1977) (比较文学原理) Chap. 8, “Translator and Translations”, Yukio Otsuka raised seven types of problems from the content of the comparative literature approach to translation studies: (1) the problem of “Creative Treason” in translation; (2) the stylistic problem of translation creation; (3) the problem of literal translation and relay translation; (4) the problem of free translation, tampering, and adaptation; (5) the problem of comparing different translations of the same work; (6) the problem of the translator’s preface and interpretation; (7) the problem of evaluating the first translation work (Yukio 1985: 100–112).

Bassnett’s *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Chap. 7, “From Comparative Literature to Translation Studies”, specifically discusses translation issues in comparative literature. She believes that translation studies incorporate linguistics, literary studies, history, and theories such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and ethnology, reflecting strong interdisciplinary characteristics. Translation studies is a research field of profound significance for the future development of comparative literature. She even proposed that “we should look upon translation studies as the principal discipline from now on, with comparative literature as a valued but subsidiary subject.” (Bassnett 1993:161).

Early comparative literature focused on the path and medium of literary dissemination and had a dedicated research field in “mediology”. In literary dissemination, translation and the translated works are the most important and effective ways and mediums, thereby receiving special attention and later becoming an independent research field of comparative literature. With the increased understanding of the nature of translation, contemporary comparative literature gradually replaced “mediology” with the concept of “translation studies”, and contents from mediology are included in the scope of translation studies.



## 2 The Object and Purpose of the Comparative Literature Approach to Translation Studies

Coming from the perspective of comparative literature, the study of translation naturally reflects the disciplinary nature of comparative literature, whereby it has its specific research objects, scope, and purposes. Thus, being different from translation studies in the general sense. Traditional translation studies take a source-text-oriented approach, wherein the pros and cons of the translation strategies are distinguished and judged by comparing translated texts, with a focus on the discussion on how one can translate well and how it can come as close to the original as possible. This approach offers a standard for translation practice and criticism for translation quality. This kind of translation research is precious and necessary for guiding the translation practice. However, from the perspective of academic research, such an approach lacks ideological depth and academic value. Lawrence Wang-Chi Wong rightly pointed out that traditional translation studies “holds the translated text while comparing it with the original text, saying either that the writing is wonderful and smooth or there is an area of misinterpretation and not fluent. One must admit that such supposed translation studies cause too much damage to the discipline” (Wong 1999:60).

From the translation issues raised by Van Tieghem’s *La Littérature comparée*, we can see from the outset that comparative literature is very different from traditional translation studies in terms of the translations’ understanding and research ideas. In comparative literature, even when comparing the translated and original text, it is not to judge the translation quality, let alone establish a certain translation standard. Instead, it hopes to “see how realistic the translation portrays the thoughts and styles of the original text” through comparing, thereby analyzing the author’s image created by the translation. More importantly, by comparing the translations of the same work across different eras, it examines the change in literary concepts and style and the influence of different eras and translation work on the target language writers.

Although the comparative literature approach to translation studies also involves translation issues found in general translation studies, its purpose is not in translation but literature. Therefore, comparative literature treats the translation as a literary work, regardless of whether it is faithful or its translation quality. Joseph T. Shaw pointed out that “(t)ranslations have perhaps been insufficiently studied as literary works in their own right because of the modern translator’s usual attempt to give himself up entirely to the form and matter of the original work and to reproduce it to the best of his ability in the new language” (Shaw 1971: 88). From the perspective of comparative literature, there is literary research value no matter the quality of the translation, because “even the worst of a translator can reflect the aesthetics of a group or an era. The most faithful translator may contribute to people’s understanding of foreign cultures. The real creators are transplanting and rewriting the works they think necessary” (Guyard 1983:20).

Comparative literature focuses on the relationship between the choice of translation and translator and the period, acceptability, and literary influence of translation.

“(A)ny translator to a greater or lesser degree adapts the translated work to the taste of his own time, and he modernizes the older work he undertakes to translate.” “(I)n any case the selection of a work for translation, if not the execution, is likely to reflect what Professor Poggioli has called the elective affinity of the translator for the work” (Shaw 1971: 88).

What needs to be pointed out is that comparative literature neither advocates nor promotes unfaithful translation but sees that different pieces of literature have different literary traditions and reading aesthetics approaches. To achieve the purpose of literary dissemination and acceptance, “it is often the form and content of its transmuted, translated form which has the greatest effect upon the native literature, for in this form it is directly assimilable into, and indeed already a part of, the literary tradition” (ibid.). Hence, even if the translation is unfaithful, comparative literature does not simply deny or abandon it but pays attention to whether it has played a literary influence in the target language literary system, whether it has literary and cultural value.

Typically, translation studies often focus on researching aspects such as the translation process and strategy of translation works. The focus of the comparative literature approach to translation studies is not on the translation level but on problems in the two stages before and after literary translation. Namely, the choice of translation and the influence and acceptance of target language literature after publication. “Such studies should take into account what qualities were taken, what were transmuted, what were rejected. The center of interest should be what the borrowing or influenced author does with what he takes, what effect it has upon the finished literary work” (Shaw 1971: 96).

The premise of studying literary translation from the perspective of literature and the comparative literature culture is that the comparative literature’s standpoint and goal must reflect the consciousness of comparative literature. The standpoint, goal, and content of the study should reflect the nature of comparative literature. If we leave comparative literature, the comparative literature approach to translation studies will then converge with translation studies in the general sense. It can then not realize the purpose of the comparative literature approach to translation studies and its unique academic value. Hence, the purpose of the comparative literature approach to translation studies is to analyze the interrelationship and characteristics of both literature and culture, analyze the complexity of cultural dialogue, communication, and construction of literary relations, and explore the commensurability of cultures and the commonality of literature. (Likewise referring to Qian Zhongshu’s commonality in “heart of the poem” and “heart of literary”). The heart of the poem means the main content of the poem and its expression technique. The heart of the literary means the writer’s intention when writing, i.e., what he wants to say with his work. Thus, non-literary translation studies are not in the research scope. If not based on literary relations as the starting point of research or from literary and cultural relations, general literary translation issues do not belong to the comparative literature approach to translation studies. In short, the comparative literary approach to translation studies is the study of translated literature.

Literary translation is not the only main intermediary of Chinese and foreign literature and cultural exchanges but also a participant in the production of the translated literature, enriching and broadening the space for expression and reading of translated literature. The outstanding performance of translated literature is its influence on writers. When people talk about the influence of foreign literature on Chinese literature in the twentieth century, they often ignore the fact that most writers learn from foreign literature not by directly reading the original works but by relying on translations. In other words, the influencing text is the translated work and not the original work. The choice of literary translation and the type of translation have affected mainly the writer's vision of the literary world; the interpretation of the translator directly affects the writer's understanding of foreign literary works; The linguistic features and style of the translation influence the writer's perception and grasp of the formal characteristics of the work.

Therefore, Mo Yan said, "I do not know how Faulkner's original works in English and García Márquez's in Spanish read like. I only know how the Chinese translation of Faulkner and García Márquez's works read like. In a sense, I am influenced by translators" (Mo 1997:237). Joseph T. Shaw indicated that "(e)ven when there is a general public which can read a foreign work in the original or some intermediate language, the work does not really belong to the native tradition until it has been translated—until appropriate style, form, and diction have been found for it within the native tradition. Thus translations, not only in the conscious changes of a literary work which they often produce, but in the adaptation which any translation provides, play a special role in the inception and the transmission of literary influences. The direct influence is often produced by the translation rather than the original work" (Shaw 1971: 96).

In recent years, Damrosch's new concept of "World Literature" and its research methods have provided new academic enlightenment for the comparative literature approach to translation studies and the relationship between literature and culture. Damrosch believes that "world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading" (Damrosch 2003a: 5). He particularly emphasized the important role of translation in the formation of World Literature, pointing out that "world literature is writing that gains in translation" (Damrosch 2003a: 281). Translation is the most important medium for the dissemination and circulation of literature. Without translation, there would be no World Literature. Translation connects two cultures and facilitates their dialogues and negotiations. From the viewpoint of "world literature is writing that gains in translation", Damrosch explores how literary works, by entering the space where translations cause two cultures to intersect, become World Literature.

Damrosch views that World Literature is a dynamic literary relationship and the literary field formed by this relationship is the space where World Literature emerges. Damrosch uses the metaphor of "elliptical refraction" to describe this field of World Literary. "It is a double refraction, one that can be described through the figure of the ellipse, with the source and host cultures providing the two foci that generate the elliptical space within which a work lives as world literature, connected to both cultures, circumscribed by neither alone" (Damrosch 2003b:514). The magnetic force of two

cultures fills the literary field, and thus, it is also a cultural magnetic field. The literary works in this space (often translated) are restricted by the two cultures, and the combined force of both cultures results in the works' mode of existence and form. Therefore, the literary works in this space have changed in content and form. The works are not fully original, and they have the characteristics of the original national literature and the projection of the translated national literature. "All works cease to be the exclusive products of their original culture once they are translated; all become works that only 'began' in their original language" (Damrosch 2003a: 22). "(W)orks of world literature take on a new life as they move into the world at large, and to understand this new life we need to look closely at the ways the work becomes reframed in its translations and in its new cultural contexts" (Damrosch 2003a: 24).

Damrosch's "elliptical refraction" theory highlights the dual cultural characteristics of texts in the cross-cultural field, as well as the implicit cultural dialogue and power relations. Therefore, World Literature in the form of translation is a new literary work resulting from two cultural conflicts, exchanges, and negotiations. It includes the birth of cross-cultural works, the establishment of cultural dialogue, and the enriching information formed from the establishment of literary relationships. Damrosch's World Literature view provides theoretical enlightenment for comparative literature to study the intercultural nature of translated literature and the intertextual relationship between literature and culture.

From the perspective of comparative literature, a translated text is a piece of new text produced in a cross-cultural field, which contains the genes of the source culture and the new genes of the target culture. It is the reconstruction of the original text under the influence of two cultural genes, presenting content that portrays the relationship between two kinds of literature and culture. This new text that enters the target language readers' reading field gains new interpretations and produces new textual meanings. The original text, the text translated and interpreted by the translator<sup>1</sup>, and the text read and interpreted by the reader all come together to constitute a dynamic generative intertextual relationship of textual meaning. Once a piece of work has made an impact on the creation of literature, the influenced work along with the translated and original work, constitute a literary intertextual relationship (such as Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* influence in Mo Yan's writing), the affected work incorporates the genes of the two cultures and consists of cosmopolitan qualities. The work that constitutes an intertextual relationship between the translated and original work, the translated and influenced work, or the influenced and original work, all reflect upon, explain, and invent each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the interpretation of the translation, Damrosch pointed out: "We encounter the work not at the heart of its source culture but in the elliptical field of force generated among works that may come from very different cultures and eras. This elliptical relation already characterizes our experience of a foreign national tradition, but there is likely to be a significant difference of degree, both because the ellipses multiply and because the angle of refraction increases" (Damrosch 2003b: 530).

In the perspective of comparative literature, translation produces new texts, reproduces the meaning of texts in cross-cultural time and space, and the cross-cultural reproduction of intertextual relationship between literature and culture. The translated work is the simple life continuation of the original, the new literary life in the cross-cultural sense, and the radiation and dissemination of the literary nature and cultural implication of the work. Suppose the choice and process of translation are a kind of production of the significance of cross-cultural dialogue. In that case, the translation text entering a circulatory field will expand the scope of cross-cultural dialogue, increase the new connotation of cultural dialogue, and generate new discourses. Therefore, it is also the reproduction of the significance of cross-cultural dialogue.

The thought processes used in the comparative literature approach to translation studies link closely to the research goals of comparative literature. It reflects the theoretical requirements and research purposes of comparative literature, which determines the research nature of the comparative literature approach to translation studies. This also means that it belongs to translation studies and literary studies. The ideal comparative literature approach to translation studies results should have academic value for translation studies, literary studies, and literary relations studies of the target language.

### **3 The Theorization of Comparative Literature Approach to Translation Studies**

The commonality between the comparative literature approach to translation studies and contemporary translation studies is that it goes beyond the traditional translation research model and pays attention to the influence of cultural factors in the target language system on all translation aspects. They center on the target language's culture, taking its culture and literature as the starting point and perspective of the research. Therefore, they do not look at the phenomenon of literary translation/translated literature in isolation but analyze the phenomenon by incorporating it into the target language culture's context. Before the cultural turn of translation studies, the comparative literature approach to translation studies focused on the impact of target language culture on translation. It just lacked a more systematic theoretical approach.

French comparative literature writers Bishop and Rousseau pointed out that "Translation theory issues" are "the central issue of current comparative literature" (Guyard 1983:20). As mentioned previously, since the 1930s, comparative literature has been paying close attention to translation and has raised many ground-breaking and enlightening views toward translation studies. However, these views are relatively scattered and not further raised to the theoretical level for systematic elaboration. The development of contemporary Western translation studies, especially the translation theories after the cultural turn, has provided effective theoretical resources

for constructing the comparative literature approach to translation studies, including the polysystem theory, the manipulation theory, and the rewriting theory.

In the 1970s, Western translation studies began to undergo a “cultural turn”, changing people’s traditional concepts of “translation” and “translation research”. The shift in research perspective from “the original text as the center” to “the translated text as the center”, “how to translate” “why translate” and “why to translate it so” focuses on the manipulation of target language culture on translation. Among them, polysystem theory has played a pioneering and foundational role in reforming traditional translation concepts, opening new translation research space, and establishing a new paradigm for research on translation. Traditional translation research is linguistic-oriented, focusing on issues like “how to translate” and translation standards. It centers on the original text and does not pay much attention to the influence of “external politics” on translation choices, processes, and strategies. The polysystem theory “integrates translation into broader socio-cultural practices and processes, making it a more exciting object of study” (Hermans 1999:110).

Even Zohar’s polysystem theory “offered a comprehensive and ambitious framework, something researchers could turn to when looking for explanations and contexts of actual behaviour” (Hermans 1999:102). Comparative literature requires the integration of literary translation and the cultural context of the time. In this regard, the polysystem theory shows its strengths. The epistemological system of polysystem theory (the system concept of polysystem theory and the universal connection consciousness of things and Zhang Nanfeng’s “large polysystem theory” (Chang 2001:173–189)) can provide a macro-theoretical framework for the comparative literature approach to translation studies. This makes it most suitable for the holistic study of a significant literary translation phenomenon or a literary translation phenomenon from a specific period.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of research content and methods, polysystem theory examines the complex relationship between literary translation and the cultural system of the target language in the multi-cultural system. It also examines how the co-system<sup>3</sup> of translated literature restricts the choice of the translated text, influences the translation norms and the formation of translated literature libraries. It determines the mode of operation, status, and role of the translated literary system in the multi-cultural system.

Inspired by the polysystem theory, translation researchers have a new understanding of the nature of translation. Theo Hermans pointed out that “all translation implies a certain degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose”

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Wang-Chi Wong pointed out: Evan-Zohar “does not think that by comparing a single translation with the original text, we can draw any constructive conclusions, but should instead analyze many translation works. Therefore, his theory is most suitable to be applied in the exploration of the overall translation features of a certain period” (Wong 1999:25).

<sup>3</sup> Chang Nam Fung believes that although there are many factors related to translation in social culture, the most important factors are politics, ideology, economy, language, literature, and translation. They are “the main source of norms governing translation decisions.” These six factors constitute a co-existing system of translation systems, and they all restrict and influence translation to a certain extent (Chang 2001:177–178).

(Hermans 1985:11). Bassnett and Lefevere state that “(a)ll rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1992: vii).

The concepts of “manipulation” and “rewriting” clearly exempt the cultural nature of translation. Looking at the phenomenon of literary translation from this perspective, one will realize that literary translation is not a simple text conversion but a cultural behavior that is complexly related to many factors in the target language’s cultural system. Literary translation, from translation selection, process, and strategies to the publication, circulation, evaluation, acceptance, and influence of translations, will be restricted and affected by the target language’s context. Since the translation is manipulating the source text, after the filtering and rewriting of the target language culture, the translation can be considered to be parallel to the manipulated text instead of the original.

The concepts of “manipulation” and “rewriting” in translation have refreshed our views of the nature of translated literature and deepened our understanding of literary relations and research. Yet, the current research on the relationship between Chinese and foreign literature does not pay enough attention to cultural manipulation in translated literature. The influence of foreign literature on Chinese literature in the twentieth century refers to the influence of “translated literature” to a large extent. Due to the cultural manipulation nature of translated literature, this literary influence is a kind of selective influence from manipulation and rewriting.

System theory compensates for the lack of theoretical construction of the comparative literature approach to translation studies and provides new and more systematic research methods. Even Zohar’s views on the operation of polysystem (combined with Chang Nam Fung’s “Large Polysystem Theory”), Lefevere’s “rewriting”, and Hermans’ concepts of “manipulation” can be used to construct an epistemological system of target language-oriented translation studies. It can help us observe the phenomenon of translation as a whole and grasp the nature and cultural function of translation from the target language culture’s perspective. Even Zohar and Toury’s “polysystem”, “repertoire”, “classics”, “norms” and others, Lefevere’s “three-factor” theory of “ideology”, “poetics”, and “sponsorship” and Zhang Nanfeng’s six main systematic norms can construct a practice-based system of translation studies. This means that the keywords in their theories are used as theoretical perspectives for investigating specific literary translation phenomena from viewpoints such as politics, ideology, literature, and economy. Thereby exploring the manipulation and restriction of the target language’s polysystem on literary translation and explaining the cultural intention of restriction and manipulation. This avoids the shortcomings of simplification and abstraction of the polysystem theory and improves its operability.

The integration of systems theories is beneficial for the study of translated literature history and the phenomenon of literary translation in a certain period. The polysystem requires literary translation to be included in the polysystem of the target language for investigation. Through the interrelationship and operation of each system in the polysystem, it can be seen that various factors in the polysystem (the

co-existing system of literary translation) have an impact on the translation norms and formation of translated literature. Thereby, one can explore the operation mode of the translated literature system in the polysystem, as well as the status and cultural functions of translated literature.

In short, many theoretical methods of contemporary Western translation theories, such as the polysystem theory, can be applied to the comparative literature approach to translation studies. Concomitantly, comparative literature research methods can also be a valuable supplement to the polysystem theory.

#### **4 The Significance of Comparative Literature on Contemporary Translation Studies**

Learning from comparative literature research methods is, therefore, a basic requirement of translation studies moving beyond the cultural turn. The most basic requirements of comparative literature research are overall awareness, context awareness, comparative awareness, and relationship awareness.

The theoretical perspectives of Toury, Hermans, Lefevere, and others mainly gear toward the impact of the target language cultural diversity system on the translation process and strategies. As for the operation of the translated work after entering the target language system, that is, the influence of translated literature on the literary polysystem and multi-cultural system of the translated language lacks sufficient theoretical explanation. Evan-Zohar's polysystem theory includes this aspect, especially the article "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem", which is directly related to this area, but the actual research results are still relatively few. Translation studies should examine the choice of translation, translation strategies, and the morphological characteristics of the translated works and examine the evaluation, acceptance, and influence of the translated works in the target language system. This is a complete translation research process. The investigation of the translation results is also a further investigation of the underlying reasons for the manipulation of translation by the multi-cultural system of the target language. The study of the relationship between translated works and the creative literature after entering the target language literature system is the specialty of comparative literature research methods. Researchers can learn from comparative literature research methods to study the interaction and intertextual relationship between translated literature and creative literature.

Taking systems theories as the research point of view, researchers must go deep into the specific cultural context of translated literature production to investigate the phenomenon of translated literature production. Exploring questions such as "why translate?", "what is the intention of translation, and what purpose does it want to achieve?", "how does this intention permeate into translation strategies and texts?", "what is the readability and acceptance effectiveness of the translation?" "How did



the reader accept the translation?” “at what level does the translated literature influence the target language literature?”, “what is the scale of influence?” and “how is it reflected or transformed in the creative literature?” These problems can only be discovered in the specific context of the production and dissemination of translated literature. Therefore, the investigation of translated literature and its history should not be based on the translated text but should incorporate the phenomenon of translated literature into the context of the target language.

The translated literature is regarded as an element in the polysystem of the target language literature, and the restriction and influence of other polysystems related to translation are examined. These research ideas are consistent with the comparative literature approach to translation studies. The comparative literature approach to translation studies begins from the perspective of literary relations, emphasizing the contextual awareness of translation studies. To place translated literary works in the cultural context of the era in which they were produced, returning it to the “historical scene” of translated literature production and penetrating the translation phenomenon deeply. The investigation of the influence of literary concepts, politics, ideology, and other factors in a specific era on translation makes a profound interpretation of translation phenomena in line with the historical reality on this basis.

Evan-Zohar’s polysystem theory requires that every cultural activity be included in the multi-cultural system for investigation, but in his research, he seldom connects the text with the specific circumstances of the text. Instead, he only uses his hypothetical structure model and abstract pattern (Gentzler 2001:121). The theory “shies away from speculating about the underlying causes of such phenomena as changes in genres, norms, and the concepts and collective practices of translation” and “in practice takes little heed of actual political and social power relations ... (f)or all its emphasis on models and repertoires, polysystem theory remains thoroughly text-bound” (Hermans 1999:118). In short, his theory is divorced from actual practice, “not fully utilizing the polysystem theory to explore the polysystems relationship between language or literary systems and other systems (especially politics and ideology)” (Chang 2000:111). Evan-Zohar and Western contemporary translation researchers usually do not fully implement the concept of polysystem theory in actual translation research, and it remains at the level of translation practice.

In her *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, published in 1993, Bassnett confidently declared that with the interdisciplinary expansion and leapfrog development of translation studies, the disciplinary status of translation studies in comparative literature would turn downside up. “We should look upon translation studies as the principal discipline from now on, with comparative literature as a valued but subsidiary subject” (Bassnett 1993:161). However, 13 years later, Bassnett was disappointed to find that “the development of translation studies in the past 30 years was slow”. She did not achieve her expected results, and the research paradigm did not reach the transformation she expected, “comparison remains at the heart of much translation studies scholarship” (Bassnett 2006:6).

In comparison, translation studies in the field of China’s comparative literature have achieved fruitful results. The study of China’s comparative literature translation is not based on the comparison between the pros and cons of the translation or the

comparison between the original text and the translated text. It uses the phenomenon of literary translation as an entry point to explore the process of cross-cultural and inter-language conversion of literary works. The interference and manipulation of politics, ideology, literary tradition, cultural concepts, and the influence and acceptance of translated literature on Chinese literature fully reflect the comparative literary nature of the comparative literature approach to translation studies.

Should we want to embody these viewpoints and research ideas of the system theory, we should learn from the thoughts of the comparative literature approach to translation studies, that is, to strengthen the awareness of literary relations, context awareness, literary intertextuality, and interculturality in translation studies.

## 5 Conclusion

The comparative literature approach to translation studies, based on the nature and purpose of comparative literature studies, has gone beyond the study of translation at the linguistic level alone right from the start. Comparative literary awareness permeates every aspect of the translation process, from the literary and cultural motivations for translation, the choice of translation, translation strategies, to the study of the circulation, reading, evaluation, readers' reception, and the creative transformation of translations, reflecting the nature of comparative literature and the aims of the research.

From the perspective of contemporary Western translation theories, translation studies' main concern is the problem of translation itself. The scope of the problem of the comparative literature approach to translation studies, on the other hand, is much broader. The main thrust of its research is not even the problem of translation, but the unearthing of questions from translated literature as a logical starting point for research that ultimately explores the relationship between literature and culture. While contemporary Western translation theory provides theoretical frameworks and research perspectives (e.g., manipulation, dynamic classics, translation norms), comparative literature provides academic and intellectual depth issues. In terms of research methodology, polysystems theory has a sociological methodological color, while comparative literature makes greater use of literary research methods, particularly comparative literary impact studies, reception theory, and intertextuality theory.

From the perspective of a complete literary translation/translated literature research process, the translation research of comparative literature started from where the system theory research "stopped". Polysystem theory, the school of manipulation theory, and other contemporary Western translation theories need to be integrated for the study of translated literature/historical literature (Zha 2015). It is also necessary to learn from the thinking methods of the comparative literature approach to translation studies, complement and integrate them, and use them comprehensively to construct a successive, complementary, and co-existing system of translation research methodology.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that comparative literature is known for being transgressive, open-minded, and pioneering. The academic reach of comparative literature is sharp and strong, and it is keen to absorb new theories, concepts, ideas, and methods in the field of humanities and social sciences, turning them into their own, constantly expanding the research boundary of the discipline, and raising new questions. This allows it to proudly be at the forefront of the contemporary humanities and become the most dynamic discipline in the field. In particular, the contextualization, historicization, and interdisciplinary trends of literary studies that have emerged in international comparative literature since the 1990s have highlighted the transversal, open and interdisciplinary characteristics of contemporary comparative literature, which became an academic pioneer in the field of humanities. As Haun Saussy said, “Our ways of thinking, writing, and teaching have spread like a gospel and have not been followed ... by an empire ... comparative literature is not only legitimate: now, as often as not, ours is the first violin that sets the tone for the rest of the orchestra” (Saussy 2006:3, 4).

The field of contemporary comparative literature issues is expanding, and cultural studies topics, such as postcolonial, diaspora, cross-cultural writing, cultural identity, cultural politics, power discourse, gender, and more, have also entered their research horizon. Many of these topics involve translation issues to varying degrees. Concurrently, the translation research topics raised by the “translation turn” in the humanities and social sciences field have also attracted comparative literature’s attention, becoming a new research content. All these have continuously expanded the space of the comparative literature approach to translation studies. From this, we can also see the mutually motivating relationship between comparative literature and translation studies. It can be envisaged that the future of the comparative literature approach to translation studies will further deepen the study of literature in translation and explore the depth of literary relations studies. On the other hand, it is a multidisciplinary, multi-perspective, and multi-dimensional study that raises translation issues in the field of humanities and social sciences while entering the research aspect of cultural history, intellectual history, and conceptual history.

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# *Yijie Xue* or Transcreation Studies: A Chinese Approach to the Study of Translation



Shaobin He

**Abstract** *Yijie Xue* (译介学), or Transcreation Studies, is a Chinese approach to translation studies. Instead of viewing translation as merely linguistic transference or aesthetic replica, it considers translation, particularly literary translation, as a form of “Creative Treason”. *Yijie Xue* shares some similarities with the “cultural turn” schools of thought on translation in the Western academia, yet also differentiates itself from the latter in two ways. First, *Yijie Xue* discusses Western topics more systemically and in greater detail. Second, it responds directly to the issues arising in the purely Chinese context. This new approach to translation studies took shape in the early 1990s and has attracted increasing attention both at home and abroad. Despite its Chinese roots, *Yijie Xue* is also applicable to similar concerns in other cultures; yet it is still too general and needs more concrete methodology at present.

**Keywords** Creative treason · Translational literature · Historiography of literary translation · Chinese approach to transcreation studies

## 1 Introduction

Before the 1970s, approaches to translation studies were predominantly influenced by linguistic theories, which are more focused on the technicalities of translation and propagated universal theories regarding translation. Yet, an “invisible college” (Hermans 1999/2004:9–10) of scholars of literary studies, in particular, of comparative literature, found that these models were resting on a shaky basis because they presupposed “a degree of symmetry between languages which makes the postulated equivalence possible” (Snell-Hornby 1995/2001:16). Some literary scholars of translation, then, veered their attention from “philosophic problems of meaning” to “how meaning travels”. (Gentzler 1993:76) More specifically, they take “a view of literature as a complex and dynamic system...an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic...”. This prompted a “paradigm

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shift” (Hermans 1985:10), which was designated as the “cultural turn” (Lefevere and Susan 1990:1–13) by André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett.

In China, during the early 1980s, the Chinese academics were introduced to several English, French, and Russian translation theories and Eugene Nida enjoyed a long-standing reputation as a prestigious theoretician of the field. Nevertheless, like their Western counterparts, a few Chinese comparatists also found that these linguistics-based translation theories could not solve the problems encountered in their studies. Some of them turned to the French comparative literature model and discussed issues regarding translation under the umbrella of mediology, in that “the comparative study of the function translation plays as a medium, translation theory and history of translation constitute the biggest division of influence studies” (Yue and Sun 1988:163), while others established new approaches inspired by the cultural turn.

Around the year 1999, a monograph entitled *Yijie Xue* (译介学, Mediotranslatology/Transcreation Studies)<sup>1</sup> was published and it stirred up sensational protests for its somewhat odd assignment and its proposition of translation as “Creative Treason”. The term *Yijie Xue* had appeared in textbooks on comparative literature before the 1990s, though they had garnered little attention. Since its proposition by comparatist Tianzhen Xie in his monographs and a series of journal papers, Transcreation Studies has gained growing currency and popularity despite its never-ending oppositions.

## 2 Core Concepts and Propositions

Superficially, Transcreation Studies bears resemblance to the descriptive and systemic approaches to translation studies; however, it is a notably Chinese theoretical framework for its understanding of translation and its responses to the issues in the Chinese literary scene, which is important, though oft-glossed over issues in Western academia.

### 2.1 Translation as “Creative Treason”

When discussing the reading effect of the translated literature, the French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit (1918–2000) defined translation as an act of “Creative Treason”, where he used the word “treason” “because it puts the work in a system of reference (linguistic, in this example) for which it was not originally conceived”. The word “creative” was chosen “because it gives new reality to the work in providing

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<sup>1</sup> Tianzhen Xie, the author of *Yijie Xue* (译介学), translated the Chinese title into “Mediotranslatology” at the suggestion of other academics, though he did not think “Mediotranslatology” could best convey his idea. Here, the present paper offers an alternative English version “Transcreation Studies” for discussion.

it with the possibility of new literary interchanges with a larger public and because it assures not only mere survival but a second existence” (Escarpit 1971:85). For Escarpit, “Creative Treason” was an unexpected result from readers alone.

Xie borrowed this concept, and further developed the notion; to him, “Creative Treason” occurs both during the translation and during the reception. The agents (mediators) of translating, including the translator and his patronage, and the readers within specific historical contexts, are all capable of “Creative Treason”. Typically, the “Creative Treason” caused by mediators falls into one of four main categories: (a) personalized translation (characterized by either domestication or foreignization drive) (*gexinghua fanyi* 个性化翻译); (b) mistranslation (*wuyi* 误译) and omission (*louyi* 漏译); (c) partial translation (*jieyi* 节译) and transcompilation (*bianyiyi* 编译); (d) relay translation (*zhaunyi* 转译) and adaptation (*gai bian* 改编) (Xie 1999:130–173). Xie’s hypothesis assumes that a translation would be different, to some degree, from its source text, no matter how faithful the theorist or practitioner may claim to be. This difference is what is known as “Creative Treason”, whether it was intentional. Intentional “Creative Treason” may arise during the translating process owing to specific purposes, like that of Ezra Pound’s translation of Chinese poetry, while unintentional “Creative Treason” may simply be due to the translator’s incapability or even carelessness. On the receiving end, “Creative Treason” is inevitable simply because of a foreign cognition framework. It must be noted that “Creative Treason” is neither a positive nor negative term, but a neutral one to describe something new arising from the translation process (Xie 2012:33–40).

This term may also immediately remind us of Theo Hermans’ idea of manipulation or André Lefevere’s rewriting. In describing Even-Zohar’s hypothesis of competition for dominance within the target text literary polysystem, Hermans posits that “all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (Hermans 1985:11), yet he also finds that Even-Zohar’s quest for “laws of literary interference” is “either trivial because self-evident or problematic” (Hermans 1999/2004:110–111). Lefevere argues that literary works are often accepted or canonized not by reading the original but by reading various “rewritings” including translations, literary histories, reference books, anthologies, criticisms, and editions, in which “rewriters adapt, manipulate the original they work with to some degree, to fit in with the dominant, or one of dominant ideological and poetological currents of the time” (Lefevere 1992:8).

As for relations between these three concepts, Xie acknowledges in the revised edition of his book that the term “Creative Treason” coincides with the idea of rewriting, and to some extent they are synonymous (Xie 2013:110–111). Despite their shared emphasis on the intentional interference in adapting translation to fit specific purposes, rewriting or manipulation centers on the intentionality and the process of translating, while “Creative Treason” encompasses both translation and reception, intentional or otherwise. That is, “Creative Treason” involves not only all constraints on process, product, and function but also the outcome of and the reaction to them.

## 2.2 *Translational Literature as National Literature*

Due to the technical understanding of the translation<sup>2</sup>, translated works are often described as secondary, derivative, and mechanical, and hence, “a copy, a substitute, a poor version of superior original”. Yet, they may be “at various moments subversive, innovatory and radical” (Bassnett 1996/2007:10–24). This subversion can be explained with “Creative Treason”. Because of the inevitability of “Creative Treason”, works of translation exert influences according to the target language context, which assumes a certain level of autonomy from the original environment; this also explains the birth of the notion of “translational literature”. Here, the word “translational” is adopted instead of “translated” because the former foregrounds the work of translation as being its literary text instead of being a derivative. In this light, literary translation can also be discussed as the creation of a piece of literature; translational literature is no longer considered foreign literature as conventionally understood by most readers but a constituent of the receiving national literary system (Xie 2019:95–102). This bold hypothesis proposed by Xie in the late 1980s (Xie 1989:60–62) gives rise to hot debates among scholars on literary studies but finally has won bigger support in China (Song 2009:44–48). The relation between translational and native literature is a topic extending from academic discourse to political narratives on cultural evolution.

The Israeli cultural historian Itamar Even-Zohar discussed “translated literature” in his literary polysystem. Unlike the Russian formalists, who view literature as a system operating between a series of dichotomies such as high versus low, or central vs. peripheral genres, Even-Zohar replaces static binary oppositions with a more dynamic, multi-structural model that features both synchronic and diachronic relations, viz. polysystem. Within his model, what is most relevant to translation studies is his proposition of a separate system of translated literature, or “a body of texts which is structured and functions as a system”, which is justified in two ways: “(a) in the way they are selected by the target literature, the principles of selection never being uncorrelatable with the home ecosystems (to put it most mildly); and (b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviors, and policies which are a result of their relations with the other co-systems” (Even-Zohar 1978:21–27). To illustrate the dynamic interactions between translated literature and other parts of the target polysystem, Even-Zohar further specifies three instances where translated literature may occupy a central position in each literary system. (*ibid.*)

Even-Zohar’s hypothesis of translated literature is very influential and strikes us as being similar to Xie’s translational literature. However, a closer look into the cultural grid bearing the two concepts will result in different discoveries. Aiming at a general map of the cultural history, Even-Zohar justifies the role of translated literature by highlighting the similarities of the norms governing both the production of native literature and the translational action. He is also whole-heartedly preoccupied with the tensions and correlations between subsystems within the general cultural polysystem

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<sup>2</sup> The traditional concept of “translation”, with an attempt to highlight “translation as purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction”. (see Munday 2001:77–78).



and meticulously constructs a dynamic mechanism that semiotically operates in our imagination. In a way, his model is simultaneously inspiring and intuitionistic.

By contrast, translational literature is legitimized with the notion that “creative treason” affects both the actual translanguaging practice and the circulation of foreign literature. According to Xie, “creative treason” applies not only to literary translation but to nearly all communications crossing languages, nationalities, and cultures (Xie 2013). In other words, Even-Zohar is deductive in his theoretical formulation for he simply takes the existing translations as they are when they are chosen to serve as an opposite to the native literature, while Xie is inductive for he puts more emphasis on the literary and cultural effect resulting from the differences between ST and TT. More noteworthy is the fact that Xie’s hypothesis was catalyzed by the call for “rewriting the history of modern Chinese literature” in the late 1980s when literary historiography was criticized for its heavily ideological principle (Song 2019:103–107).

The idea that translational literature is a special part of the Chinese literary system radically challenges, though encountering many protests from the start, both conventional literary historiography and the understanding of literature itself. By the twenty-first century, this proposition has won academic popularity, having been chosen as a thesis topic for a variety of research fields and publications of several histories concerning modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Many obscure literary translators, as well as writers, once neglected in literary history, were brought to light and discussed again. The contributions made by scholars of translation to the formation and transformation of modern Chinese culture have thence been reappraised and confirmed by the adoption of Xie’s theoretical model.

### 2.3 *History of Translational Literature or History of Literary Translation?*

Historiography of translation is a recent academic concern but has proven to be a relatively promising subject for the future progress of Translation Studies. Conventionally, the historical dimension of translation was barely discussed simply because its role in the Chinese cultural transformation was underestimated. Therefore, even in James Holmes’ general and ambitious mapping of translation studies (Munday 2001:11), the history of translation is still confined to a very insignificant position under the partial theory of the “pure” branch of the entire field.

Nevertheless, the 1970s was a turning point since “there has been a substantial increase in activities relating to the history of translation”; more importantly, the history of translation has thus evolved to “become a viable independent research area within translation studies”. (Bastin and Bandia 2006:1–9) Diverse approaches, discourses, and methodologies have been explored in the studies of translation history.<sup>3</sup> Fruitful and insightful as such writings may be, gaps remain in the vast

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<sup>3</sup> To name but a few representative works on the history of translation: Lawrence Venuti. 1995/2008/2014. *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London and New York:

unknown territories, such as oral translation, translation practice, pseudo-translation, self-translation, forgotten texts, and translated texts as survivors of lost originals (Santoyo 2006:11–43). In addition, inspiring yet polemical distinctions are made between several binary concepts like history as opposed to historiography; history against chronicle. Some scholars even argue for an autonomous status vis-a-vis the history of translation outside of Translation Studies because “the more we immerse ourselves in the historical field of our choice, the more the other scholars of this field become our natural interlocutors and the less we have in common with other scholars in translation studies” (Rundle 2012:232–248).

China boasts a long history of historical writing, but its accounts of translation history only began in the early twentieth century and made progression even later from the 1980s onwards. All kinds of “histories” concerning the translation of diverse subject matters have so far amounted to more than 80, though most of them have been criticized for their homogenous approach as a “simple compilation of materials” or “mere chronicle of facts” (Hung 2005). Only a few of these histories concentrate on literary translation. Through the lenses offered by Transcreation Studies, Tianzhen Xie distinguishes between two types of historical writing on literary translation, which he, respectively designates as the “history of literary translation” (文学翻译史, my translation) and “history of translational literature” (翻译文学史, my translation) (Xie 1999: 256–294). For Xie, works on the history of literary translation are naturally necessary for their exhaustive records of great events and translators. Yet, they cannot explain the questions imperative to Transcreation Studies such as why the works under study were translated, how well or poorly they are translated, and the impact they bring about (Xie 2013:237). In other words, translation history should be illustrative of translingual and cross-cultural literary relations.

Xie’s notion of literary translation historiography directly comes from his understanding of translational literature as “Creative Treason”. To some degree, his justification seems to have echoed his Western counterparts’ criticisms of historical chronicle, but his concerns are more conducive to his assumption about a special form of literature that comes from foreign sources but acts independently in the receiving socio-cultural setting and to the Chinese quest for alternative approaches to literary historiography. Considering that translated literature is an integral part of the target literature system in terms of its literary value, instead of other factors, renders the very difference between Even-Zohar’s Polysystem Theory and Transcreation Studies.

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Routledge; Anthony Pym. 1998. *Method in Translation History*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing; Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth. 1995/2012(revised). *Translator through History*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company; Georges L. Bastin and Paul F. Bandia (eds). *Charting the Future of Translation History*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press; Special issue “Translation and History”, *Translation Studies* 2012 (2).

## 2.4 Incoming Translation Versus Outgoing Translation

*To Be Translated or Not To Be*, a report published in 2007 by PEN International, shows that works translated into English in 2004 totaled less than 3% of all published books in English; even worse is the fact that major publishers in the United Kingdom and America are cutting back on the publication of translated works, especially of the literary translation (Ma 2014:97–101). The imbalance of language trade is true of nearly all countries, though in different forms and of diverse causes. A case in point is China where during the twentieth century as many as 100,000 foreign books were translated into Chinese while only about 1000 Chinese books were translated into Western languages (Xu 2015:111–117).

Around 2012, when Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for literature for the first time as a Chinese writer, the Chinese media and academia were enthusiastically involved in hot debates over issues like why the Chinese literature was of so low recognition in the world or what contributed to its low levels of acknowledgment among Western countries. Nearly all discussions point toward poor translation, among some other factors, as the main contributing factor to the failure of reception of the Chinese literature in the West. This explanation is popular not only among the public but also among translators as well as translation scholars. For instance, Göran Malmqvist, a Swedish Sinologist, who is said to be the only one who understands Chinese on Nobel Committee, mentioned on more than one occasion that the poor quality and scant amount of the Chinese literature translation in European languages led to its negligence by the committee (Liu 2012:61). Malmqvist, himself a translator of voluminous Chinese literary works into English, further argues that it is not advisable for any Chinese person to translate the Chinese text into English, however good his or her English is (Qin and Jiang 2011:80–85).

Whether as a reader or as a scholar and translator, Malmqvist's ideas on translation are quite representative in terms of their seeming conformity to common sense and even to most translation theories that view translation as technical operations on languages. This school of thought is even echoed in the official documents of professional organizations such as the FIT or UNESCO. UNESCO's 19th session, held in November 1976, released a paper entitled *Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to improve the Status of Translators*, advised that "a translator should, as far as possible, translate into his mother tongue or into a language of which he or she has a mastery equal to that of his or her mother tongue" (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997/2004:42). Such an argument reduces translation, "the most complex type of event in the history of the cosmos"<sup>4</sup> (Nida 2001:3), to a matter of linguistic competence; this also explains the imbalance seen in the translation market, where some languages are claimed to be little known or difficult to grasp (Chinese, for instance), and hence, are seldom translated into. Another excuse for such inequality is attributed to Western linguistic centrism, which is believed to have blocked large-scale translation into dominant languages like English, French, or German (Ma 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> A remark by Ivor Armstrong Richards, a British literary critic, and translation scholar.

Whether UNESCO's "Recommendation" or Malmqvist's warning assumes that such an act will ensure the quality of translation. Their emphasis on translating into mother tongues indicates that their understanding of translation remains at a technical level. However, the truth is far from that understanding. Since the 1950s, many Chinese works, including literary texts, have been translated into other languages, mostly by native speakers of Chinese, and such translation projects are almost funded by the governments at all levels, albeit these have been widely criticized. Statistics indicate that the reception of such translations is lackluster, at least not as good as expected in the Western readership. Compared with the huge expenditure of money and labor invested in these projects, the gains seem insignificant. However, as stated above, most criticisms focus on unqualified translators.

Confronted with the public blame, scholars have offered many explanations and solutions. But for sure, these explanations and solutions are fundamentally baseless as they are based on partial and even mistaken ideas of translation. Xie holds that incoming translation (i.e., translating into mother tongue) and outgoing translation (translating into foreign languages) by the same agents are essentially different actions far beyond a mere distinction of direction, simply because translation is purpose-driven and is, therefore, subject to the general rule of cultural communication; it is the real needs of the receiving system that play the decisive role for success or failure of a translation project. Linguistic adequacy serves only an auxiliary part in the whole process, and the influence or charm of a culture defines its "translatability"<sup>5</sup> (Xie 2020a:19–20). In other words, if the translation is merely technically understood, there is little difference between the two directions; if the translation is taken as a certain cultural strategy, say to construct a certain cultural image or to influence a certain readership, the two directions of translating are of stark difference. Take the case of the Chinese translators as an example. Since the late nineteenth century, voluminous foreign works including works of literature have been continuously translated into Chinese, immediately owing to persisting needs to learn from "advanced" cultures even though many translated books are linguistically unfaithful, even to the point of willful rewritings. In contrast, during the past seven decades, while many Chinese books have also been translated into European languages by the Chinese translators, most of them are at least linguistically faithful; unfortunately, they seem to have achieved only a limited sphere of influence among Western readers, at least comparatively less than that of Western works on the Chinese readers. The key point here has less to do with language ability but more to do with the unequal cultural influences between the two worlds, though things are increasingly changing in the recent decade.

The difference in translation direction betrays a long-standing perception of translation as mere linguistic transference. Many translation theories do mention "cultural" factors in their formulations, yet such factors are no more than static signs interwoven in idioms, allusions, and some peculiar styles, which are still confined to the linguistic level and should be identified as "cultural" by the readers or researchers as well. They are defined as "cultural" usually from an anthropological perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> Here "translatability" means certain intrinsic potential for or worthy of being translated.

Many writings on the “cultural turn” often confuse this with the “culture” derived from Cultural Studies, with the “culture” derived from anthropology, as is frequently mentioned by such well-known figures like Eugene Nida or John Catford, and many others. If “culture” in translation theory is understood from an anthropological perspective, it is always there, then how does the “turn” come?

### 3 Progress, Problems, and Prospects

As mentioned in the previous sections, *Yijie Xue* (译介学) or Transcreation Studies as a term first appeared in several textbooks on comparative literature, but it was there too vague in connotation and was not clearly distinguished from the traditional translation theories. It is Professor Tianzhen Xie who endows this term with new ingredients and expands it far outside its former disciplinary confines. From 1999 to 2020, five monographs under similar titles have been published, each retaining the core concepts and propositions but with various degrees of modification, revision, or enlargement. In his own words, “with growing participation in the studies, Transcreation Studies is getting deepened and enriched...it is indeed an integration of collective wisdom” (Xie 2020b:17).

This collective wisdom consists of not only supportive opinions but also critical comments and even sheer disagreement. Some opponents argue that Transcreation Studies is but a transplant of Western translation studies or that it is only applicable to comparative literature (Wang 2009: 147–150; Cao 2006:1–6). Some others question the legitimacy of “Creative Treason”, either claiming that not all treasons are creative or that it encourages arbitrary translation (Wang 2014a: 141–148; Jiang 2009). Still, some others partially accept its propositions but try to modify some concepts with their ideas. A case in point is the proposal of the term “*yi wenxue*” (译文学), which is claimed to be exclusively concerned with the textual analysis of the translated literature because “*fanyi wenxue*” (翻译文学) or translational literature centers only on the communication process of the translated works (Wang 2014b:1–8).

The above-mentioned oppositions are easy to retort because the commentators seem to have not yet read *Yijie Xue* thoroughly or to be preoccupied with the linguistic matters in translating (He 2020: 38–44) However, this does not necessarily mean the present framework and formulation of Transcreation Studies is already perfect. Xie himself admits in his last monograph on this subject that this approach to translation research has always been open to improvement and enrichment. He did so by adding in the latest edition of his book a whole chapter on the distinction between incoming translation and outgoing translation as well as its cultural and political significance (Xie 2020b:290–344).

I think that Transcreation Studies needs further delineation in the following ways. First, it is an interdisciplinary field rather than a subordinate branch to comparative literature. Xie himself is somewhat hesitant and even ambivalent about this point in his books and journal articles. Some critics subject it to the domain of comparative literature simply because its basic concept, “Creative Treason”, is conventionally

applied when talking about literary translation and was first mentioned in the books on comparative literature. “Creative Treason” is factually universal to all translational actions, literary or not, the difference being only a matter of degree. Similar proposals like rewriting and manipulation all point to a long-neglected fact that translating actions means the birth of new meaning and significance. This new quality has also been designated other denominations such as *translatum* (Vermeer 2000:221–232) and *translingual practice* (Liu 1995). Given such an acknowledgment, “Creative Treason” should be taken as an ontological term about translation. Seen in this light, the former English equivalent for *Yijie Xue*, “Medio-translatology”, is also problematic since the terms suffixed with *-ology* usually implies certain rigid limits or scientific pursuits, which is not at all true for studies in humanities. Following James Holmes, *Yijie Xue* might be roughly rendered as Transcreation Studies.

Next, a concrete methodology should be established for future research. Frankly, Prof. Xie has formulated a very instructive framework for Transcreation Studies, though certain categories such as translational literature remain somewhat too general and, therefore, are short of manoeuvrability. Xie writes much about this topic, but nearly all his arguments are about the nature of translational literature as a form of literature and a special part of the national literary system. Nevertheless, scholars on this subject need more specific analytic tools to elaborate their studies and this necessity opens an avenue for future progress.

Finally, if Transcreation Studies is meant to handle all translational actions, it is now the right time for the approach to be expanded beyond the sphere of literature. Today and even quite a long time prior, literature has been very marginal to our daily life and serves as a luxury. By sheer frequency and volume of translational activities, we observe way more non-literary translations than literary ones. Differences do exist between literary and non-literary texts, yet the distinction should not be exaggerated to the point of complete heterogeneity. Additionally, professional translating and interpreting is now increasingly confronted with new technological advances from the language services sector, which constantly challenges our traditional conception about the term translation itself. In its future modifications, transcreation studies should and must consider professional translation.

## 4 Concluding Remarks

As one of several approaches to the study of translation proposed by Chinese scholars since the 1990s, Transcreation Studies is justified with its original findings and the Chinese way of questioning. Admittedly, it is inspired by the cultural turn school of thought; yet it is still new for its unique inquiries and propositions that arise in the Chinese historical context. These propositions in return may compensate some blank aspects in the western formulations on translation, for instance, the nature of translational literature which is little paid attention to in the west. The recent news

indicates that *Yijie Xue* may soon be introduced to Western readers since some prestigious publishers like Routledge, Peter Lang and Springer are planning to translate Xie's books (Xie 2020b:16).

Certainly, Transcreation Studies is an open but general framework, waiting to be further systematized and perfected. At present, it still needs to concretize and specify some analytic categories and methods to make the grand propositions more applicable. It should transcend the conventional disciplinary bounds of comparative literature or literary translation<sup>6</sup>; rather, it should stand between the different areas of studies and provide insights for adjacent fields. Its prospect is promising if it is open to critical and constructive modifications.

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Bassnett once suggested that Translation Studies, as a separate discipline, should encompass comparative literature instead of the reverse. (See Bassnett 1993).

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# “Creative Treason” as a Key to Medio-Translatology: Circulation and Controversies



Hongjun Lan

**Abstract** “Creative Treason”, a key concept in Medio-translatology, has been widely disseminated and caused multiple controversies among Chinese *academia*. It was first raised by the famous French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit in his article, “‘Creative Treason’ as a Key to Literature” (1961) and was then fully expounded and systematized by Tianzhen Xie in his series as a term fundamental to the modern understanding of the nature of literary translation. As a subject of long-running debate, “Creative Treason” has raised misunderstanding and caused confusion where there are conceptual and methodological differences between the contexts of production and reception. Yet, the circulation of the theory in China has not been thematized as an issue worthy of investigation up until today. This article clarifies the circulation of “Creative Treason” in China, the traveling of the concept across disciplines and conceptual paradigms, and subsequent enrichments of the concept. To this end, this article investigates the travels of “Creative Treason” from comparative literature to translation studies, from literary theory to translation practice, from literary translation to non-literary translation, and between different philosophical schools in translation studies. The intention of the author is not so much to portray the set of its travels as it is to analyze the transformations, displacements, and possible incommensurability between the old and new concepts in translation studies.

**Keywords** Medio-translatology · Creative Treason · Translation studies · Circulation and controversies

“Creative Treason” (创造性叛逆) is by no means a stranger to Chinese scholars in the fields of comparative literature and translation studies. While the expression was first introduced in Robert Escarpit’s works on literary sociology in 1958 as a “key to literature” (Escarpit 1961), it is much more closely associated with the theories of Medio-translatology as proposed by Tianzhen Xie, who elucidated “Creative Treason” as the starting point of a new field of research. With the growing importance and recognition of Medio-translatology in theory and practice, “Creative Treason” has

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come under heated discussion, and no scholar of translation studies over the last few decades in China may overlook the ongoing arguments about it. We are witnesses to the spread of “Creative Treason” from French to Chinese, from comparative literature to translation studies, and from literary translation to applied translation, all while posing intriguing questions and prompting theories with various heuristic bases.

The transplantation, transformation, and transcendence of “Creative Treason” have not been thematized until now as an issue worthy of investigation. This article clarifies the circulation and enrichment of “Creative Treason” across disciplines and conceptual paradigms in the Chinese academic world. This article does not aim to distinguish right from wrong, but rather to tell a story of travel. The many travels of the term, namely, the process of “creative treason” being creatively betrayed, is a testament to the fact that the travel of a translation theory is itself very much a practice of translation, always purposefully loaded and contextually conditioned and thus subject to transformations, displacements, and possible incommensurability between paradigms.

## 1 Travels of “Creative Treason”

By “travel”, we do not mean a series of journeys or voyages undertaken by a person, but rather the moving of a concept, an idea, or a theory “between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, or between geographically dispersed academic communities” (Bal 2002: 24). The metaphorical expression applied in humanities and social sciences originated from Edward Said, who used the word to refer to the transfer of theories across disciplines, and in his article “Traveling Theory”, points out the three or four stages common to the way a theory travel:

First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered the discourse. Second, there is a distance transversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions --- call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances --- which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place (Said 1983: 226–227).

Taking Said’s Traveling Theory as a framework, we are here to describe the stages through which “Creative Treason” has traveled, by analyzing the selective adaptations, diversified interpretations, and productive misunderstandings in the constant motion of the term.

## 1.1 The Initial Point: “Creative Treason” in the Original

As mentioned earlier, “Creative Treason” first appeared in Robert Escarpit’s works on literature. On several occasions, Tianzhen Xie recalled his encounter with the phrase in the 1980s, when he read Escarpit’s *Sociologie de la littérature* in a Chinese version translated by Wang Meihua and Yu Pei. Tianzhen Xie was greatly impressed by an extraordinary paragraph in the book:

Perhaps the irritating problem of translation would be solved if we would just admit that it is always “Creative Treason”. It is treason because it places the work in a system of references (linguistic in this case), for which it was not conceived; it is creative because it gives a new reality to the work by providing it with the possibility of a new literary exchange with a wider public, because it enriches it, not simply with survival, but with a second existence.

如果大家愿意接受翻译总是一种创造性的背叛这一说法的话,那么,翻译这个带刺激性的问题也许能获得解决。说翻译是背叛,那是因为它把作品置于一个完全没有预料到的参照体系里(指语言);说翻译是创造性的,那是因为它赋予作品一个崭新的面貌,使之能与更广泛的读者进行一次崭新的文学交流;还因为它不仅延长了作品的生命,而且又赋予它第二次生命。(Escarpit 1987a: 137-138 tr. by Wang & Yu)

Escarpit’s original in French is as follow:

On résoudrait peut-être l’irritant problème de la traduction si l’on voulait bien admettre qu’elle est toujours une trahison créatrice. Trahison parce qu’elle place l’oeuvre dans un système de références (en l’occurrence linguistique) pour lequel elle n’a pas été conçue, créatrice parce qu’elle donne une nouvelle réalité à l’oeuvre en lui fournissant la possibilité d’un nouvel échange littéraire avec un public plus vaste, parce qu’elle l’enrichit non-seulement d’une survie, mais d’une deuxième existence (Escarpit 2021).

What struck Tianzhen Xie the most is the sentence, “translation is always a ‘Creative Treason’”, which he believed to be the one statement that speaks the whole truth about translation, particularly about literary translation. Inspired by the remark, Tianzhen Xie wrote a series of articles and books expounding upon the idea, integrating it into his theory on literary translation, and finally making it a cornerstone of Medio-translatology.

As stated by the title, *Sociologie de la littérature* is not a book on translation, but rather a book on literature from the perspective of sociology. What Escarpit was interested in was not the question of “what is translation”, but that of “how are literary works produced, distributed and received”. He was not addressing the issue of translation when mentioning “Creative Treason”, and he was just speaking of translation while discussing the consumption of literary products. Therefore, the initial point of the journey of “Creative Treason” is quite clear: (1) Escarpit, the creator of the expression; (2) literature, the context in which it is originally located; (3) literary activity: the subject on which it is originally centered.

## 1.2 *The Distance Traversed: From Literary Sociology to Medio-Translatology*

When *Sociologie de la littérature* was translated from French into Chinese, “Creative Treason” began its travel in the Chinese world. Hence what happened to “Creative Treason” when it moved out of and into discrepant contexts proposes itself as a significant topic of investigation.

As the proverb goes, many things grow in the garden that was never sown there. It is probable that Escarpit had never expected “Creative Treason” to become a topic that was so provocative and controversial in translation studies. The unexpected encounter of the term started with the inspiration it gave to Tianzhen Xie. With “translation is always a ‘Creative Treason’” resonating strongly in his mind, Tianzhen Xie began his endeavor to introduce “Creative Treason” to Chinese scholars of translation studies and to explicate its meaning (Xie 2019: 8), imbuing it with his thoughts and providing novel insights into the study of literary translation. If we say it is the translation of the book *Sociologie de la littérature* that embarked on the journey of “Creative Treason” into a different linguistic system, then in China it is Tianzhen Xie who started to load “Creative Treason” with new intellectual freight and bring it into another field of research. Since then, “Creative Treason” has become a prominent Chinese discourse on translation.

The Traveling Theory holds that theories always travel both in space and in time, continually altering their shape as they traverse from one academic context to another (Neumann and Nünning 2012: 5). It is not hard for us to notice the distance “Creative Treason” traverses from literary sociology to Medio-translatology.

### 1.2.1 From a Phrase to a Terminology

In the original usage by Escarpit, “Creative Treason” is a phrase rather than a term with a clear-cut definition, while in Medio-translatology, it is a concept fully expounded. We may find in *Sociologie de la littérature* that there is only one paragraph where Escarpit mentions “Creative Treason”, and in this specific context, “Creative Treason” is not raised as a very strictly defined concept or terminology (Wang 2017: 63).

In Tianzhen Xie’s *Medio-translatology* (1999) (译介学), his first book that makes a theoretical and systematic construction of Medio-translatology as an interdisciplinary field of research, there is a chapter named “‘Creative Treason’ of Literary Translation” (文学翻译中的创造性叛逆). As the title suggests, the chapter is devoted to the discussion of literary treason, in which Tianzhen Xie defines “Creative Treason”, explains its manifestations, and argues that literary translation is both creative and treacherous. In addition, Tianzhen Xie published several articles focusing on “Creative Treason”, such as “On ‘Creative Treason’ of Literary Translation” (1992) (论文学翻译的创造性叛逆) and “Literary Translation: A Cross-cultural ‘Creative Treason’” (1996) (文学翻译: 一种跨文化的创造性叛逆). With

these, “Creative Treason” has been conceptualized into a term frequently used in Medio-translatology.

### 1.2.2 From Literary Activity to Translation

Though the first to utter the remark that “translation is always a ‘Creative Treason’”, Escarpit is not well-known for translation study. We know that the concentration of his study is on literary sociology, and when he talks about “treason”, he specially refers to the betrayal of literary products. He states that being treacherous is a trait of literature and that literary products do have the capacity to change at any historical time the image they create at another time (Escarpit 1987b: 170).

In Escarpit’s mind, translation is “by no means the only way to literary treason” (Escarpit 1961: 16), and the process of writing accounts more for the rise of “Creative Treason” in literature, because “any conception is betrayed as soon as it is expressed as soon as it is conveyed” (ibid). A writer cannot possibly be certain that his/her words and phrases evoke the same feeling or imagination in the mind of the reader; treason is inevitable to any creative mind. When it comes to “Creative Treason”, if we come back to the original, we will find that the focus of Escarpit is on treason in creative literary activities.

While Escarpit takes “Creative Treason” as a feature of all literary activities, Tianzhen Xie confines his talk about “Creative Treason” to translation. Tianzhen Xie finds the special value of “Creative Treason” in understanding the essence of literary translation, positing that “Creative Treason” embodies mutation, misunderstanding, collision, distortion, and other phenomena in cross-cultural communication. In Tianzhen Xie’s opinion, not only the translator but also the target readership and the target culture are among the committers of “Creative Treason”. The “Creative Treason” on the translator’s part can be divided into two categories: the conscious and the unconscious, which represent themselves specifically as alienation, domestication, mistranslation, omission, abridged translation, trans-editing, relay translation, and adaptation. The readership’s role in committing “Creative Treason” should also be recognized, for, without the participation of the reader, the literary translation would be meaningless. The “Creative Treason” on the part of the target readership comes mainly from subjective factors: the reader’s personal experience, his/her philosophy, his/her values on life, his/her artistic outlooks, and so on. Besides, the target culture also plays an indispensable part in “Creative Treason”, as the historical and the cultural environment of the target reader is the ultimate factor that determines how a translation is received (Xie 1992: 30–37).

By doing this, Tianzhen Xie changes the scope of the application of “Creative Treason” from literature to translation, and by making a detailed analysis of many cases of “Creative Treason” committed by the translator, the target readership, and the target culture, he enriches our knowledge about the varieties of the committers of “Creative Treason”.

### 1.3 *The Conditions of Traveling: Acceptance and Resistance*

With the introduction of “Creative Treason” to Medio-translatology, Tianzhen Xie brings more of an epistemic innovation than a phrase from literature. Since Tianzhen Xie introduced the concept, Chinese scholars have been showing persistent interest in research into the phenomena of “Creative Treason” in translation. According to the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the online publishing platform has been publishing at least 682 journal papers and 291 M.A./Ph.D. degree theses themed with “Creative Treason”, and at least 389 journal papers and 167 M.A./Ph.D. degree theses entitled with “Creative Treason” in the last two decades. Besides, three books are specializing in the study of “Creative Treason”, which is Dong Ming’s *Translation: Creative Treason* (2006) (翻译: 创造性叛逆), Liu Xiaogang’s *“Creative Treason” in Translation and Cross-cultural Communication* (2014) (翻译中的创造性叛逆与跨文化交际), Zhao Jiping’s *Study on “Creative Treason” in Literary Translation of the Late Qing and the Early Republican Period* (2017) (清末民初文学翻译中的创造性叛逆研究).

It is widely acknowledged that Medio-translatology studies have ventured beyond the realm of traditional translation studies, in that they have adopted a much broader academic perspective, not merely restricted to the specific issue of transfer between two languages, but also include elements of literature studies and cultural studies (Xie 2017: 132). And there is also a fact not to be neglected that “Creative Treason” has aroused a lot of controversial arguments.

Some scholars challenge Tianzhen Xie’s view of “Creative Treason”. For example, Sun Jianchang (2001) thinks that the unconsciousness of the translator’s betrayal should not be brought into the range of “Creative Treason”. Duan Junhui (2004) objects to the role of the target reader and the reception environment in “Creative Treason” and criticizes Tianzhen Xie’s failure to offer a satisfactory analysis of the relations between “creativity” and “treason”. Xu Jun (2003) accepts the value of “Creative Treason” in translation but remains vigilant against the translators’ conscious betrayal of the source.

Rather than reinforcing pre-existing notions of translation, “Creative Treason” induces readers to view translation from a different angle. It exposes the side of translation opposite to “loyalty”, the unwavering principle of traditional translation. Therefore, it is natural that not everyone accepts the statement “translation is always a ‘Creative Treason’”. There are not a few who hold an aversion to the topic, believing that the introduction and the spread of “Creative Treason” in translation studies do great harm to literary translation practice and undermine our traditional belief in the translator’s loyalty to the author. For example, Lin Zhang (1998) severely criticizes Medio-translatology, contending that the idea to take “Creative Treason” as the essence of literary translation would contaminate people’s values on translation and deal a heavy blow to those conscientious translators who make unremitting efforts to stay faithful to the original text. Some translation practitioners make no secret of their resentment at the phrase. Jiang Feng (2009), a famous literary translator, scolds advocate of the study of “Creative Treason”, blaming them for the decline of

the quality of translations in recent years; he thinks what Tianzhen Xie says about “Creative Treason” corrupts the reality and traditions of translation in China.

The never-ending dissents in the past two decades imply that the impacts of “Creative Treason” endure in the field of translation studies. In recent years, sharp criticisms persist. Wang Zuhua (2015) criticizes that Tianzhen Xie exaggerated the creativeness of the translator in literary translation and failed to consider his/her aesthetic passivity. Wang Xiangyuan is another representative who depreciates “Creative Treason”. He accuses Tianzhen Xie of introducing the term to ignite conflicts between “the loyalty school” and “the betrayal school” (Wang 2014: 141) and argues that the proposition of “translation as ‘Creative Treason’” indicates a completely positive evaluation of “treason”, and thus indulges and encourages the translator to cast aside the principle of “loyalty” (Wang 2014: 145). He also criticizes Tianzhen Xie for misinterpreting Escarpit and deviating from his original intention, leading to a gradual deterioration of translation ethics (Wang 2017: 62).

## ***1.4 The Transformed Concept: New Meanings and Amplified Applications***

Clearly, “Creative Treason” started a new life when it moved out of literary sociology. As Medio-translatology is a field of research where comparative literature and translation studies overlap, Tianzhen Xie’s elaboration on the concept influences both disciplines. Thanks to “Creative Treason”, translated literature is not the same as foreign literature and deserves a due place in the target culture (Xie 2017: 126). In the field of translation studies with no intrinsic limits, “Creative Treason” displays great adaptivity and exuberant vitality.

### **1.4.1 Philosophical Grounding**

As a result of its pertinence to new circumstances, “Creative Treason” evokes new connotations in its growth. Liu Xiaogang is a scholar who has made a remarkable contribution to the development of Tianzhen Xie’s theory. In *“Creative Treason”: Concept, Theory and Historical Description* (创造性叛逆: 概念、理论与历史描述), the first Ph.D. thesis with a monographic study of “Creative Treason”, Liu Xiaogang (2006a) analyses the elements contributing to the rise of “Creative Treason”, the manifestations of “Creative Treason” in given historical contexts and the cultural significance of “Creative Treason” in the target language. To verify the validity of “Creative Treason” in translation, Liu Xiaogang turned to Gadamer’s hermeneutics for rational support. He derived an explanation for the inevitability of “Creative Treason” from the forever-existing restrictions of “Vorurteile” (pre-understanding), which is composed of ideology, poetics, and cultural tradition, which makes it impossible for the translator to retrieve the original meaning of the author. In a journal paper



published in the same year, he generalizes four essential features of “Creative Treason” and points out that “Creative Treason” is the reflection of meaning proliferation resulting from “Horizontverschmelzung” (fusion of horizons) of the translator and the original text (Liu 2006b). In this way, he consolidates the cogency of “Creative Treason” by providing a philosophical foundation. Liu Xiaogang is not the only one who connects “Creative Treason” with hermeneutics, and according to CNKI, there are six journal papers and six MA degree theses devoted to studying “Creative Treason” from the perspective of hermeneutics.

Besides hermeneutics, other philosophies are employed. Wang Xiaoling (2013) views “Creative Treason” from the perspective of deconstructionism, noting the influence of the Deconstructionist Translation Theory. Chen Tao (2008) associates “Creative Treason” with feminism and thinks that “Creative Treason” is a discourse strategy feminists apply in literal translation. While in Escarpit’s literary sociology, “Creative Treason” is a concept used to answer the irritating problem of literary translation, it is now associated with philosophical discussions.

#### 1.4.2 Theoretical Connections

Apart from the above-mentioned philosophical thoughts, “Creative Treason” has been explained through other theories. Li Xiangyi (2006) believes that the Relevance Theory of cognitive pragmatics can provide an effective explanation for “Creative Treason”. While Jiang Zhongjie (2006) thinks that “Creative Treason” can be explained from the perspective of the Adaptation Theory, holding that “Creative Treason” consists of successful adaptations the translator takes when he/she finds it difficult to make direct linguistic transcoding or cultural transfer in translation. Hu Fangyi (2010) presents an interpretation of the translator’s “Creative Treason” with the three rules of the Skopos Theory. In addition to these, there are other attempts to characterize “Creative Treason” through Reception Aesthetics, Manipulation Theory, or Rewriting Theory.

It is understandable that when scholars propose new theoretical frameworks for explaining “Creative Treason” in translation, they inevitably produce misunderstandings of Tianzhen Xie’s opinion. Though everyone who attempts to explain “Creative Treason” refers back to the original text in which it appeared, it no longer is the “thing” that Robert Escarpit or Tianzhen Xie conceived; it has become a living creature, implanted in alien surroundings, and embedded in new considerations. Many scholars have taken “Creative Treason” to be an acceptable translation strategy. For example, Li (2006: 204) points out that “Creative Treason” represents measures the translator takes to achieve optimal relevance, no matter what specific strategies the translator adopts, such as alienation and domestication.

The irony lies in that “Creative Treason” brings Medio-translatology blames for misleading translators to intentional mistranslation or wrong translation. In response to such criticisms, Tianzhen Xie emphasized several times that the term is used to describe the essence of literary translation. However, these remarks were neglected to some extent and did not appease critics. Despite Tianzhen Xie’s insistence that

“Creative Treason” is an ontological concept in Medio-translatology, many scholars persist in taking it as a methodological concept.

### 1.4.3 Application Range

As most scholars of Medio-translatology know the boundaries Tianzhen Xie set for “Creative Treason”, they tend to circumscribe their talk within the context of literary translation when they discuss “Creative Treason”. On the one hand, they are likely to make innovations by researching further into the translation of specific literary styles, such as poetry, prose, drama, and novel. On the other hand, some outside researchers tend to disregard the genre limit and lift “Creative Treason” out of literary translation to explain translation phenomena. Therefore, in different articles, the meaning, the operational value, and the context of “Creative Treason” differ significantly.

Yuan Hongyan (2006) transfers the discussion of “Creative Treason” from literary translation to sci-tech translation. She posits that sci-tech translation, similar to literary translation, must see “Creative Treason” as the translator must exercise his/her subjectivity. Like some others, she regards “Creative Treason” as a measure to achieve optimal relevance in sci-tech translation. Fan Wuqiu and Fan Toujiao (2011) reaffirm that “Creative Treason” is not exclusive to literary translation and find its existence in sci-tech translation for which faithfulness is deemed as the first criterion. They make explicit the manifestations of “Creative Treason” in sci-tech translation: a recreation of images, a transformation of lexicons, and change of textual features, and make clear the conditions of achieving “Creative Treason” in sci-tech translation: professional knowledge in a certain field, a good command of the Chinese language, as well as strong logical thinking.

Some scholars discuss “Creative Treason” in legal translation. Among them, Heng Qingzhi (2010) points out that though “loyalty” is of utmost importance in legal translation, it is impossible for anyone to achieve absolute faithfulness in legal translation because of the huge differences between English and Chinese, which inevitably results in “Creative Treason”. Qing Lihua (2018) expresses a similar opinion and discusses the theoretical value and practical significance of “Creative Treason” in legal translation.

Apart from sci-tech translation and legal translation, “Creative Treason” is said to be existing in film translation, advertisement translation, and interpreting. At least 22 journal papers focus on “Creative Treason” in film translation, nine in advertisement translation, and eight in the translation of publicity-oriented texts. There is one thing common to those who bring the talk of “Creative Treason” out of literary translation: they consider “Creative Treason” as a means of translation but not the essence of translation. It is also interesting to note that those who criticize Tianzhen Xie for his “Creative Treason” are the same in this respect: in their eyes, “Creative Treason” is a translation strategy.

## 2 Cause of Controversies

It is sure that the travels of “Creative Treason” have not come to an end. As long as the concept is used, it will be situated in an ongoing process of displacement, exchange, and transfer, in which it will unavoidably be invested with something new and different, over and over again. The meaning of “Creative Treason” is never fixed once and for all, and it is something that emerges from the way it is understood. From the travel story, we see that Tianzhen Xie’s “Creative Treason” is no longer the same as what Escarpit put it in his book, and the concept repudiated by many is not the same as what Tianzhen Xie expounds, but what critics themselves believe it to be. The conceptualization of “Creative Treason” is influenced by historical and cultural traditions and filled with conscious misreadings and/or unconscious biases. The misreadings that “Creative Treason” undergoes when crossing disciplinary boundaries and circulating within the discipline of translation studies are a driving factor spurring disputes and dialogues, through which “Creative Treason” is understood and interpreted by more and more people. It is misreadings and misunderstandings that bring about quarrels, and it is disagreements over the meaning and the value of it that open for it a new lease of life. Then what lies at the root of the disagreements? Or, in other words, what are the causes of the controversies?

### 2.1 *Difference in Translation Ethics*

The difference in translation ethics is one of the factors that contribute to the rise of controversies. When it comes to ethics, “*xin*” (信) often comes to the mind of Chinese people. As one of the five core values of Confucianism, “*xin*” can be interpreted as “loyalty”, “truthfulness” or “faithfulness” in English, and it takes a special position in Chinese culture. However, it is not so easy for Westerners to understand what role “*xin*” plays in Chinese morality. The well-renowned American scholar on translation André Lefevere once attempted to compare Chinese and Western schools of thoughts on translation, and in the process, misunderstood the ethics of translation in China, stating that the Chinese tradition has attached comparatively less importance to a “faithful” translation (Lefevere 2001: 15). Contrary to Lefevere’s impression, the traditional culture of China has imprinted “*xin*” on the Chinese mind deeply. It is not only a Chinese character frequently used in our daily lives but also serves an ethical standard for our social activities. In translation, “*xin*” is the first of the three translation principles proposed by Yan Fu, and it implores translators to be loyal to the original text and the original author. “*Xin*” has become such a deeply rooted central notion in the thinking on translation in China that close to no translators would doubt it. It has never occurred to Chinese translators or interpreters whether they should be loyal to the original; the only question is how they can achieve loyalty in their translation.

In the West, under the influence of deconstructionism, the meaning of the original text is deconstructed. As a result, “loyalty to the original text” as translation ethics becomes questionable. In 2001, *The Translator* puts forth a special issue *The Return to Ethics*, which shows that what Western scholars are concerned about with the ethics of translation is much more than “faithfulness” or “fidelity”. Ethics of translation is not always defined as the translator’s responsibility to stay true to the original text, but “as the pursuit of a subject striving to constitute itself through its activity” (Meschonnic 2011: 35). Many agree that the traditional notion of “faithfulness” should be abandoned, for it is not suitable for translation as cross-cultural communication, and thus a multiplicity of ideas about translation ethics arise. Chesterman (2001: 139–141) classifies translation ethics into five models: ethics of representation, ethics of service, ethics of communication, norm-based ethics, and ethics of commitment. Such diversified understandings of translation ethics show that “loyalty” is not the only criterion translators abide by in their translation.

Values vary a lot from person to person, and people are likely to feel defensive when their values are challenged by others. When Tianzhen Xie introduced “Creative Treason” and made it the topic of one of his articles, he brought the term with its derogatory sense into the spotlight. Since “treason” is usually used to describe an act of disloyalty, many people do not like it at all. In the eyes of those who had been immersed with the traditional ideas of translation ethics and loyalty, “treason” is the worst offense. Though they have no aversion to creative thinking, they cannot accept “treason”.

## 2.2 Confusion Between “Is” and “Ought”

Another important factor that goes into the making of the controversies about “Creative Treason” is the confusion between “Is” and “Ought”, namely, the fact-value confusion. “Is” refers to the reality of being and relates to the domain of facts. “Ought” represents what ought to do or ought not to do, and relates to the domain of ideas. British philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) was the first in history to draw a line between the Is and the Ought, claiming that “Ought” cannot be deduced from “Is” and implying that normative propositions about what men ought to do are radically different from factual propositions about what things are. The Is-Ought distinction is fundamental to understanding the difference between Tianzhen Xie’s thoughts on “Creative Treason” and those critics’ interpretations.

Since Hume made the differentiation, the Is-Ought question has been regarded as the central problem in moral philosophy. At present, the Is-Ought distinction displays its importance in translation studies no less than in any other field. The case of existing contradicting positions on “Creative Treason” illustrates that scholars of translation also have the intuition to regard a claim about facts as an assertion about moral attitudes. In our daily life as well as academic work we often come across situations where a word or a sentence has more than one possible meaning. For example, the famous saying “The translator is a traitor” may be interpreted in

both factual and evaluative meanings. Obviously, “the translator always betrays the original in his/her translation” is quite different from “the translator should betray the original in his/her translation”, for the former has descriptive meaning and the latter has ethical meaning. Those who agree with the statement “the translator is a traitor” is often criticized for calling for translators to betray the original and to undermine the ethics of translation, though they have no intention to do so at all.

When the “Is-Ought” distinction is blurred by language ambiguities, controversies are likely to arise. We may easily find more examples in translation studies where we have such confusion. For example, when we talk about the definition of translation, we often speak of the definition by Nida and Taber (1969: 12), “Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”. In this case, “the closest natural equivalent” is regarded as the standard by which we judge translation. We seldom challenge the definition, because it conforms to our intuition about what is a good translation. However, the irony is that, if we take “the closest natural equivalent” as the standard to judge whether something is a translation or not, we may not be able to find any translation at all. We take no notice of the fact that our intuition about what a translation ought to enter our judgment about what a translation is, naturally and subconsciously. We mistake a normative assertion for a descriptive statement.

The confusion between “Is” and “Ought” accounts for many of the criticisms Tianzhen Xie received with his “Creative Treason”. Tianzhen Xie declares several times that with the expression “Creative Treason”, he hopes to reveal the nature of literary translation. “Translation is always a ‘Creative Treason’” describes an objective reality of translation, but not to advocate betrayals. In Tianzhen Xie’s theory, “Creative Treason” is a neutral expression, but in the eyes of some people, “treason” is loaded with negative values.

### 3 Conclusion

As stated by Zha Mingjian (2005), “Creative Treason”, no more than a mere description of an outstanding feature of literary translation, is inadequate to meet the demand for a systemic theoretical methodology to build Medio-translatology. Tianzhen Xie’s exploration of “Creative Treason” is not perfect or complete. The fact that “Creative Treason” has aroused a lot of controversies shows that scholars consider it worthwhile to debate and to apply it in their analysis of some phenomena in translation. Tracing the travels of “Creative Treason”, mapping the transfer of the expression from literature to translation, and identifying the misunderstandings and confusions which emerge through the processes of transformation allow us to examine how the meaning of “Creative Treason” changes as it circulates and helps us understand Tianzhen Xie’s thoughts on translation.

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# Case Studies

# “Creative Treason” as Meaning Production: The Construction of Meaning Tunnels in Lin Shu’s Translation



Xiaogang Liu

**Abstract** A critical concept presented by Medio-translatology, mainly expounded by translator Tianzhen Xie, “Creative Treason” is the betrayal, fusion, and renewal of the original meaning in the production and spread of translation discourse. With the help of philosophical hermeneutics, this paper holds that to understand a text, it is neither necessary nor possible for a translator to return to the original intent of the author, but to communicate with the text by using one’s fore-understanding. Fore-understanding provides the translator with a horizon and “Creative Treason” in translated literature is the representation of meaning production through the fusion of horizons of the translator and the author. Lin Shu, an influential translator from the Late Qing and the Early Republic Period, did not speak any foreign languages but had successfully translated about 180 literary works with more than 20 partners. Not only did Lin Shu interpret the internal structure of foreign novels with the “Laws and Norms” of Chinese ancient essays which included techniques such as foreshadowing, connection, and tonal modification followed by Chinese intellectuals for centuries, but also applied Chinese traditional ethics, such as loyalty and filial piety, to the interpretation of characters’ behaviors and emotions. In both aesthetic and ideological ways, Lin Shu seeks to build a tunnel of meaning represented by “Creative Treason” to connect and mediate different cultures, thus, making horizon fusion possible.

**Keywords** Creative Treason · Medio-translatology · Meaning tunnel · Lin Shu

“Creative Treason”, a term first used by French literary sociologist Robert Escarpit, has become an influential term in translation studies in China since its convincing and in-depth expatiation by Tianzhen Xie from the 1990s (Xie 1999; 2007; 2020). According to China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), there have been 582 journal papers and 289 doctoral and master’s degree theses using “Creative Treason” as their keywords to date. The study of “Creative Treason” generally goes in two directions: one is to make theoretical exploration of the term, either trying to redefine

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it from different points of view, or to enlarge its vision with the aid of other theories; the other is to conduct historical, literary, and critical studies with the term. This paper seeks to interpret the term from a hermeneutics perspective in an attempt to clear some misunderstandings surrounding the term.

## 1 Tianzhen Xie's "Creative Treason"

As early as 1992, Tianzhen Xie introduced the term "Creative Treason" in an article "On 'Creative Treason' in Literary Translations" (论文学翻译的创造性叛逆) and then made a more systematic exploration in his influential work *Medio-translatology* (译介学) published in 1997. He believes that a gap exists between the aims and the actual results of literary translation, due to the expression power of literary languages, historical and cultural elements in the languages involved, and the life experiences of language users in each context. In literary translation, the work of the translator is a kind of recreation that, just like creation, carries consequential and independent values with them. Xie claims:

If creation in literary translation reveals subjective efforts of the translator to approach and represent the original text with his artistic talent, then we can say that treason reflects objective deviations from the original of the translator in the hope of achieving a certain desire. In practice, however, creation and treason form a harmonious organism and cannot be separated. Therefore, Robert Escarpit, the French literary sociologist, brings forward the term "Creative Treason", and asserts: "Translation is invariably a sort of 'Creative Treason'" (Xie 1999:130).

According to Xie, when an artwork is translated into a new linguistic context, it acquires its afterlife through a series of transformations, which is generally classified into conscious and unconscious "Creative Treason". From an alternative perspective, "Creative Treason" can be categorized as that of the translator, the reader, and the receptive context, respectively. There are four types of "Creative Treason" that can be "committed" by the translator, the first of which is the translator's voice, wherein the translator brings into the text different principles and aims. The second includes mistranslations and omissions in translation; these are mostly unconscious acts of "Creative Treason". Mistranslation is typically considered a disgrace in traditional translation studies, but in comparative literature, it has tremendous significance, because it reveals collisions, distortions, and transformations of meaning in cultural and literary communication, reflecting the translator's misunderstanding of another culture. The third is an adaptation, an act of conscious "Creative Treason" and is aimed at catering to the reader's taste or requirements of morality and politics. The fourth is to translate through a third language or to change the original's genre or style.

Yet, literary translation can only fulfill its destiny in readers' reception, which is also a type of translation in a broader sense. The reader enters a process of recreation with his knowledge and experiences, making "Creative Treason" rich and

colorful (Xie 2020:94). Notably, Xie emphasizes the importance of “Creative Treason” caused by the context in which the text is understood, which manifests its collective subjectivity in the cross-cultural traveling of text, in contrast to the individuality of the reader’s “Creative Treason”. Owing to a change in context, a piece of literature could be endowed with a meaning far different from the original one.

## 2 Fore-Understanding in “Creative Treason”

Translation is closely related to hermeneutics, a term that carries the meaning of both interpretation and translation in Greek etymologically. Modern hermeneutics is established by Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, who together transform hermeneutics as a way of linguistic communication understanding into hermeneutics as ontology, a fundamental condition of man’s being in the world. According to Gadamer, “understanding is There-being’s mode of being, in that it is potentiality-for-being and ‘possibility’” (Gadamer 1999:230).

Reading is a pathway through which the text manifests itself. A question arises here: how do we understand the meaning of a text? Schleiermacher “is wholly concerned to reproduce in the understanding the original purpose of a work” (Gadamer 1999:148), and a text would lose its significance if it were taken away from its origins. Therefore, for Schleiermacher, reconstructing the condition in which a text is produced is the only way to avoid misunderstanding.

Gadamer takes a clear stand against Schleiermacher in this point, declaring that “the reconstruction of the original circumstances, like all restoration, is a pointless undertaking in view of the historicity of our being” (Gadamer 1999:149). Historicity is a key term from which Gadamer starts his discussion of understanding. To understand a text does not mean to return to the original mind of the author, but to have a conversation with the text carrying one’s fore-understanding. Individuals belong to certain traditions and carry with them fore-understanding, fore-having, and foresight in connection with the meaning of the text to be understood. In understanding a text, the interpreter being cast into a settled condition is unnecessary and unable to realize and abandon his fore-understanding.

In cross-cultural communication, the process begins from one’s fore-understanding, on which dialogues with the other are based. To explore this process, Yan Shaochang compared the spread of Confucianism in Europe and Japan. From the late seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, the intellectuals in Europe regarded Chinese traditional culture as “the light of reason to criticize theology”, and Confucianism as the “spiritual power to combat feudalism of the Middle Ages”. During the same period, the autocratic Japanese government of the Tokugawa clan declared the Cheng-Zhu School of Confucianism as its official philosophy. (Yan 1999:132) While essentially the same philosophy, Confucianism experienced vastly different fates in different cultural contexts. Understandably, this is a result of “incorrect understanding” of Confucianism by both the Europeans and the Japanese, who had blended descriptive Confucianism into their cultural traditions. Yan further points

out that “(o)nl y in this way could the so-called cultural communication and cultural inheritance be realized” (Yan 1999:137).

The importance of fore-understanding can be seen in translation in which the translator carries on a conversation with the author, trying to understand the meaning of the text and represent it in an unknown circumstance with a different language. Gadamer points out: “Thus every translation is at the same time an interpretation. We can even say that it is the completion of the interpretation that the translator has made of the words given him” (Gadamer 1999:346). In conducting the act of translation, the translator tries to understand the original intent, but no matter how hard he attempts, the resulting translation is not “simply a re-awakening of the original event in the mind of the writer, but a recreation of the text that is guided by the way the translator understands what is said in it” (Gadamer 1999:347). In other words, translation is not a transparent representation of the original text, but an interpretation of the translator who sheds new light on the text from another language. The original text contains potential multiple meanings, and the translator faces difficult choices before him to make judgments from his condition. If he wants to emphasize a feature of the original that is important to him, he can play down or entirely suppress other features.

In his interpretation, the translator, being unable to reconstruct the original meaning, is, therefore, betraying the author creatively. This is the general principle of interpretation. “Creative Treason” which is the representation of the meaning the translator adds to or detracts from the original meaning is not only inevitable but also active.

### 3 Horizon Fusion in “Creative Treason”

Horizon fusion is considered to be the kernel of Gadamer’s philosophy. Before understanding a text, everyone has his horizon, which is a “range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (Gadamer 1999:269). We encounter the other in the process of understanding the text and listen attentively to the other’s request for truth. We listen because of the differences between our horizon and the others, and the resulting tensions in the interactions. Understanding does not mean to watch the other from one’s horizon or to plunge into the other’s horizon by getting rid of one’s own. Instead, thanks to his fore-understanding, one has his horizon fused with the other’s horizon in the process of understanding and the fusion of horizons is a continuity of meaning production which implies the treachery of the original horizon.

Translation is, therefore, an intermediate space where the horizons of the translator and the author meet and fuse. Tianzhen Xie holds: “Gadamer’s horizon fusion reveals the essence of translation, especially of literary translation, in which the translator should enter the world of the original text and endeavor to catch the intention of its author. In practice, however, the translator always brings knowledge and belief of his familiar world into the strange world of the original” (Xie 2000:77). The active fore-understanding in the horizon of the translator manipulates him to rewrite the original

text, which at the same time influences and remodels his fore-understanding. The elements that participate in rewriting the other would be rewritten similarly. Through continuous collision, rejection, negotiation, and fusion, both the self and the other are transformed as the result of the interaction.

A core conception of Chinese traditional culture is “seeking harmony, not uniformity” (和而不同), which illuminates properly the relation between horizons of the self and the other. Confucius says: “The gentleman aims at harmony (和), not uniformity (同), whereas the mean man aims at uniformity, not harmony” (Yang 1998:141). Yue Daiyun points out that “和” refers to the harmonious relationship between things and cultures and its spirit is to “coordinate differences, reach new harmony and produce new things which again differ from other things”. (Yue 1999:14) Harmony can only be achieved on the basis of difference and new understandings that are produced through the horizon fusion are the results of “Creative Treason”.

A new horizon that differs from horizons of the self and the other has been produced in the process of horizon fusion and “Creative Treason” in translated literature is the representation of meaning production through the fusion of horizons of translator and the original. Horizon is a dynamic concept where ceaseless transformations are described as movements of meaning production. The great Chinese thinker Chuang Tzu said: “Knowing what Man is, he rests in the knowledge of the known, waiting for the knowledge of the unknown. Working out one’s allotted span, and not perishing in mid-career, —this is the fullness of knowledge” (Chuang 1889:68). The acquisition of knowledge is a course in which knowledge known intermingles with knowledge unknown. “Knowledge known” in *Chuang Tzu* which corresponds to the fore-understanding of Gadamer forms one’s horizon. In the pursuit of understanding, we are unable to keep to our horizons, nor can we fully accept the other’s horizons. If there were not the betrayal of both horizons, the movement of meaning would stop and we can only stay in our horizons, leaving our cultural traditions stagnant. Therefore, betrayal is a necessity in the pursuit of mutual understanding and creation is what gives meaning to the betrayal. New meaning, not generated as a matter of course, requires real thought and creation. Thus, “Creative Treason” clearly and precisely illustrates the movement of meaning in horizon fusion.

In understanding, the original text is placed into the net of meaning and the new horizon produced is the revision of the two former horizons. What is produced in horizon fusion is double treason of the original culture and the target culture, but the resulting “Creative Treason” holds significant value in cultural development. The French scholar K.M. Schipper takes various cultures as gene banks are “providing necessary species for future hybrid”. The new cultural form “is always the product of interaction among different cultures” (Schipper 2002:9–28). Based on this argument, we can even say that the success of cultural communication depends on whether valuable fusion and “Creative Treason” can be produced.

“Creative Treason” or hybrid of language brings vitality to language and even to culture. The great novelist Lu Xun defends his idea of “faithfulness rather than fluency” (宁信而不顺) when facing the contradiction of the two and believes that his method of translation “inputs not only new things but also new expressions.” Chinese is not precise in language and the weakness could only be overcome by acceptance

of foreignizing sentences in translation (Lu 1984:225). Gao Yuanbao, a scholar on Chinese modern literature, maintains that Lu Xun's direction is to "admit the failure of his mother language first and then make an exploration in which otherness has to be borne" (Gao 2004:29). No doubt, Lu Xun's prescription is "Creative Treason" of language fusion in the discourse of translation.

According to Tang Yongtong, there are several types of cultural fusion. Firstly, similarities could be found and accepted among different cultures in negotiation. Secondly, a conception in one culture which does not exist in another could be altered and fused into it. Thirdly, one culture abandons some old conceptions to accept new ones. Fourthly, after a period of incessant dialogues between two cultures, both sides discover some significant new conceptions that do not exist before (Tang 2001:29–70). These four cases disclose how cultural horizons fuse in different ways and what new conceptions could be produced. To a certain extent, these different ways of cultural fusion can be applied to the study of "Creative Treason", in which various ways of meaning production can be seen.

#### 4 Historicity of "Creative Treason"

The study of "Creative Treason" has induced much criticism and misunderstanding for its "betrayal" of traditional translation theories in China. Lin Zhan believes that the study of "Creative Treason" in translation emphasizes the result but ignores the process of translation. Therefore, the indifferent attitude toward the quality of translation is a head-on blow to translators who make painstaking efforts in translation (Lin 1998: 563–565). Jiang Feng, a famous translator in China, even believes that the study of "Creative Treason" is the cause of the decline of translation quality: "The theory of 'Creative Treason' detached from Chinese circumstances preaches a poor taste and encourages misreading and mistranslation" (Jiang 2009:136).

The misunderstanding of the term roots in the ignorance of the historical nature of "Creative Treason", which calls for a descriptive study, setting "Creative Treason" back into cultural circumstances in which they are produced. Just as Foucault says: "I believe that one could find here an introduction to the historical analysis of discourse. Perhaps it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each" (Foucault 1979:158). "Creative Treason" in the discourse of translation also requires a historical analysis.

"Creative Treason" should be identified through a comparative close reading of the original text and its translations. "It is essential to know what the translator has added, what he has left out, the words he has chosen, and how he has placed them. Because behind every one of his selections, there is a voluntary act that reveals his history and the socio-political milieu that surrounds him; in other words, his own culture" (Álvarez and Vidal 1996:5). When trying to identify signs of "Creative Treason", we also need to reconstruct the historical context in which the translator makes his

choices, given that the contexts often tie with various kinds of external forces, such as ideologies, economics, and poetics, that drives the act of translation. Being an important system in the conceptual world of knowledge, translation represents the typical binary essence of Foucaultian power/knowledge: omnipresent power in the form of knowledge or knowledge as power. It is, however, not easy to find out the way of power’s operation in translation unless we make a deep and thorough exploration of “Creative Treason” identified and classified, which epitomizes how a translator is manipulated consciously and unconsciously by power in all directions.

The original text and its translations in different cultures belong to history and constitute a kind of historical reality of their existence. As we have said before, translation is a kind of understanding in a certain historical context governed by fore-understandings. After traveling into a new historical context, a text would produce new meanings through horizon fusion. Neither Defoe nor Jonathan Swift had expected *Robinson Crusoe* to become New Year presents for children. In such cases, original intentions are different from their derived meanings, owing to which, translations with “Creative Treason” in them build up their own cultural identities and become historical realities, exerting divergent impacts wherever they travel.

Gadamer connects play with the experience of art and refers to play “not to attitude nor to the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art, nor to the freedom of a subjectivity expressed in the play, but to the mode of being of the work of art itself” (Gadamer 1999:91). The subjects of play are not players, through whom play merely acquires presentation. Who or what performs play does not matter, and constant repetitions which are fundamentals, represent play? This mode of being is just the same as the artworks with self-representation of movements back and forth as its nature. In the movements, it may be changed and distorted, but it remains itself. Translation, being a part of play, is one of the kinds of distorting representation of the original text. The circulation of a text goes through innumerable historical contexts, each of which contributes “Creative Treason” to the origin. The additional meaning is produced but is also innately included in the original.

In understanding, it is impossible to fully return to the original intention, nor is it proper to abandon the original meaning. The original meaning and its additional meanings form a meaning of the inter-related and integrated whole and their relationship, to use a Gadamer’s term, can be called effective-history, in which a text in a chain not only accepts effects from others but also gives to others of its own. Essentially, understanding is an effective-historical event with text as its subject. Therefore, understanding artwork is not only governed by its historical context but also influenced by the effective-history it belongs to.

Effective-history of artwork is carried on beyond its language. Maybe the first translation of a text is the start of its effective-history in a language or maybe some earlier reviews have already started it. Regardless of its origins, translation forms an important part of a text’s effective history in which a text could be re-translated by different translators at different times. Translations in the past may not be readable anymore, just like ancient buildings are not suitable to live in, but they bring to light layers of historical relations, as they not only tell us about the political, economic, and cultural state of the time but also exert influences on later translations.



## 5 Lin Shu: A Case Study

Along with Yan Fu, Lin Shu was one of the more prominent translators in the Late Qing and the Early Republic Period, having influenced the next two generations of writers, such as Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and Qian Zhongshu, naming a few. Lin lived in a time when China was at the beginning of modernization and intellectuals started opening their eyes to the world outside of China. Despite being one of the intellectuals of the time, Lin was more traditional in his outlook and had passed the provincial civil service examination under the old Chinese examination system but failed the honor of Number One Scholar in the highest imperial examination several times. He did not speak any foreign languages, but he was celebrated for his eloquence of talented writing. Therefore, when he lost his wife in his forties, his friend, Wang Shichang, who returned from France, offered to cooperate with him in translating *The Lady of the Camellias*, to relieve his sorrow. Wang translated the meaning orally and Lin took down the words in writing, resulting in the first popular translated novel in 1897 in China, which “broke Chinese readers’ hearts” (Yan 1986:365). Since then, he has translated about 180 literary works with more than 20 partners in the next 20 years, introducing William Shakespeare, Daniel Defoe, Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Miguel de Cervantes, Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy, and Washington Irving to Chinese readers.

Lin Shu is a critical literary figure in the modernization of Chinese literature, which is characterized by the movement of fiction from margin to center in the system of literature. Poems and Essays had been dominant in the Chinese literary system, whereas fiction was considered as “minor Dao”, not belonging to orthodoxy. At the end of the nineteenth century, a critical period for China facing threats of force from the western countries and Japan, leading intellectuals, such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu, started to realize “the unbelievable power” (Liang 1989:33) of fiction and advocate the translation of western fictions. In 1897, Kang Youwei believed that “the urgent task today is the fiction writing, for those who were barely literate may not read scriptures of Confucius but would read fictions” (Kang 1989:13). In 1902, Liang Qichao proposed “Revolution of Fiction”: “The performance of social revolution should be started from the Revolution of Fiction, and the renewal of people’s thoughts should also be started from the Revolution of Fiction” (Liang 1989:33).

Lin Shu’s translations have become an important push factor of the fiction revolution since his translations made a success, no matter in quality or quantity, that no one else could match. The popularity of Lin’s translations lies in his special “Creative Treason” in translation, building a meaning tunnel that enabled easier access of “the foreign blood” of translation for the conservative Chinese, clinging to the Confucian thoughts.

The traditional Confucian ideology is deeply rooted in Lin, who demonstrated his loyalty to the Qing dynasty by crying to the tomb of Qing emperors nine times after the fall of Qing and becoming an old adherent of the past dynasty. He once said that he was as fond of the Book of Songs, the Book of Rites, and the books of

Cheng and Zhu as first-rate meat (Lin 1924:60). The day before he died, he wrote his last words on the palm of his son with his finger: “Ancient Chinese prose would never die out and you should not slack off in its study” (Zhang 1983:60). Lin even was considered as the spokesman of traditional culture, targeted by Liu Bannong and Qian Xuantong, two leading figures of the revolutionary generation of the May Fourth Movement.

The manipulation and rewriting of translation by traditional ideology is mainly reflected in Lin Shu’s interpretation of western source texts with Confucian concepts of “propriety” and “filial piety”. Dickens’ *The Old Curiosity* was translated into *The Story of Filial Nell*, in which the image of the angel of Nell was transformed into a filial granddaughter, and “Nell’s love of God into Chinese traditional ideology of filial piety” (Li 2016:22–30). Henry Rider Haggard’s *Montezuma’s Daughter* was translated into *The British Dutiful Son’s Revenge*, in which the main character of the daughter has been turned into a son. In Haggard’s story, the revenge of Thomas Wingfield for his mother is only a prelude to his adventure in Mexico, but Lin found common ground and resonance in the plot and rewrote the title. In the preface, he praised the filial deed of Wingfield and made a further explanation of his intention: “The story of the revenge of the dutiful son with lamentable determination and no fear of death should be widely publicized and emulated by Chinese youth.” The hero’s priority of revenge for his mother conforms to Chinese ethics of filial virtue. “Loyalty and filial piety constitute an organic whole in China. If one observes his family filial piety, determined for the revenge of his mother, he must be loyal to his country, keeping national humiliation in his mind. ...I hope heartily that Chinese could make their determination to remove national humiliation, just like Wingfield revenged for his mother” (Lin 1989e:139). Han Guang, a Chinese writer commented on Lin: “He adheres to Confucianism and puts too much weight on feudal codes that he defends for them in both his works and translation” (Han 1983:196).

In an era when Chinese traditional ideology was challenged by western ideologies, different voices battled for discourse power, especially between those of traditionalists and the reformists. If Lin was classified into the former, why did he translate so many fictions that have landed a heavy blow on traditional values? Lin was a complicated person with an open mind who, in his early literary stage, compiled *New Folk Songs of Middle Fujian* (闽中新乐府), advocating reformation in many aspects, including education, women’s rights, development of industry and commerce, and casting out superstition. In one poem, he even criticizes the officials who have trivialized western education (Lin 1988:299).

The tensions between Chinese education and western education had continued for almost half a century since the First Opium War in 1840. During the last ten years of the century, more intellectuals had accepted western education under the banner of “New Learning”, revealing that China was undergoing modernization and the renewal of time notion. As Matei Calinescu has said: “It is clear, however, that the idea of modernity could be conceived only within the framework of a specific time awareness, namely, that of historical time, linear and irreversible, flowing irresistibly onwards” (Calinescu 1987:13). With the translation and introduction of theories of evolution, especially the social evolution of Spencer by Yan Fu, the notion of

linear timeline and modernity has been accepted gradually under the double force of violence and discourse from outside. Lin accepted the notion, at least partially, and advocated learning from the west.

Lin found his passion and value in the translation of fiction in the discourse current of “Revolution of Fiction”. He translated with a variety of purposes, often different from those of the originals, which could be considered as “Creative Treason” expatiated in his prefaces. He took *A Story of the French War of 1813* as a book on the art of war and stated: “If Chinese could all read this book, they would know well about army march, when to move forward, and when to stop or retreat; they would also know whether to fight against or to avoid the heavy fire and may not flee in front of enemies or any other dangers” (Lin 1989a: 123). In the preface to *Le Tour de France par deux enfants*, he claims that the book is “not only beneficial to academic circle, but also to the business community, and even to the politics fundamentally.” (Lin 1989d: 268) He considered his translation as a kind of industry and explained that if young students could all engage in industry and agriculture with the result of the translation, his patriotism could be fulfilled through his practical discourse of translation. In translating *People of the Mist* of Haggard, he said: “The reason we learn robbery from this novel is not to blunder, but to guard against blunder” (Lin 1989f: 168).

It is for the above-mentioned purposes that Lin Shu devoted himself to for almost 20 years. He not only insisted that novels could shoulder the heavy responsibility of enlightenment and salvation but also accepted social evolution in the humiliation of colonization. He said: “The Europeans aim to reform in all respects, pursuing and learning everything new, even in novel writing. Whereas in China, intellectuals cling to the past, just like cherishing their own lives. How could they acquire new knowledge?” (Lin 1989b:168) Lin even worried that his fellow countrymen would resist western thought for the sake of clinging onto traditional ethics, for they often took it for granted that the Europeans did not have the ethics of filial piety, which is a foundation not only of Confucianism but also of the Chinese society. Therefore, Lin defended the west by stating that filial sons and rebellious sons could be seen both in China and the west and that the Westerners also treat their parents with filial respect, showing that learning from the west is just as valuable (Lin 1989e:139).

Thus, Lin’s “Creative Treason” of entrusting Chinese ethics to literary figures in his preface seems controversial: was he protecting traditional culture by resisting the discourse violence, or was he trying to make learning from the west more acceptable? Upon analysis, it seems that he had managed to do both at the same time. That is also the reason why he was treated differently in the same discursive events of translation. Haggard’s *Joan Haste* was first translated by Bao Tianxiao and Pan Xizi, who claimed that they only got the first half of the original, and were, therefore, unable to present the Joan’s pre-marital pregnancy, a behavior intolerable to traditional Chinese values. Lin re-translated the entire novel and was severely attacked by a critic called Yin Bansheng who claimed that Joan was pure and chaste in Bao’s translation but was presented as lascivious in Lin’s translation (Yin 1989:228). Lin’s Joan, however, moved young Guo Moruo, a famous romantic poet during the May Fourth period, who later recalled: “How much tears and sympathy did the heroine of Joan arouse

in me. I like her and pity her and I envy her lover Henry. When I read the plot that Henry fell off from the top of the ancient pagoda when he went up to get her the crow chick and she caught him with her arms, I felt as if I was falling from the top of the pagoda. If there were a beautiful girl in love with me down there, I would be ready to jump down and die for her” (Guo 1979:113).

We find that Lin managed to build a meaning tunnel with “Creative Treason”, through which the East and the west could have effective communication in ideologies. He also tried to seek the common ground between aesthetics and poetics in the novels he translated and the classical Chinese texts. In 1902, after he was done translating *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, he proposed that the opening, foreshadowing, cohesion, and ending of the novel coincided with the codes of ancient Chinese prose (Lin 1989g:27). In the preface to the translation of *Ivanhoe*, he compared Scott to the most important Chinese historian, Si Maqian, and again mentioned the similarities of writing techniques between *Ivanhoe* and Chinese prose (Lin 1989c:27). In the Chinese literary system, a history that does not separate clearly from literature occupies the center of the system together with poems and prose. Immersed in history and ancient prose for his whole life, Lin could sense the aesthetic structure of western novels crossing culture and genre. Yang Lianfen, a scholar on Chinese modern literature, has said that most of the translators in that period emphasized the differences between Chinese and western novels. Lin, on the contrary, managed to find the similarities (Yang 2003:98). The similarities Lin found in aesthetic structures between western fiction and Chinese historical biographies and ancient prose elevated the status of the novels, making foreign fiction more readily accepted by the Chinese readers.

## 6 Conclusion

Being a critical tenet of Medio-translatology, “Creative Treason” bears great research potential across three levels: national literature, comparative literature, and world literature. The meaning generation and meaning tunnel that “Creative Treason” characterizes bestow the translation a second life, enabling translated literature to become an independent literary form different from its original. In other words, translated literature has acquired its identity alongside national and foreign literature. Only when we acknowledge the independence of translated literature, can we begin to explore several critical aspects of translated literature, such as the artistic value of translations, the functions of translated works in each literary system, and the compilation of the history of translated literature, as Xie has suggested in his study of Medio-translatology.

In comparative literature, translation constitutes a major part of the literary exchange, especially between the west and the east, which manifests huge differences in language, literature, and culture. “Creative Treason”, being a basic rule of trans-lingual and transcultural practice, “reflects the collision, exchange, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation of different cultures” (Xie 2020:71). Through

comparison reading of the original and translation, we can find how literary works are understood, interpreted, and accepted in another cultural context.

“World literature”, a term coined by Goethe when he was reading a translation from China, “crystallized both a literary perspective and a new cultural awareness, a sense of an arising global modernity” (Damrosch 2003:1). Such an awareness was activated by translated literature, which not only spread national literature in its surface meaning but also forms an integral part of world literature owing to its independent identity. The inter-related and inter-dependent of national literature and translated literature form a charming yet challenging bundle of world literature, as well as a reading and researching mode provided by “Creative Treason”.

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# The Chinese Montesquieu in Yan Fu's Translation of *The Spirit of Laws*



Chiyuan Zhuang

**Abstract** Yan Fu's *Fayi* (法意) is a Chinese translation of the legal and political masterpiece, *The Spirit of Laws*, written by French enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu. Through a close examination of Yan Fu's translation and other historical materials, this study argues that in *Fayi*, Yan Fu presents his ideas through his translation of Montesquieu combining the Western theory of government with resources from traditional Chinese thoughts and is influenced by the theory of evolution, Daoism, and Confucianism, among other schools of thoughts. While Medio-translatology is usually considered as a theoretical framework for literary translation and comparative literature studies, the current study serves as an illuminating case for the application of Medio-translatology in studies of non-literary translation and the history of thought, opening a new direction for future research on Medio-translatology.

**Keywords** Montesquieu · Yan Fu · *The Spirit of Laws* · Medio-translatology · Non-literary translation

## 1 Introduction

*Fayi* (法意), a book translated into Chinese by Yan Fu (1854–1921) was successively published in seven volumes by the Commercial Press in Shanghai between 1905 and 1909. Its original is a masterpiece in political science, *The Spirit of Laws* (*De l'esprit des lois*), written by the French Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu (Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, 1689–1755) in 1748.

Montesquieu's political theory is mainly based on his theory of government, which has a far-reaching influence on later scholars (Rahe 2001:97). In Montesquieu's view, the "spirit of law" in a country originates from its form of government. At the end of Chap. 1, *Of Laws in General*, Montesquieu (1981:7) suggests: "I shall first examine the relations which laws bear to the nature and principle of each government;

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and as this principle has a strong influence on laws, I shall make it my study to understand it thoroughly: and if I can but once establish it, the laws will soon appear to flow thence as from their source.” From Chaps. 2 to 13, Montesquieu extensively discusses numerous topics related to government, including forms of government, the principles of different governments, the relationships between government and other social factors, the checks and balances of power in the government, and the relationships between forms of government and political freedom.

The issue of government is a major historical choice faced by Chinese society in the early twentieth century. After the Reform Movement of 1898 (also known as the Hundred Days of Reform) and the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, reform has become irreversible and inevitable. The debate is no longer whether China should reform, but the form of government China should adopt. The ideological divergence between revolution and reform began at the end of the nineteenth century. The revolutionaries headed by Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen) insisted on overthrowing the Qing Dynasty through a violent revolution and establishing a democratic republic, while the reformists headed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao advocated for a constitutional monarchy through bloodless reform.

The theory of government is the foundation of Montesquieu’s original work and interpretation of his time, but the publication of Yan’s translation of Montesquieu coincided with the ideological controversy in China. It is, therefore, worth exploring how Yan Fu translated Montesquieu’s theory of government and how it is related to the debate on China’s future then. The study is not only a key part of studying the translation and introduction of Montesquieu’s thought in China but also an inevitable case to examine how Chinese intellectuals understand and accept Western political thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. By borrowing the concept of “Creative Treason” from the perspective of Medio-translatology, the current study analyses Yan Fu’s translation of Montesquieu’s theory of government in *Fayi* and examines the rewriting and reshaping of Montesquieu’s thought in Yan Fu’s translation against a specific historical context, revealing the feature of “translating as writing” in non-literary or academic translations by those intellectuals such as Yan during a period of transition in Modern China.

## 2 “Creative Treason” in Non-literary Translation

Tianzhen Xie established the theory of Medio-translatology in the Chinese academic circle in the 1990s, and successively published a series of works including *Medio-translatology* (译介学), *Introduction to Medio-translatology* (译介学导论), *New Vision of Translation Studies* (翻译研究新视野), *Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* (比较文学与翻译研究), etc. These works systematically discuss the historical background and practical significance of the Medio-translatology theory, the “Creative Treason” of literary translation, and the cultural status of translated literature, etc. marking the foundation of Chinese Medio-translatology theory which has aroused continuous attention in the Chinese academic field for the past 20 years.

The term “Creative Treason” was first proposed by French literary sociologist Espica. Tianzhen Xie incorporated it as a core tenet of Medio-translatology, mainly for the study of literary translation, where it explores the nature of re-creation in literary translation. However, this concept may also be applied to the study of non-literary translation (mainly in social sciences), as Tianzhen Xie points out in *An Outline of Medio-translatology* (译介学概论): “‘Creative Treason’ is not unique to literary translation. It is a basic law of literature and cultural interlingual communication and reception” (Xie 2020:70). Compared to literary translation, the space for re-creation in non-literary translation may be relatively limited, but the translator still has room for “creation”. The “Creative Treason” in non-literary translation is not for the translator’s artistic aesthetics, but the translator’s ideas and thoughts. It originates from some essential differences between the two cultures, causing an “objective” deviation between the translation and the original.

This deviation is especially common in the modern Chinese ideological and cultural transformation termed as “Eastward Spread of Western Culture” (西学东渐). One of the most representative translators in this period is Yan Fu. As a famous enlightenment thinker of Modern China, Yan translated and introduced many renowned works from western social sciences between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, including Montesquieu’s political and legal masterpiece, *The Spirit of Laws*. Most existing academic research briefly mention *Fayi* as one of Yan Fu’s “*Eight Translation Classics*” to highlight his pioneering contributions in introducing Western political science and legal thought to the Chinese society; a few studies focus on the comments added by Yan Fu in *Fayi* without paying attention to the translated text.<sup>1</sup> This article will analyze the case of *Fayi* from the perspective of Medio-translatology, discussing the “Creative Treason” in non-literary translation and its cultural value.

### 3 Yan Fu’s Translation of Montesquieu’s Theory of Government

#### 3.1 Montesquieu’s Theory of Government

The form of government, that is, the organizational structure of political power, is one of the oldest concepts in political science. There have been discussions about the different forms of governments in ancient Greece when the history of Western political thought began (Xu and Liu 2002:1–4). In the eighteenth century, Montesquieu, on one hand, inherited and developed the long-established classification of governments in the history of Western political and legal thought, that is, distinguishing forms of government according to the number of rulers, while making some adjustments to the theory of Aristotle; on the other hand, by traveling around Europe, observing

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<sup>1</sup> Previous research on *Fayi* (法意) includes Wang (2006), Cai (2008), Yan and Bi (2014).

the political practices and social systems of various countries, Montesquieu finally developed his theory on the form of government which is elaborated in Chaps. 2 and 3 of the book *The Spirit of the Law*. Montesquieu divides all governments into three categories: republican, monarchical, and despotic, and sums up the corresponding nature or principles for each.

Montesquieu differentiates the monarchical government from the republican government according to the number of rulers. The republican government can then be sub-categorized into two types: democracy and aristocracy. For the monarchical government, it depends on whether the power is restricted by law (whether the rule of law is implemented); where the rule of a monarch that is not ruled by law, is called despotism. As defined by Montesquieu, "...that a republican government is that in which the body, or only a part of the people, is possessed of the supreme power; monarchy, that in which a single person governs by fixed and established laws; a despotic government, that in which a single person directs everything by his own will and caprice" (2-1)<sup>2</sup>.

In Montesquieu's view, each kind of government has its principles. The so-called "principle of government" refers to the human passions which set it in motion. Specifically, the principle of a republican government is virtue. A monarchical government, honor. A despotic government, fear. When Montesquieu speaks here of virtue, he refers to political virtue which is directed to the public good instead of private moral virtue in the general sense, including love for the motherland, love for equality, love for the law, frugality, and a military spirit, etc. The principle of monarchical government is honor. The monarchy relies on the law to rule. Honor here specifically refers to the nobility of high-ranking officials, prominent status, noble origin, etc. It makes everyone in the monarchy work hard for personal interests. Under the restriction of the law, these personal ambitions will ultimately increase the public interest and help the monarchy flourish. The principle of a despotic government is terror. In a despotic government, the will of the monarch requires absolute obedience. "...man is a creature that blindly submits to the absolute will of the sovereign." "Man's portion here, like that of beasts, is instinct, compliance, and punishment" (3-10).

Montesquieu's attitudes toward the three kinds of governments are worth noting from the following three points:

First, Montesquieu opposes a despotic government, which has not changed throughout the whole book. He regards despotism as synonymous with barbarism and cruelty. "When the savages of Louisiana are desirous of fruit, they cut the tree to the root, and gather the fruit. This is an emblem of despotic government" (5-13). A despotic government does not need laws, and it is completely dictated by the tyrant alone. Even if there is a law, it is useless and will change according to the monarch's erratic will. "...a timid, ignorant, and faint-spirited people have no occasion for a great number of laws" (5-14). "Despotic governments, where there are no fundamental laws, have no such kind of depositary" (2-4). In addition, Montesquieu also criticizes its monarchs, the corruption of officials, the disparity between the rich and

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<sup>2</sup> The number a-b is used by the author to indicate Chap. a/Sect. b of Montesquieu's original text.

the poor, and the enslaving education of the citizens, lashing out at all aspects of despotism.

Second, in *Spirit of the Law*, a monarchical government is a fine political system bound by law, which is used as a contrast to a despotic government without the rule of law. There are two types of monarchy that Montesquieu highlights, the first being the French monarchy, and the other the British constitutional monarchy. The commonality between the two is the existence of a mechanism of checks and balances of power. The monarchy is restricted by other powers such as the aristocratic power and the religious power; all these powers are then subjected to the law, regardless of the form of distribution.

Third, Montesquieu does not blindly praise the republican government. He opposes direct democracy and supports representative democracy. The republican government in Montesquieu's book does not refer to the modern bourgeois republic, but mainly refers to the republican system of ancient Greece and Rome. In his view, all democracies should avoid going to two extremes, extreme equality, and extreme inequality, because both are prone to extreme despotism.

It is apparent that Montesquieu's criticism of the despotic government is beyond doubt, but it remains unclear as to which form of government, a monarchical government or a republican one, he thinks is better. Some scholars point out that throughout *Spirit of the Law*, Montesquieu never implied any relation or resemblance between the republican government and the governments of eighteenth-century Europe. On the contrary, he believes that the British monarchy is superior to most ancient republics and superior to most republics of Italy at that time. Therefore, it seems that to Montesquieu, the only good and effective government can only be the monarchy. (Shackleton 1961: 272–277) Some scholars also believe that Montesquieu's ambiguity in his stand was to avoid the strict censorship regulations and persecution of his time. (Pangle 1973:19) What is certain, however, is that Montesquieu regards both the monarchical government and the republican government as being “moderate”, a contrast to the despotic government. However, we cannot jump to a simple conclusion here, as he had claimed that “(a)ll Europe read my book, and all admitted that they could not tell whether I was on the side of the republican or the monarchical.” (see Mastellone 1995:10).

### ***3.2 Comparing to Chinese Tradition: Yan Fu's Domesticated Translation of Montesquieu***

Yan Fu's translation of the above-mentioned three kinds of governments and their principles in *Fayi* is a rewriting based on Chinese traditional thoughts, which is quite different from Montesquieu's original meaning. First, Yan Fu translates republican government as “*Minzhu* (民主governance by people)/*Gongzhi* (公治public governance)” and its principle of virtue was translated as “*De* (德morality)” or “*Minde* (民德morality of people)”, wherein the morality of people is then the root of the success

and failure of the ancient Greek democracy and the British democratic revolution in the middle of the seventeenth century (3–3). When talking about the aristocratic government, one of the republican governments, Yan Fu sometimes also translates virtue as “*Renyi* (仁义benevolence and righteousness)” (3–4).

Notably, Montesquieu reminds readers of the non-ethical nature of “virtue” in the “Advertisement”: “For the better understanding of the first four books of this work, it is to be observed that what I distinguish by the name of virtue, in a republic, is the love of one’s country, that is, the love of equality. It is not a moral, nor a Christian, but a political virtue” (Montesquieu 1896: xlvi–xlviii). However, the Chinese words used by Yan Fu (*De, Minde, Renyi*), are core concepts of Confucianism and undoubtedly have distinct ethical and moral underpinnings in the Chinese context.

Second, Yan Fu translates the principle of honor in the monarchical government as “*rongchong* (荣宠favours from the emperor)” or “*li* (礼rites)” (3–6, 3–7). *Rongchong* in Chinese refers to high ranks or status given to officials from the emperor, and Yan Fu emphasizes more than once in *Fayi* that Montesquieu’s “honor” is the Chinese “*li*”. “What this section says is the ideas in the ‘*Nine Classics*’ of *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *Jia Yi’s Policies of Governance*. The so-called *honor* is *li* in China. The power of the rites is not only just manipulated by the monarch but also used by officials as references for decision-making” (3–8).

Third, the principle of the despotic government, fear, is translated by Yan Fu as “*xingwei* (刑威penalty and deterrence) or “*xing* (刑penalty)” (3–9).

If we put Yan Fu’s choices of *de*, *li*, and *xing* together, we will find that they correspond, respectively, to the Taoist “virtue”, the Confucian “rites” and the Legalist “penalty”. There is also a descending hierarchical relationship between morality, rites, and penalty. Yan Fu has repeatedly mentioned in *Fayi* the relationship between Lao Tzu’s theory of “a devolution of government with Tao, morality, *ren*, *yi*, rites, and penalty” with the three kinds of governments:

If Montesquieu’s theory is put into the Chinese context, the principles of the three kinds of governments can be understood as that morality is the core principle of an ideal society; rites for a worse monarchical society; penalty for the worst, a despotic society (三制精神, 若其论出于吾人, 则必云太上之民主以德, 其次有道之君主以礼, 其次无道之专制以刑) (3–9).

When I read this article, I suddenly understand Lao Tzu’s theory of ‘a devolution of government with Tao, morality, *ren*, *yi*, rites, and penalty’, and why Confucius regards rites as the key to maintaining the order of society (吾读此篇, 然后恍然于老子道德、仁义、礼刑递降为治之说, 而儒者以礼为经世之纲维, 亦此意也) (3–10).

Lao Tzu once said: “If we lose *Tao*, we will turn to morality; morality, benevolence; benevolence, righteousness; righteousness, rites. So, when morality declines, rites are needed.” At first, I could not understand this line, but now it is very clear. [...] Did not Confucius say: “If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and will become good” (老之言曰: “失道而后德, 失德而后仁, 失仁而后义, 失义而后礼。礼者忠信之薄, 而乱之首也。”始吾尝憺然恍然, 不知其之所归, 乃今洞然若观火矣。……且孔子不云乎: “道之以政, 齐之以刑, 民免而无耻。道之以德, 齐之以礼, 有耻且格”) (8–21).

In other works of the same period, Yan Fu also mentioned the same point of view: “However, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of Laws* suggests that democracy uses morality, monarchy uses rites, and despotism uses penalty.” “When rituals are falling, the penalty is rising.” (Yan 2014a: 46–47).

Lao Tzu’s theory of “a devolution of the government of Tao, morality, ren, yi, rites, and penalty”, specifically refers to the content in Chapter 38 of *Tao Te Ching* (道德经). Lao Tzu believes that the dominant spirit of different societies is different, and Tao, morality, ren, yi, rites are in descending sequence. However, Lao Tzu did not mention the penalty in *Tao Te Ching*. We may infer that the statement “When rituals are falling, the penalty is rising” is from Yan Fu himself based on similar Confucian teachings.

It is precisely based on this traditional cultural background that Yan Fu uses “*de* (morality)” to translate the principle of “virtue”, “*li* (rites)” to translate “honor”, and “*xing* (penalty)” to translate “fear”. He transforms Montesquieu’s theory of government by using Chinese ideological resources. He compares the hierarchical degrading relationship formed of *de*, *li*, and *xing* in the traditional cultural context of Chinese Taoism, Confucianism, and Legalism to the relationship of the three forms of government by Montesquieu. That is, the republican government is the best, the monarchical, the second; and the despotic one is the worst. As mentioned above, Montesquieu only emphasizes that despotism is the worst government in the original work and has no leanings toward either republics or monarchies.

### 3.3 *Introducing the Idea of Evolution: From Degrading to Upgrading*

Yan Fu’s translation of Montesquieu’s theory of government is not simply a comparison to Chinese tradition. In addition to the influence of traditional Chinese philosophy, his re-creation of Montesquieu is also integrated into some Western thoughts such as Herbert Spencer’s social evolution theory, forming a brand-new theory of evolution of government in the Chinese context.

Yan Fu doubts the degrading relationship of *de*, *li*, and *xing* in Lao Tzu’s view. The traditional Chinese view of history is cyclical and retro. Traditional thinking regards ancient times as the golden age. When the ancient social order collapsed, there is a historical regression. Therefore, the Confucian ideal of governing is to restore the rule of ancient times, and the Taoist saying is “a devolution of *Tao*, *de*, *ren*, *yi*, *li*”. Yan Fu, who believes in the Western theory of evolution, believes that the development of government is not a degenerate process, but an evolutionary process that starts from a low-level to a high-level stage. Therefore, although he compares Montesquieu’s principles of government to Chinese tradition, he does not accept Lao Tzu’s judgment on the degradation of civilization. He adopts Western historical evolution theory to rewrite the Chinese cyclic understanding of history, changing the

descending order of *de*, *li*, and *xing* into an evolution order, namely, from a despotic government (*xing*), to a monarchical one (*li*), and a republican one (*de*).

Regarding the ideological origin of the evolution of government, we can trace it back to Yan Fu's translation activities before *Fayi*. Similar views can be found in Yan Fu's translation of *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith from 1897 to 1901. In that translated book, Yan Fu clearly states the relationship between a democratic government and a monarchical one: "Democracy results from the most profound intelligence and the best morality of the people. A monarchy may develop into a democracy, while democracy will never change to a monarchy. Those governments that did change into a monarchy are not a true democracy" (Yan 2014b: 400–401).

Later, in the translation of Spencer's work *The Study of Sociology* (1903), when translating Spencer's gradualist thoughts on social change, Yan Fu emphasizes that "people's quality" is very important. Reform can only be successful if obeying the rule of evolution and ethics and the development of government matches that of the people. (Yan 2014c: 167).

In the translation of *A Short History of Politics* (1904), Yan Fu once again proposes that history is a process of continuous development from a lower level to a higher level, and the political system must be adapted to the level of the people. The original work of Edward Jenks (1861–1939) divides human society into totem society, patriarchal society, and military society. Yan Fu combines the theory of evolution with Jenk's theory on types of society, thus interpreting a linear social historical evolution, as points out by Wang Xianming: "From Jenk's three forms of society to Yan Fu's three stages of social development, it reflects that modern Chinese people's understanding and cognition of the process of human history has been through important changes, and they are beginning to recognize that history is constantly developing from a lower level to a higher level" (Wang 2005:87–88).

In *Fayi*, although Yan Fu uses concepts from traditional Chinese philosophy, including Taoism, Confucianism, and Legalism, to translate Montesquieu's theory, he also clearly points out in comments that according to the law of evolution of society, the Chinese cyclic understanding of history is just the wild creation by the various schools of thoughts in ancient times, thus, unreliable:

Civilization cannot regress to barbarism, nor can barbarism coexist with civilization. Judging from the morality of people in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, it can be inferred that the so-called Three Generations, the so-called Tang and Yu, are only creations by Confucianists and other schools in their minds, and how can it be considered a fact! (夫已进之化之难与为桎梏, 犹未辟之种之难与跬文明也。以春秋、战国人心风俗之程度而推之, 向所谓三代, 向所谓唐、虞, 祇儒者百家其境界中之造物也, 又乌足以为事实乎!)(3–5)

The United States of America and France in Europe were all established at the end of the eighteenth century when there had been great advancement in civilization. It would have been impossible to establish a democracy in an earlier period. [...] The political systems of the five continents all derived from the patriarchal society. In East Asia, the monarch has always been the absolute authority, while in Western Europe the equality of the nations has been recognized since the time of nomadism. These differences are due to geography and religion. How different they are! (若今世美洲之合众国, 欧洲之法兰西, 皆造于十八世纪之末, 文明大进之秋, 前此所必不能者也。.....夫五洲之制, 皆宗法社会之所变化者

也。顾东亚则以宗子而成继天立极之至尊，西欧则于游牧之时已著民族之平等，此其所以然之故，又不能不求于地势与所行宗教间也。呜呼，可异也矣！(2-3)

Yan Fu's implication is quite clear here: that the ideal society of ancient China does not exist, and the democratic system in Europe can only become a reality at the end of the eighteenth century when the civilization fully developed. Human society can only follow the laws of evolution and develop gradually, and the development of a political system is no exception. From a despotic government to a monarchical one and then to republican democracy, it is a universal law that cannot be violated. This is the key point of Yan Fu's "evolutionary" rewriting of Montesquieu's theory of government by integrating Chinese and Western thoughts from Lao Tzu, Spencer, and Jenks.

#### 4 "Creative Treason" of the Mediator: Yan Fu's Motive

From the perspective of Medio-translatology, mediators mainly refer to translators. Based on the views of the French literary critic and scholar in comparative literature, Pierre Brunel, Xie puts forth three questions as the basic ideas for discussing "Creative Treason" of the mediator": Who is the translator? What did he or she translate? How did he or she translate it? He points out that by answering the question of "who the translator is", we can understand "the translator's worldview, position, and attitude toward the translated author and work", which is helpful for us to grasp the content and form of "Creative Treason" in translation. In literary translation done by writers, the "Creative Treason" tends to be more obvious than in those by professional translators. (Xie 2020: 74-75) This observation is insightful and applies equally to the field of non-literary translation.

To understand Yan's rewriting, we must start from understanding Yan Fu himself. He is not simply an ordinary professional translator, but rather a thinker who hopes to achieve the ideal of saving his country from danger through translation. His "Creative Treason" in the translation of *Fayi* not only reflects his academic insights that integrate Chinese and Western traditions but also has practical concerns. His emphasis on the evolution of forms of government was intended to correct the radical ideas of establishing a republican government in China as proposed by the revolutionaries of the time.

Revolution or reform was the choice faced by Chinese society in the early twentieth century. In 1905, when the first three volumes of *Fayi* were published, which mainly discuss the theories of government), Chinese revolutionaries and constitutionalists had a heated debate on the future of China. With *Minbao* (民报) and *Xinmin Congbao* (新民丛报) as the main platforms, both sides published articles on newspapers to elaborate on their principles and refute the other side's propositions. Even before 1905, the debate over whether to choose a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic had already escalated.



Before the Reform Movement of 1898, Kang Youwei, the leader of the Reformist group, combined “three-times-life theory” in *The Spring and Autumn Annals annotated by Gongyang* (春秋公羊传)<sup>3</sup> with the concept of “Datong” (大同)<sup>4</sup> in *The Book of Rites* (礼记), and initially formed “the theory of three-eras in Datong world”, which was widely propagated by his disciples. (see Tang 2016:25–46) Kang’s student, Liang Qichao, later combined this theory with the three forms of government and demonstrated the evolutionary order of social development: “There are three periods in which the world was governed: one in which many Kings governed, the other in which one monarch governed, and the third in which the people governed.” (Liang 1897) In 1902, Kang Youwei published an open letter to the Chinese Businessmen in North and South America, in which he expressed his opposition to revolution and his support for constitutional monarchy. Kang Youwei further developed his theory of three-eras, comparing the troubled life (据乱世), the peaceful life (升平世), and the merry life (太平世) to the three stages of despotism, constitutional monarchy, and democratic republic, and stressing that the evolution sequence of “the three eras” should not be disturbed, as “... if the sequence is not followed one by one, there will be chaos, as France has shown.” (Kang 1981:476).

Revolutionary voices reached a climax by 1903.<sup>5</sup> In 1903, Sun Zhongshan declared in his *Message to His Fellow Countrymen* (敬告同乡书), “There is a huge divide between revolution and reform, just like black and white should not be confused, and things should not be transposed.” (Sun 1981:232) Zhang Taiyan wrote *A Refutation of Kang Youwei’s Remarks on Revolution* (驳康有为论革命书), propagating revolutionary ideas. “In less than a month, thousands of copies of this article sold out and caused a huge response at home and abroad.” (Jiang 1936). In addition, more similar articles appeared in *Hubei Student Circle* (湖北学生界), *Zhejiang Tide* (浙江潮), *Jiangsu* (江苏) and other revolutionary publications sponsored by students studying in Japan. In 1904, revolutionary groups such as The Rejuvenation Society (华兴会) and The Restoration Society (光复会) were founded one after another, and the revolutionary tide began to surge.

In this context, how did Yan Fu view the choice between constitutional monarchy and democratic republic? Yan’s views on China’s political reform were consistent with those of Kang and Liang. He insisted that Chinese people lacked intelligence and morality and could only take constitutional monarchy as the direction. He opposed the immediate implementation of democracy and republicanism and was disgusted with the radical behaviors of the revolutionaries.

In the text of *Fayi*, Yan Fu points out that democracy (i.e., republicanism) is good but difficult to implement:

<sup>3</sup> *The Spring and Autumn Annals annotated by Gongyang* (春秋公羊传), one of the Thirteen Confucian classics, is a special interpretation of *the Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋).

<sup>4</sup> Datong (大同), which literally means all the same in Chinese, is a political concept in Confucianism that refers to the ideal world that human beings can eventually achieve and represents human beings’ beautiful vision for the future society. The basic features are that everyone loves and helps each other, and every family lives and works in peace and contentment, without differences or wars. This state is called “A World of Datong”, similar to the concept of Utopia.

<sup>5</sup> For the development of revolutionary ideas in 1903 see Yan and Xu (2011).

Democracy is the best form of government. If the world ever had a perfect day, it would be a democracy. Democracy, however, is hard to implement. Why is that? Because the intelligence, morality, and ability of the population often fall short. (民主者，治制之极盛也。使五洲而有郅治之一日，其民主乎？虽然，其制有至难用者。何则？斯民之智、德、力常不逮此制也。) (8-2)

Yan Fu regards democracy as the best political system. But whether a country implements democracy, depends on whether the intelligence, morality, and ability of the people have reached a comparable level. If, when the people are not prepared, despotism is even more conducive to the well-being of the people than democracy, “it(despotism) can what achieve democracy cannot achieve” (而为民主所必不可及者也) (3-11), “the people are like a body. Form of government, a piece of clothing. Children cannot wear adults’ clothing. It is ridiculous to argue only about the form of government without considering the quality of the people. This is a rule that historians are aware of” (Yan 2014c:468-469). Therefore, with the consideration of reality, Yan Fu rewrites Montesquieu’s theory of “forms of government” into “evolution of government” from despotism to constitutional monarchy and democratic republic. The reason lies in the argument that China should choose the right direction for the monarchy according to the evolutionary laws. In this way, Yan is emphasizing the importance of promoting the education of people and criticizing the radical revolutionists for that they only focus on reforming the political system and ignore the situation of the public.

## 5 Conclusion

In all, Yan Fu’s rewriting of Montesquieu’s theory of government in *Fayi* is not a linguistic mistranslation, but an expression of the translator’s thoughts, which reflects Yan’s rejection of the revolutionary ideas at that time and his realistic consideration of the path of China’s social reform. For a long time, most of the studies on Yan Fu’s translation have centered on his criteria for translation as “*xin* (信faithfulness), *da* (达expressiveness) and *ya* (雅elegance)”, exploring to what extent Yan’s translations have fulfilled or deviated from this standard. This chapter argues that we cannot analyze Yan Fu’s translation skills only from the perspective of language, nor can we simply blame the rewriting in his translation as the translator’s poor language skills, or inadequate grasp of the original idea. We should return to the specific historical and cultural context to understand Yan Fu from the perspective of a thinker who expresses his ideas through translation.

From the perspective of translatology, Yan Fu’s translation activities can be seen as an act of “translating as writing”, a response to the social reality of China at that time, responding to the political reform and ideological transformation that he cared about. In a broader sense, the case of Yan Fu’s translation also reflects the complexities of non-literary or academic translation activities during that transitory period. The academic translation of Western social sciences at the beginning of the twentieth century is not only an introduction and reception of Western ideas but

“Creative Treason” by many translators in the name of “translation”, integrating Chinese and Western traditions and addressing issues in reality.

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# Understanding Lu Xun: A Cultural Probe into Lu Xun’s “Hard Translation”



Feng Cui 

**Abstract** Research on Lu Xun and his works began almost the same time he started writing and publishing. Throughout the past century, scholars have focused on different aspects of Lu Xun: between the 1920s and 1940s, scholars primarily conducted textual analyses of his works; between the formation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and the cusp of the Cultural Revolution, academics explored his ideologies and philosophies; starting from the 1980s, studies have turned to academic discourse about the relationship between Lu Xun, Chinese, Western cultures and societies. Little attention has been paid to Lu Xun’s translations. The current study aims to fill in this gap by investigating Lu Xun’s translations through the theoretical lens of Medio-translatology. This study delves deep into how the political climate manipulated intellectuals to explain Lu Xun’s choice of “hard translation” (硬译) and the cultural significance of such a translation strategy.

**Keywords** Lu Xun · Hard translation · Medio-translatology · Manipulation

## 1 Introduction

Lu Xun (1881–1936) is undoubtedly the most widely studied albeit controversial novelist and essayist of modern Chinese literature. A prominent figure of the field, his works garnered much attention from academics even at the beginning of his literary career. “From his pioneering phase of the late 1910s to his maturation in the 20s and 30s and the height of his fame in the 40s, Lu Xun left a long-lasting legacy that survived the decades—academic discussions about his works never took a pause or went through a hiatus regardless of the social circumstances.” (Peng 2001: 1) “Lu Xun” is no longer a pseudonym used by an author; it marks the beginning and development of modern Chinese culture. It symbolizes a persevering image of the Chinese intellectuals across the ages, of revolution and national salvation, and a Chinese renaissance. It is for this very reason that Lu Xun has been critically acclaimed by

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writers, critics, translators, philosophers, aestheticians, as well as politicians. His works and thoughts laid the groundwork for their research and provided a multi-dimensional perspective informing studies across literature, philosophy, aesthetics, political science, psychology, ethics, and history.

## 2 Hundred Years of Lu Xun Study: An Overview

The overview of Lu Xun studies laid out in this paper is based on Zhang Mengyang's *A History of Lu Xun Studies* (鲁迅学通史) and Du Yibai's *The History of Research on Lu Xun* (鲁迅研究史稿), with a focus on tidying up research and discussions on Lu Xun over the past century to paint a clearer picture of the discipline in general.

All of Lu Xun's works, from his literary works to academic essays and translations, such as novels, *zawen* (critical satiric essays), poetry, letters, and diaries, have been the subject of research about the writer due to their rich literary symbolism. Studies on Lu Xun have primarily revolved around the survival and destiny of people, discussing topics such as national salvation, social progress, cultural changes, and the enlightenment of the masses, highlighting Lu Xun's historical and cultural significance. Several scholars have, therefore, proposed the formalization of an academic discipline focused on the writer, as there is a need to organize and crystallize the research findings generated from studies on Lu Xun to offer a more all-encompassing theoretical framework for future research (Peng 2001) systematically and objectively.<sup>1</sup> Strong proponent of this idea includes Peng Ding'an and Zhang Mengyang. In his monograph, *Lu Xun Studies* (鲁迅学导论), Peng (2001:3) suggests that studies on Lu Xun should include both his works and the author himself. Yet, it is also apparent from Peng's argument that he excludes Lu Xun's translations from the research area<sup>2</sup>—his categorization of Lu Xun's works includes literary works, academic essays, novels, *zawen*, poetry, letters, diaries, memoirs, and even non-textual materials about Lu Xun (Peng 2001: 1). Similarly, in Zhang's *A History of Lu Xun Studies*, Lu Xun's translations were excluded from the scope of Lu Xun studies; instead, Lu Xun studies were defined as the exploration and exposition of Lu Xun's writings, thoughts, life, and character (Zhang 2001: 13). Both Peng and Zhang have based their conclusions on the studies on Lu Xun in the past hundred years, where the writer's translations have been, for the most part, overlooked by academics.

The period between 1919 and October 1936, which is also the time of Lu Xun's death, can be considered the early years of Lu Xun studies and can be further subdivided into four periods. The first period is from 1919 to 1925, during which Lu Xun published *Diary of a Madman* (狂人日记), *The True Story of Ah Q* (阿Q正

<sup>1</sup> In the prologue of Peng (2001), he states the terminology "Lu Xun Studies" (鲁迅学) was first proposed by him in 1981. However, this was not the case. Earlier that year, Ge Baoquan had already mentioned the establishment of such a discipline at a meeting held to prepare for Lu Xun's hundredth birthday. More can be found in Du (2000).

<sup>2</sup> This paper believes that this is an unintentional exclusion, for Peng (2001) discussed Lu Xun's interactions with foreign literature through literary translation in a chapter of the same book.

传), and *Call To Arms* (呐喊) and these publications took the Chinese intellectual sphere by storm. Discussions of Lu Xun were mainly based on these three pieces of work by intellectuals like Fu Sinian, Shen Yanbing, Zhu Xiang, and Cheng Fangwu. Among these discussions, Shen, the earliest friend of Lu Xun, lauded *The True Story of Ah Q* as a masterpiece of its time. The second is between 1925 and 1927, during which Lu Xun was firmly established as a titular figure of the field. Most of the discussions during this period were composed of works written in response to Lu Xun's *Wandering* (彷徨) and other works of *zawen*. Academics like Li Jiannong, Dong Qiufang, Ren Shu, Sun Fuxi, Xiang Peiliang, Zheng Zhenduo (郑振铎) focused on literary analysis of the stylistic differences between *Call To Arms* and *Wandering* and between the individual essays in *Wandering* itself. In September 1927, Lu Xun published *Wild Grass* (野草), *Hot Winds* (热风), *Huagai Ji* (华盖集), *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (中国小说史), and *Old Tales Retold* (小说旧闻抄), which were all introduced to the literati and intellectuals in issues 47 and 48 of *Beixin* (北新). At this time, Lu Xun had already become an influential writer, having published many *zawen*. He was recognized both as a novelist and as an essayist, with an equal amount of attention paid to both his Chinese fiction and his *zawen*, albeit stirring more controversies with the latter. In 1927, Shen published *A Discussion on Lu Xun*, a comprehensive paper that discusses all of Lu Xun's novels and *zawen* to date. In the paper, he described Lu Xun as the role model for the youths of that time, securing Lu Xun's leadership in modern Chinese literature. The third period spans from 1928 to 1933, starting with the debate on Revolutionary Literature and ending with the execution of Qu Qiubai. This period was characterized by *Chuangzaoshe's* (创造社) and *Taiyangshe's* (太阳社) constant barrage on Lu Xun. Notable publications on Lu Xun included Feng Xuefeng's *Revolution and Intellectuals* (革命与知识阶级), an essay written at the height of the debate on Revolutionary Literature, and *Satirical Literature and Social Reform* (讽刺文学与社会改革), an essay focusing on an analysis of Lu Xun's *zawen*. 1933 saw the publication of the *Collection of Lu Xun's zawen*, a landmark in Lu Xun Studies. Qu Qiubai wrote the prologue to the book. In his prologue, Qu analyzed and affirmed Lu Xun's significance in intellectual history and summarized some of the more salient linguistic and stylistic features of Lu Xun's *zawen*. From 1933 to 1936, China experienced a boom in academic interest in Lu Xun's work. Qu Qiubai's evaluation of Lu Xun has been widely accepted by literati and scholars of the time and Lu Xun's *zawen* was more categorically examined. Some of the more significant essays of the time include Feng's *Lu Xun's Position in Chinese Literature* (1936) (关于鲁迅在文学上的地位), Li Chang-zhi's *Critiquing Lu Xun* (鲁迅批判), and Su Xuelin's *On The True Story of Ah Q and Lu Xun's Literature* ((阿Q正传)及鲁迅创作的艺术). Overseas scholars also took notice of Lu Xun and had a deeper understanding of his works; Masuda Wataru and Edgar Snow were among those who drafted biographies about Lu Xun after personally visiting the writer during this time.

After the passing of Lu Xun on the 19th of October 1936, up until the founding of the People's Republic of China on the 1st of October 1949, studies on Lu Xun were developed even further. Again, this period can be further divided into three sub-periods. The first spans over a year, between 1936 and 1937. Academics and

literati, such as Yu Dafu, Zhuo Zuoren, Qian Xuanton, Lin Yutang, and Hu Shi either reminisced on the late writer or approached his works with a more objective lens to analyze and discuss the features of his works and his character. Notably, an article published in *Northwest Cultural Daily* (西北文化日报) holds significance in Lu Xun Studies. Written by Da Cheng (达城), the article, *A Catalogue of Lu Xun Studies* (鲁迅研究大纲草目), laid out 36 key questions relating to the studies on Lu Xun. Among which, Question 26 specifically mentions Lu Xun and his views on translation, bringing a new perspective and understanding to the studies of Lu Xun. The second sub-period is from 1937 to 1939 when the foundations for the studies of Lu Xun as a formal discipline were laid. *Studies on Lu Xun* (鲁迅研究), written by Xia Zhengnong, marked an important transition from the reminiscence of the writer to a more logical and rational study as it documented and investigated assiduously the life, thoughts, and works of Lu Xun. In *Discussing Lu Xun* (鲁迅论), Mao Zedong also provided an incisive overview discussing some of Lu Xun's key features. The *Complete Works of Lu Xun* (鲁迅全集) was also published during this period, more specifically, in 1938. A twenty-volume publication, the collection comprises of both Lu Xun's literary works and translations, with ten volumes dedicated to each section. Other notable publications of the time, as with prior years, primarily dealt with the literary analysis, thoughts, and life of Lu Xun; examples include Lu Zuo's *Lu Xun: The Philosopher* (思想家的鲁迅), Zhou Yang's *The Journey of a Great Democratic Realist: Lu Xun's Second Death Anniversary* (一个伟大的民主主义现实主义者的路--纪念鲁迅逝世二周年), Zhang Zhen'ou's *Lu Xun and Nietzsche* (鲁迅与尼采), Tang Tao's *Lu Xun's zawen* (鲁迅的杂文), Xu Guangping's *Lu Xun and the Youths* (鲁迅和青年们), Feng Xuefeng's *Uncompleted works of Lu Xun* (1938) (鲁迅先生计划而未完成的著作), and Tai Jingnong's *The Life of Lu Xun: Proceedings from Lu Xun's Second Death Anniversary Conference at Chongqing* (1938) (鲁迅先生的一生--在重庆鲁迅先生逝世二周年纪念大会上的一个报告). It was also around this time when Lu Xun's efforts in schematizing classical Chinese literature were taken notice of—scholars began researching intensively in this arena, again laying down a cornerstone that later formed the studies of Lu Xun. Tai Jingnong's *Lu Xun's Contributions to Schematizing Classical Chinese Literature* (鲁迅先生整理中国古文学之成绩), Zheng Zhenduo's *Lu Xun the Scholar* (鲁迅的治学精神), and Zhao Jingshen's *On Lu Xun's Ancient Chinese Fiction* were among the more significant contributors to this area of research. Finally, the years between 1940 and 1949 marked the third sub-period in the second phase of the development of Lu Xun Studies. In *On New Democracy*, Mao (1940) affirmed the legacy of Lu Xun, depicting him as a close associate of the ideals of New Democracy. Feng Xuefeng, Hu Feng, Zhou Yang's *On Lu Xun* expounded on the understanding of Lu Xun. Ai Siqi and Li Pingxin examined Lu Xun and his works through a philosophical-sociological lens in their articles, *Lu Xun's Early Contributions to Philosophy* (鲁迅先生早期对于哲学的贡献) and *The Literati of the Masses* (人民文豪鲁迅), respectively. Memoirs about Lu Xun were also abundant and well-received, as evidenced by the publication of Feng Xuefeng's *Memoirs of Lu Xun* (鲁迅回忆录), Xiao Hong's *In Memory of Lu Xun* (回忆鲁迅先生) and Xu Shoutang's *Remembering a Late Friend* (亡友鲁迅印象记). At the same time, Lin Chen's *Investigating Lu Xun* (鲁迅事迹考) marked a pivot into research



on historical facts about Lu Xun. Worth mentioning is Ouyang Fanhai's *Lu Xun's Works* (鲁迅的书)—is analyzed and discussed Lu Xun's works, not in isolation, but in conjunction with his life experiences and beliefs. Wang Shijing's *Lu Xun: A Biography* was also published in 1948.

The seventeen years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, that is, between 1949 and 1966, saw both significant developments and minor setbacks to the studies of Lu Xun in China. Significant contributions to the studies of Lu Xun during this time include Feng Xuefeng and his discussions about Lu Xun and Russian literature and Lu Xun's unique stylistic choices in literary works, Chen Yong and his research on the realism in Lu Xun's fictions, Tang Tao and his analysis of the literary features in and aesthetics of Lu Xun's *zawen*, Wang Yao and his investigations into the relationship between Lu Xun's works and classical Chinese literature, Li Changzhi and his research on Lu Xun's works on the history of Chinese literature, and Lin Chen and his studies about Lu Xun's efforts in schematizing classical Chinese literature. Another key outcome of research during these seventeen years also includes the publication of a biography of Lu Xun and a ten-volume collection of Lu Xun's literary works.<sup>3</sup> In January 1959, Lu Xun's translated works were published as a separate collection in another ten-volume collection. More memoirs of Lu Xun were written by academics and scholars, including Zhu Zheng's *Lu Xun: A Biography* (鲁迅传略), Wang Shijing's *A Biography of Lu Xun* (鲁迅传), and Cao Juren's *Evaluating Lu Xun* (鲁迅评传). Yet, at the same time, academic thought and theoretical explorations of the studies of Lu Xun were severely impacted and warped by dogmatism and philistinism at the height of the anti-rightist campaign in 1957. This persisted through to the 1960s and proper academic discourse about Lu Xun only resumed with the return of intellectual freedom.

The Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 brought on the greatest decline of the studies of Lu Xun. Lu Xun's work was egregiously rewritten and reinterpreted by the leftists to promote their political agenda. However, there remained several clear-minded scholars who forged ahead with a more rational approach to the studies of Lu Xun and contributed to the development of research on Lu Xun and his works. Significant works of the time include *Correspondences from Lu Xun* (鲁迅书信集), *Lu Xun's Diaries* (鲁迅日记), *Poetry from Lu Xun: A Manuscript* (鲁迅诗稿), *Prologues for Classics by Lu Xun* (鲁迅古籍序跋集), and *Prologues for Translated Texts by Lu Xun* (鲁迅译文序跋集). Scholars then also rediscovered works and letters deemed missing, adding them to the already massive collection; they also organized and tidied up all of Lu Xun's works thus far for future reference. Among these scholars, Li Helin was one of the most important ones, publishing monographs such as *Answering Questions to Fifteen of Lu Xun's Fictions in Beijing's Secondary School Textbooks* (北京市中学语文课本中十五篇鲁迅作品的问题试答), *The Life and zawen of Lu Xun* (鲁迅的生平与杂文), and *Annotating Lu Xun's Wild Grass* (鲁迅(野草)注解). His pragmatism and commitment to presenting the truth were particularly valuable in the socio-political climate then.

<sup>3</sup> The 1958 anthology only included Lu Xun's writings, a step back from the twenty-volume series published in 1938, wherein Lu Xun's translations made up ten volumes in total.

In the years following the end of the Cultural Revolution, the academic rigor in the studies of Lu Xun was re-ignited. Senior scholars of Lu Xun critically examined the theoretical underpinnings and understanding of Lu Xun. Notable works of the time include Tang Tao's *Leading the Cultural Forefront: Lu Xun* (鲁迅--文化新军的旗手) and *Commemorating Lu Xun's Hundredth Birthday: A Discussion about Realism in Lu Xun's Fictions* (论鲁迅小说的现实主义--纪念鲁迅诞辰一百周年), Wang Shi Jing's *Annotating Lu Xun's First Five Essays* (鲁迅早期五篇论文注释) and *A First Look at Lu Xun's Creative Journey* (鲁迅创作道路初探), Li Helin's *Lu Xun: Poet, Thinker, Revolutionist* (伟大的文学家,思想家和革命家鲁迅), Chen Yong's *Realism and Romanticism in Lu Xun* (鲁迅与现实主义和浪漫主义问题), and Wang Yao's *Essays on Gushi Xinbian* ((故事新编)散论). The publication of these works ensued from the revival of academia's spirit after the Cultural Revolution. It also provided refreshed perspectives on Lu Xun and his works. At the same time, a group of younger researchers and scholars had equally significant breakthroughs in their analysis and research of Lu Xun, including: Lin Fei's *A Brief History of Lu Xun's Early Ideologies* (鲁迅前期思想发展史略) and *Essays on Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说论稿), Zhang Enhe's *Explaining Lu Xun's Poetry* (鲁迅旧诗集解) and *Comparing Lu Xun and Guo Moruo* (鲁迅与郭沫若比较论), Li Zehou's *A Brief Discussion on Lu Xun's Ideologies* (略论鲁迅思想的发展), Sun Yushi's *An Investigation Into Lu Xun's Perspectives on Reforming National Ideologies* (鲁迅改造国民性思想问题的考察) and *Research on Wild Grass* ((野草)研究), Yan Jiayan's *The Historical Significance of Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说的历史地位), Lin Zhihao's *Lu Xun: A Biography* (鲁迅传), Liu Zaifu's *On Aestheticism and Lu Xun* (鲁迅美学思想论稿), Le Daiyun's *Nietzsche and Modern Chinese Literature* (尼采与中国现代文学) and *Overseas Studies on Lu Xun (1960-1981)* (国外鲁迅研究论集(1960-1981)), Ma Liangchun's *Studies on Lu Xun's Ideologies* (鲁迅思想研究), Li Yunjing's *Lu Xun and the New Wood-carving Movement* (鲁迅与新兴木刻), Zhang Zhuo's *Exploring Lu Xun's Philosophies* (鲁迅哲学思想研究) and *Analysing Traditional Chinese Societies* (中国传统社会剖析), Li Xifan's *A literary and ideological analysis of Call to Arms and Wandering* ((呐喊)(彷徨)的思想与艺术) and *The Wish of a Noble Explorer* (一个伟大寻求者的心声), Jiang Deming's *Shuye Ji* (书叶集), *Shubian Ji* (书边集) and *Living Lu Xun* (活的鲁迅), Chen Mingshu's *Essays on Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说论稿), Wu Zhongjie's *On Lu Xun's Fictions* (论鲁迅的小说创作) (co-authored with Gao Yun), *Biography of Lu Xun* (鲁迅传略) and *On Lu Xun's zawen* (论鲁迅的杂文创作), Shao Bozhou's *A literary exploration of Call to Arms and Wandering* ((呐喊)(彷徨)艺术特色探索) and *The Literary Features of Lu Xun's Philosophies and zawen* (鲁迅思想与杂文艺术特色), Chen Mengxiong's (Xiongrong) annotations and investigations into historical facts about Lu Xun and his works, Ni Moyan's *A Look at Lu Xun's Ideologies in his later years* (鲁迅后期思想研究), Wang Xirong's research on Lu Xun's diaries, Wang Jinquan's *On Huagai Ji and its successor* (论(华盖集)及其续编), Qiu Wenzhi's *Chronicles of Lu Xun* (鲁迅年谱) (co-authored with Bao Chang) and *Questions about Lu Xun's Works* (鲁迅名篇析疑), Liu Jiaming's *The Art of Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说的艺术), Zhang Juxiang's *The Literary Features of Lu Xun's zawen* (鲁迅杂文的艺术风格), Li Yongshou's *The Development of Lu*

*Xun's Ideologies* (鲁迅思想的发展), Peng Ding'an's *Evaluating Lu Xun* (鲁迅评传), Du Yibai's *On Lu Xun's Ideologies* (鲁迅思想论纲) and *The Stylistics of Lu Xun* (鲁迅的写作艺术), Wang Guanquan's *Chronicles of Lu Xun* (鲁迅年谱), Liu Boqing's *Lu Xun and Japanese Literature* (鲁迅与日本文学), Liu Zhongshu's *Lu Xun's Views on Literature* (鲁迅的文学观), Sun Zhongtian's *Notes on the Literary Features in Lu Xun* (鲁迅小说艺术札记), Li Chunlin's *Interrogators of the Human Soul* (两位“人的灵魂的伟大的审问者”), Wang Jipeng's *On Wild Grass* ((野草)论稿), Wang Baolin's *On zawen co-authored by Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai* (鲁迅和瞿秋白合作的杂文及其它), Li Guotao's *The Literary Value of Wild Grass* ((野草)艺术谈), Zhang Yongquan's *On Ah Q: The Stereotype of National Inferiority* (民族劣根性的典型--论阿Q), Feng Guangliabn's *Research on Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说研究), Zhu Defa's *On Distress Awareness in Lu Xun's Fictions and its Western and Eastern Cultural Roots* (鲁迅小说的忧患意识及其中西文化渊源), Wei Shaoxin's research on Lu Xun and literary thoughts, Fan Boqun and Zeng Huapeng's *New Perspectives on Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说新论), Bao Zhongwen's *New Perspectives on Lu Xun's Ideologies and Literature* (鲁迅的思想和艺术新论), Gan Jingcun's *On Emotions and Thoughts in Lu Xun's zawen* (略论鲁迅杂文的情理趣), Liu Fuqin's *Discussing the Creative Process of The True Story of Ah Q*, Xin Youshu's *Supplementary Thoughts* ((多余的话)) and *A History of Lu Xun* (鲁迅心史), Wang Xianyong's *On the Literary Features of Lu Xun's zawen* (鲁迅杂文艺术论), Zheng Zekui's *The Literary Features and Ideologies in The True Story of Ah Q*, Wang Jialiang's *Aestheticism in Poetry*, Yu Fenggao's *Lu Xun's zawen and their place in Scientific History* (鲁迅杂文与科学史), Qiu Shixiong's *Shaoxing in the eyes of Lu Xun* (鲁迅笔下的绍兴风情) (co-authored), Xu Huaizhong's *Lu Xun and Classical Chinese Fiction* (鲁迅与中国古典小说), Lu Yaodong's *Lu Xun and Nietzsche* (co-authored), Chen Anhu's *Essays on Lu Xun* (鲁迅论稿) and *Thirty Years of Studying Lu Xun* (鲁迅研究三十年集), Huang Manjun's *Features of Lu Xun's Creative Process and Thought* (鲁迅论创作思维的特征) and *The Gemini in Modern Chinese Literature* (中国现代文坛的“双子星座”), Yi Zhuxian's *On Lu Xun and Hu Shi in the May Fourth Movement* (评“五四”时期的鲁迅与胡适), Yan Xiong's *Lu Xun on The Dead Soul* (鲁迅论(死魂灵)), Zheng Xinlin's *An Initial Look at Lu Xun's Poetry* (鲁迅诗浅析), Zhang Jing's *Lu Xun in Guangzhou* (鲁迅在广州), Liu Tailong's *The Constant in Lu Xun's Ideologies through the years* (论鲁迅思想发展的一贯性), Zhi Keqiang's *On the Revolution in The True Story of Ah Q* (关于阿Q的“革命”问题), Wu Xiaomei's *On Wild Grass* (论(野草)) and *The Empty House* (虚室集), Zhang Hua's *Lu Xun and Foreign Writers* (鲁迅和外国作家), Yan Yuxin's *Journal on Lu Xun Studies* (鲁迅研究年刊), Zheng Xinmiao's *Cultural Critique and National Reform* (文化批判与国民性改造), Tuohuti Bake's *Lu Xun's Works in Xinjiang* (鲁迅作品在新疆), Huang Chuan's *A Xinjiang's Perspectives on Lectures on Biology by Lu Xun* (鲁迅编著的(生理学讲演)在新疆发现) and *A Cultural Reflection: Lu Xun and the Minority in Xinjiang* (鲁迅与新疆少数民族对传统文化的反思), Yan Qingsheng's *Lu Xun's zawen and its literay value* (鲁迅杂文的艺术出版), Liu Yanglie's *An Introduction to Lu Xun's Poetry* (鲁迅诗歌简论), Meng Shuhong's *Draft of the Chronicles of Lu Xun* (鲁迅年谱稿), and Liu Zhengqiang's *Essays on Lu Xun's Thoughts and Works* (鲁迅思想及创作散论), among many others. Some scholars also looked at Lu Xun

through a more ideological perspective, publishing their findings in various pieces of works, such as Wang Furen's *Lu Xun's Earlier Writings and Russian Literature* (鲁迅前期小说与俄罗斯文学) and *A Reflection of Anti-feudalism in China: A Discussion on Call to Arms and Wandering* (中国反封建思想革命的一面镜子--〈呐喊〉〈彷徨〉综论), Qian Liqun's *On Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren's Ideologies* (试论鲁迅与周作人的思想发展道路)和(心灵的探寻), Yang Yi's *An Overview of Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说综论) and *A Compilation of Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说会心录), and Jin Hongda's *An Exploration of Lu Xun's Cultural Thoughts* (鲁迅文化思想探索). From the aforementioned works on Lu Xun, it is clear that the life of Lu Xun received much attention from scholarship, who published numerous biographies about Lu Xun.

Additionally, a team of scholars, formed by pioneering figures such as Lin Chen and Xue Sui, and more contemporary scholars like Zhu Zheng, Chen Shuyu, Ma Tiji, Bao Ziyang, and Li Weijiang, uncovered, organized, cross-referenced, and compiled all historical facts relating to Lu Xun. Their dedication to the task is also dedicated to the scientific pursuit of truth. Later, Yuan Liangjun's *A History of Lu Xun Studies* marked the maturing of Lu Xun Studies as a discipline. Following its publication, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House published *An Anthology of Lu Xun's Writings and Translations* compiled by Shanghai Lu Xun Museum in 1981; this book offered refreshed perspective for the discipline.

The establishment of Lu Xun Studies as a discipline was first proposed by Ge Baoquan in Beijing in the March of 1980 during the academic conference held in commemoration of Lu Xun's Hundredth Birthday. Peng Ding'an built upon the proposal and published the paper *Establishing Lu Xun Studies: A Suggestion* (一个建议: 创立鲁迅学) in which he laid out a framework for the discipline, comprising of the following: (1) research on Lu Xun's life, (2) research on Lu Xun's ideologies, (3) research on Lu Xun's works, (4) multifaceted research on Lu Xun, (5) research on Lu Xun Studies, (6) research on overseas research on Lu Xun and (7) philology of Lu Xun. Chen Mingshu supported the call to action and published the paper *Establishing Lu Xun Studies: A Great Idea* (1981) (建立鲁迅学的建议, 好!), in which he points out that research on Lu Xun should not only take a literary lens but also a philosophical, political, historical, sociological, and aesthetic lens because the studies of Lu Xun is multi-disciplinary and should be treated as such. Zhu Wenhua (1981) further developed the framework by categorizing the areas of research into two: the first consists of research on Lu Xun's life, works, translations, and ideologies, the second comprises of Lu Xun's familial background, philology, and research on the studies of Lu Xun, among others. Worth mentioning here is that Zhu included Lu Xun's translations as part of the research area—it is a long-neglected area in the studies of Lu Xun in China. Wang Yongsheng (1981) later also wrote a paper to discuss how Lu Xun's translations should be researched independently of his literary works and be accorded the same amount of recognition from a scholarship. However, their views on Lu Xun's translations were again overlooked by academia of the time. Even though Shao Bozhou went into greater detail about the framework for Lu Xun Studies in his paper *On Lu Xun Studies* (谈谈鲁迅研究史与“鲁迅学”的体系问题), he, like many other scholars before and of his time, failed to make mention of Lu

Xun's translations. To him, Lu Xun Studies comprises of the following: (1) research on Lu Xun's historical and social context, and his lineage, (2) research on Lu Xun's life and career, (3) research on Lu Xun's works, (4) research on Lu Xun's ideologies, (5) research on Lu Xun and the Chinese cultural traditions, (6) research on Lu Xun and exchanges with foreign cultures, (7) research on Lu Xun and Aestheticism, (8) research on Lu Xun and the reform of Chinese characters, (9) research on rewritings and illustrations of and in Lu Xun works, (10) comparative studies of Lu Xun and his contemporaries, (11) research on research on Lu Xun, and (12) philology of Lu Xun Studies.

The 1990s till date saw the apotheosis of Lu Xun Studies. While not as groundbreaking as the 1980s, Lu Xun Studies in the 1990s delved deeper and produced sounder findings. It was more academically rigorous and marked the maturation of Lu Xun Studies as an academic discipline. This was expounded upon in Yuan Liangjun's *Deepen, Broaden, Innovate, and Breakthrough: Eighty Years of Lu Xun Studies* and Xu Jie's *Research on Lu Xun and the Establishment of Lu Xun Studies*. Over the decades, the most significant pieces of research on Lu Xun would be Zhang Mengyang's *A History of Lu Xun* and Peng Ding'an's *Lu Xun Studies*. As mentioned in earlier paragraphs, while Peng did not include Lu Xun's translations in his framework for Lu Xun Studies, he did discuss the relevance of research on Lu Xun's translations in the chapter *Lu Xun Studies and its framework: A Discussion on Research Areas and Works of Interest* (鲁迅学的构造因素: 对鲁迅文本的类别接受与研究). He also dedicated a chapter to discussing Lu Xun and research on his translation; in the chapter, Peng focused on four main issues, namely, Lu Xun and translation, research on Lu Xun's literary translation, Lu Xun's acceptance of foreign literature, and research on Lu Xun and comparative literature. Lin Fei's *Lu Xun and Chinese Culture* pushed the research area even further by broadening perspectives on the relationship between Lu Xun and Chinese culture, while Wang Hui's *Fight Against Hopelessness: An Investigation into the Ideologies in Call to Arms and Wandering* sets forth the idea of a "history intermediary", effectively transitioning Lu Xun Studies into a truly interdisciplinary study. In terms of studies looking into humanism in Lu Xun, there are significant studies such as Qian Liqun's *No Compromises* (绝对不能让步), Wang Dehou's *The Fundamentals of Reforming to Survive* (立人: 革新生存的根本观念), Gao Yuandong's *Humanism in East Asia* (立“人”于东亚), Xu Lin's *Humanism as the Core* (首在立人), Zhang Mengyang's *Humanism and Lu Xun: The True Story of Ah Q* (阿Q正传“鲁迅人学”阶级论), Li Xinyu's *Introduction to Lu Xun's Humanism* (鲁迅人学思想论纲). A close reading of Lu Xun's works to rediscover perspectives also gained new ground during this period, contributing to the development of the academic discipline. Notable scholars and their publications include Wang Furen's *Close Reading The Diary of A Mad Man* ((狂人日记)细读) and *Narrative features of Lu Xun's Fiction* (鲁迅小说的叙事艺术), Xue Yi and Qian Liqun's *Close Reading The Diary of A Mad Man* ((狂人日记)细读). In the 1990s, the long overlooked studies on Lu Xun's organization of Chinese classics also received scholarship attention, of which, Zhao Ying's *Lu Xun and Chinese Cultural Heritage* (籍海探珍--鲁迅整理祖国文化遗产撷华). The publication of the series on Lu Xun studies is a huge leap forward for the academic discipline. Of

the sixteen books published under this series, one was a collection of essays written in commemoration of Lu Xun's 110th birthday, while the other fifteen were monographs and manuscripts contributed by generations of scholars of Lu Xun, including *Lu Xun and Religion* (鲁迅与宗教文化), *A Reflection on History* (历史的沉思), *Chinese and Nationalism* (民族魂与中国人), *Lu Xun's Creative Process and Thoughts* (鲁迅创作心理论), *Lu Xun and English Literature* (鲁迅与英国文学), *An Overview of Lu Xun's Literary Thoughts* (鲁迅文学观综论), *Modern Essays* (现代散文的劲旅), *Searching for Infinity from the Middle* (由中间寻找无限), *Lu Xun's Works and Nietzsche's Precepts* (鲁迅的创作与尼采的箴言), *On Lu Xun's Creative Processes* (论鲁迅艺术创造系统), *Reflections and Choices* (反省与选择), *Lu Xun and Modern Chinese Fiction* (中国现代小说史上的鲁迅), *Lu Xun and the New Thought* (鲁迅与新思潮), *On Call to Arms* (《呐喊》论), *The Cultural Hero Never Seen Before* (空前的民族英雄), and *New Perspectives on The True Story of Ah Q* (阿Q新论). Zhang Mengyang (2001: 646) finds that the series covers almost every significant area of interest of Lu Xun Studies, from cultural and literary thoughts, creative processes to fiction, *zawen*, poetry, and even relationship with foreign literature. Yet, once again, Lu Xun's translation has been left out from the discussion. Biographical studies on Lu Xun also experienced further growth with works like Zeng Zhizhong's *The Journey of Three Men* (三人行), Zhu Wenhua's *Comparing Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and Guo Moruo* (鲁迅, 胡适, 郭沫若连环比较评传), Tang Tao's *Lu Xun: A Biography* (鲁迅传), Peng Ding'an's *Walking into Lu Xun's World* (走向鲁迅世界), Wu Jun's *Evaluating Lu Xun* (鲁迅评传) and *Research into Lu Xun's Personality and Psychology* (鲁迅个性心理研究), Wang Xiaoming's *Lu Xun: A Man of Many Faces* (无法直面的人生--鲁迅传), Chen Shuyu's *Lu Xun* (鲁迅), Chen Ping's *Lu Xun* (鲁迅), Niu Daifeng's *Lu Xun: A Biography* (鲁迅传), Chen Yue's *Lu Xun: A Biography* (鲁迅传论), Xin Xiaozheng's *The Father of Chinese Nationalism: Lu Xun* (国民性的缔造者--鲁迅), Zhu Zheng's *The Zhou Brothers* (周氏三兄弟). Wang Qiankun's *Lu Xun's Life Philosophy* made a breakthrough for studies in Lu Xun and philosophy. The 90s were a truly remarkable decade for Lu Xun studies given its abundance of new perspectives. Sun Yu's *The Most Distressed Soul of the 20th Century* (20世纪中国最忧患的灵魂), *The Desecrated Lu Xu* (被褻读的鲁迅), *Into Lu Xun's World: Poetry* (走进鲁迅世界·诗歌卷), *Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren* (鲁迅与周作人), *Conversations between Lu Xun and a traveller* (一个漫游者与鲁迅的对话), and *Lu Xun and Hushi: The Most Influential Intellectuals of the 20th Century* (鲁迅与胡适--影响20世纪中国文化的两位智者) were particularly striking and noticeable, making waves within scholarship. Other notable and innovative works include Chen Fangjing's *Lu Xun and Zhedong Culture* (鲁迅与浙东文化), Zhang Fugui's *Habitual End: Lu Xun's Cultural Choice and its Historical Significance* (惯性的终结—鲁迅文化选择的历史价值), Xu Lin's *Studies of Lu Xun's Mid-career Ideologies* (鲁迅中期思想研究), Chen Mingshu's *On Lu Xun's Intellect and Wisdom* (论鲁迅的智慧), Xu Mingde's *Analysing Lu Xun's Cultural Psychology* (鲁迅文化心理结构解析), Peng Ding'an's *Lu Xun and his position in Sino-Japanese Cultural Exchange* (鲁迅: 在中日文化交流的坐标上), Liu Yukai's *Lu Xun and Qian Zhongshu* (鲁迅钱钟书平行论), Dong Dazhong's *Lu Xun and Gao Changhong* (鲁迅与高长虹), Wang Junji's *Lu Xun, Guo Moruo and Chinese Traditions* (鲁迅郭沫若与中国传统文化),

Ye Shuhui and Yang Yanli's *Getting to Know Lu Xun from His Belongings* (从鲁迅遗物认识鲁迅), Ye Shixiang's *Structuralism in Lu Xun's Fictions* (鲁迅小说的形式意义), Cheng Zhizhong's *Searching for a Spiritual Homeland: Lu Xun the Thinker* (寻找精神家园—思想者鲁迅论), Deng Guowei's *Returning to the Wilderness of Home* (回到故乡的荒野), and Wang Jiaping's *Staring into Lu Xun's Spiritual World* (鲁迅精神世界凝视).

The paragraphs before this have laid out the six most significant periods in the studies of Lu Xun and listed the most notable scholars and research findings. Through such an exercise, we have arrived at an understanding of research on Lu Xun for the past century. His life, fiction, *zawen*, essays, ideologies, and relationship with Chinese culture have remained the core focus of the academic discipline. Even though Lu Xun's translations were briefly mentioned in 1936 and 1981 by various scholars, it has never gained much traction beyond that and has remained marginalized in the face of other research areas. Statistically, between 1919 and 1936, there were 25 essays were discussing Lu Xun's translations, focusing mainly on Lu Xun's correspondences with Qu Qiubai and his arguments on translation with Liang Qiushi and Zhao Jingshen; between 1937 and 1949, there were nine essays in total, one of which was published overseas; from 1949 to 1966, there was more attention paid to his translations, with a total of 41 essays, including five that were published overseas. This was a huge improvement from before the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Cultural Revolution set research in this area backward and left a huge gap, with only two essays published overseas. During the revival of Lu Xun Studies between 1977 and 1989, research interest in Lu Xun's translation saw a similar revival, with a total of 45 essays, including four overseas publications; there was also a resource book and a monograph published during this time. The 1990s saw the most attention paid to Lu Xun's translations, with hundreds of essays and twelve monographs to date<sup>4</sup> (Cui 2006: 20).<sup>5</sup> While discussions on Lu Xun's translations started at the same time as research in other areas, it is obvious that it has not received the same amount of attention. He was more regarded for his literary works instead, though this was not for a lack of translation works; Lu Xun was a prolific translator in his time. He spent 33 long years translating over 200 literary texts from Russia, England, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romani, Czech, Japan, France, and Germany; up until his death, he was

<sup>4</sup> These include the Ph.D. thesis "Lu Xun as a Translator" by Lennart Lundberg, Liu Shaoqin's *On Lu Xun and Translation: The Journey of He who Stole the Fire* (盗火者的足迹与心迹——论鲁迅与翻译), Wang Yougui's *Lu Xun the Translator* (翻译家鲁迅), Li Ji's *On Lu Xun and Traditional Chinese Translation* (鲁迅传统汉语翻译文体论), Gu Yun's *Studies on Lu Xun's Translations* (鲁迅翻译研究), Wu Yun's *Lu Xun's Literary Translation* (鲁迅翻译文学研究) and *Lu Xun's Poetry and their Translations* (鲁迅诗歌翻译传播研究), Tao Lixia's *Lu Xun and Lin Yutang: Comparing their views on culture and translation through their translations* (文化观与翻译观——鲁迅林语堂文化翻译对比研究), Feng Yuwen's *Lu Xun and his views on Translation* (鲁迅翻译思想研究), Wang Jiaping's *On the Anthology of Lu Xun's translations* ((鲁迅译文全集)翻译状况与文本研究), Chen Hong's *Studies on Lu Xun's Translations through a Japanese lens* (日语源语视域下的鲁迅翻译研究), Luo Xianfeng's *Studies on Lu Xun's Thoughts on Translation* (鲁迅的翻译伦理思想研究).

<sup>5</sup> Related statistics can be found in Cui (2006: 20).

still tolling over Gogol's *Dead Souls*. At the time of his passing, he had translated five collections of literary essays, one paper on literary policies, one book on the history of art, one collection of literary texts, one collection of *zawen*, five books on fairy tales, two long fiction, 64 short novels, two science-fiction, two mid-length novels, two plays, one fairy tale play, ten pieces of poetry, and ten pieces of *zawen*. Aside from literary texts and literary commentaries, he also translated correspondences and diaries written by foreign writers, which span 380 writers from around 25 different countries. Thankfully, this neglect has changed over the years, starting in the 1990s, though research on his translations is still far and few between. Peng (2001: 3) suggests that as an established scholar and esteemed translator,<sup>6</sup> Lu Xun is a pioneering figure who laid the foundation for many others who came after him; his contributions in modern Chinese translation and comparative literature theories and practices are unparalleled. Xie and Zha (2004: 85) also supports the same view, stating that Lu Xun's translations are valuable pieces of modern Chinese translation history in many ways; he is a pioneer in translating foreign literature for Chinese readers, in translating minority and marginalized literature, in translating Russian literature, in translating New Literature from Europe, in establishing the relationship between literary translation and new Chinese literature, in developing Chinese translational theories and frameworks, and in training new translation talents and organizing translation efforts. Sun (2004a; b: 86) proposes that to fully understand Lu Xun, understanding and studying his translations are prerequisite to his literary works, as Lu Xun is first and foremost a translator before he is a writer; that to Lu Xun, translation has always been the priority and writing was something he did only in leisure. This suggests that scholars have recognized the duality in the role that Lu Xun plays and even discussed if one role supersedes the other. Barring the fidelity of such views, such a perspective breathed new life into the research of Lu Xun and is beneficial in bringing research on Lu Xun's translations to the foreground of research in the discipline.

Research on Lu Xun's translation can be categorized into the following, based on the two hundred over essays reviewed for this paper thus far:

- a. Discussions about Lu Xun's thoughts on translation. His thoughts and views on translation can be found in various early essays and translations, such as *Moluo Shili Shuo* (摩罗诗力说), *Unrecognizable Transliteration* (不懂的音译), *Yaowen Jiaozi* (咬文嚼字), academic debates with Liang Qiushi and Zhao Jingqiu, correspondences with Qu Qiubai, and other prologues for various translations. There is no system to be said of his views on translation, and most scholars of Lu Xun's translations based their research on these texts and materials. Research shows that Lu Xun emphasizes the objective, standards, and criticisms of translation and that his views are built on the experiences of translators before him. He was also concerned with the training of new translators and how foreign literature informs his translations. Aside from an organization

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<sup>6</sup> Scholars and translators are not equal; the former covers a much broader base. It is, thus, more appropriate to term the 'scholars' mentioned here as 'writers'.



of his thoughts and views, scholars rarely input their judgment and evaluation of Lu Xun's translations and his thoughts.

- b. Discussions about the relationship between Lu Xun's translations and foreign literature. The relationship between Lu Xun and foreign literature has been researched by many scholars over the last hundred years; research has been focused on how foreign literature, in particular, Japanese, Soviet, and European literature, has influenced his translations in terms of objectives and practices.
- c. Discussions about Lu Xun's translations and the various paradigm shifts in China. Scholars of the research area tend to investigate how various cultural and socio-political movements, like the Self-strengthening Movement, Hundred Days' Reform, May Fourth Movement, and the collapse of the Second United Front, shaped Lu Xun's views and ideologies and, thereby, informed his various decisions in translating foreign literature.
- d. Discussions about Lu Xun's translation of various genres of literature. Translations of Soviet literature make up around two-thirds of all of Lu Xun's translations, naturally leading to an abundance of research using such translations as case studies. Some studies analyze Lu Xun's translations in other areas, such as children's literature, literature of the fellows ("同类人"文学),<sup>7</sup> science-fiction, literary theories, and classics. Such studies generally discuss the reasons behind his choices and his translation practices and their effects.
- e. Anecdotal research of Lu Xun's translations. Researchers interested in this area primarily investigate correspondences and memoirs to uncover stories relating to Lu Xun's translations and how he views these events himself, in a bid to untangle and bring to light his views on practices in translation and on the development of the field itself. This includes the happenings and experiences Lu Xun had with various literary societies, publishers, newspaper and journal editorials, other translators, writers, youths, and students.
- f. Discussions about the academic debate between Lu Xun, Liang Shiqiu, and Zhao Jingshen in the 1930s, and the translations of correspondences between Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai. This research area is of particular interest to many researchers, as analysis and discussions about these issues shed light on several issues in translation, such as translation and politics (class and ideology), the controversial "hard translation" (硬译), and the Vernacular Movement.
- g. Other discussions, such as those approaching Lu Xun's translations from a linguistic, practical, or ideological perspective, or those that attempt to assess Lu Xun's proficiency in English and the authenticity of his translations. Such studies are, to date, not yet mainstream, and are therefore classified in this category.

Peng (2001: 228) argues that the theoretical framework and stylistic features of Lu Xun's translations are worthy of research as it concerns not just the translated text itself but also the relationship between the languages in both the source and target languages, and more importantly, the discourse between two cultures, the creativity of

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<sup>7</sup> This is technically part of Soviet literature, but due to the sheer number of discussions on this particular subset, it has been listed as a separate entry.

translation, ‘reasonable misinterpretation’, and domestication of foreign cultures. As Peng puts it, such research is multimodal and multifaceted and can provide multiple perspectives for the studies of Lu Xun. Using the theoretical framework provided by Medio-translatology and supplemented by contemporary Western translation theories, this paper explores the following: (a) the relationship between Lu Xun as well as Western and Eastern cultures, (b) the choice of literary texts for translation, (c) cultural factors behind translation practices, (d) the agency of the translator, the translator as the invisible reader, (e) the relationship between translation purpose and practice, (f) manipulation of translation by intellectuals and ideologies, (g) politics of language and translation, and (h) the Vernacular Movement. In doing so, this paper seeks to plug the research gaps and uncover new grounds in the research area.

Viewing Lu Xun’s translation through the lens of Medio-translatology was discussed in Peng (2001: 236), wherein he stated that “such a research approach offers a well-rounded approach for Lu Xun Studies. Tianzhen Xie, in his monograph *Medio-translatology*, specifically mentioned the state of research in China after modern Western translation theories, such as Nida’s dynamic equivalence, Newmark’s semantic equivalence, and Catford’s linguistic theory of translation, were introduced. Applying these theories to the studies of Lu Xun’s translations can uncover more findings of literary translation and Lu Xun and push the field forward”. Xie (1999: 10–11) argues that the core interest of medio-translatology is not on instructing practices in translation but on informing translation on the cultural and literary fronts. It is, therefore, crucial that scholars of translation should juxtapose the translator, translated text, and the practices against various cultural and social backdrops to examine how these contexts influence translation. Xie similarly argues that in translating, the two cultures and literature interact with each other; they intermingle and integrate, misalign and misunderstand. It is this sort of mutual acceptance and rejection that causes the cultures to shift and transform. In Medio-translatology, the translated text is viewed as a literary text to be studied, something to be accepted regardless of its qualities. On this basis, scholars of Medio-translatology can then explore and discuss literary exchanges, impacts, acceptance, and spread through examining translated texts. The addition, omission, and warping of the source text in translation and the “Creative Treason” found in the literary translation are all interest areas in Medio-translatology. Given such a broad view of translation, it becomes apparent how Medio-translatology can further develop the studies of Lu Xun by providing more perspectives with which scholars can use to discuss Lu Xun’s translations. Studies on Lu Xun’s translation should not be too caught up with the evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, nor should they be overly focused on correcting every word and sentence in his translations. Instead, especially when taking a Medio-translatology lens, scholars should discuss his theories, practices, and texts in relation to the appropriate socio-political and historical contexts. It is also necessary to cross-examine the socio-political climate, cultural backgrounds, and language use with Lu Xun’s language preference and habits and modes of thinking, his political and cultural climate, and the target audience of his translations. There simply is no single way to fully appreciate and break down Lu Xun’s translation and its significance.

### 3 A Case of 'Hard Translation' (硬译): Manipulation from Intellectuals and the Political Climate

If we were to breakdown Lu Xun's journey in translation, we can find three distinct periods: (1) the first starts in 1903 and ends in 1909, and is a phase of exploration and discovery marked by literal translation and retranslation; (2) the second spans across 1909 to 1928, and is a phase distinguished by its emphasis on literal translation and the budding of hard translation, especially in literary essays; (3) the third and final phase is between 1928 and 1935, which is similar to the second phase, though the hard translation approach is now more prominent in the translation of Marxist and Lenin literature. The question here is, then, why the hard translation approach is preferred by Lu Xun, especially in his translation of literary essays. Current studies quote Lu Xun's explanations given in his essays, citing reasons such as domestication, retention of its Western features, and the introduction of new linguistic features. Yet, such explanations are still caught in the trappings of the more traditional views of translation of authenticity and overlook the rich cultural significance of hard translation (Lu 1981a: 352, b: 382).

Very often, when translating classics, translators are cautious, fearful of the criticisms and potential troubles that come with misrepresenting the source text. This is evidenced by the change in attitude toward Lu Xun's translations. While academics and the masses could debate with Lu Xun about his translations in the political climate he lived through, it was not the case once he became a friend of the Chinese Communist Party. Criticisms of his translations were no longer academic or professional, but a complex web consisting of the translator, the intellectuals, and the mainstream ideologies, where the agency of the translator was manipulated and restricted by political factors.

A proponent of the view that culture is the operational unit of translation, André Lefevere suggests that translation should be discussed in conjunction with politics, ideologies, patronage, and poetics, as translation is often intricately tied to politics and legality, which is indirectly associated with power, and those nations often seek out 'trustworthy' translators to take charge of the translation of important books and documents. Yet, 'trust' in this case is separated from mastery. As Goethe argues, trust is more important than mastery, even when the trusted translator is nowhere as good as the master. Translation is not as simple as converting linguistic codes; instead, it is a cultural and political act, where the translator acts following the ideologies, poetics, and value system of the target language (Guo 2000: 159–160; Xie 2002: 35–36).

In mainstream Chinese discourse, Lu Xun has always been depicted as the architect of the Communist future and a close ally of the Communist party; in his late career, he was even regarded as a materialist through and through. However, is the relationship between Lu Xun and the Chinese Communist Party truly that close? What kind of relationship did they share? How was the political climate like in Lu Xun's time? How did this influence and shape his translation practices? We can approach this first through an examination of his works, letters, and memoirs.

On 14 May 1929, when Lu Xun was still traveling the North by train, Xu Guangping sent a letter to him. In the letter, Xu requested Lu Xun to send a letter to her friend from Hebei First Woman's Normal University, Chang Ruilin. Also, Xu described in her letter that Lu Xun as a man who is willing to sacrifice for others but is also one who is tired and sick from facing enemies on all fronts (adapted from Zhu 2003).

In the earlier half of 1930, Lu Xun fully involved himself in the political struggles of the time. On the 13th of February that year, the Chinese Freedom Movement Alliance (中国自由运动大同盟) was established. Feng Xuefeng recalls:

At that time, the Shanghai leadership of the Party wanted Lu Xun to be the leader of the Alliance. They sent for me to speak with Lu Xun, who did not agree with the establishment of the Alliance. He even reckoned that the Alliance would collapse right after its inauguration. (Feng 1985: 79)

On the 21st of March, Lu Xun wrote a letter to Zhang Yanqian:

The Alliance is real, as with the listing of my name on their nominal roll. My name was initially placed further down the list, but reasons unbeknownst to me, it became second to Dafu during the printing. I have been involved in talks about literature in various institutions of late, knowing nothing of the movement. It is why my speeches and presentations are seldom aligned with the Alliance. Some people felt that I have created a sensation that swept across the institutions, while some found me nasty and began writing to criticize me again. Little did I know that I would be scolded by so many people in my later years, though I could not care less. Such is only common. (Lu 1981c: 6-7)

On the 2nd of March 1930, the League of Left-Wing Writers was founded in Shanghai. On the 27th of the same month, Lu Xun expressed his views to Zhang Yanqian, mentioning that he agrees with the views of the League and that he has slogged over the past decade in assisting various literary clubs like the *Weiming She* (未名社), *Kuangbiao She* (狂飙社), *Chaohua She* (朝花社), regardless of their eventual successes or failures. All he wanted is to see the able youths of the nation come together to save the nation. He also, thereby, became a member of both the Alliance and of the League. This view is contrary to the popular belief that Lu Xun has been assimilated by Marxism-Leninism; Lu Xun merely wanted to be a ladder to help newer generations climb to greater heights (Lu 1981c: 8).

Li Lisan, an early leader in the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party, admired Lu Xun's energy and influence. Li invited Lu Xun for a meeting, set on the 7th of May 1930, together with Pan Hannian and Feng Xuefeng, and had hoped that Lu Xun could pen a declaration, just like Henri Barbusse of France, to express support of the Communist Party. During the meeting, Li told Lu Xun that he hoped the latter could use his real name, Zhou Shuren, to write an essay to heavily criticize Chiang Kai-shek and influence the masses with his fame. Lu Xun rejected the invitation, seeing that there was little he could achieve by doing so and may likely be exiled from the country (Wang 1993:18). While nothing was fulfilled from the meeting, the call for the meeting during the White Terror (白色恐怖) demonstrates that Lu Xun was a highly trusted translator in his time. The exile that Lu Xun talked about referred to the political persecution by the Chinese Nationalist Party, an opposing political force of the time. It truly is a tiring time for Lu Xun, for he had to find a

way to survive between the two opposing parties, both of which are pursuing him for their reasons (Zhu 1979: 186–187).

Xiao San wrote to Lu Xun from Moscow on the 8th of November 1935 to convey the message that Wang Ming and Kang Shengde, Chinese representatives at the Communist International, were embroiled in an argument and had proposed the dissolution of the League of Left-Wing Writers. Lu Xun then passed the letter on to Zhou Yang, who shared it with Xia Yan. These leaders of the league had not been in contact with the Party before the receipt of the letter and decided to dissolve the League, as per the message conveyed by Xiao San. They later formed a literary society again, though Lu Xun did not join the newly formed society due to his disapproval of the dissolution of the League. This resulted in his involvement in a conflict between those who held opposing views from him. His thoughts and feelings regarding this issue could be gleaned from some of the letters he wrote during the time (Zhu 1979: 246). For instance, on the 5th of April 1936, he wrote a letter to Wang Zhiqiu saying:

I think the people in our League (redacted by the recipient) do too little – everyone wants to manage and supervise. Hard work, thus, becomes harder. Now that the League has been dissolved, I have no intention of joining any other societies, though I will persist and continue doing what needs to be done. (Lu 1981d: 349–350)

In another letter to Cao Jinghua dated 23rd April, he said:

They have recently set up a new writers' association. Friends and enemies have now all stood together, though I know nought about the internal workings of the society. Some say that Mao and Zheng are leading the efforts and the society to save *Life in Literature* (文学生活). Given the troubles and hurt I have sustained in the past, I have decided not to partake in the dealings of the Society, though this is likely going to be yet another huge sin written on my name. (Lu 1981d: 361–362)

He Jiahuai, a founder of the literary society, handed Lu Xun various documents, such as the constitution, to extend an invitation to join the society. In a reply dated 24 April, Lu Xun said:

I once partook in a society, though I do not know if the society still exists. I do not even know if there was a last issue of *Life in Literature* (文学生活). The current undertaking covers even more ground and is more ambitious; it is beyond my capabilities. While I can sign off as a member of the Society, but such actions are meaningless and futile, and I have, thus, decided not to be part of the Society. (Lu 1981d: 363)

On the 26th of April 1936, Feng Xuefeng, then appointed to work in Shanghai by the Chinese Communist Party, arranged for a meeting with Lu Xun. Feng recalls that:

Lu Xun shook my hand awkwardly (he was not used to the custom) and said, quietly, that he had been at their mercy... When we talked about the literary sphere in Shanghai, Lu Xun seemed rather angry... The two lines that struck me during the meeting were that he felt that he was going to be a sinner who ruined the nation's plans and that he wanted to take a break. (Zhu 1979: 248)

By "at their mercy", Lu Xun was referring to the issues relating to Lin Mo and Shao Boxiang; "ruining the nation's plans" referred to his refusal to join the Literati

Society. On the 17th of July 1936, Lu Xun wrote a letter to Yang Zhihua, wife of Qu Qiubai, stating that the new heroes are rising, and are looking to make an example out of him, though they are unable to do so as yet. This helped him see the true colors of many around him, though he felt pressured in this climate. What he was referring to her was how the Nationalistic Literature was attacking his decision to not join the Literati Society (Zhu 1979: 248).

All these sources reflect the socio-political climate Lu Xun existed in and shed light on his relationship with the Chinese Communist Party. Because he was faced with enemies on both hands, he could only try to navigate the complexities and survive within the tiniest of margins. While he opposed the White Terror imposed by the Chinese Nationalist Party, he was not fully satisfied by the policies and directions of the Chinese Communist Party either. Many times, he was forced to make a choice, to passively accept the tasks assigned by the Communist Party to survive in the unfavorable political climate. He had little choice, despite being a friend of the Communist Party. However, his involvement with the Party was also because he was sympathetic to their ideals and beliefs. Reading Marx and Lenin was also born out of a need for survival and discourse. Given his influence as a leading figure of the literary scene, the Communist Party desperately wanted Lu Xun to join their ranks. It must be made clear, at this point, that Lu Xun's fame came not from his work on Marxism and Leninism, but his work post-1920s has been intricately tied to the non-internal factors and he could no longer express his views on reformation and truthfulness as freely as before (Lu 1981c: 37).

As one of the leaders of the CCP, Feng Xuefeng was directly involved in Lu Xun's translation of literary theories and Marxist-Lenin Literature, as evidenced by him proofreading Lu Xun's translation of Plekhanov's *On Art* and even receiving a fee of 50 dollars for the task. Xu Guangping recalls the relationship between Feng and Lu Xun, stating that their conversations are akin to a competition between two obstinate men and quite interesting to listen to. There is a lot of back and forth between Feng and Lu Xun, with Feng making certain suggestions for Lu Xun and Lu Xun rejecting them until one of them caved; typically, it is Lu Xun who eventually accepts the suggestions, given that Feng often uses a more demanding tone with Lu Xun. Concerning this issue, Lu Xun lamented that he had no choice for there are few people who can complete the tasks, that such straightforwardness is typical of a Zhedong man like Feng, and that politically, Feng was right in his attitude. Sympathetic to Lu Xun's plight, Chen Wangdao said that Feng was heavily influenced by Lu Xun in his youths, he also actively sought to shape and influence Lu Xun. As a translator, Lu Xun knew clearly that his agency and voice in translation was restricted by power dynamics and felt the conflict between his freedom of thought and his survival. For the Chinese Community Party, Lu Xun was a trusted translator simply because of his reputation, status, and the influence his works had over the masses, not because of the quality of his translations (Zhang 2000; Lu 1981e: 190).

For someone who was attacked simply for not joining a literary society, Lu Xun understood the perils of translating for the Chinese Communist Party without a complete understanding of Marxism-Leninism. Should his translation be based on his incomplete understanding, it would be sure to attract the ire and criticism of

the Party, who trusted him as a translator capable of serving the political agenda of lauding the classless. It is for this reason that he chose to translate Marxist-Lenin texts using the 'hard translation' approach; aligning to the ideology of the target culture is a means that ensures his survival in the political climate.

It should be pointed out that his left-leaning political views and political circumstance are complex as well. He was unsatisfied with the manipulation by the Party and sought to retain some freedom of thought, but 'attention and care' was afforded to him and his work anyway, given his role as a trusted translator in the political agenda of the Party. Regardless of the reason behind his association with the Party, it was clear that he could not escape the manipulation of the Party; his agency and voice as a translator was suppressed in this process. Interestingly, however, this seems to go against Lefevere's views on translation. A deeper analysis reveals that such a choice to be subservient to the source text and target culture is a politically motivated one. To Lu Xun, alignment with the mainstream ideology of the target culture is of utmost priority; 'hard translation', or the complete subservience to the source text, is merely a means to an end. This is not dissimilar to Lefevere's exposition of translation, where the translator considers not the source text but the value system, ideology, and poetics of the target culture. This view is shared by Sun Yifeng:

Ideology has received a bad reputation for its close association with power and politics. In terms of translation, power dictates what and what not to translate, how and how not to translate. Due to its inextricable links with social realities, ideologies can become politically charged and serve a political agenda. Translation's role in this is to remove or to reinforce the political messaging in the ideologies. (Sun 2004a; b: 254)

Qian Liqun once shared his incisive views on the deviation between intellectuals and politicians:

Intellectuals and politicians are fundamentally different because of their goals and the jobs they do. Politicians fight for a political agenda, while intellectuals often pursue spiritual goals. They have different social standing, work differently, live differently, and even think differently. This causes a deviation between the two groups, where the intellectuals prioritize intellectual freedom and the politicians see freedom as a tool that can be used to achieve higher purposes. (Qian 2001: 26–27)

## 4 Conclusion

Studying Lu Xun's translation from a medio-translatology perspective offered us a way to move past the more traditional evaluative research of Lu Xun's translation. It sets his translations, including his thought processes and his practices, against a historical backdrop, allowing us to examine the interactions between his translations and the political and cultural contexts of his time. It is apparent that his translations do not exist in a vacuum but in an intricate web of ideology and politics, and therefore, researchers must take a broader, more understanding approach to analyze his 'hard translation' approaches.

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# Translation of Charles Baudelaire in China from 1949 to 1976



Jiyong Geng

**Abstract** Following the drastic changes in Chinese society and its ideology in 1949, modernist literature became taboo. But the translation, reading, and reception of Charles Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* in China continued. By synthesizing the process of translating Baudelaire in China from 1949 to 1976, we can see the overt translation and rewrite of Baudelaire by Chen Jingrong and the *Journal of Translation*, the secret translation pioneered by Shi Zhecun and Qian Chunqi, and the popular underground reading activities. These concurrent efforts promoted the dissemination of Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil*, together with other modern poetry, among the Chinese potential poets, unexpectedly gave birth to the rise of new poetry schools represented by the Misty Poetry in the new era.

**Keywords** Charles Baudelaire · *Flowers of Evil* · Chen Jingrong · Translation · Misty Poetry

In January 1949, before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the book *On the Problems of Literature, Arts, Philosophy and Others*, was published by Shanghai Time Publisher of Books and Newspaper. Despite having only 4000 volumes in the initial print, it still exerted a profound influence on China's arts policy and literary understanding over the next 30 years. The author Andrei Zhdanov made the following comment on modern Western literature:

The decline and decay of bourgeois literature is a result of declined and decayed capitalist system and is characteristic of the current condition of bourgeois culture and literature. [...] Today, there has been a common degeneration in both subject matter, brilliance and author, the protagonist. [...] the prevalence of mysticism, religious fervor and erotic literature are all characteristic of the decline and decay of bourgeois culture. Those "renowned figures" in bourgeois literature who have sold themselves to the capitalists are thieves and burglars, special agents, prostitutes and gangsters. (Zhdanov 1949, 16–17)

Therefore, the Chinese literary academia "began taking it as an exemplar to be imitated. [...] without any digression [...] because it is of the Soviet Union and

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Socialism, thus our arts and literature guidelines and policies must be directed that way” (Xu 2014, 575).

As a result, modernist literature became taboo in China. The general view among scholars is that since the “May Fourth Movement” there has been a halt in the circulation of modernist Western literature (Zhao 2010, 59). However, the translation, reading and reception of Baudelaire ensued. In comparison with other modernist writers, Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* was in “good luck”, because, during that special period (1949–1976), his work not only well-received publicly, but also, deeply influenced the development of modern Chinese poetry, especially Misty Poetry at the end of 1970s with the secret translation and readings.

Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* benefited from the Hundred Flowers Campaign launched in 1956 by Mao Zedong and the central committee. At the Supreme State Council on May 2, 1956, Mao declared that “it is necessary to let a hundred flowers bloom in arts and let a hundred schools of thought contend”, “(b)ased on the Constitution of People’s Republic of China, academic thought of all kinds, be it right or wrong, is allowed to be stated without interference” (quoted in Xia 1996). Subsequently, in 1957, the *Journal of Translation* (July edition) published an illustrated special issue commemorating the centennial of *Flowers of Evil*, featuring nine poems translated by Chen Jingron, namely “Misty Dawn”, “Thin Evening”, “The Swan—to Victor Hugo”, “Death of the Poor”, “Autumn”, “The Archenemy”, “Eternal Flame”, “Depression”, “Waka of the Dusk”. Were it not for the concurrent publication of two influential articles in the same issue, the translation and publishing of these poems would have been impossible.

The author of the first article is Lousi Aragon, then a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize. At that time, the party membership of Aragon was an important guarantee of legal translation. The article is written to commemorate the centennial of *Flowers of Evil*, and thus he reveals his admiration for Baudelaire right at the beginning: “No poet could arouse that much passionate feelings in people like Baudelaire. [...] In certain times, I could barely stand a single word of criticism to him” (Aragon 1975, 152). After rebuking some of the misconceptions of Jules Valles, he immediately quotes from *Flowers of Evil*, employing phrases like “no one writes” and “no one can write” to indicate the unparalleled nature of Baudelaire poetry: “Before Baudelaire, no one writes poems that begins its first line in this way: ‘the lost gems of Palmyra City...’. Or lines like: ‘ship crew often in search for distraction’. No one can in any poem write an indifferent line: ‘The sun blackens the flame of the candle’. No one can” (Aragon 1957, 154–155).

Aragon highly praises the genius of Baudelaire: “It takes genius that of Baudelaire’s to write this twelve-syllable verse: ‘the lasciviousness in the guards regiment and the kitchen’. Or even bolder: ‘heavy bowels flow on the thighs’. Only a genius could transform La Fontaine’s ‘Upon a sandy, uphill road...’ into the first line of his ‘La Beatrice’: ‘on that ash-laden charcoal ground where no grass grows’” (ibid., 156). He analyses the poem, “the Sun”, arguing that “to give the most insignificant thing the noblest destiny [...] and that is the definition of the modern poetry”. His efforts to impart the ideas and methods have left an indelible mark on Chinese poets.

The last part of the article is rather interesting: “I have a strange little habit of reading my finished article to comrades. One of the comrades spoke after a while that he could not find something in my article, he asked, ‘where is Marxism?’ I did not reply to him and instead said that Marxism was not as pompous as someone would think” (ibid., 161). He has prepared for possible questioning.

Following Aragon’s article is a translated introduction from *Baudelaire’s Poetry Selection* published in Soviet Union’s journal *Foreign Literature* and later renamed to “Baudelaire and his Flowers of Evil”. The “afterword” in this article considers “the introduction to be a short essay, where keen comments are made about the poet and his work” (ibid., 166). This introduction, originally an article by the Soviet scholar Wilhelm Levick, served to clear up possible domestic doubts by borrowing positive responses from the Soviet Union. In certain historical times and places, translating modernist poetry not only requires courage but tactics. In his article, Levick applies an obvious strategy. He starts by citing Aragon’s positive comments on Baudelaire: “We demand to restore the people’s overall legacy: Veron, Moliere, Hugo...and Baudelaire. We demand [...] a recognition of all the poets who make the French language echo in all poetry” (Levick 1957, 162). He then takes a series of strategies to legitimize the translation of Baudelaire. Firstly, in terms of ideology, Baudelaire is listed among the poets who are against the bourgeois, sympathizing with the revolution and supporting progressive writers. The article shows: “Baudelaire detested everything that was produced from the bourgeois society. [...] that clearly showed his compassion for democracy. He passionately stood for the creation of worker poet du Pont and praised the realism reflected in Barbizon’s nationalism. [...] Until his death, he loved the genius of Eugene Delacroix’s romanticism and respected Daumier and other progressive artists” (ibid., 163). Secondly, he considers modernist Baudelaire’s form and style to be classical, stating that his “form was classical” (ibid., 162) and his style “resembled that of classical not modernist writers” (ibid., 164). Thirdly, as for Baudelaire’s creation mode and content, the term “modernism” is strictly avoided, claiming that his work reflects real life instead. Rhetorical questions that start with “does not that” are frequently employed: “in the ‘hazy dawn’, the landscape of the city awakens. Doesn’t that an excellent reflection of realism? Doesn’t it that each line of the poem is generated straight from real life or from the sharp perception of real life?” (ibid., 165). Realism was the mainstream, and even the sole legitimate model for literary creation. Fourthly, “decadence” remains to be a hard problem. Levick begins by rebuking that “is there any similarity between Baudelaire’s poems and the Decadent Movement? (ibid., 165); he then reinterprets it as a synonym of “delicacy”, “refinement” and “exquisiteness” (ibid., 164). He even quotes the words of Baudelaire’s friend and poetry mentor, Gautier, asserting that Baudelaire’s work is “an art of utmost maturity, rising out of the setting sun of an aging civilization. It is a well-thought and complicated style that is full of ingenuity and clear levels...” (ibid., 164). In retrospection, these interpretations (misinterpretations) seem to be intelligent decoys of Levick’s real purposes.

With the tone-setting support of Aragon and the legitimization effort for translation by Levick, there should be no issues in translating Baudelaire’s poetry, “one of the most unique and perfect phenomena in entire French poetry” (ibid., 162). But the

*Journal of Translation* still added a one-page “editor”, in fact, the translator himself, article before the translated poems, introducing the *Flowers of Evil* and Baudelaire. Nevertheless, it serves as an important article for achieving translational validity. Two paragraphs are presented for illustration:

The original meaning of *Fleurs du mal* (*Flowers of Evil*), as indicated by Charles Baudelaire, is “sick flowers”. The traditional translation in China has been “E Zhi Hua” (Evil Flowers). There are two indications of “evil”: grotesque or criminal, but it has been understood for its criminal implication and thus the flowers of evil become poisonous flowers or poison.

Although Baudelaire led a rather undisciplined life, he labored intensively. The word “laodong” (labor or work) appears in his poetry many times and it is not an abstract concept. Baudelaire died on August 31, 1867, at the age of 46. He may have a little over twenty years for creation, but he has produced a hefty *Flowers of Evil*, a volume of prose poetry and a multitude of articles on literature and aesthetics. [...] In addition, he spent more than half of his life translating poetry collections of American writer Allen Poe, which has become a classic in literary translation. (Chen 1957, 133)

Chen’s intention and strategies are evident: he interprets “evil” as “sick”, downplaying its noxious connotation; he views the “decadent” life of Baudelaire as “undisciplined”; he underscores his passion for “laodong”, thus placing him among the working class; he points out further that Baudelaire is not only a writer but also a literary theorist, philosopher of aesthetics and exemplar translator. Also, the paragraphs reflect Chen’s translation choice. Since the word “laodong” recurs in Baudelaire’s poem, the translation must highlight it. The word “laodong” appears in Chen’s first translated poem “Misty Dawn” twice: “the diligently laboring old man” and “the working woman”. Although the word “laborieux” does have connotations of “diligence and hard work”, the translation of “diligently laboring” reveals a purposeful highlighting of “labor”. The latter case, however, is a total mistranslation. The literal translation of “des femmes en gésine” is laboring woman or woman in labor but by no means “a working woman”. The word “laodong” appears in his second (“Thinn Evening”) and third (“The Swan”) translated poems as well, which is hardly a coincidence.

Chen rewrites not only the content but the form of the poems. The translated poem of “The Archenemy” by Chen Jingrong and Guo Hongan are juxtaposed as an illustration.

#### L’Ennemi

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu’un ténébreux orage,  
Traversé çà et là par de brillants soleils;  
Le tonnerre et la pluie ont fait un tel ravage,  
Qu’il reste en mon jardin bien peu de fruits vermeils.

Voilà que j’ai touché l’automne des idées,  
Et qu’il faut employer la pelle et les râteaux  
Pour rassembler à neuf les terres inondées,  
Où l’eau creuse des trous grands comme des tombeaux.

Et qui sait si les fleurs nouvelles que je rêve

Trouveront dans ce sol lavé comme une grève  
Le mystique aliment qui ferait leur vigueur?

— Ô douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie,  
Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur  
Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!  
(Baudelaire 1993, 28)

#### 仇敌

我的青春只是一场阴暗的暴风雨,  
星星点点, 透过来明朗朗的太阳,  
雷雨给过它这样的摧毁, 如今  
只有很少的红色果子留在我枝头上。

此刻我已经接近精神生活的秋天,  
应该用铁铲和犁犁,  
重新翻耕这洪水后的土地,  
洪水在地上留了些大坑象墓穴。  
谁知道, 我所梦想的新的花朵,  
许会找到增加活力的神秘的食物,  
在这像海滩样被水冲过的土地上?

——呵, 痛苦! 呵, 痛苦! 时间蚕食着生命,  
那阴森森的仇敌在侵蚀我们的心房,  
它靠我们失去的血液成长, 一天比一天强壮!  
(Chen's translation 1957, 140–141)

#### 仇敌

我的青春是一场晦暗的风暴,  
星星点点, 漏下明晃晃的阳光;  
雷击雨打造成了如此的残凋,  
园子里, 红色的果实稀稀朗朗。

我现在已经触到思想的秋天,  
我现在必须使用铁铲和铁犁,  
把被水淹过的泥土重新回填,  
因为它已洞窟累累坟一般大。

有谁知道我梦寐以求的新花,  
在冲得像沙滩一样的泥土下,  
能找到带来生机的神秘食品?

——哦痛苦! 哦痛苦! 时间吃掉生命,  
而噬咬我们的心阴险敌人  
靠我们失去的血生长和强盛!  
(Guo's translation, Baudelaire 2002, 216)

The original poem is a sonnet with twelve syllables, known as Alexandrine; the overall rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCB EEF GFG. Chen's translation fails to follow the form, with the longest line being eighteen Chinese characters and the shortest one eight. In contrast, Guo's translation follows closely the original, having twelve characters in each line. Chen's translation also deviates from the original in rhyme scheme, being ABAB DEEF GHH IHH. But the musicality to a large extent remains because of the two rhymed lines in each verse. Guo's translation represents the original rhyme scheme successfully. When read aloud, Chen's translation is more fluent and impactful than Guo's, albeit the latter's loyalty to the original text. The edge of Chen's translation contributes to its huge influence among "Misty Poets" in the late years of the Cultural Revolution.

In addition to public translation, secret translation, reading and circulation thrived during that special period. Materials of this kind are hard to acquire, therefore only limited cases like Shi Zhecun and Qian Chunqi will be presented.

In 1957, Shi was condemned to be a right-wing, for his publication of an article "Cai Yu De" ("Talents and Virtues") and the prior intellectual debate between him and Lu Xun. As a result, his writing and translation work ceased, and he began working on classic literature and historical tablets. But as Shi (1987, ii) recounts, "I suddenly grow keen on foreign poetry in the 1960s and decide to edit several poetry selections. The first plan is to translate about a hundred the French and Belgian symbolist poetry into a selection." On June 27, 1976, in a letter to Zhang Suo, he talks more specifically about his plan: "Back in the 60s I translated many foreign poems and compiled a series of poem selections: the first was *English and American Modern Poetry*, the second was *French Modern Poetry*, the third was *Spanish Modern Poetry*, the fourth was *Poetry of the Eastern Europe Countries* and the fifth was *German Poetry*, all of which were short poems, with each volume consisting 60 to one hundred poems" (Shi 2008, 52). Referring to his *Diary in Leisure Time*, the specific time was 1964. In a diary written on September 30, he writes: "Out of a sudden interest, I have sorted through my old translations of foreign poetry over the last few days and have found several hundred pages, possible to arrange them into six volumes" (Shi 2002, 144). These 60 poems were at last collected and published in the *Notes of the Foreign Poetry* in 1987, four of which were of Baudelaire's including "Decaying Body", "Ghost", "The Owl", "The Woman Beggar with Brown Hair".

Qian left his medical practice and focused on literary translation. He committed himself to the translation of *Flowers of Evil* in the 1960s. According to his translator's note in 1986, he notes: "It was purely out of interest to gain techniques for composing poems that I began translating it. There was no intention of publishing it. Following the cultural disaster, only half of the fish (the manuscript) escaped, the head and the body were boiled into pulp. With an opportunity to publish, I have started re-translating it" (Qian 1986, 422).

Apart from the secret translation by translators like Shi and Qian, a group of young people with their characteristic rebellious mentality were secretly and passionately drawn to Baudelaire. As the poet and scholar Chen recalls, he and Zhu Yulin, Wang Dingguo, Qian Yulin formed a small literary group, Zhu being the "soul"

of the group. Zhu was “a Spanish major at Peking University, under the supervision of Zhu Guangqian. He was fluent in English and French and was well versed in Western literature. What we liked most was his translation of Baudelaire. He would occasionally take out a new translated poem” (Chen 2011, 284). It is hard to know how many Baudelaire’s poems Zhu has translated. There are altogether eight poems collected by Chen: “Bad Luck”, “Annoyance”, “Broken Clock”, “The Swan”, “L’Héautontimouroménos” (“The Self-Tormenter”), “Autumn Hymn”, “Moon Sadness”, “Exotic Fragrance” (Chen 2006, 185—196). Chen states that Zhu’s translation is “exceptional” and it “reached a high level of reconciling Chinese language and its traditions with foreign grammars” (Chen 2011, 284). Chen himself “translated the whole *Flowers of Evil*” in the late 70s but did not have it published (*ibid.*, 287).

Baudelaire’s poems were widely circulated in the various underground reading activities between 1960 and 1970. As noted by the poet Bai Hua, “At that time, there were circulations of Baudelaire’s poems in Beijing, Shanghai, and even in my hometown Chongqing. We had something resembling a literary salon, where the youth mentor Ma Xinglin passionately read Baudelaire’s poems and Paustovsky’s poetic prose and novels. He had a catchphrase borrowed from Chen’s translation—a piercing joy that exceeds ice and iron’ and it ‘almost became the code word between poets in the 60s, 70s, and 80s” (Bai 2008, 8). What is worth noting here is that Bai points out that Chen’s published translation in 1957 is the version used in these underground reading activities.

As is pointed out by the poet Jiaxin Wang, “after reading these poems, it is not difficult to imagine the ‘thrill’ they incited among the painful and repressed Chinese young people in the late years of the Cultural Revolution. If we are familiar with the poems [...] from that time, we may be able to appreciate the impact of Baudelaire’s poems” (Wang 2008, 72). Bei Dao remembered that he had put in much effort seeking Chen’s translated poems and conscientiously transcribed them onto his notebook. “It is never too much to state the leading role of Chen’s translation for Beijing underground literary groups that began in the late 60s” (Bei 2015, 111–112). There are clear connections between “Rainy Night” (Bei 2003, 41–42) and Chen’s translation of “Depression” (Chen 1957, 142–143).

Rain constitutes the theme for both poems, while other phrases like the prison cell, overcast sky, humid air and dark views are associated. There are also similarities among images like “the huge lid” and “the huge palm”, “four walls” and “the walls”, “iron railings” and “iron bars”. The poet Bai Hua confirms that “Rainy Night” is influenced by Baudelaire, “Rainy Night carries a Baudelairian callous euphoria, piercing through our joyous hearts as a fierce rivaling force. It is joy within pains, only to be felt keenly by people of that time” (Bai 2009, 538).

Another Misty Poet Duo benefited from Chen’s translation as well. In an interview with Wansongpu Academies in 2007, he indicated that Chen’s translation set off his life as a poet:

It is the French poet Charles Baudelaire that truly touches my heart. When I read Baudelaire, I get headaches. Thanks to the translator, Chen Jingrong, her translations are vivid and I have never read better ones since. There might be other versions that are more accurate but



hers are just better. Chen is a poet herself, knowledgeable and skilled. So, I just read the nine translated poems and started writing poetry. (Hai 2007)

While being interviewed by *Jing Bao*, he again mentioned the key influence of Chen's translation: "My true poetry writing is influenced by Baudelaire; I have read some modernist poems before, with no feelings of obsession. When I read on *World Literature* the nine translated poems of Baudelaire, I am immediately fascinated, 'This is true poetry!' There is no strangeness whatsoever and I understand it quickly. I can never forget it. [...] I am shocked." (Liu et al. 2007, D3).

Many Misty poets from the 1970s to 1980s are influenced by Chen's translation. The poet Shi Zhi still remembers his first encounter with Chen's translation many years later, "After all, it is Chen's translation that is worth reading: 'Youth is a gloomy rainstorm, the sparkling light run through from the blazing sun'. What a great line! Beautiful! These images would stick in the head. True poetry is like that" (Lin and Ai 2003, 26). Bai Hua in various occasions—articles, interviews and his autobiography *The Left—Lyric Poet from Mao's Time*—remembers his strong feelings when reading Baudelaire for the first time: "In my defining years, I read the life-changing poems presented by Baudelaire, thus my destiny is changed for good" (Bai 2009, 537).

The poet Zhang Zao gives a rather different opinion about the influence Baudelaire has on Misty poets. He points out that the reason behind Baudelaire's popularity is that, "some of the Misty poets consider Chen's translation better and few voices are praising the translation of Liang Zongdai. Liang intended to reproduce the style of Song ci and this translation principle may not appeal to the rebellious sentiment of the young poets. Chen's translation is fraught with errors, and she is notorious for being one of the initiators of the revolutionary style. Poems that are translated in her style tend to be readable, like those poems by Bei Dao and others" (Zhang 2012, 243–235). Bei Dao uses the word "translational style" as an equivalent of the revolutionary style and points out its importance: "Were it not for the support of the 'translational style', there would have been no true underground literature. And it is exactly the long incubation period that enabled underground literature to germinate and grow into a forest in the late 1970s" (Bei 2012, 159).

Therefore, the nine translated poems by Chen Jingrong are not remarkable in terms of quantity and accuracy. As is pointed out by one scholar, "Chen's translation may not be the best according to current standards. But it is of great significance to construct a common ground between the revolutionary spirit of Baudelaire's poems and the revolutionary mentality pervading China and create a translation that emulates the artistic beauty of *Flowers of Evil* and a language style that fits into the 'horizon of expectation' of the underground literary groups" (Ya 2012, 18).

The reason behind the unexpected popularity of Charles Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil* between 1949 and 1976 is complicated, yet two key points stand out. One is its perfect timing of public translation right after the initiation of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1957 and exactly on the centennial of the publication of *Flowers of Evil*, with a high-profile commemoration of the influential Soviet Union. The other concerns the devoted efforts of translators (Levick from the Soviet

Union included) in packaging Baudelaire and *Flowers of Evil* to be “redder” and revolutionary for ideological thinking. The intentional choice of Baudelaire and *Flowers of Evil* reflects the struggle and the paradoxical mentality existing among the society, literary groups and poet translators. It is a rebellion in poetics against the dominant hollow political poetry as well. Meanwhile, it might serve as a basis to understand the tolerance and reception of the ruling ideology and patrons. The result is that the translation, reading and circulation of Baudelaire and *Flowers of Evil* must go underground. In all, the Chinese literary circle between 1949 and 1976 is a rather closed system, lacking symbiosis with other systems. As is noted by Peter Barry, for a “system clogged with its own detritus and cut off from any possible sources of catharsis or renewal,” it will eventually collapse from within (Barry 2009, 252). Then it is safe to say that translated literature, especially that of Baudelaire and his *Flowers of Evil*, has provided the Chinese literary system with the necessary impact and vitality, and helped it steer away from collapsing.

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