Document généré le 12 oct. 2024 04:41

TTR
Traduction, terminologie, re?daction

What's Modern in Chinese Translation Theory? Lu Xun and the Debates on Literalism and Foreignization in the May Fourth Period

Qu'est-ce qui est « moderne » dans la théorie de la traduction en Chine ? Lu Xun et les débats sur le littéralisme et la traduction éthique dans la période du 4 mai

Leo Tak-hung Chan

Volume 14, numéro 2, 2e semestre 2001

Antoine Berman aujourd'hui
Antoine Berman for our time

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/000576ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/000576ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (imprimé)
1708-2188 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Tak-hung Chan, L. (2001). What's Modern in Chinese Translation Theory? Lu Xun and the Debates on Literalism and Foreignization in the May Fourth Period. *TTR*, *14*(2), 195–223. https://doi.org/10.7202/000576ar

Résumé de l'article

Cet article propose d'évaluer la contribution des traducteurs et théoriciens chinois des années trente et quarante. Je porterai une attention particulière à Lu Xun, que je considère le premier théoricien de la traduction en Chine. Grâce à lui, la Chine est entrée dans sa période moderne en traduction. En plus de prôner la conservation de l'« étrangeté » du texte de départ — un peu à la manière des théoriciens de la traduction de l'Allemagne romantique, de Schleiermacher à von Humboldt, en passant par Goethe —, il a aussi exploré la possibilité d'enrichir la langue chinoise par l'importation de structures et d'expressions « européanisées » dans ses propres traductions. Ce sont ces tendances « décentrées » qui ont permis à Lu Xun de se démarquer de ses prédécesseurs : les théoriciens chinois pré-modernes. D'une part, ces tendances le rapprochent des maîtres à penser de la traductologie tels Nabokov et Benjamin (qui ont mis l'emphase sur l'importance de la méthode littérale en traduction), d'autre part, cette approche le met en relation avec Venuti et Holmes (qui ont mis en relief les processus d'indigénisation et d'exotisation de la traduction).

Les idées de Lu Xun ont occupé une place particulière dans le contexte culturel et historique élargi. Des positions semblables avaient été défendues par ses prédécesseurs au début du siècle, mais ces tentatives d'« européanisation » n'avaient malheureusement pas été très populaires à l'époque. Lu, quant à lui, a trouvé de nombreux sympathisants parmi ses amis et collègues qui ont soit : a) suggéré une européanisation approfondie ; b) préféré une européanisation limitée. Par contre, d'autres auteurs contemporains ont formulé de fortes objections. Parmi eux, on retrouvait ceux qui : a) préféraient l'usage d'une langue inspirée du parler populaire ; b) proposaient plutôt d'apprendre la langue étrangère afin de lire le texte original. Mon article se penche longuement sur les débats entre ces théoriciens et tente de les mieux comprendre à la lumière de la traductologie occidentale contemporaine.

Tous droits réservés © TTR : traduction, terminologie, rédaction, 2001

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

https://www.erudit.org/fr/

What's Modern in Chinese Translation Theory? Lu Xun and the Debates on Literalism and Foreignization in the May Fourth Period

Leo Tak-hung Chan

The period beginning with the New Literature Movement in 1917 and ending with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 (or, simply, the "May Fourth Period") must be viewed as *the* decisive period in modern Chinese translation history.[1] In terms of translation output, especially in the field of literary translation, and in terms of the abundance of theoretical discussion of translation, it rivals two other high points of twentieth-century translation history, namely, the first decade of the twentieth century and the late eighties-early nineties. Favorable historical conditions at those times have prompted advances in translation theory and practice. When the last of the Chinese dynasties — the Qing — followed its downward trend toward disintegration in the first decade of the last century, the eagerness to absorb things Western as a way of "saving" the dynasty led to a flurry of translation activity unmatched by any since the great epoch of the medieval Buddhist translations. As the twentieth century drew to a

[1] The New Literature Movement, heralded by Hu Shi's call for literary reform in 1917, must be distinguished from the May Fourth Movement inaugurated in 1919. But in the present article, the "May Fourth period" will be used as a convenient designation for the twenty years under discussion. Cf. Susan Daruvala who thinks that the period does not end till 1942 (Daruvala, 2000, p. 10).

close, there was also an impetus to rapidly import ideas from the West. The re-opening of China, which came with the resumption of power by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, spurred a great deal of translation activity by the so-called Fifth Generation of Chinese translators, in particular of works from America and Europe (in contrast to translations from the Soviet Union in the preceding era). This second period can be designated as the Reform Era or (roughly) the "Post-Mao Era," in contrast to the late Qing era. In both periods, along with an abundance of translations, theories of translation were propounded with fervor by practitioners, scholars and academics. Especially in the last twenty years or so, the institutionalization, as well as internationalization, of translation studies has substantially altered the theoretical perspective on translation, and it would not be inaccurate to say that a revolution of sorts is underway even today.

Nevertheless, it is in the May Fourth Period that one sees translation theory entering a distinctly modern phase, when translations assume a key role in ushering in what has been termed Chinese modernity. "Modernity" is not an easy concept to define, especially in view of the many recent formulations that conceive of it broadly as a kind of space in which one's place in the world can be variously imagined. In the Chinese case, it will, however, become relevant if one sees it as an ever-changing project developed in unequal cross-cultural dialogue and interaction. As such, it can be said to have begun as early as the mid-nineteenth century; it continued in a series of distinct moments in which the foreign as "Other" was contested and/or contained; it might not even have concluded even by this time, as some cultural critics have averred. In fields as diverse as politics, economics and philosophy, the confrontation with the West was carried on. But a fact less often noted is that translation also became involved in the modernity debates, perhaps more directly so, especially in the first thirty years of the last century. While understandable, it is perhaps unfortunate that translations of the first decade — the so-called "late Qing period" — have been allowed to overshadow those of the May Fourth Period in modern Chinese translation histories. Translations of the twenties and thirties greatly outnumber those of the late Qing, and current research has established that they reached a much wider readership, creating an influence well outside the elite circle of readers. The theories that accompanied translation production in the twenty years in question were, at the same time, a lot more exciting than those of the preceding period.

Three key bibliographies of literary translations of the May Fourth Period provide some indication of the amount of translation undertaken during those years, though one should expect non-literary translations at the time to be just as voluminous. Qian Xingcun's (alias A Ying) (1900-1977) list, divided into two parts and classifying translation works according to country of origin and original author, was the earliest of the three, published in 1936 as Volume 10 of *A Compendium of New Chinese Literature* (Zhao, 1935-1936). Significantly, though, it begins with Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Zhou Zuoren's (1895-1967) *Collection of Tales from Abroad* (1909), which presages "modern" Chinese translations in many ways, though it still uses the classical language to translate stories mostly from Russia and Northern Europe. Since the most recent translations in Qian's list do not go beyond 1929, it should be taken as a cataloging of translations only of the first decade of the May Fourth Period. The lacuna is filled by the two later bibliographies compiled by the Shanghai Wenyi Publishing House in 1986 and the Beijing Library in 1987 — in fact almost all of Qian's 200-plus entries reappear in these lists.

The "Bibliography of Translated Titles" in Shanghai Wenyi's *Compendium* was modeled closely on its 1936 predecessor and covers the eleven years from 1927 to 1937. It therefore provides information pertaining to literary translations only in the second decade of the May Fourth Period (Zhongguo, 1989). With translated works classified according to genre — novels and novellas, short story collections, poetry and drama — this list boasts a total of 1,409 works, thereby furnishing some evidence for what has been repeatedly asserted by translation researchers, namely, that it was a period of prolific translation production. In most cases, however, the list does not give the names of the original authors, which leads to difficulty in identifying the source texts. It is also far from comprehensive, as it was based on materials retrievable only from the Library of Shanghai.

The Beijing Library list is the most comprehensive of all three. Only when the Qian and Shanghai bibliographies are complemented with this exhaustive listing of translations does the full picture of the May Fourth literary translation scene finally emerge. It actually covers all the Chinese publications of the Republican period, up till the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan in 1949. Detailed information is given concerning the source texts and source authors; successive editions and reprints of the same translation, chronologically listed; classification according to genre and country of origin; and so

on. In many cases brief descriptions of the translations have been included. Of course, for the purposes of the present investigation, the items from the May Fourth Period have to be sieved from among those of the pre- and post-May Fourth eras (Beijing Library, 1987). In any case, it is by combining relevant parts of the three bibliographies that one can figure out what literary translations were undertaken from 1917 to 1937, especially with respect to the countries and authors most favored by translators. If anything, a brief survey of the facts impresses one with the vast magnitude at which translation activities were carried on. It was after all an age of literary, rather than non-literary, translations. The diagrams appended to the present article give a rough sketch of the entire historical situation, when some 200 works of translation were published over the twenty-year period in question. (Diagram A shows the most frequently translated authors; Diagram B, the number of translations per year; Diagram C, the countries best represented in the translations.)

If translation during the May Fourth Period — mainly of the literary variety — can be shown to have proceeded at an unprecedented scale, it must be noted that pioneering theorists of translation have also emerged from the same era, with ideas that affected, if not determined, the direction for theorizing in the rest of the century. These theorists were engaged in intense debates about the nature and function of translation in the "new" China. Most notably, there were fierce disagreements about issues of "foreignization" (the method of allowing cultural and lingustic differences to stay intact), the use of Europeanized structures and expressions in translation, and the criterion of faithfulness in rendering the original (in contrast to a readiness to dispense with accuracy when it conflicts with fluency of expression). The question of faithfulness or fidelity was an age-old one, but it somehow became entangled with questions which bear on the language of translation. All these issues then got embroiled in yet a more general debate about the influence of translation on original writing, or more specifically, its positive versus negative influences. Finally, looming in the background were concerns about the creation of a new Chinese vernacular to replace the old classical language, the confrontation of foreign languages with the indigenous tongue, the implementation of language reforms and, above all, the deeply-felt need to modernize the nation on the political, cultural and linguistic levels — to, in other words, realize the grand "May Fourth Project."

Literalism versus Liberalism

There is little doubt that the May Fourth literary giant Lu Xun (1881-1936) stood at the center of the debates on translation in the late 1920s and early 1930s; in more ways than one he can also be considered the first modern translation theorist in China. Among historians of translation, Yan Fu (1854-1921) has long been eulogized as the "founder of modern Chinese translation theory," while Lin Shu (1852-1924) has been acclaimed as the most influential twentieth-century Chinese translator — presumably because he had translated more than anybody else, with 184 translations to his credit, and because, for many, his translation style was exemplary. The time has perhaps come for a re-evaluation of such widely accepted platitudes. To begin with, Lin Shu's translations, albeit influential for a while, are essentially cast in the late Qing mode of "free translation" or rewriting. The objection is not that they pay no heed to the requirement of "faithfulness"; the crux of the issue is whether they can be considered translations as such. Before one is prepared to stretch considerably the concept of translation to include a large corpus of "second copies" of pre-existent works, as the late André Lefevere has attempted, the place of Lin Shu in Chinese translation history ought to be problematized rather than accepted as a mere fact.

On the other hand, Yan Fu has apparently done little to deserve the conspicuous, almost overblown, position he has been granted in the history of translation theory. He simply wrote one short treatise, and summed up traditional translation theories in his three principles of "faithfulness, fluency and elegance" — terms first used in the Six dynasties by the Buddhist monk-translator Zhi Qian (ca. 2nd century).[2] What should not escape notice from our modern-day standpoint, in fact, is that he is a lot more traditionalist than modern in his translation theory. That he has been incessantly cited by twentieth-century theorists of translation by no means proves the relevance of his ideas to the problems encountered by the country as it entered its modern era; uncompromising critics have suggested giving up his three principles as a necessary step to making further progress. Furthermore, while he has completed close to a dozen translations of non-literary texts, his best-known translation, that of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, has been repeatedly charged with having taken liberties with the original text,

[2] Zhi Qian already mentioned *xin*, *da* and *ya* in his "Preface to the *Faju jing*," published in 224.

hence falling short of being a truthful Chinese "rendition." As with Lin Shu, one is equally justified in raising queries about the appropriateness of considering his version of Huxley to be a translation in the prototypical sense.

Even as a contemporary of Yan Fu and Lin Shu, Lu Xun reacted strongly against the translation method favored by both of them, though one adopted it only occasionally and the other, ubiquitously. Ironically, as far as the principle of translation is concerned, Lu Xun might be said to have adhered to "faithfulness," which was Yan Fu's first principle, one that preceded fluency and elegance. It was just that in some of his translations (like *Evolution and Ethics*), Yan did not practice what he taught, valorizing "fluency and elegance" over faithfulness. In this, Yan participated in the general trend in translation since the late nineteenth century, one in which liberalism took precedence over literalism, and free translation rather than close adherence to the original was the order of the day. Lu Xun was obviously not the first theorist to suggest pursuing an alternative, in the face of the infelicities prevalent everywhere in translations of his time. As early as 1919, in an essay titled "Thoughts on Translation," Fu Sinian already expressed his dissatisfaction with Yan Fu's abandonment of the method of "straightforward translation" or "direct translation" (*zhiyi*),[3] which connotes — in contemporary translation studies parlance — close formal correspondence to the original text. The method is supposed to be conducive to a "faithful" translation, though one need to be cautioned against equating the method with the desired result as expressed in a principle. It could be carried to an extreme (as Lu Xun did), in which case it is tantamount to word-to-word translation, or what Lu Xun has called "stiff translation" (*yingyi*) — also translated as "hard translation" by Pérez-Barreiro Nolla.[4] Over the centuries, "straightforward translation" has been used in Chinese discourse on translation in opposition to sense-for-sense translation (*yiyi*), but this latter term has been used rather loosely in two senses. It basically implies semantic correspondence between the source and target texts, but can be extended to refer to the free method of translation (more closely denoted by *ziyouyi*) overwhelmingly favored in the late Qing.

[3] "Direct translation" is the term coined by David Pollard (Pollard, 1991, p. 9).

[4] Pérez-Barreiro Nolla suggests, insightfully, that "hardness [. . .] points towards the target language" while literalism points to the source language (Pérez-Barreiro Nolla, 1992, p. 85). I would add that it describes the effect of a translation as well as the method used.

The terminological confusion, which is the single most important factor leading to interminable debates in the course of the twentieth century because it keeps debaters talking at cross purposes, can be somewhat clarified with reference to the following schema:

Zhiyi	Yiyi
= Straightforward translation/ Direct translation	=Sense-for-sense translation/ Sense translation
Formal correspondence	Semantic correspondence
~Word-for word translation (*zuziyi*)	~Free translation (*ziyouyi*)
~Stiff translation/ Hard translation (*yingyi*) (Lu Xun)	~Distorted translation (*waiyi*) (Lin Shu) (see below)

Existing documents reveal that, among May Fourth intellectuals with an interest in translation, there was a tendency to revile the liberal method. For instance, Mao Dun (1896-1981), probably the best-known novelist of the 1930s, spoke openly against Lin Shu's translations (Mao, 1934, in Luo, 1984, pp. 351-354). For him, Lin Shu's translations do not even qualify as "sense-for-sense translations," which is, in any case, a neutral term describing one of two preferred methods of translation handed down from antiquity; Mao Dun flatly denounces them as "distorted translations," pinpointing Lin's inexcusable departures from the source text and passing obliquely a judgment that is ethical in orientation. Such derogatory labeling of Lin Shu's translations, in sharp contrast to the praise showered on them a decade ago, was followed up later by others (like Ai Siqi) who simply said that Lin was rewriting and not even translating. In fact, this bespeaks a concerted movement away from the sort of translation associated with Lin Shu, a trend in favor of greater accuracy and presenting the original as it is.

Against this background it can be seen that Lu Xun was deliberately pursuing a path diametrically opposed to Lin Shu's, and it is as if to counteract Lin's extreme liberalism that he practiced an extreme literalism in translation.[5] His translations, especially of Russian literary works and Marxist literary criticism during the late

[5] For a penetrating analysis of literalism as a mode of translation, especially why it has persisted, see Shen (1995, pp. 568-579). While citing examples of extreme literalism, Shen does not treat it as an independent category, as I do in the present article.

1920s (many of them published in 1929, the so-called "Translation Year"), were exemplary in this regard. It was Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987), translator of the complete works of Shakespeare, who launched the most vehement frontal attacks on Lu. In his 1929 essay, "On Lu Xun's 'Stiff Translation," he began by quoting sentences from Lu Xun's recent translation of Lunacharsky, whose meanings were hardly decipherable. To him Lu Xun had followed the original text too closely and ended up with syntax much too convoluted to be understood. Reading Lu's translations is, consequently, like "reading a map and trying to locate places with one's fingers." Liang noted that they are more than just "stiff translations"; they are nothing more than "dead translations" (*siyi*).

Today, with the benefit of almost a century's advancement in comparative linguistic research, it is not difficult to see what went wrong with Lu Xun's translations. His literal method results in sentences that are downright incomprehensible — for several obvious reasons. Structurally, as a language, Chinese differs drastically from Western languages. In translating word for word from English, for instance, the Chinese translator invariably produces sentences in which the normal word order is seriously violated. More specifically, whereas in many Western languages premodifiers can be placed before, and post-modifiers after, the headword in a noun phrase (as in "the pretty *woman* in red standing over there"), Chinese permits premodifiers only. Hence in extremely literal translations, several premodifiers have to be strung together by a series of (the possessive) *de* placed before the headword; this not only makes a sentence look "heavy" at the beginning, but also frustrates the reader as he tries to locate the headword in question. To add to these, the Chinese language, because of the way its verbs are used, is also notorious for its inability to indicate time (past, present, future), modality, aspect, voice and mood (like the subjunctive). Some of the sentences Lu Xun translated, like those quoted by Lennart Lundburg, cannot but leave the readers of Lu Xun's time as well as today baffled and outraged (Lundburg, 1989). It must be admitted that Liang was justified in his accusations, and he appeared to be doing nothing more than advance the simple, commonsensical reader's argument.

However, Lu Xun's response to Liang a year later, in his essay "'Stiff Translation' and the 'Class Nature of Literature'" (1930), shows that more was at stake than just conflicting opinions about the proper method of translation. The question of how to translate was simply one

of many bones of contention between intellectuals with leftist, Marxist leanings (like Lu Xun) and those of the "right wing" (like Liang Shiqiu) in the 1930s in China. It must be remembered that the League of Left-wing Writers (with whom Lu Xun was affiliated) was established in 1930, while Liang Shiqiu was an active member of the rightist, bourgeois Crescent Moon Society. Judging from the arguments presented by Lu Xun, it is likely that Liang was as much against Lu Xun's translation method as he was against Lu Xun's translation of Marxist theory from 1928 onwards. In his 1930 essay, Lu Xun began his rebuttal of Liang by laying the cards on the table, as it were. He pointed out, right away, that Liang was not simply expressing his own views: he was actually representing the Crescent Moon Society in launching vitriolic attacks on him as a person. Lu Xun retorted in a manner typical of him; sarcasm was never wanting in his polemical essays during the period, especially when directed against his opponents. He remarked, sarcastically, that Liang Shiqiu "could not represent all the Chinese" and his views had little universal validity.

Nevertheless, Lu Xun did put forth an explanation in this essay for his preference for extreme literalism, an explanation that goes beyond the choice of a method for interlingual transfer, but is related to the political purposes he wanted his translations to serve. After saying that his translations did convey the tone of their originals (a doubtful point, in any case), Lu Xun stressed that it was a special class of readers that his translations were intended for — the proletariat literary critics who had special class interests to advance. Extreme faithfulness to the original was a way of ensuring that "true" Marxist literary thought be presented to those who wanted the facts as they were. It does not appear as if critics have been taken in easily by the rationale that Lu Xun presents here, or by the idea that strict literalism can be the means to achieving the accurate transmission of leftist (revolutionary) ideas to China. David Pollard, for one, has raised the interesting point that Lu Xun might have deliberately gone against the readers' expectations: for him, "There is something not quite right in the head of a translator who would say that his translations were not intended to please the reader, but to make him uncomfortable" (Pollard, 1991, p. 10). In any case, the link between accuracy and literalism is extremely tenuous — one can be inaccurate even though one stays very close to the original vocabulary and sentence constructions. The fact that Lu Xun resorts to a variety of arguments (political, aesthetic, linguistic) to justify his method shows an almost personal obsession with literalism on his part. In particular, the suggestion that foreigners

in a fictional work should be made to speak like foreigners, which Lu Xun mentioned in 1935, is as different from the "accuracy argument" as can possibly be imagined.

That Lu Xun's views as expressed in the article of 1930 are not palatable to the rival intellectual group is evident in the fact that, barely a year later, another member of the Crescent Moon Society, Ye Gongchao (1904-1981), joined the debate "on Liang Shiqiu's side" (in his own words). In his "On Translation and Language Reform," published in the journal *Crescent Moon*, he suggested that it is futile to talk in such simplistic terms as Lu Xun did about translation. Ye's argument, ostensibly concerned with "fluency" in translation, did not make any reference to the hidden politics of translation. On his own side, however, Lu Xun could be said to have found support in Mao Dun, to whom literal translation is not to be equated with "dead translation." For Mao, a literal translation may put excessive demands on a reader, but it will at least be comprehensible, whereas a dead translation will not (Mao 1922). These theorists have effectively moved the discussion back to the choice of a method, to considerations for the reader. These, unfortunately, did not seem to be Lu Xun's concern at all.

Europeanization versus Sinicization

For Lu Xun, extreme literalism, or "word-for-word translation," is preferred to sense-for-sense translation not merely because faithfulness to the original is, from a source-text-oriented point of view, of unquestioned importance, or a standard that he will defend at any cost. There is a linguistic dimension as well, if one takes into consideration the fact that these two methods of translation imply handling the language of the source text at two different levels — or translating with respect to larger or smaller units. Given the substantial difference between the syntax of Chinese and that of European languages, an extreme literalism would mean the grafting of unfamiliar linguistic structures onto the indigenous tongue, while liberalism, even not of the extreme variety as seen in Lin Shu and (sometimes) in Yan Fu, would allow the translator to domesticate his original text to a greater or lesser degree. Thus the choice between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation is linked to incompatibilities that can be theorized on other dimensions — between Europeanization and Sinicization, and between an adherence to either faithfulness or fluency. These dimensions became inextricably meshed in the discourse on translation in the May

Fourth era, and it is from our theoretical vantage point that the interrelated planes can be understood, separately, as in the following diagram:

Method:	Word-for-word (literalism)	Sense-for-sense (liberalism)
Language use:	Europeanization	Sinicization
Principle:	Faithfulness	Fluency

Lu Xun's preference for Europeanization in translating into Chinese was expressed most succinctly in his correspondence with Qu Qiubai (1899-1935), a younger colleague and a leftist writer, in 1931-1932.[6] This time, however, despite differences in opinion concerning what kind of language should be adopted for translation, there are clear indications of shared viewpoints and common goals. The exchange (of three letters) was carried on only in the "spirit" of debate characteristic of the May Fourth Period; more accurately, perhaps, it was in the nature of a friendly interchange of ideas. Subsequent events actually prove that the tie between the two became closer as a result of the correspondence. In fact, they met for the first time in Shanghai in 1932 through the arrangement of a common friend, Feng Xuefeng (1903-1976), an avid translator of Marxist theory.[7] In his letter to Lu Xun dated 5 December 1931, written to congratulate him on the publication of his translation of A. Fadeyev's (1901-1956) *Razgrom*, Qu Qiubai began by stressing his concurrence with Lu's view that there is a need to invent a new Chinese language:

> Translation — in addition to introducing the content of the original to Chinese readers — has another important function, that is, helping us create a new modern Chinese language. The Chinese language (as well as its writing system) is so deficient that it lacks names for many everyday objects. Indeed it has not developed completely beyond the stage of "sign language" — everyday conversation almost can't do without the help of "gestures." Of course, there is almost a complete absence of all those adjectives, verbs and prepositions that express subtle

[6] Lydia Liu gave an abundance of examples of Europeanization in the appendixes to her study of what she called "translingual practice" in the May Fourth era (see Liu, 1995).

[7] In 1929 alone Feng Xuefeng published six translations of Marxist works. The signs of bonding among Lu Xun, Feng and Qu, or their forming something like a leftist clique, seem quite obvious.

differences and complex relationships (Luo, 1984, 266; trans. Yau Wai-ping).

This is comparable to Lu Xun's view, expressed in his letter of December 28, 1931, that "[The Chinese language] is just too imprecise" and that "To cure this ailment, I believe we have to suffer some more pain and embody our thought in wayward syntactical structures — ancient, dialectal, as well as foreign — so that one day these structures can become our own" (Luo, 1984, p. 276; trans. Leo Chan).

For a proper perspective on the argument, influential at the time, that foreign (Europeanized) structures can be imported to replenish the Chinese language, one needs to review briefly the discussion about the strengths and failures of the vernacular language movement over several decades. The advocacy of the use of the vernacular (*baihua,* literally, "plain speech") to replace the classical language (*wenyan*, literally, "embellished words"), begun in the late Qing, had gathered a following within a few years of the New Literature Movement of 1917.[8] With the rapid success gained by ardent advocates and daring practitioners, the question soon became not one of whether this new language should be used in writing at all, but how it could be honed into a means of expressing the thoughts and sentiments of the new generation of writers, that is, those who used it as a tool. In other words, the inadequacy — not viability — of this Chinese language of the future turned out to be a matter of serious concern, after the initial optimism had subsided.

Even before Lu Xun, many had stood on the side of Europeanization, believing it to be beneficial to the development of the vernacular, though quite a few were against it too. Fu Sinian (1896-1950), an early enthusiast of the vernacular, was in favor of Europeanization. He practically opened the century-long debate on Europeanization in 1919 with his article on "How to Write the Vernacular," in which he made the bold claim that the Europeanization of the Chinese language is "all but inevitable" (Fu, 1919). When the debate in newspapers and journals reached a feverish pitch, most intellectuals got involved, with a diversity of positions being taken. Mao Dun and Zheng Zhenduo (1898-1958), purveyors of the New Literary Movement, contributed one essay each to the *Xiaoshuo yuebao*

[8] Yet another term for the vernacular language is *yutiwen*, literally meaning "written language based on speech."

(*Stories Monthly*) to discuss the issues involved in 1921 (Mao, 1921; Zheng 1921). Mao Dun was in favor of limited Europeanization; one does not go all the way because one must not come up with expressions with which ordinary folks would be unfamiliar. Zheng Zhenduo adopted a similar stance; for him reforming the classical language is necessary because it is lifeless, contains too many *cliche* expressions and is obviously unfit for modern expression, but there should be some limit to Europeanization. (It must be added that both men were prominent translators and editors of translation journals and series of translation works.)

As one moves across the broad spectrum of views expressed, one sees others who were more skeptical. Hu Shi painstakingly promoted the vernacular, but for him the best written language is one that can be spoken by the masses or understandable to them, as seen in his letter to Gu Jiegang published in Vol. 14 of the *Xiaoshuo yuebao*.[9] His was a pro-vernacular but anti-Europeanization stance very similar to Qu Quibai's, as I shall explain shortly. For him, the vernacular is best enriched through the importation of dialectal, not foreign, features. Also taking part in the early 1920s debate was Fu Donghua (1893-1971), acclaimed Chinese translator of *Gone with the Wind* and for some time a colleague of Mao Dun and Zheng Zhendo at one of the leading publishers at the time, the Commercial Press. Using a pseudonym, in the 30th of June 1921 issue of *Jingbao* (Beijing News), he reviled Europeanization as a kind of "imitation," and imitation of things foreign is as deplorable as imitation of things ancient. His opinion is that only "what is imagined and what is created is beautiful," and borrowing is thus to be frowned upon. However, Mao Dun later exposed the fallacy of Fu's argument by noting that Europeanization is a linguistic phenomenon, not a literary one, and so talking about originality and inventiveness is simply confusing one with the other.[10]

---

[9] One can say that, in essence, Hu Shi viewed the vernacular as just a means whereby the Chinese writing system can be reformed. To him, because there are so many monosyllabic characters in the classical language, making it impossible to convert Chinese into a phonetic language, he suggested the use of the vernacular (considered to be less monosyllabic) first, then turning it into a "modernized" phonetic language.

[10] See the July 10, 1921 issue of the "Literary Supplement" to the *Shishi xinbao.* As a matter of fact, the term *Ouhua* (Europeanization) is deployed only in the Chinese discourse on language, not on literature.

Even from such a brief synopsis as can be given here, it should be evident that the early twenties debate on Europeanization shows the four-way entangled relationship that existed between the vernacular, the classical language, foreign languages and the spoken language (dialects). Against the backdrop of such a fervent debate, one can comprehend Lu Xun's delicate position. Influential as he was, he could not but feel poised between the views of at least two opposed parties on the merits and drawbacks of Europeanization. Through his own combination of translation theory with practice, however, he brought the discussion down to concrete terms. For he not only talked about but experimented with the idea of absorbing foreign "nutrients" to expand the repertoire of linguistic resources available to the Chinese language, to impel it toward becoming a medium of modern expression. The result was translations that somebody like Liang Shiqiu found incomprehensible in an oddly Europeanized vernacular.

Interestingly enough, Lu Xun and Qu Qiubai utilized similar strategies in expressing their views on the issue of the "proper" language for translation. Zhao Jingshen (1902-1985), another eminent translator and translation theorist at the time, was targeted for attack by both of them.[11] It was through disagreements with Zhao that both put their views across. Ridiculing him as "Venerable Master," Lu Xun derides the over-emphasis he places on "fluency," the second of the cardinal principles laid down by Yan Fu. As already noted, Lu Xun seems obsessed with a concern that the original text be faithfully rendered, even to the extent of introducing unnatural expressions into the translation. Awkwardness is compounded with awkwardness when Europeanization is advocated as an acceptable feature in translations in his letter to Qu Qiubai. Here Lu Xun argues for the strange-sounding expressions in his translations by differentiating among three types of readers — the well-educated, the semi-literate, and the illiterate — and by explaining that his translation method is directed at the first group:

> As far as the art of translation is concerned, if the first group of readers is to be the target, I would advocate "literal translation." In my own translation, even if [a phrase] is unnatural, I will not replace it with a more straightforward expression that shifts the emphasis unnecessarily.

[11] For the relationship between Lu Xun and Zhao Jingshen, see Wang (1999, p. 259). Zhao became at the time almost a representative of the school that advocates "fluency." Zhao, however, was famous for his literal translation of the phrase "Milky Way," which became the butt of many sarcastic references to Zhao as a second-rate translator.

> Even in creative writing, I think the distinction [among different sorts of readers] has to be made by the author. We import as much as we can, and then digest and absorb as much as we can. What is usable is retained, and what is not is abandoned to the past. So if we tolerate "a certain degree of awkwardness" at present, it does not mean that we are simply on the defensive (Luo, 1984, p. 276).

Here Lu Xun makes clear that his preference for extreme literalism, his deployment of Europeanized structures, and his choice of a rather stilted language of translation are all inter-related issues, made understandable with reference to the readership he targeted (a very different group than Qu Qiubai's). His optimism about such a practice is seen in his belief that while the less acceptable Europeanized expressions he introduces into the Chinese language will eventually be discarded through a natural selection process, "what is usable [will be] retained."

It seems that Qu Qiubai would have concurred with Lu Xun in so far as the priority of "faithfulness" over "fluency" is concerned; in particular, both inveighed against Yan Fu, undeniably the leading translation theorist of the age. In his letter of 5 December, Qu even said that Yan had secretly upheld "elegance" (the third principle) at the expense of faithfulness and fluency. Then, using Zhao Jingshen as the spokesman for the principle of "fluency," he reproached him for making three mistakes, of which the first bears quoting:

> First, what he [i.e. Zhao] calls "fluency"— since it is to be achieved even if this entails a little "inaccuracy"— is of course a way of obliterating the original meaning so as to accommodate the *primitive* state of the Chinese language. This is not creating a new language. Just the opposite, this is striving to preserve the *barbaric* state of the Chinese language, to stunt its development (Luo, 1984, p. 267).

Today, this can be seen as an attack on "fluency" strategies, or domestication on a linguistic level, which becomes associated with "backwardness." Of further significance is the fact that Qu Qiubai (just like Lu Xun) interprets "faithfulness versus fluency" as a language issue. These are not just two translation methods or principles; they determine language choice, reflecting the way the translator views the Chinese language to be used in translations.

However, Qu Qiubai differs from Lu Xun in his conception of what language is best for translations. Qu is famous for his advocacy of

an “absolute vernacular” based on the speech of the commonfolk. Because such a language “copies” the spoken language, it is preferred to Europeanized Chinese. He argues for the enrichment of the Chinese language though the utilization of indigenous resources (in this case, dialects) rather than through the importation of foreign words, structures and expressions. The dialects of different regions could be used and incorporated into the vernacular used in translation. This is part of Qu’s programme for developing a proletarian literature for the masses, and for him Zhao Jingshen fails precisely not because his position is linguistically indefensible, but because it is ideologically unsound. For that reason Qu pronounces Zhao an “enemy of proletarian literature.” Lu Xun, on the other hand, while recognizing the existence of an illiterate readership, does not specify in concrete terms how the needs of this readership can be catered to. In that sense, Qu has greater “evangelistic” zeal than Lu Xun in promoting a different language for translation, though he never puts it into practice. An absolute vernacular fashioned on local dialects, for Lu Xun, is a future possibility only — a language whose usefulness he still questions. He makes a sharp differentiation between the spoken and the written languages in terms of their suitability as a medium for translation. To him: “Our written language cannot yet be blended with the crude dialects of the different regions, and it will be either a special vernacular language, or the dialect of one special region. In the latter case, readers outside the region will not understand it” (Luo, 1984, p. 277). As a practical measure, therefore, Lu Xun prefers the former, a “special”— rather than an absolute — vernacular.

The debate on the language of translation was thus a crucial part of the discussion on language reform in early twentieth-century China, and it surfaced with the discrediting of the classical language and the emergence of a far-from-perfect vernacular. In his letter of December 3rd, Qu Qiubai made an apt comparison of the former to Latin, and the latter to French, in much the same vein as Hu Shi had earlier (in 1917) referred to the way “Luther and Dante replaced the dead literature written in Latin.” Indeed, it is true that in medieval Europe, again with the help of translations, vernacular languages like French and German gained an ascendancy over the official idiom in use for centuries and managed eventually to establish themselves as “official” languages. Based largely on the spoken Northern dialect, and used for centuries in popular literature (like novels and folk drama) that had been denigrated by the elite, the Chinese vernacular was propounded very early as a form of writing by language reformers like Qian Xuantong (1887-

1939). May Fourth translators participated in this linguistic revolution by actively deploying the vernacular, and Lu Xun (as well as a number of other translation theorists) rightly perceived how translations could assist in the modernization of the Chinese language. His hope was that in Europeanizing Chinese "new modes of thinking" would become expressible. Qu Qiubai was equally interested in language reform, but he was more oriented toward the masses, and more inclined towards utilizing native linguistic resources (provided by Chinese dialects) and resisting the influence of foreign languages. Lu Xun might have been right in pointing out the limitations of Qu's project, but the deeper implications of Qu's ideas had yet to be fleshed out — as they were later during the Mass Language Movement of the late thirties and forties.

All the same, while postcolonialist critics of today can take Lu Xun to task for willingly submitting to a kind of linguistic self-colonization,[12] in his own time the attack on his promotion of Europeanization was connected more with partisan politics, coming in particular from his right-wing intellectual rivals. In the same way he found substantial support among intellectuals of his own camp. The alliances and groupings of intellectuals may have been shifting and complicated, but the main matrices are still clear. At the same time, although language issues were inseparable from politics (in both its broader and narrower senses) in the twenties and thirties, it must be noted that the debates can only be fully explained with reference to the radically different way in which translation was then viewed. It was beginning to be taken seriously. Some writers did disparage translation as an activity,[13] but since most of those who wrote plays, poems and fiction also translated, it was getting increasing recognition. The majority was becoming alert to the role that translations could play, and hence was concerned about the way in which the language of original writing could be affected by that of translation.

Translation and Modernity

[12] For Leo Lee this also shows a kind of "extreme humility" toward foreign cultures (see Lee, 1990, pp. 109-135).

[13] For instance, Wu Mi (1894-1978) queries why one should not learn a foreign language and read the original instead.

It is in the May Fourth Period that China entered her "modern" phase in translation theorizing, just when it saw an upsurge in translation production, as evidenced most clearly by the thousands of literary translations appearing in print within the span of two decades. Theorists like Lu Xun, Qu Qiubai, Liang Shiqiu and Zhao Jingshen, therefore, did not emerge in a vacuum. The cultural conditions were ripe, and the peculiar linguistic situation that had evolved since the late Qing placed urgent demands for theories to cope with changing realities. Most significantly, the polemics surrounding *how* to translate resounds with the discourses on modernity carried on in so many spheres of Chinese society in the early twentieth century. The wish expressed by Lu Xun as well as Qu Qiubai was precisely one of release from the backwardness that characterized Chinese life at every level. Promotion of a new vernacular, or simply vernacularization, was nothing less than a project for national rejuvenation.

Also during the period in question, not only were translations produced in abundance, but literary translations had also moved center-stage, replacing non-literary translations. They set the scene for yet another round of fierce discussions in the twenties, one concerning the debasement of translations as second-rate, as secondary to original writing. In fact, our examination of how Chinese translation theory turned "modern" will not be complete without a consideration of how translation figured in the intellectual landscape of this time. While one would be hard put to say which of the debaters won, it already seemed much harder, after so many literary luminaries had spoken positively about the role of translation, for those who participated in the debate to continue to relegate it to a subordinate position.

The debate on translation versus original writing can be briefly recapitulated. In an article appearing in the October 1920 supplement to the journal *Xuedeng* (*Lamp of Learning*), Guo Moruo (1892-1978), an eminent Chinese poet and translator of Goethe's *Faust*, compared original writing to a "virgin" and translation to a "matchmaker." This belittling of translation (especially literary translation) as a legitimate creative endeavor, implied by the metaphor applied to it, seems to have been not just of Guo's own making. For a year later, in a letter to Zheng Zhenduo published in the *Wenxue zhoubao* (*Literary Weekly*), Guo cited two views similar to his. Zhou Zuoren reportedly said that, creative writing being more difficult and demanding, one might, more profitably, turn to translating. Geng Jizhi (1899-1947), translator of several works by Dostoevsky, even went so far as to remark that, since

the Chinese are no good at creative literature, they might as well translate.

Zheng Zhenduo believed otherwise. As a translator of an array of literary works ranging from Greek legends to Russian fables to Tagore's poetry, and as one of the first theorists to introduce Western translation theory (that of Tytler) to China, Zheng blatantly flouted Guo Moruo in an essay entitled "The Virgin and the Matchmaker" (1921), where he asserted the importance of the "matchmaker's" role. Mao Dun, whose indirect involvement in the debates discussed in the last two sections was already noted, touched on the same topic thirteen years later. In an essay in *Wenxue* (*Literature*) dated 1934, he cited Pope's translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as the 1874 English translation of Balzac's *Les Contes drolatiques*, as proof that translations do measure up to original works. This allowed him to view literary translations with approbation, and to conclude that:

> A truly superior translation is, therefore, by no means less worth cherishing than a piece of creative writing. As a matter of fact, the task of producing a truly superior translation is twice as challenging as the task of producing a piece of creative writing. A virgin is certainly hard to come by; but who would say that a matchmaker's role is easy to play? (Luo, 1984, p. 350; trans. Laurence Wong)

More research needs to be done on the way the Chinese perception of the importance of translation, as well as the function it was supposed to serve, changed from the mid-nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century. Only the bare outlines can be sketched at this point, with the caveat that only shifts of emphasis can be discerned, so that the wrong impression will not be given that abrupt changes marked one period from another. After the Opium War (1840) and during the period of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the mid-nineteenth century, technical translations were undertaken with the goal of tapping the Western sources of military strength. During the final years of the Qing dynasty, foreign novels were translated because this was seen as a means of transmitting Western models of government and Western political thought, so that political changes in China itself could be brought about. In both scenarios one can easily see the instrumentality of translation: it was supposed to help China to acquire the power of the Western "Other" and to impel it along the path to modernity, both technologically and politically. Translations in the May Fourth Period must be understood as a continuation of this project, though a great deal of attention was placed squarely on linguistic issues. If anything,

the theorization about translation on the part of many intellectuals of the era (like Lu Xun), in so far as it dealt with issues of the "proper" language of translation, can be viewed as an active engagement with questions of *linguistic* modernity. (As far as *literary* modernity is concerned, it is interesting to note that very few of the literary translations of the May Fourth Period were of the Modernist masterpieces by authors like T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Marcel Proust. For intellectuals at the time, literary modernity — not literary *modernism* — was partly realized through translations of nineteenth-century works, whether of the realist, romantic, or naturalistic modes.)

It can be said that, even by the yardstick of contemporary Western translation theory, we should have no qualms calling Lu Xun a modern translation theorist. For one thing, he advocated retaining the foreignness of the original text — especially the foreign linguistic structures — in a way reminiscent of the entire tradition of German Romantic translation theory from Schleiermacher to von Humboldt to Goethe.[14] He also explored, in one translation after another, possibilities for enriching the Chinese language through the importation of Europeanized terms, structures and expressions. One can of course point to the fact that few of his translations had either great or lasting impact; they never were popular or widely known. One can also question the influence of Lu's theories, given the opposition they encountered and the scant reference to them in subsequent discussions as compared with, say, Yan Fu's three principles of translation. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it was in the May Fourth Period that the foreignizing impulse first showed up strongly as a *desire* for the linguistic Other.

As demonstrated above, Lu Xun's Europeanizing impulse is coupled with a preference for extreme literalism and fidelity to the original text. This puts him, then, in the company of such modern

[14] Necessary reference must be made here to the works of Antoine Berman and Susan Bernofsky (see Berman, 1992; Bernofsky, 1998). For Berman, there exists in Germany "a tradition of translation that regards translation as the creation, transmission and expansion of the language"— a highly revealing statement when seen against the Chinese case discussed here. But the two cases are still different. While in Romantic Germany, translation poses a link between language and national identity, and national differences are seen as a linguistic thing, early twentieth-century China's "modern" identity is to be constructed through a recasting of the Chinese language through the absorption of non-Chinese elements.

Western translation theorists like Vladimir Nabokov and Walter Benjamin, both of whom valorize the literal method in translation. Neither, in fact, is afraid of going to the extremes of word-for-word interlinear translations. Equally, Lu Xun's ideas can be partly understood via contemporary translation studies scholars like Lawrence Venuti and Douglas Robinson, who have investigated cultural and linguistic processes of foreignization in translation at great length. But the fact that Lu Xun's ideas happen to correspond to those in the late twentieth century, especially those in translation studies circles, is of significance only in so far as it can serve as a measure of the extent to which Lu Xun has moved bravely ahead of his contemporaries. This is precisely what made his ideas so objectionable.

However, in saying that Chinese translation theory became "modern" with Lu Xun and not Yan Fu, and in contrasting Lu Xun's views on translation with those of his contemporaries, we wish to draw attention to the entire Chinese cultural context in the May Fourth Period against which Lu Xun's ideas have arisen, rather than to just point out his individual contribution. It is more appropriate to say that, with Lu Xun, Chinese translation theorizing entered its modern phase. One thing that is readily observable from the series of polemical debates discussed above is that, while Lu Xun emerged with the most radical standpoint, the other debaters were also positioned on various places along the axis of attraction-and-repulsion as far as the issue of the incorporation of foreign linguistic elements was considered. All were evincing what has come to be termed the "May Fourth spirit." In this period not only was translation viewed differently; the Chinese language itself was viewed differently. Lu Xun's ideas must hence be related to the general concern with how Chinese linguistic modernity could be attained, a concern that already figured prominently in the 1919-1921 debate for and against Europeanization involving people like Fu Sinian. It is only hence that issues of how to translate became a platform for further exploring this concern.[15]

The resistance to Europeanized and foreignized translations in Lu Xun's time, given the overwhelming popularity of the domesticated/ Sinicized/ natural/ free translations of Lin Shu and others, must have been tremendous. Lu Xun's failure to find a large following for the

[15] Belief that new ideas emerged through discussion, debate and dialectical confrontation is perhaps another oft-noted aspect of the "May Fourth spirit" (see Tagore, 1967; Liu, 1999).

method he advocated does not undermine the significant impact to be made by his theory. In fact, throughout the entire twentieth century it might be said that the opponents of Europeanization and extreme literalism in translation consistently gained the upperhand. Among these we need only mention the leading contemporary Taiwanese poet Yu Guangzhong (1928-) who, virtually speaking on behalf of the entire camp of advocates of linguistic purism, openly castigated Europeanized translations for contaminating the Chinese language and badly affecting Chinese creative writing. But while Europeanization and literalism, as methods of translation, have not been very popular, their effect has been pervasive. Many a translator have testified to their own experience of not being able to avoid Europeanizations, much as they wish to. Many a Chinese person, too, will say that Europeanized Chinese is "modern Chinese." What Yin Jicheng said in 1927, in response to Hu Shi's denouncement of Europeanization — that "[the Europeanized vernacular] will, after one, two, three, perhaps four years, not appear stilted to readers" and that "several years later, non-Europeanized expressions will probably become unreadable"— has turned out to be prophetically fulfilled.[16] The language of translation has prevailed. Lu Xun's theory of foreignized/ faithful/ Europeanized/ literalist translation is thus, unwittingly, a tribute to the way in which translation can advance the Chinese modernity project, though many critics originally had serious doubts about its viability.[17]

Lingnan University

References

BEIJING LIBRARY (1987). *Minguo shiqi zhong shumu 1911-1949* (A Complete Bibliography of the Republican Era 1911-1949). Beijing, Shumu wenxian chubanshe.

[16] See the 30 July 1921 issue of the "Literary Supplement" to the *Shishi xinbao*.

[17] One should note, when all is said, that the various dichotomies treated seriously throughout the May Fourth Period debates (Europeanization vs. Sinicization, faithfulness vs. fluency, literalism vs. liberalism) might also be construed as "false dichotomies," in that most translators actually tried to find a comfort zone somewhere along the continuum that extended from "alienation" to "domestication." My thanks to one of the reviewers of the present article for bringing this point to my attention.

BERMAN, Antoine (1992). *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. Trans. S. Heyvaert. New York, CUNY Press.

BERNOFSKY, Susan (1998). "Writing the Foreign: Studies in German Romantic Translation." Princeton University Ph.D. thesis.

DARUVALA, Susan (2000). *Zhou Zuoren and an Alternative Response to Modernity*. Cambridge, Harvard University Asia Center.

FU, Sinian (1919). "Zhenyang zuo baihuawen" (How to Write in the Vernacular). *Xinchao* (New Currents), vol. 1, n° 2 (February).

LEE, Leo (1990). "In Search of Modernity: Some Reflections on a New Mode of Consciousness in Twentieth Century Chinese History and Literature." In Paul Cohen and Merle Goldman, eds., *Ideas across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*. pp. 109-135, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

LIU, Lydia He (1995). *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity — China, 1900-1937*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

LIU, Yansheng (1999). *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Lunzhengshi* (Modern Literary Debates in China: A History). Guangzhou, Guangdong renmin chubanshe.

LUNDBURG, Lennart (1989). "Lu Xun as a Translator: Lu Xun's Translation and Introduction of Literature and Literary Theory, 1930-1936." Stockholm University Ph.D. thesis.

LUO, Xinzhang, ed. (1984), *Fanyi lunji* (Essays on Translation). Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan.

MAO, Dun [1934](1984). "Zhiyi, shunyi, waiyi" (Literal Translation, Smooth Translation and Distorted Translation). In Luo, ed. (1984), pp. 351-354.

— (1922). "Zhiyi yu siyi" (Literal Translation and Dead Translation). *Xiaoshuo yuebao,* vol. 13, n° 8, August issue. In Luo, ed. (1984), pp. 343-344.

— (1921). "Yutiwen Ouhua zhi wojian (1)" (My Own Views on Europeanization). *Xiaoshuo yuebao,* vol. 12, nº 6.

PÉREZ-BARREIRO NOLLA, Fernando (1992). "Lu Xun's Ideas on 'Hard Translation': A Historically Justified Case of Literalism." *Babel,* vol. 38, nº 2, pp. 79-89.

POLLARD, David (1991). "Translation and Lu Xun: The Discipline and the Writer." *Chinese University Bulletin Supplement,* vol. 21, pp. 4-11.

SHEN, Dan (1995). "Literalism." In Chan Sin-wai and David Pollard, eds., *An Encyclopedia of Translation: Chinese-English, English-Chinese*. Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 568-579.

TAGORE, Amitendranath (1967). *Literary Debates in Modern China 1918-1937.* Tokyo, Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies.

WANG, Hongzhi (1999). *Congshi xindaya: Ershi shiji Zhongguo fanyi yanjiu* (*Re-interpreting Faithfulness, Comprehensibility and Elegance: Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Studies*). Shanghai, Dongfang chuban zhongxin.

ZHAO, Jiabi (ed.). (1935-1936). Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi (A Compendium of New Chinese Literature). Shanghai, Liangyou shuju.

ZHENG, Zhenduo (1921). "Yutiwen Ouhua zhi wojian (2)" (My Own Views on Europeanization). *Xiaoshuo yuebao,* vol. 12, nº 6.

— (1989). *Zhongguo xinwenxue daxi* (A Compendium of New Chinese Literature). Shanghai, Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 20 volumes.

ABSTRACT: What's "Modern" in Chinese Translation Theory? Lu Xun and the Debates on Literalism and Foreignization in the May Fourth Period — This article attempts to assess the contribution of Chinese translators and theorists of the twenties and thirties, in particular the famous writer Lu Xun, whom I consider the first modern translation theorist in China. It is with him that China entered its modern phase in translation. Not only did he advocate retaining the foreignness of the original text, in a way reminiscent of the entire

tradition of German Romantic translation theorists from Schleiermacher to von Humboldt to Goethe; he also explored in his own translations the possibilities for enriching the Chinese language through the importation of Europeanized structures and expressions. It is these foreignizing impulses that set Lu Xun apart most clearly from pre-modern Chinese theorists. At the same time, these impulses connect him with leading giants of translation theory like Nabokov and Benjamin (who emphasized the importance of the literal method in translation) on the one hand, and Venuti and Holmes (who highlighted processes of indigenization and exoticization in translation) on the other.

Lu Xun's ideas had a particular place in the wider cultural and historical context. Views similar to his had been advocated by his predecessors at the beginning of the century, whose attempt to Europeanize the classical language did not, unfortunately, find a large following. In his own time, Lu found ardent supporters among friends and colleagues who either (a) suggested thorough Europeanization, or (b) preferred limited Europeanization. Dissenting views, however, were clearly voiced by some of the other leading writers of the day. So there were (a) those who favored the use of a language based on the actual words spoken by the populace and (b) those who queried why one should not learn a foreign language and read the original instead. My article deals at length with the debates among these theorists and seeks to understand them from the perspective of contemporary Western translation theory.

RÉSUMÉ : Qu'est-ce qui est « moderne » dans la théorie de la traduction en Chine ? Lu Xun et les débats sur le littéralisme et la traduction éthique dans la période du 4 mai — Cet article propose d'évaluer la contribution des traducteurs et théoriciens chinois des années trente et quarante. Je porterai une attention particulière à Lu Xun, que je considère le premier théoricien de la traduction en Chine. Grâce à lui, la Chine est entrée dans sa période moderne en traduction. En plus de prôner la conservation de l'« étrangeté » du texte de départ — un peu à la manière des théoriciens de la traduction de l'Allemagne romantique, de Schleiermacher à von Humboldt, en passant par Goethe —, il a aussi exploré la possibilité d'enrichir la langue chinoise par l'importation de structures et d'expressions « européanisées » dans ses propres traductions. Ce sont ces tendances « décentrées » qui ont permis à Lu Xun de se démarquer de ses prédécesseurs : les théoriciens chinois pré-modernes. D'une part, ces tendances le rapprochent des

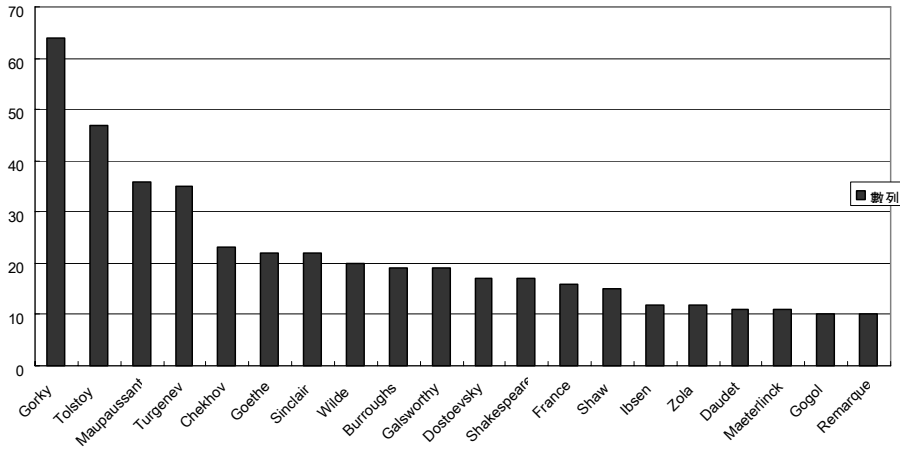
maîtres à penser de la traductologie tels Nabokov et Benjamin (qui ont mis l'emphase sur l'importance de la méthode littérale en traduction), d'autre part, cette approche le met en relation avec Venuti et Holmes (qui ont mis en relief les processus d'indigénisation et d'exotisation de la traduction).

Les idées de Lu Xun ont occupé une place particulière dans le contexte culturel et historique élargi. Des positions semblables avaient été défendues par ses prédécesseurs au début du siècle, mais ces tentatives d' « européanisation » n'avaient malheureusement pas été très populaires à l'époque. Lu, quant à lui, a trouvé de nombreux sympathisants parmi ses amis et collègues qui ont soit : a) suggéré une européanisation approfondie ; b) préféré une européanisation limitée. Par contre, d'autres auteurs contemporains ont formulé de fortes objections. Parmi eux, on retrouvait ceux qui : a) préféraient l'usage d'une langue inspirée du parler populaire ; b) proposaient plutôt d'apprendre la langue étrangère afin de lire le texte original. Mon article se penche longuement sur les débats entre ces théoriciens et tente de les mieux comprendre à la lumière de la traductologie occidentale contemporaine.

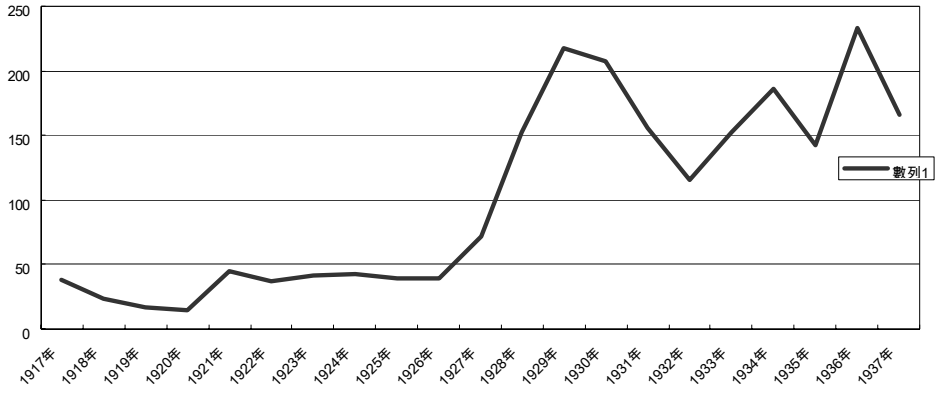
Keywords: Chinese translation theory, literalism, foreignization, modernity, Lu Xun

Mots-clés : Théorie de la traduction en Chine, littéralisme, traduction éthique, modernité, Lu Xun

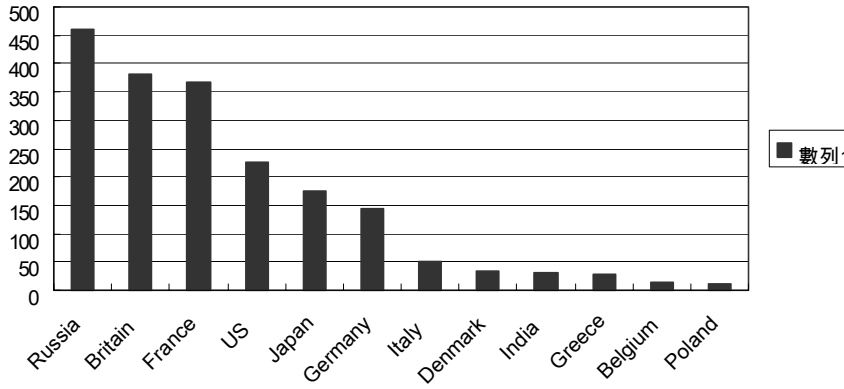
Leo Tak-hung Chan : Department of Translation, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong
Courriel : chanleo@ln.edu.hk



A. Most frequently translated authors, 1917-1937



B. Number of translations per year, 1917-1937



C. Number of translations by country, 1917-1937