“Isms” and the Refractions of World Literature in May Fourth China

Thesis

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Ziqi Yuan

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Thesis Committee:

Kirk Denton, Advisor

Nina Berman, Advisor

Patricia Sieber, Committee Member
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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of two translation projects by two Chinese intellectual groups that were active in the early 20th century, the New Culturalists and the Critical Review School. The project tries to bridge two fields of study, i.e. the intellectual history of the Chinese May Fourth period (mid-1910s to mid-1920s) and the study of world literature. The theoretical concern of this thesis in terms of world literature is an area of inquiry which considers the human knowledge, values, beliefs, etc. as important constructive powers of international literary orders. I project this theoretical concern onto the historical issue of “isms” in the study of Chinese May Fourth history. As a traditional Western way of designating philosophical ideologies, the category of “isms” was accepted in the Chinese context in the mid-1910s, and rapidly populated and reshaped Chinese intellectual discourse in the years that followed. The main discussion part of this thesis contains two case studies, each dedicated to a translation project hosted by one of the two intellectual groups. In the case studies, I use a close reading method to investigate the targeted groups’ modes of receiving Western literary ideologies and their methods of translating non-Chinese literary works. By juxtaposing the two intellectual groups, I reveal the historical tension in China between different assumptions of world literature, which evolved in the early 20th-century Chinese contexts into contending modes
reproducing the Western texts and knowledge. In the conclusion, I demonstrate how the May Fourth literary practices can be viewed as objects of the study of world literature, and argue that these new objects of study entail theoretical impacts. In particular, my case studies show that the theoretical construction of world literature should take into account the historical and geographical diversity of the non-Western world which is not yet fully recognized as a space of world literature.
Vita

May 2009 to June 2013……….B.A. English, Zhejiang University, China

B.A. Sociology, Zhejiang University, China

August 2013 to present………………Graduate Student, Department of Comparative Studies, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Comparative Studies
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1) Main questions and goals of the thesis

In the early decades of the 20th century, a plethora of Western ideas was introduced to China through a prolonged boom in translation. During this process, a new order of knowledge unfolded in front of Chinese eyes—one that propelled Chinese readers to rethink the world in terms of such newly-acquired categories as science, disciplines (the “-ologies”), and ideologies (the “-isms”).

The major topic of this thesis concerns the isms, and the textual practices, especially translation practices, that were motivated by a Chinese intellectual politics of isms around 1920. The imported category of “ism” started to make its appearance in Chinese intellectual discourse in the mid-1910s, and drastically reshaped the Chinese intellectual landscape in the years that followed. Terms ending with “-ism” were seen as one of the most effective ways of packaging and introducing ideas, identifying people’s

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1 In imperial China, the human practices that would nowadays be considered as “scientific” were usually included in craftsmanship and excluded from the “intellectual works” defined by Confucianism. It was not until the start of the 20th century did the Western ideas of “science,” “scientist,” “scientific method” become shaping powers of the political and intellectual activities. Interestingly, the Western notions of “science” and “democracy” were anthropomorphized as “Mr. Science” 賽先生 and “Mr. Democracy” 德先生 during the 1910s, and were used as two major anti-Confucianism slogans by the New Culturalists (defined in the next section of this chapter). Retrospectively, modern Chinese people do think that the ancient Chinese civilization has a scientific tradition and a lineage of scientific development before the Western idea of “science” was introduced to China. It also worth mentioning that Chinese people have lasting memory of their “international old friend,” the British scientist and sinologist Joseph Needham, who initiated and edited the influential book of a history of science in China, Science and Civilization in China. This book, first published in 1954, is one of the earliest efforts to rewrite Chinese history in term of science. In the book Needham posed the famous “Needham question”: why did modern science started from the West, not from China or India?
political beliefs, and motivating social and political practices. “Ism” 主義 became a keyword of the early 20th-century Chinese intellectuals, often signifying “systematic (Western) ideas.” By the year 1920, there were so many “isms”² populating the Chinese intellectual discourse that in 1918 Hu Shi, a leading intellectual of the time, encouraged people to “study more problems and talk less isms.” With this slogan, Hu Shi advised intellectuals to concentrate more on examining and solving actual social problems and to spend less effort on harping on ideologies. Soon, some contrary critics took issue with Hu Shi, and the public debate between “problems” and “isms” evolved into one between “experimentalism” and “revolutionist socialism” (Zhang 2005: 161). Another debate of the sort happened in 1923; this time the opposing sides were identified as “scientific determinism” and “free will” (Zheng 2001: 30-31). Although in the study of Chinese history, these debates were “concluded” by certain intellectual events, there was no solution for the problems under debate. Instead, the more notable historical outcome is that the participating intellectuals were formed into certain factions and identified as followers of certain “isms.” The debate between “problems” and “isms,” for example, led to the separation between the experimentalist reformists and the socialists among the New Culturalist group (I will define the New Culturalist group in a moment). My point here is to show that in the intellectual sphere of the early 20th-century China, political categories (i.e. the “isms”) were linguistically overused, causing their meanings to evolve

² The popular ones include individualism, scientism, socialism, liberalism, nationalism, realism, romanticism, humanism, anarchism, and many others. The meanings of these “isms” was very situational to the context of early 20th-century China.
and twist.

The Chinese phrase for “ism” is “zhuyi,” a loanword from Japanese (Liu 1995: 351) borrowed before the May Fourth period (mid-1910s to mid-1920s). During the time of the debates I have just mentioned, the meaning of “zhuyi” floated away from its original meaning in many Western languages as a marker of a philosophical ideology, to the 1920s Chinese idea, meaning an ideal, a doctrine, or a worldview. In addition, this Chinese “zhuyi” took on a life of its own: one could leave out the stem and use it alone, like “our social activism should, on the one hand, cater to realistic problems and, on the other hand, propagate a suitable ism.” Historically, the linguistic distance between the “ism” terms in Chinese and Western languages has caused considerable difficulties for Chinese in transnational intellectual exchanges. The difficulties are partly attributed to the intellectual imagination in early 20th-century Chinese that they were using the “isms” terms in the same way as other parts of the world.

In this thesis, I use a close reading method to search on the linguistic level for founding moments of some literary “isms” in Chinese intellectual discourse. The targeted historical period is the May Fourth period, which is associated with the mid 1910s and early 1920s. The weight of this thesis is not located on any particular literary “ism” or the

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3 This is one sentence from an essay participating in the 1918 debate between “problems” and “isms,” written by Li Dazhao, a founding father of the Communist Party of China.

4 During Bertrand Russell’s visit in China in 1920, a socialist scholar and activist, Chen Duxiu published a letter addressing Russell. In the letter, Chen says that he saw from a Chinese “capitalist” newspaper Russell’s advice for Chinese people about “there is no necessity in promoting socialism.” “Did you really say this?” questions Chen, “I think this issue is crucial for the future reform of China…so you’d better clarify yourself…lest you will disappoint the progressive people in China.” There is no historical record about whether Russell responded to this public letter. However, one can imagine that there would be considerable difficulty for Russell to communicate with Chen about the idea of socialism. Russell himself expressed his frustration in his private letter, that “the Chinese do need proper philosophy; what they want is concrete suggestions on social reform” (Zhu 1995).
historical evolution of its meaning. Instead, I treat the category of “ism” in modern Chinese history as an independent object of inquiry. Although in this thesis the idea of “ism” refers exclusively to its linguistic uses in the early 20th-century Chinese context, the “isms” are still ideologies; to define them more exactly, the “isms” are early 20th-century Chinese reproductions, or “refractions” in André Lefèvere’s term (2000: 235), of Western ideologies. Different intellectual treatments of “isms” are related with the different modes of reading, interpreting, and valuing ideas and texts.

I situate my theoretical questions on “isms” in a middle-range scope in the study of world literature—the scope, as I suggest it, is closely related with the epistemological question “what is literature?” and with the ways people’s understandings can in turn give shape to world literature. I explain in detail the idea of “middle range” in the following theoretical review section. I choose the study of world literature as my perspective for two reasons: first, I find it methodologically suitable for discussing the translation of Western literary ideas (some “isms”) into Chinese language, and their encoding into Chinese domestic discourses; second, thematically, world literature was a topical center from which many May Fourth literary practices found their values and motivations. As the goal of this thesis, I plan to develop a new critical perspective of the mainstream New Culture Movement, which still occupies a major position in Chinese literary studies, and bring another relatively obscure intellectual group, the Critical Review School, to the forefront. I argue that the Critical Review School occupies an important position on the
modern Chinese spectrum of different intellectual attitudes and gestures to Western literature. Comparison between the two groups, the New Culturalists and the Critical Review School, can reveal the historical tension in early 20th-century China between different assumptions of world literature, which evolved in the Chinese contexts into different modes of reading and translating foreign literary works. I relate the Chinese debate on how to translate Western literature and knowledge to more general debates in world literature and translation studies.

2) The historical background and related terms

For Chinese social elites, the mid-1910s was a time when the general idea of “participation in the global sphere” became a motivation for intellectual practices. Before that, China had undergone a long process during which it forsook the longstanding Chinese ideology with regard to the world order (in which China is enshrined as the center of the world, maintaining a tributary relation with the surrounding peoples, who are deemed culturally inferior) and attuned itself to the modern West-dominated world order. China’s grinding transition from the traditional regional order to the modern world order is an immense topic in the study of Chinese history. In my personal opinion, China’s first active participation in global politics was in 1917, when it joined the Allied Powers in World War I. The end of the war led to the massive student demonstration in Beijing on May 4, 1919, protesting against the unfair treatment China received at the
Paris Peace Conference. This event has been remembered as the climax event of the May Fourth period, during which the Chinese people struggled for political and cultural autonomy. It is not surprising, then, that the mid- and late-1910s was also the time Chinese intellectuals began to consider China’s cultural and literary participation in globalization.

Conventionally speaking, the New Culture Movement is the major historical event in Chinese history responsible for national cultural modernization and disillusionment with the imperial cultural tradition. Before I go on to a general discussion about the movement, I would like to clarify a few pertinent terms. Usually, native Chinese speakers do not distinguish between “the May Fourth Movement” and “the New Culture Movement.” For my purposes, the term “New Culture Movement” emphasizes the culture-related content of the historical period, which centers on ideas and practices regarding the construction of a modern national culture and literature (as opposed to the traditional, imperial Chinese culture and literature), linguistic reforms, education reforms, and so on. Meanwhile, the term “May Fourth Movement” has a very flexible reference field; in my understanding, the term contains a vast range of the cultural and social changes that occurred in the period between mid-1910s and mid-1920s. To prevent further confusion, I stick to “New

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5 On the Paris Peace Conference, the major allied powers transferred Germany’s concessions and economic rights in China’s Shandong province to Japan, ignoring China’s national sovereignty. Meanwhile, several Chinese domestic officials were accused of selling China’s territory and economic rights to Japan. These are the two major causes (one international, one domestic) of the massive student demonstration in Beijing on the May 4th, 1919, and the nationwide demonstration that followed.

6 For example, one can consider that during the May Fourth Movement the Chinese people were educated about the importance of science and egalitarianism, and acquired consciousness about rationalism, patriotism, so on and so forth. In the present communist discourse, the May Fourth Movement is also a period that witnessed the decline of the capitalist anti-feudalism revolution and the rise of Chinese proletarian class. Another difference between the two terms
Culture Movement” and avoid using “May Fourth Movement”; the literary and linguistic emphasis of this thesis also favors the employment of “New Culture Movement” over “May Fourth Movement.” However, “the May Fourth period” is a related term I use, which means the historical period during which the Movement took place—namely from the mid-1910s to the mid-1920s. Another term related to “New Culture Movement” is “New Culturalist”: according to the convention in Chinese studies in the English speaking sphere, “New Culturalist” usually refers to the intellectuals who were supporters and promoters of the New Culture Movement. Finally, I use “May Fourth” functionally as an adjective, meaning “of the May Fourth period”: for example, “the May Fourth reformists.”

During the May Fourth period, China was faced with domestic political unrest and international political pressure. So most Chinese intellectuals in the May Fourth period had an awareness of impending national crisis. Such awareness was one of the major psychological origins of the intellectual enthusiasm for political reform and cultural enlightenment. Another important feature of the intellectual psychology during the movement is the long-standing Chinese belief (see Lin 1979) that literature has the power to bring about the most fundamental changes to people’s minds. Consequently, during the May Fourth, literature carried the major burden of the movement’s historical mission of national salvation and enlightenment. It is not surprising, given the above-mentioned
psychological characteristics of the May Fourth intellectuals, that “new literature” became a main intellectual theme of the historical period.

The two cases presented in this thesis are two May Fourth translation projects. The first case involves a 1918 translation of a few of Henrik Ibsen’s plays, and the second concerns a translation of Socrates’ *Apology* in 1922. I call them “translation projects” instead of merely “translations,” because more than simply translated texts was involved. In both cases, the translations are marked by the purposeful illustrations of certain literary ideologies; in other words, the translated foreign literary texts were intentionally presented as examples of certain literary “isms.” I think it is meaningful to connect to a more immediate background of the translation projects, i.e. the history of translation prior to the May Fourth period and the introduction of Western literary thoughts in May Fourth China.

Yan Fu 嚴複 (1854-1921) was one of the first Chinese translators who introduced Western social and political thought to China. He was celebrated as the first Chinese translator of a few groundbreaking books in political science, including *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, *The Spirit of the Laws* by Montesquieu, *The Study of Sociology* by Herbert Spencer, *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, and several other works. Yan was also known as the person who translated Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* and thus introduced Darwinism to China. Most of Yan’s translations were published between

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7 In early 20th-century China, Darwinism was understood both biologically and socially. Social Darwinism had great impact on the early 20th-century Chinese understanding of the international politics. A psychological feature of people during the time was the apprehension that Chinese people were threatened by extinction because of their lack of
1898 and 1909. China’s defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) was usually considered as an important political background of Yan’s translation effort (Schwartz 1964:18). After reflection on the defeat, the late 19th-century Chinese political elites realized that learning from “the whole political, legal, and social structure of Western society” (Schwartz 18) was China’s way out of its failures and inferiority in the international politics and conflicts. Yan’s translations, obviously, responded to the social elites’ demand for Western political thought. Generations of Chinese social thinkers and activists were influenced by Yan Fu’s translations; according to Schwartz, people like Hu Shi, Lu Xun, and Mao Zedong all felt Yan’s influence in their youth (3).

Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924) was another influential Chinese translator who was active before the May Fourth period. He was remembered as one of the earliest Chinese who translated European novels into Chinese, and he was exceptional because he translated over a hundred foreign novels in his translation career (from 1898 till his death). His translation introduced to the Chinese reading public a dozen of important European novelists, including Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, Alexandre Dumas fils, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Washington Irving, and others. Zhou Shuren 周樹人, an important May Fourth essayist and Lu Xun’s brother, comments that “frankly speaking, it was because of Mr. Lin’s translations that we learned of the existence of novels in foreign literature” (1924: 5). Lin Shu was a representative of the national power.

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8 Lin established his literary fame more than a decade before the New Culture Movement, but he was still active and influential during the movement. However, during the May Fourth period, he was severely criticized by the New Culturalists because of his support of Confucianism and classical Chinese language (see Hill 2014).
first generation of Chinese intellectuals who departed from the traditional Confucian literati career and managed to make their living in the newly-established industries of newspapers and translation in the 1900s (Hill 2014: 2-3). When it comes to the late 1910s, namely the start of the New Culture Movement, people started to demand access to Western literary thought; this is the time when translation practice became associated with Western literary ideologies (i.e. “isms”).

As Kirk Denton (1996: 12) summarizes, the consciousness for China’s need of a “modern” literary criticism was initiated by the May Fourth generation of Chinese intellectuals. “Modern” literary criticism was often expected by May Fourth scholars to be a “scientific” and professional discipline as opposed to the “random, subjective, fragmentary, unsystematic” traditional Chinese literary criticism (Zhu 1982: 2, quoted in Denton 1996: 13) that was deemed insufficient to support the making of a new national literature. The historical period of my two cases (i.e. roughly between 1918 and 1923) was the time of the first wave of enthusiasm for Western literary criticism. To be exact, the very idea of “literary criticism” was a keyword of the time, spoken as an emerging field of learning that grounded all the newly introduced literary isms.

My first case, namely the 1918 translation project of Henrik Ibsen, contains the first Chinese attempt to employ “realism” in actual textual analysis of Western literary works (Anderson 1990: 32). Before that, “realism” only existed in the intellectual discourse in general terms as “realistic literature,” exemplified by Chen Duxiu’s 1917 literary slogan
“down with stale, pompous classical literature, and up with fresh, sincere, realistic literature!” (in Denton 1996: 141). According to Denton (1996: 23-26), one important characteristic of May Fourth literary criticism is the emphasis on literary creation and creativity. Important May Fourth literary critics like Mao Dun 茅盾 and Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 had expressed the idea that the task of literary criticism was to support literary creation (Denton 1996: 23-25). Thus, literary criticism during May Fourth was assigned a constructive role in the May Fourth production of a modern Chinese literature. My first case is closely related with such a view of literary criticism; in my discussion, I show how the New Culturalists infused the notion of “realism” with the power to motivate social action and literary creation.

My second case, however, concerns a contesting view of literary criticism coexisting with the one above during the May Fourth period. The featured intellectual group is named the Critical Review School. Three of the core members of the school, Wu Mi 吳宓, Hu Xiansu 胡先驌, and Mei Guandi 梅光迪, are frequently cited in the following discussion. Interestingly, the Critical Review intellectuals have found in Western literary criticism the terms to describe their confrontation with the creation-motivated criticism. According to Wu Mi (1926: 32), the May Fourth “epoch of expansion” should come to an end, and an “epoch of concentration” should be initiated for the purposes of evaluating the “expansive” literary creations produced so far. In other words, the Critical Review

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9 In Chinese, the school is called the Xueheng School 學衡派. “The Critical Review” is the English name the members gave for themselves.
10 The distinction of the epoch of expansion and of concentration is first made by Matthew Arnold. In his famous essay,
School believes that the role of literary criticism is more about the judgment and evaluation of literature than the promotion of literary production. Hu Xiansu (1922) argues that criticism and literary creation should be two distinct kinds of literary activities. He summarizes the “duties of literary critics” as establishing the moral criteria of criticism, broad knowledge about world literature, developing a historical point of view, and so forth. The Critical Review School’s ideas of criticism were mainly inspired by a literary trend in the early 20th-century U.S. called New Humanism. In chapter 3, where I discuss a translation project hosted by the Critical Review School, I highlight their characteristic ways of engaging New Humanism in their translation practice.

The area of study elaborated above is not usually discussed in terms of world literature, because the concerned literary practices did not have much international influence outside China. In this thesis, I consider world literature to be a productive perspective on the May Fourth period. Different intellectual groups had different modes of using Western texts and ideas to produce new literary knowledge. In the conclusion, I reflect on how the May Fourth intellectual history may shed light on more general questions of world literature, especially the modes of production of transcultural value and knowledge.

3) Theoretical review: the middle-range tools in the study of world literature

“The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” Arnold considers human civilization is a process in which the two epochs appear alternatively. The epoch of expansion is marked by abundant production of new ideas and the break-free from previous cultural and moral constrains; the epoch of concentration, on the other hand, is featured by the refinement of the new creations of the preceding epoch of expansion, and the establishment of new constraints.
This thesis approaches the May Fourth period through the idea of “world literature.” I intend to suggest a perspective on Chinese cultural history in the early 20th century that is alternative to the research developed in both China and the West around the notion of “modernity.” The conceptualization of “modernity” in Chinese studies is closely related with the “impact-response” model introduced in the 1950s by John King Fairbank, one of the most influential American historians of China. The model considers the late 18th century as a historical period when the social stability of imperial China was disturbed by Western colonialism and when China started to re-gear itself in accordance with the Western developmental paradigm. The major problem of the impact-response approach, as is pointedly argued by Paul A. Cohen, is its limited scope on Chinese modernity, that only focuses on the consequences of China’s reaction to the West (5). The impact-response model “predefines what is important about 19th-century Chinese history in terms of a set of questions prompted by the Sino-Western encounter” (52).

Examining the ways May Fourth intellectuals imagined world literature helps to reveal the multiplicity of the social teleology in the historical period in question. Thinking from the perspective of world literature, we can delineate one of the more concrete fields grounding early twentieth century intellectuals’ desires and motivations for developing and modernizing Chinese language, culture, and literature. In particular in this thesis, I intend to pursue a path that studies the textual inauguration of the intellectual order of “isms” in May Fourth China. To do this, I next identify a “middle range area” in
the study of world literature, because I consider “isms” as a kind of concept belonging to the middle-range area.

By “middle-range” area,” I mean a scope of inquiry in the study of world literature that can be located between the macrocosmic scope (which considers nations, languages, cultures, or other forms of communities as it object of study) and the microcosmic scope (which examines the dynamism of literary works, authors, or other units on the individual level) of the study of world literature. I consider this middle-range vision of world literature to be occupied by historical, cross-national groupings, orderings, and movements of literary works that are epistemologically informed. In other words, the middle-range area is formed by the study of the nature and dynamism of knowledge, value and belief in the realm of world literature; the nature and dynamism of epistemological units that mediate national literary spaces and control the flow of literary texts and ideas. The middle-range vision includes countless historical forms of value, knowledge, recognition, belief, etc. that have affected the international orders and movements of texts throughout the history of world literature.

Arguably, world literature cannot be adequately defined and understood based solely on material factors that include, on the macrocosmic level, nations and linguistic communities and, on the microcosmic level, works and authors. David Damrosch famous definition of world literature can represent an attempt to situate world literature on such a

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11 I borrow the notion of “middle range” literally from the sociological “theory of the middle range.” Established in the 1960s by the American sociologist Robert King Merton, the theory develops a theoretical scope between the macrocosmic study of social structure and the microcosmic study of individual social behaviors.
materialist basis; he argues that a work’s entrance into world literature is marked by being translated and circulated beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin (2003: 6, 228). Clear as the definition is, it fails to account for the middle-range factors and processes of world literature. To give a concrete example within the May Fourth history, many Chinese intellectuals returned from Western countries back to China, and wrote literary works or criticisms with the Western ideas which they learned while abroad; although most of their writings were neither meant to be translated, nor have been translated into other languages (their literary works never became world literature, according to Damrosch), the May Fourth intellectuals, along with the background history, still can make meaningful objects of world literature study (this is also what I try to prove in this thesis). The May Fourth literary activities not only contribute to the summation of the literatures of the world, but also are part of the global process in which the global literary circulation and national literary developments exist in mutual formation. Research about May Fourth literary processes will benefit from models that utilize the middle-range factors. The cases in this thesis, for example, are related to the Chinese reproduction of “Western” knowledge and value; and I will show that for some May Fourth intellectuals, the formulation of the values (in the form of “isms”) was more important than the quality or accuracy of the translation of texts. Due to the insufficiency of the materialist factors, many world literature theorists resort to the epistemological factors that may also actively structure global literary exchange. Next, I review a few conceptual tools useful in
middle-range analysis.

Almost two centuries have passed since Goethe first called attention, in the 1820s, to the idea of “world literature.” Goethe envisioned world literature as a literary space, beyond all individual national literatures, that is a stage for international literary exchange. It is a “market,” where all countries freely exchange their literary merchandise (1984: 18). Goethe’s understanding of world literature was a reaction to the prevailing nationalism and the lack of a German nation-state during his time; he expressed the goal of his conceptualization of the world that nations “shall learn how to understand each other, and, if they do not care to love one another, at least they will learn to tolerate one another” (8). Questions untouched by Goethe are: “what is actually exchanged in the market of world literature?” and “what is the nature of that ‘literary merchandise’?” Of course, “literary works” is not a satisfactory response. Beyond that, there are a range of more abstract middle-range “merchandises” such as literary forms, values, ideologies, beliefs, and so on. Next, I review some of the thoughts that may be useful in identifying these “merchandises” in the global literary exchange.

Richard Green Moulton was an American world literature theorist active in the late 19th century and early 20th century. He thinks that the scope of world literature is informed by two complementary principles (2013: 31-32). He terms the first principle National Literary Pedigree, which is a skein of historical connections and judgments that situates a readership or an authorship in a linguistic and cultural tradition. The second
principle is Intrinsic Literary Interest. The individuality of certain works or authors can elevate them out of their cultural tradition and make them shine with their own artistic light. The individuality of Dante, Moulton illustrates, “modifies for all of us the general map of poetry” (31). For Moulton, world literature should not be a simple summation of all national literatures according to the first principle; people must identify the works with great intrinsic literary values that mark the development of human civilization. By combining the principle of historic connection and the principle of intrinsic literary value, Moulton envisions the foundation on which a conception of world literature rests. Moulton does not deliberate on his criteria for measuring literary value. Instead, he explains metaphorically that world literature is represented differently from different standpoints (varying from nation to nation, and from individual to individual), just like the same geographical space appears as different landscapes in the eyes of different observers; works that have great intrinsic literary value, in this regard, resemble high mountains that can be visible even to distant observers. Nowadays, most theorists of world literature would probably disagree with Moulton’s idea that literary value is “intrinsic.” Unlike a mountain’s height which remains unchanged forever, literary value is often considered by later theorists as a very dynamic factor in the global circulation of literary works.

The idea of exchanged literary value takes on a very full form in Pascale Casanova’s theory. Pascale Casanova embraces the logic of economic exchange in her
conceptualization of world literature. In *The World Republic of Letters*, she argues for the use of economic terminology in literature, because, following the same line of thinking pioneered by Goethe and Paul Valéry, she sees the global literary space as based on a literary economy that is as concrete as the actual market exchange (2004: 14). According to Casanova, the world literary space “is a relatively unified space” featured by the literary differentiations and competitions among different nations (83). The way Casanova measures the competitions is through her conceptualization of “literary capital,” a value-related term borrowed from economics. Casanova mentions several factors that can define a nation’s literary capital. The factor she puts most emphasis on is the literariness of the language, which is gauged by the aesthetic possibilities in the language in question, resulting from centuries of linguistic uses, modifications, and refinements (18). In this sense, Casanova considers the literary capital of a nation as “accumulated.” The unequal distribution of literary capital is an essential feature of the world literary space, and the inequality results in the international flows of literary capital. In one direction of the flow of literary value, literarily poor countries seek literary values—in forms of new literary forms, aesthetic inspirations, etc—from the “rich” countries (see 95-99). And in the other direction, literary production will be transported to “rich” countries to be recognized as literarily valuable—Casanova (136) calls this process “littérisation” (136).

In plain terms, I think literary value denotes the degree of literary importance.
Literary ideologies always comprise principles to evaluate literary works in terms of their aesthetic, historical, formal, or political importance. So, I believe it is legitimate to consider a number of the literary ideologies, usually labeled with the suffix “-ism” as specific tokens of literary values. One of Casanova’s examples concerns the Danish critic Georg Brandes who “had lived in Paris for several years and brought back to Denmark the naturalism he discovered there” (97). In my case studies, I discuss several “isms” imported into China during the May Fourth period; meanwhile, I examine the sufficiency and insufficiency of the idea of literary value in explaining literary practices on a transnational scale.

Some theoretical discussions on world literature feature the knowledge and recognition exchanged between nations. Mutual knowledge among nations has been considered the main advantage of world literary exchange since Goethe first imagined world literature. A universal world literature can only be achieved when “nations get to know all the relations among all the nations,” Goethe writes (2013: 14). Fritz Strich expresses a similar view; he thinks that world literature has two advantages; first, it increases a nation’s self-knowledge by mirroring it with other nations; second, it lets nations become acquainted with each other (2013: 47).

Some other theorists, however, do not favor the idea that in world literature countries are always on equal status just “getting to know” each other. Instead, some countries are privileged in terms of enjoying literary fame, whereas others are more deprived and thus
strive for international recognition. This problem was identified in an essay written by Georg Brandes in 1899, where he argues that certain nations, languages, and authors were not receiving the recognition and attention they deserved (26). As a critic from the margin of Europe, Brandes complained that the politics of recognition negatively impeded the circulation of great literary works by several Danish authors and by the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen. The greatest authors of Danish national literature, Brandes observed, were hardly known by anyone outside Scandinavia.

The problem of recognition in world literature is still very much alive today. The “technologies of recognition,” Shu-mei Shih argues, still operate in world literature, alongside other conventional hierarchical spaces, such as international politics. In the academic study of world literature, these technologies function to produce “the West as the agent of recognition and the Rest as the object of recognition” (260). The result is the theoretical practice that the West is depicted as the major reference point and the major agent, whereas the Rest is placed in a position of silence, only meaningful as test cases for Western-based theorizations. To remedy such problematic theorization, Shih argues that the West should overcome the kind of cultural relativism in which it does not take responsibility for the distance and difference it maintains to the Rest; this is to say, the researcher of world literature should assume a “responsible attentiveness” that strives to give reality to the non-West, which, however hybridized, should receive attention
“beyond citing a couple of secondary sources as final words on a literature” (263).\textsuperscript{12}

For me, this is a very meaningful and relevant perspective. When we establish a viewpoint from the non-Western perspective, the involved mentality in this cultural space is not only, as Brandes acknowledges, the expectation of being recognized by the global literary authority (i.e., the West). In late 1920s, two Chinese authors (Lu Xun and Hu Shi) refused the chance to be nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. While there were complicated reasons for their apprehension about achieving worldwide fame, their refusal of Western recognition should not banish them from the scope of world literature study. Quite the contrary, historical cases like the May Fourth indicate world literature’s unfinished inquiries about the historical dynamics between the local and the global.

In my understanding of the intellectual history of the May Fourth, the idea of the “West” was not usually positioned as the agent of literary recognition. That is to say, during the May Fourth period, being realistically Western or recognized by the West were not considered central qualities of valuable literary thoughts or creations. Instead, “the West” was often a symbolic construct that participated in the production of local knowledge. Different groups of intellectuals were able to strategically manipulate their distances to the “West” in a variety of ways to achieve a range of political ends. This thesis reflects on the May Fourth intellectuals in term of their sense of responsiveness to the China-West distance.

\textsuperscript{12} Here Shih is implicitly criticizing the discussions on world literature by Franco Morretti and Fredric Jameson, who Shih quotes in her context.
Another group of theorists takes a descriptive approach to the middle-range space of world literature. For them, there are transnational literary features that are critical to the study of world literature. Dionýz Ďurišin, a Slovak theorist, describes world literature as a category formed by three principles, which I think correlate to the three levels, macrocosm, microcosm, and middle range. Ďurišin’s three principles concern: first, national literatures or analogous literary-historical units; second, the best authors, works, processes, etc.; third, literary phenomena that include, in Ďurišin’s term, typological and genetic relations between literary units (154). Irina Grigorevna Neupokoyeva offers a similar, but better-shaped explanatory structure about the historical formation of world literature. In her essay “Dialectics of Historical Development of National and World Literature,” Neupokoyeva pays much attention to a mediating stage between the national and world literature. The mediating stage, as she terms, is characterized by historical and cultural “zones” that include a few geographically or ideological proximate national traditions. She states succinctly that “a national literature does not enter into world literature on its own” (108). Instead, national literatures aggregate into a super-national zone (also called regions) for reasons such as linguistic, cultural, or ethnic proximity. Interestingly, as a Soviet theorist, Neupokoyeva highlights, the cultural aesthetic shared by socialist countries also results in a super-national literary aggregation (107).

With regard to literary affinities, we cannot ignore the discipline of comparative literature, since it offers crucial notions of similarity and dissimilarity. I consider the
notions of similarity and dissimilarity as middle-range concepts because they always instantly imply knowledge and value, by notifying the affinities among literary spaces. The discipline of comparative literature was developed in Europe in the late 19th century with cross-cultural comparison as its core methodology. Through comparison, researchers come to know the similarities and dissimilarities between different literary units, and the ways these similarities and dissimilarities are made sense of varies greatly in different schools of thought. For Fritz Strich, cross-cultural similarities offer us the knowledge about a general idea of the Human (just as the discovery of scientific laws had resulted in the imagination of a general idea of Nature). He assumes that the relation between individual nations and world literature can be thought of as cultural multiplicity in the unity of humanity (Strich 2013: 42). The benefit a nation earns in transnational literary exchange, as I have mentioned above, is the relational knowledge acquired in the dialectic view between the supernational unity and the national self.

Critiques of the notion of a universal human spirit can be useful in terms of not overvaluing cross-cultural similarity. Belief in a universal human spirit implies a humanist positivism, which posits that the repetitive social and cultural patterns in human society add up to a general image of mankind (quite akin to the way modern science usually operates, summarizing human experience for the scientific laws). I think the problem of this worldview is its overemphasis on the value of similarity. As Fredric Jameson suggests, with regard to culture, globalization is emerging into “a postmodern
celebration of difference and differentiation” (1998: 56). In such a global condition, it is becoming more obvious that international politics is not only about establishing intimacy on the basis of cross-cultural similarity, but also about maintaining tolerant contacts within the irreducible global differentiation and plurality.

Here we may introduce the idea of “system of differences” to balance the similarity-based tradition of comparative literature. The system of differences was first developed in Saussurean linguistics. Saussure considers human language to be a system of difference in the sense that an individual symbol in language acquires its meaning only by its difference from other symbols (1959: 120; pt. 2, ch. 4, sec. 4). System of difference also forms the theoretical foundation of Casanova’s idea of world literature. For Casanova, the making of a distinctive national literary identity helps a nation to win its freedom and autonomy from international political oppression (2003: 87). For countries striving for literary independence from the dominating literary center, their chance lies in the manufacture of literary differences using their unique linguistic and cultural traditions (221). In this sense, Casanova’s theory can offer an example to account for the literary differences among national literatures. According to Casanova, the production of literary capital essentially involves “making differences,” i.e. conducting literary and aesthetic innovations. It is not possible to exhaust the theoretical issues pertinent to similarity and difference, but I pay critical attention to these notions in my case studies.

Another meaningful study in world literature is that of Daniel Dooghan, because he
suggests a way around universalizing the middle range categories that have a European origin. Daniel Dooghan (18) questions the legitimacy of applying European literary categories to a non-Western author like Lu Xun (1881-1936), a famous modern Chinese author. He remarks that although it is pedagogically useful to tag Lu Xun as a realist, a symbolist, etc., because it allows us to position him conveniently in a network of “realists” or “symbolists” in 20th-century China, such characterizations may misrepresent or oversimplify reality. Also, such labeling with Western literary categories requires a definition that takes into account places beyond the West—what, for instance, the meaning of realism is in China. This necessarily involves a discussion of the applicability of the Western literary category to the Chinese historical context, and maybe a comparison of European realism with its possible Chinese counterpart (38). For Dooghan, in the study of a specific non-Western literary space, such categories may obfuscate rather than clarify reality.

In response, Dooghan suggests an alternative approach, called the “cartographic method.” This method features a return to close reading. The method only accounts for the relations among texts, aiming to examine texts by drawing the map of the textual network that is crystallized in the target texts. According to Dooghan, such a method is inspired by Vladimir Nabokov’s translation of *Eugene Onegin*. In Nabokov’s commentary on the translation, he documents every textual connection from Pushkin’s text to the texts Pushkin drew literary forms and ideas from (22). The cartographical
method, according to Dooghan, takes relations between texts as the fundamental objects of inquiry, an approach that thus has the advantage of being able to sever “the Gordian knot of the complicated categorical, political, and disciplinary legacies” that twist about the authors (35). In my second case study on the Critical Review School, I borrow from Dooghan’s cartographic method, because the structure of the translation project features a textual network. The target translation was designed by the Critical Review scholars to be read in a network of texts, Chinese and foreign. In using this method, however, I have an intention that is different from Dooghan: I do not want to bypass the “twisting categorical, political, and disciplinary labels,” but to examine how the labels interact with the production of the translation and its surrounding textual network.

In general, Dooghan’s insight is helpful in reminding us of the limits of the ideological categories. As Dooghan warns, the utility of broad terms of literary categories and ideologies may result in the neglect of concrete texts and textual relations. Such critical awareness is very important both when I evaluate the historical textual practices during the May Fourth period, and when I use my cases to reflect theoretically on world literature. Actually, the problems in people’s view of world literature a hundred years ago still exist in present conceptions of world literature.

4) Overview

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, this thesis is divided into two main
parts. In each part, I primarily analyze a Chinese translation of a non-Chinese literary work. Each translation is an organic part of a project promoting a kind of literary ideology, i.e. an “ism.” To repeat, in my discussion I do not examine texts with regard to their authors’ ideological attribution, but trace the textual moorings of a few “isms” through close reading. The “isms” under examination, as the case studies illustrate, had divergent starting points and impacted on the May Fourth intellectual order in different ways. In creating “isms” by using both international intellectual resources and local-oriented thinking, the May Fourth scholars conjured myriad kinds of social consciousness (every kind being reasonable and problematic in its own way) that intended to motivate people to cultural or social action.

In the first case study (chapter 2), I analyze a translation project carried out by several New Culturalist intellectuals. The translated texts are plays by Henrik Ibsen, the famous Norwegian playwright. I show that the project is designed to package and promote Western-originated ideas like realism, individualism, and female liberation under the term “Ibsenism,” and such intention is textually rooted in the New Culturalists’ translation and criticism. In this chapter, my discussion deals with three key texts: a Chinese translation of *A Doll’s House*, Hu Shi’s essay introducing and interpreting Ibsen, and one of George Bernard Shaw’s books on Ibsen. By disentangling the intricate interrelation among the three texts, I try to clarify the mechanism through which “Ibsenism” in the New Culturalist language was adapted to the May Fourth social context.
and became a part of the intellectual politics of “isms.”

In the second case study (chapter 3), I visit the oft-ignored Critical Review School, which produced the first Chinese scholars trained in comparative literature. In the 1910s, the study of comparative literature had just been established in American universities. Around the year of 1920, several young Chinese scholars returned from the U.S., bringing to China the New Humanism school of literary criticism, and established the Critical Review. In my discussion, I examine a translation endeavor of one of the members, named Jing Changji 景昌極, which was one of the earliest textual practices exercising the New Humanist thoughts in the Chinese language. There are also three key texts involved in the third chapter: a translation, an editor’s foreword on translation principles, and an essay written by the American New Humanist Irving Babbitt. By discussing the textual network in which the key texts are situated, I present an alternative mode of use of these Western literary ideologies.
Chapter 2: A Translation of Ibsen and the Start of Chinese “Ibsenism”

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the New Culturalist translation of Henrik Ibsen in 1918. Because the New Culturalists were the most influential intellectual group in the New Culture Movement, their literary practices can be considered representative of the movement’s intellectual attitude toward world literature at the time. In particular, a key text I deal with—namely Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism”—is very informative about the New Culturalist discourse of literary value in term of “isms.” I spend much space in this chapter analyzing the textual relations that built up Ibsen’s literary fame in China. And at the end of this chapter, I discuss the problems—both theoretical and historical—of the New Culturalist approach to introducing an author of world literature.

1) The 1918 Translation of Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) has been recognized as one of the founding figures of modern drama in the West. He has been celebrated for his social realism, which introduces social problems as subjects for plays. In a period of a half-century, Ibsen’s international fame spread from Germanic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Britain) in the 1870s to peoples geographically distant from Norway, like the Chinese and
Indians, around 1920. Of course, by the 1920s, Ibsen was unquestionably a writer of worldwide fame, a writer of world literature. Ibsen’s 1879 masterpiece, *A Doll’s House*, was most responsible for generating Ibsen’s worldwide fame. According to the famous English translator of Ibsen, William Archer, it took ten years for *A Doll’s House* to “pass beyond the limits of Scandinavia and Germany” and be widely received in Britain and then performed in other English speaking countries like Australia and the U.S. (Archer, Introduction). In China, *A Doll’s House* is also the play by which Ibsen was first known.

This chapter features an influential Chinese translation project in 1918 aiming to systematically introduce Ibsen to China.

The 1918 translation of Ibsen is remembered as one of the most typical and important of New Culturalist practices in terms of importing foreign ideas and literary forms for the construction and enrichment of a new, modern Chinese culture and literature (as contrasted to those of the imperial past). In his introductory essay, Hu Shi makes his intentions especially clear. This essay, titled “Ibsenism,” is like a banner for the translation project. Under the banner of “Ibsenism,” Hu assembles some Western political and literary values he relates to Ibsen’s plays, including individualism, realism, female liberation, free will, and some critical reflections on notions of family, ethics, religion, nation, etc. For Chinese intellectuals in the 1910s, these ideas were very eye-catching: they seemed so new and versatile that they could bolster the future development of China and its national culture.
The translation was a group project, headed by Hu Shi and contributed to by four other New Culturalists—罗家倫, 陶履恭, 吴弱男, and Yuan Zhenying. In June 1918, the New Youth journal, the principle journal of the New Cultural Movement, released a special issue solely dedicated to this fully embodied translation project, which was a package containing the “Ibsenism” essay by Hu Shi, three translated plays—A Doll’s House, An Enemy of the People, and Little Eyolf—and a biography of Ibsen. Of the three plays, A Doll’s House was translated most attentively, it is the only one among the three plays that is translated in full (the other two, An Enemy of the People and Little Eyolf, included only their first acts). Considering Archer’s remark, cited above, about A Doll’s House, it is not surprising that the New Culturalists paid it special attention. Also, the literary ideas Hu Shi identified in Ibsen’s dramas are exemplified quite well in A Doll’s House alone.

In the following close reading, I show that it was Ibsen’s literary value that anchored the significance of the New Culturalists’ translation project. More concretely, the values in Ibsen’s plays are identified as realism, individualism, female liberation, etc. Further, I show that the New Culturalist discourse presented these social and political values as deriving from an imaginary source of universal authority, whereas in fact they were fabricating this authority so as to assert for themselves an intellectual position. After I have presented my textual materials, I connect the New Culturalist translation with more

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13 By the way, A Doll’s House had two translators: originally the entire play was in the responsibility of Luo Jialun, who was an important New Culturalist and Hu Shi’s student. After Luo translated the play, Hu was not very satisfied with his job, and retranslated the third act. So the translation of A Doll’s House published with the names of the two translators.
theoretical issues in world literature.

2) “Ibsenism is a kind of realism”

Realism is the primary Western literary concept the New Culturalist tried to advocate with their promotion of *A Doll’s House*. The idea of realism has a very rich and complex history in the European literary tradition. In China, the idea of a “realist literature” was one of the earliest initiatives of the New Culture Movement. In “On Literary Revolution,” one of the movement’s tune-setting texts published by Chen Duxiu in February 1917, Chen calls for a revolution of new literature; he makes “three great isms” (三大主義) the banner of the literary revolutionists (1996: 141). Realist literature, being one of the “three great isms” is asserted against the “stale, pompous classical literature,” which he says is detached from contemporary social life. According to Marston Anderson, Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism,” published one year and four months after “On Literary Revolution,” was the next major push of realism in the May Fourth period. In the essay, Hu followed Chen’s defining realism against the outdated classical literature. Also, as I have mentioned previously, Hu’s “Ibsenism” was groundbreaking in the sense that the essay examines the actual operation of realism in Ibsen’s texts (Anderson 1990: 31-32). The very first move in Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism” is to prove that Ibsen’s literature and view of life constitute “a

14 The other two “isms” are the anti-elitist “literature of the people” and the “comprehensive, popularized social literature” (Chen 1996: 141). Here, Chen’s use of “ism” can serve as an example that the May Fourth notion of “ism” was often designated as a stand-alone word denoting “ideological tenet.” In other words, Chen’s claim of “three great isms” are essentially three ideological tenets and slogans about literature; among them, only the second one (i.e. “realistic literature”) can be identified with a “-ism” term in the European tradition (i.e. realism).
kind of realism” (1918: 490). In addition to Anderson’s observation, if we expend some effort in searching through the historical materials in Ibsen’s criticism on the global scale, we can identify Hu’s idea of realism as the result of a complex politics between the European tradition and the Chinese context.

What kind of realism, then, does Hu discover in Ibsen’s plays? In his essay, Hu quotes the words of an old sculptor in Ibsen’s play When We Dead Awaken. The old sculptor comments on his young dream of sculpting an innocent, beautiful woman, “awakening to light and glory without having to put away from her anything ugly and impure.” When he “learnt worldly wisdom in the years that follows,” this dream was replaced by the idea to sculpt another image, in which from the dirty ground “swarm men and women with dimly-suggested animal faces.” The women and men with the faces of beasts were what he witnessed in his real life (Hu 1987: 155). “This is the basic literary method of Ibsenism,” Hu comments, “the young, innocent woman symbolizes idealistic literature, while the throng of dimly suggested men and women with human bodies and animal faces symbolizes realistic literature. Ibsen’s literature, his view of man is solely realistic” (Hu 1987: 155). This statement, reasonable as it is at first glance, is quite strange. The quoted text has some symbolistic features in term of its form, since the sculptural images are described with obvious symbolic meanings. Thematically, as Hu notifies, the old sculptor’s words favor realism. In addition, the old sculptor is not celebrating his conversion from idealism to realism; the plot hints at a kind of worldly
determinism in the sense that an individual in society will grow more realistic as he or she ages. Despite the profound heterophony in this quote from *When We Dead Awaken*, Hu’s comment only highlights one aspect: “Ibsen’s literature is solely realistic.” Instead, I think it would be more reasonable to argue, at least (if we ignore the complicated textual politics between the author and his character) that Ibsen is comparing himself with the old sculptor, who is a realist that reluctantly gives up his earlier artistic idealism. Hu’s identification of Ibsen as a realist, and Ibsenism as a kind of realism, seems overly confident. The confidence, I argue, comes from an established Western criticism of Ibsen. Although Hu does not quote from any author except Ibsen, silence, as Foucault reminds, “is less the absolute limit of discourse than an element that functions alongside the things said” (27). The telling silence in this paragraph in “Ibsenism” is the politics of authority in the global circulation of Ibsen: how can the idea of realism in Hu’s account stand alone as a justification in and of itself? Why the lifting of realism, together with Ibsen, above idealism?

Hu’s essay pictures Ibsen as an anti-idealistic realist. For the anti-idealism part, it is quite evident, both from Ibsen’s literature and the criticism about him, that Ibsen has been critical of a number of social ideals. *A Doll’s House*, for example, is a text attacking social ideals about love, family duty, and law. As for realism, Ibsen probably did not devote himself specifically to the idea of realism.15 It is some critics who started

15 Ibsen’s earliest spokesperson, the Danish critic Georg Brandes expresses his doubt in the criticism characterizing Ibsen as a naturalist. In an essay written in 1898, Brandes recalls that Ibsen had been labeled as a “naturalist” and thus attacked by the “symbolists.” “Such catchwords seldom mean much,” comments Brandes, in Ibsen’s case “realism and
evaluating Ibsen in term of realism, and some of them may have influenced Hu Shi. Elisabeth Eide (11) noted that Bernard Shaw might be one critic who affected Hu Shi’s interpretation of Ibsen. Eide suggests that Hu’s “Ibsenism” may come from the title of Shaw’s 1891 book, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. But Eide considers that Hu’s and Shaw’s approaches to Ibsen are more different than similar, and the similarities are not so significant as to suggest direct relations between the two critics (60). I disagree with Eide, because among the European criticism on Ibsen that was available to the New Culturalists, Shaw’s understanding of Ibsen has extraordinary affinity with Hu’s. In term of more specific evidence, several literary historians have discovered that Hu’s interpretations of the plots of *A Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *An Enemy of the People*, etc., are very similar with Shaw’s ideas in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (see Tam 1982: 45; He 2004: 19; Chiang 2013: 386-90).\(^{16}\)

Shaw wrote *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891. It was originally a long essay written at the call of the Fabian Society for papers under the heading of “Socialism in Contemporary Literature.” Although there is no way that Ibsen can be considered a socialist in any sense, Shaw pictures him, at the very beginning of the book, as a pioneer who subverts existing social norms, which thus correlates with the reformist image of the Fabian Society. It is quite true, as Eide points out, that what Shaw claims to be the “quintessence” of Ibsen is actually more quintessential to Shaw himself (60). Critics may

\(^{16}\) According all three researchers, Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism” was originally an English paper written in 1914. Kwok-kan Tam and Changzhou He have studied this English version and drawn the conclusion that Hu Shi was borrowing Shaw’s ideas. No direct historical record has been found to prove that Hu actually read *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. 
employ literary texts to speak for their own personal or social interests, which, as we will see, is also quite true for Hu Shi.

In the book, Shaw develops part of his argument around the interrelationship among the notions of realism, idealism, and individualism. He thinks that idealism is informed by human nature to mask everything that is fearful and inexorable—for example, the mask of romantic love and marriage shields the brutalities of human sexual instinct. For every mask, there should be a person brave enough to pull it off and confront the reality behind it (10-11). For Shaw, Ibsen is such a heroic mask-puller. In his view, the realist, alarmed about the self-deceiving, self-denying force of idealism, has profound faith in individual will.

While I am not knowledgeable enough to tell if Bernard Shaw was the first critic to label Ibsen a realist as opposed to idealist, he is certainly one of the earliest critics to do so, because the plays that were determining Ibsen’s literary fame, like A Doll’s House, Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, etc., were composed no earlier than 1879. Also, among the several critics who had written systematically about Ibsen and were available to the early 20th-century Chinese,17 Shaw was the only person writing in term of realism—a special version of realism marked by individualistic and anti-idealist features. So I think Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism” is under the direct influence of Shaw’s interpretation of Ibsen. The beginning of Hu’s “Ibsenism,” where he sets the tone of his essay by claim Ibsen’s

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17 Other available critics include: Georg Brandes (Danish critic and historian, Ibsen’s close friend), William Archer, and Edmund Gosse (two earliest English translators of Ibsen). Eide (126) also lists three critics whose criticisms on Ibsen were known in the early 20th-century China with more specified influence: Emma Goldman (an anarchist critic), George Plekhanov (the famous Marxist theorist and politician), and Janko Lavrin (a psychoanalytic critic of Ibsen).
literature is a kind of anti-idealist realism, is implicitly referring to the authority of Shaw.

Also in line with Shaw, Hu Shi goes on to deliberate on what appears for him to be the absurdity of idealism. He starts with the claim that “the greatest weakness in mankind is refusing to open one’s eyes to reality,” which appears to be a paraphrase of Shaw’s “it is human nature to mask the inexorable with ideals” (10) argument. Here, Hu substitutes Shaw’s notion of “the fearful and inexorable” with “reality”; he manages to smuggle in the reference to the worrisome reality of 1910s Chinese society, characterized by corrupt government, immoral behavior, a diseased national spirit, etc. He reasons that

The greatest weakness in mankind is refusing to open one’s eyes to reality.

Even though it is evident that our society is full of whores and thieves, we all claim that it is a country of the good and wise. . . . If one wants a good government, one must first acknowledge that the present government is bad, and if one wishes to improve society, one must first acknowledge that the present society is corrupt. Ibsen’s greatest asset is he is willing to put forward the truth and that he can describe all old and depraved truths and expose them so that everybody may see them in detail. (Hu 1987: 156)

By criticizing the “ideals,” Hu is denouncing the values advocated by the “backward powers” in Chinese society, especially the ruling landlords and conservative intellectuals in the 1910s who refused social reform and defended the moral and political status quo
under their governance. In the main body of “Ibsenism,” Hu explains in detail that social institutions, such as family, morals, religion, laws, etc., are the hegemonic tools of the powerful, usually men. Hu Shi quotes from Ibsen’s plays to prove his points; *A Doll’s House* and *Ghosts*, for example, are quoted to prove that family structure is designed to suppress the female. In his summary, he concludes his Ibsenism with obvious revolutionary passion:

> I began this essay by characterizing Ibsen as a realist. He has described the real conditions of the family and of society so that it has moved us. He demonstrates how the family and society have actually deteriorated to such an extent that everybody feels that there must be a reform. This is Ibsenism. (Hu 1987: 165)

Hu’s version of Ibsenist realism, then, is also a pragmatic kind of realism. It is defined by its purposefulness, the purpose being to reveal the real face of a problematic social reality. Several scholars have noted that ideological tenets considered in the West as ends in themselves were received in May Fourth China as means to other ethical or social goals: individualism as the means to the improvement of people’s virtue (Schwartz 1964: 141); Ibsen’s egoism as the means to social reform (Anderson 1990: 35); realism as the means to the cultivation of self and life (Denton 1996: 39-41). In the context of “Ibsenism,” Hu’s realism is marked by its illocutionary power: to write is to reveal, and to reveal is to
call for reforms. He borrows the anti-idealist realism logical frame from Shaw and re-contextualizes that frame with the reformist and nationalist discourses of early 20th-century China.

3) The New Culturalist Translation of A Doll’s House

World literature, argues David Damrosch, is a mode of reading; great conversations of world literature take place when works and ideas around the world are brought together in the process of reading (205). If gauged by Damrosch’s criterion, the 1918 Chinese translation of Ibsen does not, unfortunately, engage in a productive conversation of world literature. The New Culturalist mode of reading Ibsen is not only reflected in their interpretative essays, but also in their “mode of translation”; the former interacts with the latter to stress the “Ibsenism” interpretation while obscuring alternatives. I will review some of the contemporary (1910s and 1920s) contentions evoked by the New Culturalist mode of introducing Ibsen at the end of this chapter. Before that, I would like to offer a close reading of the translation of A Doll’s House. In conducting this textual analysis, I intend to show that the New Culturalist mode of translation is driven by a thematic understanding of the play and enhances the theme of social criticism that is identified in the term “Ibsenism.” Moreover, being thematically tilted can mean obscuring other aspects, such as the mimetic aspect, examples and explanations of which I offer in my analysis.
The Chinese version of *A Doll’s House* published in *New Youth* was translated by Luo Jialun (1897-1969) and Hu Shi—Luo translated the first two acts and Hu the third act. The title of the translation is “Nuo La” 诺拉 (Nora), i.e. the name of the female protagonist, instead of a direct translation of “A Doll’s House.” Although the translators did not indicate from which language they were translating, it is quite evident that they were translating from English, not Norwegian or Danish, because English was the foreign language in which they had the most linguistic competence in 1918 (in fact, English was at the time the only language Luo understood other than Chinese). After close investigation, I believe that Luo Jialun was translating from William Archer’s English version of *A Doll’s House*, whereas Hu translated from a different anonymous English version.  

In the short preface to the translation, Hu seems to be dissatisfied with Luo’s translation and promises to publish his own translation of the whole text in the future, which he never did. On close examination, we can indeed see that Luo’s translation is not very satisfactory: he makes some very basic linguistic mistakes, such as confusing “quite” with “quiet” (Hu and Luo 534), and “banquet” with “bouquet” (552); and he sometimes does not fully understand the lexical or grammatical meanings of certain words. Comparatively speaking, Hu Shi’s translation is much better. Despite the shortcomings of Luo’s part of the translation, the whole text was published.

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18 I do not offer detailed proof for this statement, because the presentation is too complicated and not very necessary. The text Hu Shi was translating from is available on Project Gutenberg website, which is also published by Dover Publications. The Dover edition indicates on its title page that the text is “a republication of an anonymous, undated English translation published by Batholomew House, Inc. New York.” The Project Gutenberg page, on the other hand, identifies the names of the translators as Martin Adamson and David Widger, about whom I cannot find any background information.
In Luo Jialun’s translation, there are clear traces of thematic enhancement of the plot. To put it simply, Luo makes the oppressor more condescending, the oppressed more innocent, the villain morally worse, so on. In William Archer’s introduction to his translation of *A Doll’s House* (i.e. the source text of Luo’s translation), Archer gives especially high marks to Ibsen’s attentiveness in designing the subtle power struggles implied in the characters’ dialogues. Luo’s retranslation of Archer’s translation, however, obliterates some of these subtle designs.

One example can be found in a scene in the first act, where Helmer and Nora reminisce about their previous Christmas:

(Archer’s version)

HELMER. Do you remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long past midnight to make flowers for the Christmas-tree, and all sorts of other marvels that were to have astonished us. I was never so bored in my life.

NORA. I didn’t bore myself at all.

HELMER. [Smiling.] But it came to little enough in the end, Nora.

NORA. Oh, are you going to tease me about that again? How could I help the cat getting in and pulling it all to pieces?
What accords with Archer’s comment here is Helmer’s teasing tone, delicately mixed with affection, complaint, and appreciation. By saying this, Helmer is haughty and complaining about Nora’s obsession with her “flower-making” (from a later part of the play we know that Nora was not making flowers but working secretly to pay off her debt) and about his loneliness not having Nora’s evening company for three weeks. Luo translated this dialogue as:

郝爾茂: 你還記得去年耶誕節嗎？你在三禮拜之前就關你自已在一間房裏從停晚起一直做到半夜。說是做那聖誕樹上各種的花，和其餘種種奇怪的東西來嚇我們。我卻一生永遠沒有討過那時的煩惱。

娜拉: 我自己一點也不討煩惱。

郝爾茂: （帶著笑臉兒）但是成績在什麼地方娜拉

娜拉: 哎唷你又要來挑剔我了。一下不小心，貓兒走進去把他撕了，我又有什麼法子呢？

(My translation of Luo’s rendering, with my highlights:

Helmer: Do you remember last Christmas? For three weeks you locked yourself in a room, making stuffs from evening until late night, declaring that you were making flowers for the Christmas-tree—and other strange things to scare us. I never felt so bothered in my life.
Nora: I didn’t feel bothered at all.

Helmer: [Smiling.] But what was your achievement, Nora?

Nora: Oh, are you going to pick on me about that again? I was careless just for a moment, and the cat got in and pulled it all to pieces—how can I help with that?)

Compared to Archer’s English version, what is lost in Luo’s translation is Helmer’s appreciation of Nora’s intention to contribute to the family. In Archer’s English version, although it turned out that Nora had not made many Christmas decorations from her three weeks’ hard work, Helmer recognizes that she did her best to give the family pleasure. Despite the complaint, Helmer considers that Nora’s effort “came to little enough in the end” (there is some achievement, but very little). Comparatively, Luo’s rendering of Helmer is that of a completely patronizing patriarch, who deems Nora’s effort to be pathetic, annoying, and fruitless.

There are quite a few places in Luo’s translation where Helmer’s sense of superiority is intensified. I would like to give a brief one before I move on to discuss Hu Shi’s part of the translation. In the second act, Nora wants Helmer to spend the entire evening helping with her dancing performance, in order to prevent him from checking his mailbox. And Helmer agrees: “(Archer’s version) I promise. All this evening I shall be your slave. Little helpless thing-!” Luo translates this sentence as “I promise you. This evening I shall be
your slave! **Useless little thing**” (我答應你。今晚我做了你的奴隸罷！無用的小東西。) (Hu and Luo 1918: 550). Again, Luo leaves out the affectionate flavor, the mixture of condescension and admiration, in Helmer’s speech, and replaces it with a clear, patronizing tone.

This intensification of the husband’s position as the superior oppressor in their relationship is in tune with the social criticism in Hu Shi’s “Ibsenism.” “Ibsenism” has six sections—four discussion sections on four different topics plus an introduction and a conclusion. One of the four discussion sections is dedicated to family issues, drawing examples from *A Doll’s House* and *Ghosts*. In the section, Hu launches a severe attack on the absolute dominance of the man in the family:

> The man of the family is completely selfish. He seeks happiness, comfort and honor and so he marries. … The wife is wholly a slave. … Her job is to please her husband. … She has no need for the ability to think, because her husband can think for her.” (Hu 1987: 156)

Along the same line, Luo’s translation shows some effort in staging Helmer as a subject to be readily problematized. In this sense, Luo is in sync with Hu’s interpretation. His translation intensifies the artificiality of the plot. He pushes the Chinese Ibsen to an opposite direction from the naturalistic Ibsen perceived in much European criticism. In other words, Luo’s translation makes the characters in *A Doll’s House* more artificially
functional for the theme of social criticism: this diverts the Chinese Ibsen from the naturalist principle, in which Ibsen had more faith as he grew old (see Archer, Introduction), that the characters and scene should not appear to be pre-arranged for a certain purpose. This fissure already emerged when the 1918 translation readapted the original play title as “Nora,” directing the May Fourth Chinese readers’ attention to the female antagonist and related social critiques. In the years that followed, the fissure grew wider as the Chinese Ibsen inspired compositions of plays, including Hu Shi’s own *Greatest Event in Life* (Zhongshen dashi; 1919). Many of these plays share the feature that the main characters are designed very artificially for the propagation of certain social critiques or ideologies.\(^\text{19}\)

As regards Hu Shi’s translation of the third act, I think it is also thematically tilted, in ways either similar with or different from Luo’s. Similar to Luo, Hu sometimes manipulates the dialogue in order to underline the Ibsenist theme. For example, in the English text he was translating from, Helmer says to Nora “miserable creature—what have you done?” when he discovers her forgery. Hu seizes the chance and translates “miserable creature” into Chinese as “miserable *woman*—what have you done?” correlating with the female liberation theme he identifies in *A Doll’s House* in “Ibsenism.”

Because Hu Shi’s English was better than Luo’s, and he is more faithful to his English source text, he does not leave as many signs of artificial manipulation as Luo.

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\(^{19}\) Other examples include Guo Moruo’s *Wang Zhaojun* 王昭君 and Ouyang Yuqian’s *A Shrew* 汲妇.
does. However, Hu’s translation has another distinctive feature that makes it inviting for the thematic mode of reading. In Hu’s translation, highlights are sometime added to mark the “important” lines in the drama. These highlights are indicated by little circles to the right side of the relevant sentences (see figure 1 on the right, taken from Hu and Luo 1918: 559). We can be sure that these highlights are Hu Shi’s, instead of any editor’s, because the first two acts Luo translated do not have any such highlights.

These highlights lead the reader to rethink the arguments in “Ibsenism.” It is not at all difficult to find for every highlighted sentence a corresponding statement in “Ibsenism.” For example, the dotted sentence in the excerpt above comes from the scene in which Nora is disgusted when Helmer looks at her as if looking at his plaything. In response, Helmer says to Nora: “why shouldn't I look at my dearest treasure?—At all the beauty that is mine, all my very own?” These words can be employed to support the point in “Ibsenism” that Helmer, as the representative for the oppressive husband in the family, “wants his wife to be nicely dressed and made-up. The wife is wholly a slave” (Hu 1987: 156). In addition, a number of the highlighted dialogues are already quoted in “Ibsenism” to sustain Hu’s arguments. Hu’s highlights in his translation, in general, remind the reader that these sentences are of particular importance and should be read in the light of “Ibsenism.” Every marked
sentence is a fiber of Hu’s string of pragmatic realism in the name of “Ibsenism”: they reveal the real, problematic conditions of the family and society that need to be reformed—“this is Ibsenism.”

4) Reflections

In general, the 1918 translation project reflects the New Culturalist attitude, which favored interpretation and criticism over the actual text. It is evident that Hu Shi surveyed quite a number of Ibsen’s dramas to find examples to include in his “Ibsenism” essay. Following the translation project, he even composed a play written in the general spirit of his “Ibsenism.” The translation itself, however, could be better. Hu’s section and Luo’s section do not quite correlate with each other in terms of some basic format: Hu has the highlights, whereas Luo does not; and they sometimes use different names for the same characters, not to mention that Luo’s translation has some basic linguistic mistakes that should not have escaped the eyes of a qualified editor. This kind of translation contrasts sharply with the translation principles of the Critical Review School, group established five years later than the New Culturalists; the Critical Review scholars had a far more rigorous attitude toward translation practice. As regards to the New Culturalists, their introduction of world literature emphasizes the interpretive level more than the textual level. The translation, moreover, is thematically enhanced in such a way that it sheds light back on the pre-established interpretation.
Theoretically speaking, the New Culturalist translation of Ibsen involves a twin-track process: one overt track confirms the textual link between Ibsen’s plays and their Chinese translations; one covert track carries out the actual transmission of literary value through a textual filiation from Shaw’s criticism to Hu’s “Ibsenism.” The overt track is more of a formality, whereas the covert track fulfills the central ideological mission of the New Culturalist introduction of Ibsen to China. This ideological mission, in brief, concerns establishing a new literary foundation to support writings that were oriented to social criticism and reform.

The comparative importance of the covert track makes the case quite compatible with the value exchange model in world literature, represented by Casanova’s theory. Ibsen’s anti-idealist realism is a literary value, produced first by Shaw and then imported to China by the New Culturalists. As a result, the contentions evoked by the New Culturalists in the May Fourth period may also be used to question Casanova’s value exchange model. The value exchange model fails to take into account the most debated issues on the local level. In my opinion, the debates during the May Fourth period originated from the imaginary completeness and imaginary continuity of the 1918 translation.

In term of imaginary completeness, Casanova considers a main content of literary circulation to be the transportations of literary value from one region to another. With the case of Ibsen, we may reassess this assumption. In the Chinese domestic sphere, the 1918
translation of Ibsen was the start, rather than the conclusion, of the acceptance of Henrik Ibsen by May Fourth China. Intellectuals debated the question of “how to read Ibsen?” They found that calling on people to take action according to the New Culturalist Ibsenism may lead to false social consciousness and actions. So people started to disassemble the imaginary completeness of the New Culturalist Ibsen and reassess it. The alternative readings sanctioned by the 1918 interpretation mushroomed in the following decades. In general, the 1918 “arrival” of the Ibsenist value in China is only the beginning of the story.

One example of alternative readings of Ibsen can be found in Lu Xun’s writings. During the early 1920s, there was a social craze in calling for Nora-style individualistic rebellions against the oppressive family and society. The motivation of this “home-leaving” movement was closely related with Hu Shi’s interpretation of Ibsen in “Ibsenism.” Lu Xun has two well-known texts, “What Happens after Nora Leaves” 娜拉走後怎樣 (a lecture delivered in 1923) and “Regret for the Past” 傷逝 (a fiction written in 1925), which address the “home-leaving” craze. In “What Happens after Nora Leaves,” Lu Xun (2005) argues that Ibsen himself had no intention to offer answers to social problems or to call for reforms. The problems of family and human society identified in A Doll’s House, or in Ibsen’s other plays, do not (as Hu Shi implies in “Ibsenism”) easily lead to effective practical solutions. According to Lu Xun, the search for solutions requires people to take into consideration China’s particular social
conditions and national character; the real solutions, if they exist, will be far more
difficult to find and execute than simply to “leave home.”

Another example comes from Cao Yu 曹禺，an important Chinese playwright. His
drama creations, starting from his famous career-launching play Thunderstorm 雷雨,
published in 1933, broke free from the New Culturalist thematic paradigm of reading
Ibsen. Cao Yu’s plays find inspirations from the formal and structural techniques of
Ibsen’s works. For example, the command of the “well-made play” structure manifested
in Cao Yu’s plays is partly attributed to the influence of Ibsen’s A Doll’s House and
Ghosts (Hsia 1999: 318).

My skepticism about the imaginary continuity concerns the New Culturalists’ opaque
processing of their source texts. As I have shown in my foregoing discussion, although
Hu Shi imported Shaw’s criticism, he remolded it greatly according to the historical
situation of May Fourth China. This process of rewriting is not visible to the readers,
fostering in the Chinese reading public two kinds of illusions: first, that the New
Culturalists were introducing authentic Western literature and criticism; and, second, that
they were introducing conventional literary value from the Western world (not some
personal ideas by a British critic whom few 1910s Chinese had ever heard of). This is the
kind of literary politics I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, especially the May
Fourth intellectual uses of the Chinese “isms” as if they were globally standardized terms.
The New Culturalist problematic assumption about world literature leads directly to the accusation that the New Culturalists’ so-called “Western literature” was a distorted picture, an unreasonable, insignificant fragment claiming to be the whole. A leading Critical Review scholar, Hu Xiansu, criticized the New Culturalists for “only acquiring the malformed West European culture, neither able to help overcome the weaknesses of our national learning, nor to introduce the strong points of other nations’ learning” (1922: 34).

On reading Ibsen, the New Culturalists deferred a range of other possibilities in terms of interpretation, translation, and text selection. Hu Shi gives his Ibsenist realism too much explanatory and pragmatic power, suggesting to the Chinese public that there were no alternative views left to make sense of social reality. In effect, readers were offered the Ibsenist criticism of family and society, and then prodded by the New Culturalist ideology to engage in Ibsenist-style social reform. This was the reason the Critical Review scholars accused the New Culturalists of being prestige-seeking politicians and sophists who were poisoning the youth (Mei 1921).²⁰

Ibsen’s literary identity in the New Culturalist account was not marked by his globally differentiated circulation, or by the network of global works and authors in which Ibsen has been situated. Instead, the New Culturalist Ibsen was a literary talent, whose works can enlighten the people and society, single-handedly, without the help of

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²⁰ Notice that these accusatory words are borrowed from Plato. Sometimes the Critical Review scholars used interesting terms like these. As we proceed onto the third chapter, there will be no surprise about why Plato’s phrase should be spoken by the Critical Review scholars.
other authors and thinkers. The New Culturalist Ibsen resembles a self-portrait more than a mirror (in Fritz Strich’s sense)—a self-portrait of the New Culturalist, who asserts his talent to produce a new, modern national literature from ground zero. Several Chinese New Culturalist playwrights have expressed an ambition to be “the Chinese Ibsen”—who is unrelated to the real Henrik Ibsen; the “Ibsen” they wanted to be was, from early on, a position they designed for themselves in the name of Ibsen—a modern, national hero who saves his society from corruption and self-deception. The Chinese playwright Xiong Foxi wrote in 1931 that “we know Ibsen because he advocates female liberation; we are aware of Ibsen because he supports social reform; we agree with Ibsen because he criticizes all the decadence and hypocrisy in society; we admire him, because he promotes individualism” (1931: 115). Behind this “Ibsen” in Xiong’s statement stand “the New Culturalists,” who receive all the power and prestige designated nominally to “Ibsen.”

One may ask: how is it problematic that the New Culturalists interpreted Ibsen in their particular way? Isn’t this kind of active appropriation of texts from other cultures part of the whole dynamic of world literature? Feeling obliged to answer this important question, I find myself facing an essential ethical choice that can be related to three fields of study: world literature, translation study, and the historical study of the May Fourth. The New Culturalist appropriation of Ibsen’s text is a perfect example of André Lefèvere’s notion of “refraction.” Refraction means the process by which a text, when entering a new cultural and linguistic space, is re-interpreted and re-conceived (or
misinterpreted and misunderstood, as many will consider it) by the new cultural and linguistic context that is receiving the text (Lefèvere 2000: 234). Refraction has three parameters, measuring three kinds of translator’s benefit that motivate refractions: ideological benefit, economic benefit, and benefit of social status (234). In interpreting Ibsen in their particular way, the New Culturalists benefited in terms of ideology and social status—that is, they legitimized their intention to reform Chinese literature and gained intellectual authority. “Let’s accept that refractions . . . have always been with us in literature,” Lefèvere suggests (235). Accepting this suggestion will also mean accepting that active appropriation of foreign texts is a normal mechanism of world literature. However, recognizing such line of commitments means diverting from another line of beliefs that were established from the very beginning of the idea of world literature. “General world literature,” Goethe argues, “can only develop when nations get to know all the relations among all the nations” (2013: 14). This ideal vision of world literature is in line with Goethe’s influential translation belief that good translations are those that attract the reader to the original texts (2012: 66). Here, I think the most important difference between Goethe and Lefèvere concerns the question: what attitude toward foreign cultures and texts should we hold? The two theorists offer two choices: for Lefèvere, we should live the fact that our knowledge of the cultural other is always mediated through our own interests; for Goethe, we should always be ready to travel across cultural distances between us and understand the cultural other. For now, I would
like to add in a missing puzzle in this debate I just reflected on: a May Fourth intellectual group whose ethical principles were quite akin to Goethe’s ideal about world literature and translation. The concerned group is the Critical Review School. I first push aside the above abstract theoretical considerations and approach the intellectual group from its historical background.
Chapter 3: The Critical Review School:
Rethinking the Classical Chinese Canon by Translating

Nowadays, one common view held by Chinese historians about the Critical Review School is that it was comprised of conservatives who advocated the American New Humanism to counteract the radicalism of the New Culturalists. In other words, the Critical Review School is viewed as the group who translated and presented the New Humanism, along with the representative American New Humanist Irving Babbitt, to China—in a similar “ism”-oriented pattern as the New Culturalists’ translation and introduction of Ibsen and anti-idealist realism.

In this chapter, however, I offer a different perspective on the Critical Review School, sticking to their intellectual practices that involve world literature. It is true, that the Critical Review scholars considered the New Humanism as their ideological guideline, and they published essays about New Humanism and Chinese translations of the New Humanist essays written in English or French; despite their devotion in spreading New Humanist ideas, however, the Critical Review scholars had much engagement with literary translation. In their translations, they often show an explicit attempt to reinvent the relation between China and the West in terms of language and culture. As I
demonstrate, efforts of such reinventions were consciously invested into morphemes and ideologemes. The Critical Review School’s reinvention of translation was as characteristic of the School as the conservatism and New Humanism that they advocated in China in the early 1920s. This means that we should understand the Critical Review School not only in the ism-centered approach that is often used to study the New Culturalists. Instead of “ism,” the idea of “network” is central in my understanding of the Critical Review approach to introducing works of world literature.

1) A Brief historical Background of New Humanism and the Critical Review School

New Humanism is a school in literary criticism developed around 1900. Irving Babbitt, the most famous New Humanist, was a professor at Harvard University who spent his entire career teaching at Harvard. Babbitt’s 1908 book *Literature and the American College* was the work most responsible in establishing New Humanism. In the book, Babbitt defines his humanism against the humanitarianism he identifies as the grand legacy of Jean-Jacque Rousseau’s romanticism. Humanitarianism in Babbitt’s understanding is marked by a belief in human progression and expansion; such humanitarianism offers an ideological basis for the literary trend that advocates the expression of human emotions and the liberation of suppressed human nature. In contrast, in defining his humanism, Babbitt stresses the necessity of the control of human emotion and the refinement of human knowledge. For New Humanism, such ethical requirements
are found in the Western cultural tradition and can be traced all the way back to Socrates—this is the New Humanist stance against the Romanticist belief that human virtues and rights originate from human nature that exists prior to society and tradition.

Babbitt’s humanism is recognized as a kind of conservatism. It intends to salvage the ethical qualities of past civilizations destroyed by modernization and industrialization. It is quite historical and situational for New Humanism to define itself against romanticism—this is natural for a 1900s school of thought, but it is also the reason why New Humanism has been forgotten so completely in academia in the 21st century. Back in the day, New Humanism was the main rival of New Criticism in the American academy. The leading New Critic, John Crowe Ransom, considered the New Humanists moralists: the New Humanist emphasis on the moral quality of literature was the main point of contention with New Criticism, since New Criticism values the aesthetic quality of literature ("Criticism Inc."). However, the ethical orientation of the theory was the very reason that New Humanism attracted Chinese followers.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Irving Babbitt received a few Chinese graduate students, who, in the years to come, became core members of the Critical Review School. These Chinese students came to America usually with a patriotic heart in search of ways to modernize China. What some of them found inspiring in Babbitt’s humanist ideas was a global perspective in re-valuing traditional Chinese culture. Through the translations by or recollection of his students, we know that Babbitt developed a cross-cultural
perspective in his humanism by thinking about the Chinese literary situation in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. In an essay, which was translated into Chinese and published in the third issue of \textit{Critical Review}, titled “Humanistic Education in China and the West,” Babbitt warns that May Fourth China was re-walking the old path along which the post-industrial West became estranged from a large part of its cultural tradition as a result of adopting scientific pragmatism and undisciplined human liberation. In the essay, Babbitt explicitly names Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw as representatives of the liberal, anti-traditional authors. For Babbitt, the Chinese cultural tradition informed by Confucianism, along with Buddhism and other elements, has a global significance because it has profound ethical consonance with the Western tradition founded by the Hellenic philosophers. In both cultural traditions, there are elements of a cultural universalism that is very precious in a time dominated by the belief in individual freedom and scientific progress (1922: 4-6).

Babbitt’s Chinese students returned to China in the early 1920s and established the Critical Review School with some like-minded domestic scholars. The establishment of the Critical Review School was marked by the launch of the \textit{Critical Review} journal. The \textit{Critical Review} was issued published between January 1922 until July 1933. The scholar who contributed most to the editing and publishing of the journal is Wu Mi (1894-1978), who was Babbitt’s student. In the first half of the 1920s, when the New Culture Movement still dominated the Chinese intellectual sphere, it was not difficult to
distinguish Critical Review School’s cultural and political stance from that of the New Culturalists: the former supported the preservation of Confucianism and thought positively about the literary value of the classical Chinese language for modern times, whereas the latter mostly strived to terminate the modern influence of Confucianism and the classical language. The Critical Review intellectuals found in Babbitt an international ally.

Most existing studies of the Critical Review School deal with the relationship among the Critical Review School, New Humanism, and the New Culturalists. Lydia Liu’s (1995) discussion treats New Humanism as an entry point to examine the Critical Review School’s competitiveness in the grand May Fourth debate on what kind of national culture and literature China was needed in the modern era. By adopting New Humanism, as Liu points out, the Critical Review School challenged the New Culturalists’ position as the true representatives of Western learning (247).

Shen Weiwei (1999, 2000, 2007), an expert historian of May Fourth history, has several books recording the biographies of the Critical Review members and mapping their intellectual network under the theme of “conservatism.” Here, differing from Shen’s historical approach, I would like to develop my discussion through close reading. With the close reading approach, I also adopt Daniel Dooghan’s method of “literary cartography.” Similar to Dooghan’s treatment of Lu Xun’s texts, I use a translation by a Critical Review intellectual (Jing Changji 景昌極) to exemplify the way the school’s
translation produces a network of texts around it. By visualizing the textual network, I show how the Critical Review School’s translation method differs from that of the New Culturalists. And further, I argue that, compared to the New Culturalists, the Critical Review School has a different mode of reading foreign literature that exemplifies a more attentive engagement with the foreign original, a kind of readiness to acknowledge and make sense of the linguistic and cultural distances between China and the culture whose texts are translated.

2) Mapping a Critical Review Scholar’s Translation of Apology

The text I analyze is Jing Changji’s translation of Socrates’ Apology. To introduce Jing Changji briefly, he (1903-1982) was a very versatile scholar, specializing in Buddhism while quite versed in Western philosophy and literature. He contributed the fourth-most articles to the Critical Review over the history of the journal (Shen 1999: 44). Jing’s translation of Apology was published in the third issue (March 1922), which suggests that he was one of the founding members of the Critical Review School. And I show in my “cartographical” close reading that this translation also echoes several texts that carry the core ideas of the School. Following Apology, Jing also published in the journal translations of other chapters of Plato’s Dialogue, i.e. Crito (4th issue) and Phaedo (10th issue). Similar to what I did in the previous chapter, the following discussion examines three kinds of texts: interpretative and argumentative essays written by May
Fourth scholars, the Chinese translation(s) of foreign literary texts, and essays written by non-Chinese literary authorities. However, in the Critical Review’s case, the interrelation among the three groups of texts is different from that in the New Culturalists’ case, a point I revisit after I finish my presentation of Jing’s translation. Before going into Jing’s translation of *Apology*, however, I would like to first introduce a Critical Review core text that expresses the School’s translation principles.

In the ninth issue (September 1922 issue) of *Critical Review*, Wu Mi attaches an editor’s note to a translation of Charles Lamb’s prose, summarizing Critical Review’s principles of translation. In the note, Wu lists five standards for Critical Review translations:

1. First, in terms of the selection of the translated texts, they should be classics from the West that have been well received in Western society.

2. Second, in terms of collation and proofreading, the translator should be an expert of what he or she is translating. Furthermore, the editor [basically Wu himself] will make sure that the translation is faithful and comprehensible.

3. Third, in terms of annotation, the translator or editor should annotate sentences that are meaningful or relevant with historical background, quotations, etc. The annotated translation should meet the standard that it can serve as textbooks for students, or references for researchers who want to study the original text.

4. Fourth, in terms of word choice, the word use of the translation should be able to
convey the spirit of the original text, and it should avoid producing additional moods not found in the original.

5. Fifth, in terms of the choice of form and genre, the form and genre of the translated text should correlate to those of the source text. This is to say, the translator must use Chinese prose to translate the prose in the language of the source text. Furthermore, the consideration of the translation should take into consideration if the source text is archaic or contemporary, ancient or modern, high-brow or popular. This means that the correlation should be exact to an extent, as Wu exemplifies, that Plato and Aristotle should be translated using the language and phrases found in the Chinese classics such as the *Analects*, *The Records of the Grand Historian*, and so on.

Now that we have had a first impression of these principles, I briefly compare them to the domestication-foreignization criterion in translation studies. The distinction between “domesticating” and “foreignizing” a text in translation was first introduced by the German theorists Friedrich Schleiermacher. With the belief that a great many difficulties in translation result from the distance between the language of the original writer and the language of the translator, Schleiermacher summarizes two translation approaches to mediate the original writer and the reader of translation. The two approaches are foreignization (i.e. to translate by privileging linguistic and cultural elements of the original writer’s language and culture, bringing the reader of the translation across the
linguistic and cultural distance to the original writer) and domestication (i.e. to translate by privileging linguistic and cultural elements familiar to the reader of the translation, bringing the original writer closer to the reader). Wu Mi’s set of translation principles, curiously, appears to be a mixture of foreignization and domestication. The second and third principles are requirements about the translator’s knowledge and annotation about the background of the source text, which are technically meant to pursue the foreignization approach. When it comes to the fourth principle, it becomes more obvious that the Critical Review School translators were expected to convey the spirit of the original text, namely bring the Chinese readers to the cultures of the original writers. The fifth principle, however, takes on the color of domestication, because it requires the Critical Review translators to reproduce foreign texts with the corresponding forms and genres in Chinese literary tradition. In my opinion, the story behind this mixture of domestication and foreignization concerns the New Humanist mode of production of the knowledge about the West-China cultural distance. Next, I demonstrate that the principles Wu summarizes are profoundly in tune with, on the one hand, a considerable number of translations published in Critical Review by the mid-1920s and, on the other hand, Irving Babbitt’s New Humanism.

In terms of New Humanism, Babbitt envisions in “Humanistic Education in China and the West,” “an internationalism of the humanistic gentlepeople” that unites all the humanistic traditions (12). For China, this means a mission to find ways to correlate the
Confucian tradition with the Western humanistic tradition. It is not difficult, then, to
discover that part of Wu’s translation principles put into practice Babbitt’s humanistic
beliefs. The first principle quite obviously favors the translation of the Western cultural
canon—which is essentially the texts that constitute the humanistic “old civilization.”
The fifth principle is also crafted in the same spirit. It realizes Babbitt’s proposal to unite
the humanistic traditions of all civilizations. Following Babbitt’s idea, Wu Mi frequently
expresses in his own writing the intention to compare Chinese ancient sages, such as
Confucius, with Western ones, such as Socrates. In “On New Culture Movement,”
published in the 4th issue, Wu laments that “it has always been the case that in the time of
radical social change, religion and morals will lose their authority, while fetishism (物本
主義) prospers. This explains the situation of Confucius and Mencius in our country, and
that of Socrates and Plato in the West” (22). He then suggests that, to restore the moral
order disturbed by social change, the humanism (人本主義) of Confucius and Mencius
should be recognized as the root of the Chinese moral system. Further, Wu proposes to
compare the Chinese humanistic tradition with “the thoughts since Plato and Aristotle, a
selection of the ideas of great Western thinkers,” and “melt them into one pot.” By this
method, a new national culture that combines the essences of the East and the West will
be achieved. It appears that, in proposing such a grand project, Wu has concrete practical
methods in mind; translation is one of them.

Regarding Schleiermacher’s theory of domestication and foreignization, I think Wu
Mi’s ideal of translation differs from Schleiermacher’s theoretical presupposition; Schleiermacher believes that there is always an objective distance between the source and target language in translation. In my opinion, the ideal of translation assumed in Wu’s principles dwells heavily on the belief that distances between cultural and linguistic communities are not restrictions on translation, as Schleiermacher may argue, but a kind of knowledge produced by translation. As a matter of fact, people in the May Fourth China did not know much about how China was different from (or similar with) other cultural traditions. The translation principles of the Critical Review School show the school’s consciousness to fill in this blank of knowledge by means of translation. In addition, the knowledge that the Critical Review translations aim to produce is ideologically pre-modeled by the New Humanist belief that the intellectual origins of the great civilizations are ethically similar. Next, I conduct a close reading of Jing Changji’s translation, which serves as a concrete case illustrating the interrelation between Critical Review translation, the West-China distance and New Humanism.

Jing Changji’s translation of Socrates is the earliest attempt of the School to re-think the Western humanistic tradition in Chinese language. In the following analysis of Jing’s translation, I mainly measure it against Wu’s five principles.

First, Jing’s selection of text is undoubtedly typical for the Critical Review School. Plato’s recollection of Socrates words—no one would disagree that this is absolutely the core of the Western cultural tradition, the very origin of “the West.”
Second, about the translator’s mastery of the translated text, by no means can we consider Jing an expert in ancient Greek, because in 1922 Jing was just a 19-year-old junior at Central University in Nanjing. The source text Jing used was Benjamin Jowett’s famous first English translation of the Dialogues from Greek, and he also used as reference another English translation by Paul Elmer More, another notable American New Humanist critic. Of course, it is very likely that Jing received help from his professors and the editor\(^2\)\(^1\), but the result is a translation that shows the translator’s ample knowledge about the related Greek historical background.\(^2\)\(^2\) Of course, there are a few traces of Jing’s lack in his knowledge about certain things in Greek history. One example concerns an English clause, untranslated in Jing’s version, which specifies the poets Socrates conversed with, who were “tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts” (Jowett 8). My guess is that Jing Changji did not manage to find what does “dithyrambic” mean.

Third, with regard to annotation, Jing’s translation is effectively annotated. I managed to find an 1892 Oxford edition of Jowett’s translation, which contains the complete information Jowett published about Apology. Jowett’s annotation is mostly analysis of and commentary on Socrates words, which may have helped Jing translate, but are not included in Jing’s translation. As for More’s translation, it includes notes with

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\(^2\)\(^1\) The help Jing received may be significant, because Jing majored in history and his advisor was Liu Yizheng, a famous historian of China and a core member of the Critical Review School. Also, it is very possible that it was Wu Mi who introduced Paul Elmer More’s translation to Jing, because we know from Wu’s diary (1998: 102) that, when he was still a student in Harvard in 1919, he was quite familiar with More’s Shelburne Essays (The collection of More’s essays that includes his translation of Apology). Imaginably, Jing’s translation should also be a collective project, to which other Critical Review intellectuals had contributed considerably.

\(^2\)\(^2\) It is always possible that some of the translation and annotation were done by the editor, Wu Mi, instead of Jing Changji. For convenience, I will just consider that the translation and annotation is Jing’s individual effort—such supposition will not affect my line of discussion, which intends to show the textual network related with the Critical Review School, not any single intellectual.
some background information, for example, about the senate in Athens in Socrates’ time, informing us who Anaxagora of Clazomenae is, etc. Jing keeps some of More’s annotations in his Chinese translation. Apart from these, there are a number of notes that Jing added himself. These notes are of two kinds. The first kind is detailed background information for Chinese readers: for example, who Aristophanes is and how he represented Socrates in his dramas (see figure 2 below). Obviously, this kind of annotations functions to offer the readers knowledge about Greek history and literature.

The second kind of annotation is more interesting—let me translate one of them. One of the points Socrates makes in *Apology* is that he is the wisest man (according to the Oracle) only because he knows his ignorance while others do not. Here, Jing (7) comments with an annotation: “this is also what is meant by Confucius’s aphorism ‘When you know a thing,
to tell that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it;—this is knowledge.” There are three such annotations—not many, compared to the total number of annotations, which is around thirty—but they certainly reveal the translator’s awareness of humanistic internationalism, which I introduced earlier. Also, I think such an effort should be evaluated positively, since it is true that Socrates and Confucius share the idea that self-knowledge is an important kind of knowledge. Such similarities found between Confucius and Socrates can showcase the intended cross-cultural comparison by the translator.

As for the fourth principle on word choice, I would like to combine it with the fifth principle of genre choice. As I will show momentarily, word choice in the translation is determined by the translator’s choice of genre of the target text. It is an interesting question, as we will see, whether Jing’s translation of *Apology* introduces additional moods into the original text, because the classic question of faithfulness in translation theory may be dissolved in more complicated issues, which I have reflected on at the end of the second chapter. In general, I consider Jing’s translation of *Apology*, in Lefèvere’s term (2010: 26), as a rewriting of the English version with a poetics that is dominated by Confucian literary devices, genres, idioms, etc. Again, as André Lefèvere reminds, refractions—additions, omissions, and misrepresentations of meanings—always exist in

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23 This is a quote of Confucius from the third chapter of the *Analects*, very well-known for native Chinese speakers. The English quote is taken from James Legge’s translation of the *Analects*, p.151. It is worth mentioning that the character “zhì 知” which Legge translated as “knowledge” is very often understood in the Confucian tradition as “wisdom,” which is a Socrates’ keyword, too. The correlation of the motifs in Socrates’ and Confucius’ ideas must have amazed the Critical Review translator.
literary translation. But it is this point that Wu Mi does not want to accept in his principles. In practice, however, the unique way Jing Changji handles the Chinese refraction of his source text will be the very point of interest in the following discussion of the fifth principle.

Now let’s move to the fifth principle, the choice of form and genre. Quite consistent with Wu Mi’s suggestion, Jing uses classical Chinese and wordings from the *Analects* and other Confucian classics to translate *Apology*. In ancient China, there was no rhetoric or democracy in the strict senses of those words; there was also no rhetorical genre of the public self-defense, such as the Greek *apologia*. To compensate, Jing employs more dynamic and situational genre equivalences, which further complicate the textual map. For example, Socrates is an early practitioner in the Western tradition of private education, and Confucius made a similar kind of contribution to Chinese civilization. So, in Jing’s translation, we can find a Chinese phrase like “shuxiu” 束脩 to render “tuition fee.” “Shuxiu” in ancient Chinese means a slice of dried meat; Confucius once said that “from the man bringing his bundle of dried flesh (shuxiu) for my teaching upwards, 24 I have never refused instruction to any one” (Legge 197). Thus, in classical Chinese, “shuxiu” means a token, a symbolic amount of tuition. It is quite suitable to apply “shuxiu” to Socrates, who charged no instruction fee.

Also in *Apology*, Socrates advises his audience “not to take thought for your persons

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24 James Legge’s English version of the *Analects* is a strict word-for-word translation, which tries not to change the original sentence order. This method may result in awkward English, like this one.
or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul” (Jowett 123). By the 1920s, there was already a standard phrase in Chinese to translate “soul,” which was “hun” 魂 or “linghun” 靈魂. However, the phrase Jing uses is “xingling” 性靈, which approximately means human nature and spirit. In my opinion, there are stories behind this word choice. A standard translation of “soul,” using “linghun 靈魂,” would involve an emphasis on the body-soul binary, which did not exist in the Confucian tradition. Alternatively, Jing’s word choice, “xingling,” with the addition of the notion of “xing” 性, redirects the emphasis to a rich line of Confucian learning traceable all the way back to The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong Yong).25 The very first sentence of this Confucian classic says:

天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教。

what Heaven has conferred is called THE NATURE (xing 性); an accordance with this nature is called THE PATH of duty; the regulation of this path is called INSTRUCTION (Legge 383, capitalization and italics by Legge).

In this brief quote, there are key notions of “Heaven,” “nature,” “path (Dao),” “duty,”

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25 The major school of thought in this lineage is the Cheng-Zhu School, which is also known as the School of Xing and Li 性理學. It is the major school of Neo-Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism is the reformed Confucianism started from the late 9th century; it is not the same thing as the New Confucianism, which started in the early 20th century). The dialectics between xing (human nature) and li (principle, rational law) one of the major motifs around which the school developed its learning. The Cheng-Zhu School had profound influence on Chinese history; the Cheng-Zhu learning dominated the bureaucratic examinations for hundreds of years until the examinations were abolished in 1905. The Doctrine of the Mean is one of the earliest Confucian texts that elaborates on the ideas of xing and li, and it is often quoted by later Confucians.
“instruction.” It is not difficult to find these keywords in Jing’s translation in the immediate context of “xingling.” For example, after the advice of the improvement of the soul, Socrates compares himself to a gadfly sent to the Athenians by the gods, and the gods confer on him the mission to prevent the Athenians from “sleep[ing] on for the remainder of their lives” (see Jowett 124). Here, Jing writes in his translation that Socrates received “a mission conferred by Heaven” 受命於天, which is very similar with the wording in The Doctrine of the Mean. Moreover, “I shall never alter my ways,” Socrates insists, “not even if I have to die many times” (124)—in this sentence, the notion of “my ways” is also rendered by Jing with the same term as “the path” from The Doctrine of the Mean. Socrates, who received his mission from the gods to seek for truth and virtue and who instructed people about how to improve the soul, seems to become in Jing’s translation a role model who practiced the teaching of The Doctrine of the Mean.

The two cases of “shuxiu” and “xingling” reveal but a corner of the literary network in which Jing situates Apology. In the English text Socrates also reasons frequently on honor, righteousness, and death, which is reproduced by Jing using language from yet another crucial Confucian text, The Records of the Grand Historian (Shi ji). Readers familiar with The Records should know that death, righteousness, and honor are its overarching motifs. Moreover, there are also sure links in Jing’s translation to other Chinese classics, such as Mengzi26 (Mencius) and Zhuangzi.27 The latter book, often

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26 Jing borrows from Mengzi wordings like “benmo” 本末, “jixi” 稀希, “xingcha” 省察, “bisi” 避死, etc. Also, Jing borrows heavily from Mengzi its characteristic argumentative style prose. A thorough examination of Mencius’ influence on Jing’s translation would require another chapter-length discussion—which I would have been very willing
known by English readers as *Chuang Tzu*, is a Taoist classic, which further reflects the fact that Jing is not translating as a narrow-minded Confucian conservative; rather, he is searching extensively through the ancient Chinese texts for the appropriate linguistic equivalence of the original Greek phrases.

In sum, Jing’s translation of *Apology* stages a comparative reading between Socrates and several classic Chinese texts. This translation is probably the model that Wu Mi had in mind when he was drafting his translation principles.

3) The Larger Map

Jing Changji’s translation of *Apology* was one of the early examples that gave Wu Mi the confidence to elevate the theoretical significance of Critical Review translations. It is especially the case that Jing’s translation exemplifies Wu’s fifth principle—a principle that imposes very strict translation standards and that appears to put into practice Babbitt’s cross-cultural humanist ideas. Here, I have to mention that Jing’s translation is not the only Critical Review members’ translational practice carried out according to Wu Mi’s principles. Wu Mi published in *Critical Review* his own translation of William Thackeray’s novel, *The Newcomes*. He explains in the translator’s preface that he was trying to use the style of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the greatest Chinese classic novel, to translate Thackeray, because he believed that there was a common value between the

\[\text{to do had I’d been given more time and space for this thesis.}\]

\[\text{Jing uses phrases like “nanmianwang” 南面王, “wuya” 無涯, “wuqiong” 無窮, which will ring a bell for the readers who are familiar with Zhuangzi.}\]

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two novels. According to my experience reading Wu’s translation, he indeed manages to translate Thackeray’s novel with some of the flavors of *Dream*. Likewise, other Critical Review scholars translated the likes of Cicero and Charles Lamb according to similar comparatist viewpoints.

It is beyond my purview to examine all the Critical Review translations so as to comprehensively grasp the map of texts they involve. The translations of the Critical Review School cover over a dozen Western canonical authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, Cicero, Dante, Voltaire, Saint-Beuve, Victor Hugo, Matthew Arnold, Charles Lamb, and so on. There are a few very devoted Critical Review translators, including Wu Mi, Jing Changji, Xu Zhen’e 徐震堮, Chen Jun 陈鈞 (陳汝衡), and Xiang Da 向達. Shen Songqiao (1984: 225) accredits the Critical Review School’s translations of Plato’s *Dialogues* (translated by Jing Changji and Guo Binghe 郭斌和) and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (translated by Xiang Da and Xia Chongpu 夏崇璞) as the first Chinese translations of Greek classics. These achievements are worthy acknowledging, because usually these translators are better remembered for their academic achievements in their respective fields than for their translations.28

Let us return to my three basic texts: Jing Changji’s translation of *Apology*, Wu Mi’s summary of five translation principles, and Irving Babbitt’s “Humanistic Education in

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28 Notably, many of their academic achievements are related to the history of East-West communication. For example, before I knew that Xiang Da 向達 was a member of the Critical Review School and the first Chinese translator of *Nicomachean Ethics*, I knew him by his study of the material culture on the Silk Road. Also, the translators I list were all in their twenties during the early 1920s. They were indeed a group of open-minded “new youth.” The more serious academic contributions for which they are remembered were mainly achieved later than the time of the *Critical Review* journal. However, according to the editor, Wu Mi, some essays on Chinese historical studies in the *Critical Review* had attracted attention from some French sinologists; confer Wu Mi 2004: 183-4.
China and the West.” The implicit resonances among the three texts are beyond dispute. The relation among the three can be described as follows: Babbitt offers the general ideology (the humanistic internationalism), Wu articulates the guiding principles, and Jing is the practitioner. Brief as this one-sentence summary is, it is based on an inaccurate temporal assumption. We know that Jing’s translation was published half a year before Wu Mi wrote his five translation principles. It is very likely that Wu’s five principles are the product of earlier translation practices. Also, Babbitt could not be determining the Critical Review School’s principles of action once and for all. In the literary practices of the Critical Review School, there are dialectic relations between China and the West, the traditional and the modern, theory and praxis. I agree with Yi-tsi Mei’s observation that “the question of how to accommodate effectively translations of Western literature into Chinese traditional literary forms was the subject of ongoing experimentation in the [Critical Review] journal” (Feuerwerker 2008: 151).

Jing’s translation of *Apology* exemplifies the kind of translational literary practice that produces an interstitial space, in Homi Bhabha’s (4) sense, enabling a kind of linguistic and cultural hybridity. For the Critical Review School, this hybridity is the very frontline where the new national culture of China was in the making. In weaving the literary network, which I draw around three key texts of the Critical Review School, the intellectuals try to keep both the Chinese and the Western, both the modern and the ancient, and both the theory and the praxis present in the process of cultural
communication and reformation. This is one of the main points where the Critical Review intellectuals are different from the New Culturalists. As I demonstrated in the second chapter with the example of *A Doll’s House*, all literary efforts in the project served to sharpen the edge of a single appeal (i.e. the appeal of social reform according to anti-idealist realism and individualism). In their discourse, there are always hierarchical differences between China and the West, and between the traditional and the modern, with the latter terms favored over the former.

In my opinion, Jing’s translation offers a very typical case for André Lefèvere’s theoretical distinction between ideology and poetics as two different factors that determine the image of a literary work refracted in translation (2010: 41). On the one hand, New Humanism is the overarching ideology that partly shapes the translating principles and strategies Jing employs to translate *Apology*. The poetics of Jing’s translation, on the other hand, originates from classical Chinese literature, especially the Chinese works and genres considered as “correlative to” those of the text translated. I do not think that the “correlations” established between literary forms are dictated by the school’s ideology, i.e. New Humanism. Rather, I think the idea of “experimentation,” as Yi-tsi Mei terms, better captures the nature of the establishment of the correlations. This experimentation is a very demanding work—more demanding than finding several classical Chinese ideas to translate Socrates’ ideas. As I have mentioned briefly, Jing borrows extensively from Chinese literary classics, like *Mengzi* and *Zhuangzi*, to
reproduce the apologetic and argumentative features in Socrates’ *Apology*. Such task is practically more difficult than attending to certain ideologies when translating. I think Jing’s translation represents a kind of experimental translation whose performative function is to search for the comparative knowledge about West-China similarities.

Of course, during the early 1920s there was a competition on the ideological level between the New Culturalists and the Critical Review School. From the aspect of literature, the contention between literary “isms” was essentially a competition between different ways of evaluating and representing foreign literary traditions. Should one follow Ibsen or Socrates (Plato)? The choice is definitely determined by the ideological standpoint. New Humanism, for sure, was a competitor representing the Critical Review School in the May Fourth arena of “isms”. So, for modern researchers, it is always justifiable to examine the Critical Review School from an approach centered on “New Humanism,” “conservatism,” or “New Confucianism.” However, as I have reasoned in the last paragraph, part of the Critical Review School’s literary and translational efforts are not directly oriented to ideological considerations and are prone to be overlooked by the ism-centered approach.

Contrary to the New Culturalist translation of Ibsen, the Critical Review translation does not chain their literary ideology (i.e. New Humanism) with their translated texts. The idea conveyed in their translation can be more generally conceived as an attentive attitude toward Chinese literary tradition, on the one hand, and the foreign literature, on
the other. As Jing Changji exemplifies in his translation, both Socrates and Confucius are valued (or devalued) by very concrete ideas (such as “what is self-knowledge,” “what is an ethical attitude to death,” etc.). Such attitude to human ideas contrasts sharply with the New Culturalists, who were devaluing the Confucian tradition in wholesale negative terms such as “Confucianism is feudal ethics,” or “the classical Chinese is a dead language.” Such wholesale negation, I argue, is profoundly in line with the “ism” politics during the May Fourth period, since the intellectual cult of “isms” caused people to empower the abstract literary discourses and to overlook the textual basis of ideas. In the previous discussion, we have already experienced the way Hu Shi proclaims literary values with the power of “ism”: “Ibsen’s literature and view of life is a kind of realism,” and “this is Ibsenism.”

In terms of cross-cultural knowledge, the Critical Review School shows some affinity with the conservative tradition of comparative literature. It is very evident that the translation principles of the Critical School want to establish a practical approach in the search for cross-cultural similarity. The Critical Review intellectuals keep both the foreign and the local present while spreading world literary texts and ideas. Such effort echoes perfectly with Strich’s idea that world literature brings to a nation self-knowledge and knowledge about the world. Their translation method can facilitate the kind of reading, in Goethe’s sense, in which the reader is attracted to the original texts and cultures. Practically, the Critical Review translators add abundant annotations in their
translations or write informative articles, so as to make sure that readers should have sufficient knowledge about what is good literature (at least in the Critical Review School’s sense). It is important, as they would emphasize, to have the ability to tell good literary works from the third-rate ones flooding the Chinese book market in the 1920s.

The cross-cultural knowledge the Critical Review School envisioned was based on the belief in the existence of universal ethical values. Such belief was supported by their mode of translation that manifests cultural similarities between China and the West. The belief also formed the ground for the school to argue against the theme-driven literature promoted by Hu Shi’s Ibsenism, which, as I mentioned at the end of the third section of chapter 2, considers social criticism as the decisive factor in the literary plot. In an essay written in 1923, Wu Mi (5) reflects on the theme-driven literary productions since the start of the New Culture Movement (roughly the time of “Ibsenism”). He argues that although the number of works is significant, few of them really achieved any remarkable literary innovation: their contents were usually devised according to a few hackneyed themes, such as liberal topics about individual freedom and free love, Marxist topics about the glory of labor and the proletariat, or iconoclastic topics about the evils of tradition. Wu goes on to elaborate nine principles of what he considers the true path toward literary creation. These principles are too complicated to discuss here, but it is notable that some of the principles advise reading, learning, and imitating works from the Chinese and Western literary canons.
I think Wu’s criticism of the literary creations during the New Culture Movement is quite accurate, but the solution he offers (i.e. Wu’s “true path toward literary creation”) has significant limitations. As a matter of fact, the core members of the Critical Review School had no remarkable literary creations. Their over-emphasis on cross-cultural similarities may have prevented them from thinking creatively against the past and the West. Their intention to understand the Western literary tradition via its similarity with the Chinese tradition can sometimes be unproductive. One example can be found in Wu Mi’s translation of Thackeray. In the translation, he recast Thackeray’s novel partly into the form of a traditional zhanghui 章回 novel. As a result, every chapter in Wu’s translation ends with the formulaic sentence: “if you want to know what happens next, please listen to the next chapter” 預知後事如何，請聽下回分解. In Thackeray’s original text, there is absolutely no such layer of meaning. This is too artificial a rendering for a vain invention of China-West literary similarity.

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29 Several writers, who have connections with the school, do have important literary creations. For example, Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, who was a Chinese literary scholar, comparatist, novelist, and a student of Wu Mi, has a famous novel Fortress Besieged 围城. Published in 1947, the novel does not have much to do with the Critical Review School in the 1920s. Also, there were May Fourth intellectual groups that were more devoted (both practically and theoretically) to literary creation than the two groups studied in this thesis. The Chinese Literary Association and the Creation Society are two most influential creation-oriented groups during the period; both were established in 1921.

30 Traditional Chinese novel originates from a special kind of oral story-telling performance. The scripts for the performances that were circulated independently were considered as the most primitive form of Chinese novel. Such textual circulation started roughly in the Song Dynasty. Because of the oral origin, in traditional Chinese novels there are usually many textual remainders of a story-telling performer. The formulaic endings of “if you want to know what happens next, please listen to the next chapter” is one of such kind of remainders. Also, many traditional novels assume their narrators to be oral performers who are totally detached from the stories. According to Henry Zhao (1995), it was in the mid-Qing Dynasty when more varieties of narrators were introduced to Chinese fictional writings to replace the oral performer narrator. So, I consider it very redundant that Wu Mi brings back the voice of an oral performer.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

For my conclusion, I start with some reflections on the question: how can these two May Fourth cases be considered subjects of the study of world literature? Since there have been few studies that have related the May Fourth period to the field of world literature, my attempt of bridging the two areas of interest may result in critical reflection on two levels. The first level of criticism is directed toward the ongoing construction of the field of world literature; the second level, then, will target the May Fourth literary practices discussed in my case studies. But first, I would like to direct attention for a brief moment onto the debate in world literature concerning the contemporary Chinese poet Bei Dao. Bei Dao started his literary career in the 1970s, and was exiled from mainland China because of his participation in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. In 1990, the American Sinologist Stephen Owen published a review essay about Bei Dao titled “What is World Poetry?” In the essay, Owen identifies Bei Dao’s poetry as an example of “world poetry.” This is not at all a complement; Owen considers “world poetry” a problematic category resulting from the global cultural hegemony of Euro-American modernism:

Poets who write in the “wrong language” (even exceedingly populous wrong languages, like Chinese) not only must imagine themselves being
translated in order to reach an audience of a satisfying magnitude. They
must also engage in the peculiar act of imagining a world poetry and
placing themselves within it. And, although it is supposedly free of all
local literary history, this “world poetry” turns out, unsurprisingly, to be a
version of Anglo-American modernism or French modernism. … This
situation is the quintessence of cultural hegemony, when an essentially
local tradition (Anglo-European) is widely taken for granted as universal.

(28)

For Owen, “world poetry” is a kind of problematic literature that is written as essentially
translatable, intending to be recognized by the Euro-American readership that dominates
the world literary sphere. This means that this kind of literature, at its moment of creation,
severs itself from the untranslatable, i.e. the complex cultural and linguistic embodiment
of local culture and history in a literary composition. Since “poetry is what gets lost in
translation” (the famous aphorism by Robert Frost), let’s write poetry with only
translatable elements—this is the essential attitude in “world poetry” that Owen has a
problem with.

This issue of world literature Owen identifies has been widely discussed and
criticized by some influential theorists like Rey Chow and David Damrosch. Basically,
these two theorists argue strongly for the respect for “world poetry,” because it is the
legitimate outcome of diasporic literature (Chow 1993: 2-4) or of transnational literary
circulation through translation (Damrosch 2003: 24). I will not repeat the ideas of Owen’s criticizers. Instead, using my examples, I would like to argue that Owen’s “world poetry” problem may not be as general and representative as many might think; the “world poetry” mode may not be the only way a third-world author writes vis-à-vis world literature. The New Culturalists and the Critical Review School represent two alternative modes.

In my opinion, value and recognition are two parameters Owen uses to define “world poetry”: “world poetry” is written to be recognized by Euro-American readers (the recognition parameter), and it represents a local version (the Anglo-European) of modernism as the universal (the value parameter). The case of the New Culturalist translation of Ibsen, then, represents a single British critic’s (Bernard Shaw’s) idea as the universal (the value parameter), but does not care at all about international recognition outside China (the recognition parameter). On the other hand, the Critical Review translation of Socrates is very involved with the foreign understanding of the Confucian tradition (the recognition parameter), but is critically aware of the fallacy of the imagined “universal West” (the value parameter). So, if Bei Dao represents the general approach of third-world authors participating in world literature, then what about the New Culturalists and the Critical Review School? How do they relate to world literature?

I think this historical diversity of the ways Chinese intellectuals approach world literature can serve to relocate Owen’s “world poetry” problem. The emerging issue, that
may replace Owen’s concern, is the local command of the question “what is translatable?” And the question is not only linguistic, but also cultural. In Bei Dao’s case, I do not think that there is an essence of “the translatable” to which third-world authors are obligated to respond. Standing at the linguistic boundary, a literary agent defines a local sense of translatability by deciding what is suitable (linguistically and culturally) to send into or out of his home community. That is to say, I do not agree with the presumption of translatability in Owen’s conception of the “world poetry,” which is translatability into the hegemonic West. Before we criticize a conception of “world poetry” or “world literature,” we should not define it with a problematic version of translatability in the first place. This corresponds to Shu-mei Shih’s point that we should not only regard the West as the predominant agent defining world literature. In the same sense, we should not recognize the West as the agent defining translatability. I have provided sufficient information in my case studies about the highly complex decision-making processes that the May Fourth Chinese translators went through. And I tried, in various places, to gauge the complexity using the middle-range tools that involve concepts like literary value, recognition, similarity/difference, and so on.

In Chinese scholarship, the New Culturalist translation of Ibsen is usually not considered in the light of world literature, because it hardly resulted in any social or literary impact outside China. However, I would like to argue that the logical pattern of this translation event is organically embedded in a global problematics of world literature.
Previously, I have argued that the problem of “the imaginary completeness of value transmission,” which applied to the New Culturalist case, is related to their representation of a particular understanding of Ibsen’s social criticism as universal. The logic resembles Owen’s criticism of “world poetry.” Now consider Fredric Jameson’s idea of “national allegory,” by which he means, in literary works by third-world authors, “the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society” (69). Jameson reads four pieces of Lu Xun’s writing with the “national allegory” mode of reading, and identifies Lu Xun’s works as allegories of the national suffering of China in the early 20th century. Isn’t this, then, identifiably a cognitive problem of “the imaginary completeness of recognition”? Compare the “national allegory” mode of reading with the New Culturalist mode of reading Ibsen, we can find that both modes feature a similar process: reading a translation and over-generalizing an interpretation of the translation, ignoring the author’s historical and geographical specificity. Along this line, I can simply rename the New Culturalist method as “the allegory of the universal,” since in the New Culturalist understanding (to readapt Jameson’s wordings) “the story of the private individual destiny in Ibsen’s works is always an allegory of the universal situation and problems of the human culture and society.” The only major difference between Jameson’s allegory and “the allegory of the universal” is that the New Culturalists were motivated by the latter to push for China’s social reform.
The similarity between these modes of reading may reveal some common patterns that have informed problematic transnational knowledge in the first, second, and the third worlds alike. Shu-mei Shih has already pointed out one of the commonalities as the irresponsibility toward difference and distance (2013: 263). In the case of the New Culturalists, it is quite true that they did not take adequately into account the cultural distance between the bourgeois society reflected by Ibsen and May Fourth Chinese society. Their “ism” is produced by “the allegory of the universal,” with which they could ignore the realistic social and literary context of Ibsen’s plays. It is also because of this “responsibility to difference” that I am feeling uneasy about Lefèvere’s suggestion to “accept the existence of refraction.” On the one hand, I totally agree that refraction “has always been with us in literature” (Lefèvere 2000: 235), but on the other hand, I think there are different kinds of refractions informed by different modes of translation—certain modes may fall in the existing criticisms in fields other than translation studies, such as world literature.

Comparatively, Critical Review intellectuals were different; they actively worked to understand and renegotiate the China-West distance by looking into the purported cultural origins of the two civilizations. This is one of the reasons why I think the Critical Review School deserves more academic attention than it has been given.

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31 Here, by “China-West,” “cultural origins” and “civilizations,” I am using the Critical Review scholars’ own terminology to describe their works. Of course, we should always keep in mind that these terms are risking cultural essentialism. And actually, this thesis can serve to examine the textual basis of the Critical Review essentialist discourse. The most typical example in this thesis is that the School uses Socrates’ philosophy to represent the ethical essence of the Western culture.
As I have introduced, from its founding moment, the Critical Review School claimed New Humanism as its guiding principle. It is fair to argue that the Critical Review intellectuals’ literary practices were partly motivated by actual international recognition, because Irving Babbitt did contribute his thoughts and writing to their journal after it was established. However, I think it would be unfair if we remember the Critical Review School only by its commitment to New Humanism—I am more than willing to try rescuing them from the pervasive politics of “isms” during the May Fourth period. From the world literature perspective, the Critical Review’s literary effort concerns a very complex literary endeavor involving both China and Western literary canons.

A Chinese historian, Zheng Shiqu, remarks that the Critical Review School was memorable in the balance they kept in their attitudes toward the East and West (2001: 86). I agree with Zheng, but would like to emphasize the School’s textual effort in mapping the Western and Chinese literary canons. In the terms of the West, Wu Mi’s translation principles clearly intend to build up a repertoire of the Chinese translations of Western canonic works. Viewing the entire life span of the Critical Review journal, the literary translations represent a wide variety of European canonic works. Moreover, what makes the Critical Review School different from common contemporary practices of translating famous Western books is their collective attentiveness to finding comparability between Western and Chinese literary canons. In Jing Changji’s translation of *Apology*, we can clearly see the details of the decision-making process in which the translator determines
the translatability between the text of ancient Greek philosophy and Chinese classics. In my opinion, by doing so, the Critical Review intellectuals provided access to the Western canon for Chinese readers, on the one hand, and modernized the China literary canon, on the other. As John Guillory meaningfully argues, canon modernization is the procedure needed to open the literary canon to the emerging modern readership; and education is one of the major motivations of canon modernization (1993: 32). In term of the Chinese literary canon, it lost much of its institutional infrastructure with the abolishment of traditional education in China around 1910. The Critical Review translation functions to renegotiate the significance of the Chinese canon in modern times by relating it to the Western canon.

It is not a main concern of this thesis, but I should acknowledge the limits of the Critical Review approach in terms of world literature. The most obvious limit is their commitment to cultural canons and to very highbrow, elitist literature. The result of such commitment was that the Critical Review School’s academic achievements seldom survived outside the ivory tower (see also Feuerwerker 2008: 155). As one of Wu Mi’s students recalls, in the modern Chinese literary sphere, a person like Mr. Wu who clumsily preaches the literary values of Homer, Vigil, Dante, and Milton can hardly receive any response other than ridicule (Zheng 2001: 424-5). Around 1920, there were few authors in the world who still drew literary inspiration from Homer, Aristotle, or Confucius. It is not surprising, then, that Critical Review members are usually
remembered for their expertise in history study or literary criticism, and not for influencing the Chinese readership or post-1920 literary composition.

In this thesis, by locating my topic in a middle-range scope, I am also writing with a general intent to reflect on the conception of world literature. I mentioned briefly in my theoretical review my disagreement with David Damrosch’s definition of world literature. I think Damrosch’s conception of world literature represents a theoretical trend that attempts to anchor the idea of world literature onto the microcosmic and the macrocosmic levels—that is to say, to deny the theoretical weight of the middle-range epistemological factors such as value, recognition, etc. It is true that texts and nations always have material forms of existence, so they are easier to theorize than abstract ideas. An example statement of this material-based trend can be Damrosch’s argument that “world literature is writing that gains in translation”; while works that suffer significant losses through translation “remain largely within their local or national context, never achieving an effective life as world literature” (288-9). This thesis, then, can be considered a response to Damrosch’s conception of world literature, in the sense that my cases represent a literary space, i.e. the May Fourth China, in which the middle-range literary ideas are important shaping forces. Although the reality may be misrepresented through the lens of the middle-range concepts, as the case of New Culturalists manifests, we should not ignore their constructive power in the world literary history. The constructive power thus justifies the theoretical significance of the middle-range concepts.
Meanwhile, this thesis also presents a critical point of view to the understandings of world literature that rest mainly on middle-range concepts. For this approach we can find typical examples in Casanova’s theoretical system, which is pillared by the ideas of literary value and recognition. In my opinion, there is a theoretical choice between two views: are literary values and knowledge *circulated* across nations? Or, are they constantly *reproduced* every time the concerned texts cross a linguistic boundary? Such distinction between two choices is very relevant with my evaluation of the translations of New Culturalists and of the Critical Review School. The former pretended to offer a universal valuation of Ibsen even though they were producing a Chinese Ibsen that differed from Ibsen’s images in other cultural spheres. The latter, being aware of the constructive nature of translation, spent remarkable effort in achieving good (good according to New Humanism, at least) reproductions. So, in world literature, difference in the middle-range conceptions does result in different practical consequences. The middle-range of the study of world literature is a theoretic realm that needs to be dealt with carefully.
Works Cited


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