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Translation and Ideology
-----Western Literary Translation in China
(1949-1966), Using World Literature as an Example

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The literary history, from the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949 to the outbreak of the Culture Revolution in 1966, is well-known as “the Seventeen-Year Literature”. The translation of western literature, mainly referring to European and American literature in this essay, during this period was greatly affected by factors such as political ideology and nation-state discourse. Although since the definition of ideology was first proposed by the French Scholar Destutt de Tracy(1754-1836) in the late 18th century, ideology has seen the emergence of over 150 definitions about its itself

and till now no consensus on the issue has been reached among scholars, many of them share some common contents. For example, the definition given by *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (Revised Edition 2002) is: ideology refers to the systematic views and concepts of human beings toward world and society formed on a certain economical basis, as represented specifically by philosophy, politics, art, religion, and ethics, etc. It is a part of superstructure, and has a class nature in a class society.¹ And the one given by *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* is “a. a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture; b. a manner of the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture; c. the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.”² From the above, one can see that although widely different in diction, the two definitions are, to a large extent, similar in nature: both hold that ideology is a systematic body of views, concepts, and theories about world and society. In the attempt to analyze the translation in the seventeen years, especially that of the works in *World Literature*, ideology is only restricted in the sense closely related with politics, that is, it refers to the dominant political ideology, because the ideology then was obviously a part of the socialist superstructure and it constituted “a sociopolitical program”.

As the only official journal publishing translated foreign literature, *World Literature* epitomized mainland China's literary policy towards

¹ *Modern Chinese Dictionary*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2002, p.1495.

² Mish, Frederick C.. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary(Tenth Edition)*. Massachusetts:Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2001, p.574.

foreign literature. A study of *World Literature* sheds light on the ideological influence over the translation of western literature in mainland China in the seventeen years. Due to ideological influence, a great number of literary works from the Soviet Union and so-called “third world” of Asia, Africa as well as Latin America were translated during the seventeen years and my article will make reference to them accordingly.

I. Mainland China’s Policy towards Foreign Literature during the Seventeen Years

During the 1950s and 1960s, the literati were overwhelmed by the frequent advent of critical movements before they could possibly adjust to the politics-oriented society of the PRC.³ The frequent occurring of struggles and critical movements lasted for three decades after the founding of the PRC. The critical movements in the 1950s and 60s, upon looking back, were merely preludes to the decade-long Culture Revolution later on. Of course there were moments, such as the periods during the year 1952 to 1953, 1956 to 1957 and 1961 to 1962, when the tightened control tended to loosen a bit. Such phenomena were commented upon by Hong Zicheng, a Chinese scholar, as follows:

³ Large-scale criticism movements in the literature and art circle during the 1950s and 60s included: 1) criticism of the film *Biography of Wu Xun*, 1950-1951; 2) criticism of Xiao Yemu and other people’s creative writing, 1951; 3) criticism of *A Study of A Dream of Red Mansions* by Yu Pingbo and Hu Shi, 1954-1955; 4) criticism of Hu Feng’s counter-revolutionary clique, 1955; 5) anti-rightist movement and criticism of the anti-Communist Party clique with Ding Ling and Feng Xuefeng as representatives, 1957; 6) Mao Zedong’s speech “Never forget the Class Struggle ” on the Tenth Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party in September, 1962.

Loosening control is a strategy to establish a system compromising to the “non-mainstream” literary views, which, unluckily, will soon be overturned by movements on even larger scales, with more drastic methods and from more aggressive viewpoints.⁴

It is worth noticing that the literature and art policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) before and after the year 1949, including the Party’s attitudes towards foreign literature, came down in a continuous line with basic principles unchanged. The vigilance against and censorship of foreign culture, especially the capitalist culture, had become higher and stricter.

Before the founding of the PRC, Mao Zedong stated clearly in his “On New Democracy” speech that “the essence of foreign culture should be absorbed as raw material for our own culture” and in his “An Address at Yanan Forum on Literature and Art” speech that “all the excellent literature and art heritage should be inherited” and “be utilized in our daily creation of literature and art” and “heritage of our ancestors as well as those of foreigners should never be refused”. Nevertheless, the censorship still functioned. On 21st January 1948, the Ministry of Publicity published on *People’s Daily* “The Unified Publication Regulations of Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong and Henan”, of which Item 5 of Article 5 stated that “No copying, publication and public distribution of books from the capitalist countries, such as America, Great Britain, districts occupied by Chiang Kai-shek troop

⁴ Refer to Zicheng, Hong. *Literary History of Contemporary China*. Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1999, p.39.

and persons without the approval of the Central Bureau of Publication are allowed.”

After the founding of the PRC, CPC leaders such as Mao Zedong had a great doubt as to the capability of the intellectuals, most of whom originally were landlords, well-to-do peasants, bourgeois and petty bourgeois, to lead the New Democracy Culture and the future communist “new culture” and “new literature”. In Mao Zedong’s viewpoint, the “proletarian literature team” should comprise of those of worker or peasant origins. Therefore, extra caution should be taken in the choice of foreign literature since most translators were intellectuals, to whom the bourgeois ideology and lifestyle held great appeal.

In a cultural context as this, translators, foreign literature scholars as well as all the others in the literature circle, were in constant fear of persecution. With the critical movements surging and escalating, they were so scared that they invariably worked cautiously within the national ideology framework, not daring to go beyond the lines.

After 1949, it became “trendy” among writers and artists to link their work to politics. Translators were no exception. Jin Ren, a renowned translator, stated in “On the Ideology of Translation” that “translation was and always is a political responsibility. Only sometimes we consciously serve politics, while sometimes unconsciously.”⁵

With the change of political situations at home and abroad in the

⁵ From Ren, Jin. “On the Ideology of Translation”, *Translation Notes*, Vol.2, No.1, January 5th, 1951.

1960s, mainland China had increasingly rejected western culture. “Things that are politically reactionary may have artistic values as well. The more artistic values a work has, the more reactionary its content is, the more it will poison people and the more severely it should be rejected”.⁶ These words of Mao Zedong uttered from a political high ground not only pointed to creative writing but also acted as a warning that translators could not dare to ignore.

On 12th December, 1963, several years after the rupture of Sino-Soviet Relationship, Mao Zedong instructed the literature and art circle again, saying that “many communist party members have no interest in promoting communist art but are keen advocates of feudalistic and capitalist arts. Is not it strange?”⁷ It is easy to imagine that such severe wording would surely alarm translators. No wonder foreign translation activities during this period were at their lowest ebb.

II. The Policy towards Literary Translation in Mainland China during the Seventeen Years

The modern China history was characterized by diverse ideologies introduced from the West via translation and was influenced directly or indirectly by various trends of thought in the West. Marxism-Leninism in the PRC was finally established as the mainstream ideology after decades of struggle between different political powers within China as

⁶ From Helin, Li. “A Minor Problem in the Literary Theories and Criticisms for the Last Decade”, *He Bei Daily*, 8th January, 1960; reprinted on *The Art* Vol.1, 1960, with an additional “editor’s words”.

⁷ From Zicheng, Hong (edited). *The Selected Material of History of Contemporary Chinese Literature, 1945-1999*, Wu Han: Chang Jiang Wen Yi Press, 2002, p.512.

well as oppression and aggression of foreign powers. In 1949, the PRC established and consolidated Marxism as its single guiding thought. Time changed and literary translation had moved from the center position within the culture system to the periphery, a secondary position even within the literary system.⁸ Translation literature existed only under the headline of “foreign literature” and as a tool in service of political ideology, possessing no independent power of discourse. In fact, in a country where the sole “patronage” was the national government, translators had to choose texts from among a very limited number. Consequently, the preface, postscript, note, literary introduction and review could be regarded, to a large extent, as “rewriting” of the original texts.

Against such a historical backdrop, literary translation at this time was highly organized both in respect of translation and publication, which stood in sharp contrast to the first half of the 20th century when the choice of texts was largely determined by the preference of translators and publishers.

On June 19th, 1949, the conference for the launch of “The Association of Shanghai Translators” was held in Shanghai. “The

⁸ Tianzhen Xie. *Media-Translatology*. Shanghai Foreign Languages and Education Press, 1999, p. 246. “At present, a great number of academic works on the history of modern Chinese literature ignore the existence of translated literature. In contrast, several books on the history of modern Chinese literature published after the May fourth Movement, especially those during the 1920s and 30s, allotted at least one chapter to translated literature, attesting the great importance attached to it. ” We could infer that the status of translated literature is on the decline. It is inevitable for translated literature to move to the periphery after the consolidation of the mainstream ideology. At the same time, the translated literature must undergo the strict censorship of the mainstream ideology.

Association of Shanghai Translators”, PRC’s first translators’ association, was founded accordingly on the 13th of November. The tenet was “unite translators, promote international communication, cultivate more translators, improve translation quality, and partake in New Democratic Culture Construction”.

The CPC as well as the national government attached great importance to translation. On March 26th, 1950, The *People’s Daily* published three articles collectively entitled “Adopting a Serious Attitude towards translation work”. The Central Culture and Education Committee, hosted by Guo Moruo in May 1950, approved the establishment of the Committee of Unification of Academic Glossary to regulate translation glossary. On 6 June, 1951, “Use the Mother Tongue correctly, Struggle for the Purity and Healthiness of Mandarin” revised by Mao Zedong was published on *People’s Daily*. On 15 July, 1951, *Translation Notes* (vol.3, No. 1) reprinted this article and further pointed out in the editor’s notes that “although no reference to translation is made, this article pertains to translation since translation is fundamentally the work of language.”⁹

In order to regulate translation activities and improve the general quality of translation, the First National translation Conference was held by the Central Bureau of Publication in November, 1951. The conference approved “Regulation (Draft) on Publication of Translated Books by Public-Private Partnership” and “Regulation (Draft) on Bureaus, Organizations, and Publishers’ Translation Works”. On 19th

⁹ *Translation Notes*, Vol.3, No.1, July 15th, 1951.

August, 1954, the Association of Chinese Writers and the Publishing House of People's Literature co-sponsored the First National Literary Translation Conference. During the conference, Mao Dun delivered a speech of "Struggle for the Development of Literary Translation Cause and the Improvement of Translation Quality", highlighting translation as an important tool in cultural communication. Special attention was given to pressing issues such as the disarray of translation activities and low quality of translation, and suggestions were made accordingly. Mao Dun further pointed out the importance of "criticism and self-criticism, mutual assistance and cultivation of more translators".¹⁰

During the early years of the PRC, due to the lack of management, several translators might simultaneously translate the same work, especially newly-published Soviet works, without guarantee on the quality of the translation. Such situation did not change until the publication of journals specialized in translation studies such as *Translation Monthly*, *Bulletin on Translation*, and *Translation Notes*.

That the publishers could publish whatever foreign literature they deemed worthy was out of question after the government commenced the management of publishers. A few publishers specialized in translating and publishing foreign literature and favored by government policy prospered accordingly, taking a certain kind of leadership within the translation circle.

¹⁰ From Dun ,Mao."Struggle for the Development of literary Translation Cause and the improvement of Translation Quality", *The Translation*, vol. 10, 1954.

From 1949 to 1966, the years before the Culture Revolution, with the increasing importance attached to translation by national government, political ideology became increasingly involved in translation. Despite the fact that various adjustments of the literature and art policy had been made during the seventeen years, the political factor remained determinant. Literary translation was no exception to this general rule. Therefore, we can reasonably infer that political ideology was the yardstick as well as the most prominent feature of the literary translation from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Under the manipulation of mainstream ideology, literary translation activities during the seventeen years could be roughly divided into two phases with the Anti-right Movement in 1957 as the dividing line. Translation activities before Anti-right Movement reached their climax, whereas the period after Anti-right Movement until the Culture Revolution witnessed the decline of literary translation activities. During the second phase, translation activities were limited to mere reprinting of works translated before the mid-1950s. The number of newly-translated works dropped dramatically and the content of *World Literature* shrank.

In the early 1950s, literary translation flourished in respect of circulation and content. Although a great number of important works published in the 1950s and 60s were reprinting of works translated during the first half of 20th century, a small fraction of newly-translated works still managed to fill in the blanks in the history of literary translation.

The boom of translation activities in the early 1950s would not be possible without the relaxation of policy on the part of the government, who granted texts from capitalist countries such as America and Great Britain to be translated, as long as they were “in favor of revolutions” and “progressive”.

In “Struggle for the Development of literary Translation Cause and the Improvement of Translation Quality”, Mao Dun stated that:

We value and favor progressive works of revolution themes from all over the world. These works offer us insight into mankind’s unrelenting struggle for freedom. Their suffering under the invasion and enslavement of the imperialism is what we have just gone through. Their struggle for independence and freedom is part of the whole world’s defence of peace and fighting against invasion. To the people with whom we are closely linked, we offer our profound sympathy.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that while keeping track of contemporary works of Soviet Union and other socialist countries, literary translation in the 1950s and 60s intentionally ignored European and American modern and contemporary works. Not only the ideology of western literature but also the western modernistic writing techniques contradicted those in mainland China. Not surprisingly the western modern and contemporary literature was pushed to the periphery or, worse still, was totally ignored.

III. The Three Phases in *World Literature’s* Translation of

Western Literature

The First Phase: the intensification of Ideological Control (February 1953-March 1956)

It was in “On the People's Democratic Dictatorship”, an article published on 30 June, 1949, the date of the 28th anniversary of the establishment of the CPC, that Mao Zedong expounded the interior and foreign policy of the new China, declaring that “headed by Soviet Union, the anti-Imperialistic battle line is where we belong and the only place where we could seek true friendship”.

It is worth noticing that the nation-state consciousness and the political ideology were juxtaposed and taken into consideration when Mao Zedong proposed the “Leaning to One Side” Policy. It would therefore be more accurate to say that it was due to consideration of securing the success of revolution and the national interest of the new China that such decision was reached. With the Cold War looming large in the background, for CPC leaders, the most imminent task was to safeguard the independence, freedom and territorial integrity of the “new China”. On the one hand, the imperialistic antagonists within China should be cleansed in order to eliminate the possibility of the intervention and threat of invasion from imperialist countries and isolation in the international society should be endeavored to avoid; on the other hand, the interior stability, recovery and development of economy and striving for necessary international support should be undertaken.

All the above are prerequisites to solidify the success of the revolution and conducive to the interests of the new China. In the meantime, the ideology upheld by the CPC and the political development direction determined by which gave further support to the “Leaning to One Side” Policy. Not only a strategic choice, the “Leaning to One Side” Policy was also an open declaration in the political arena, proclaiming that the stance of the “new China” was always with that of the Soviet Union. It was a policy based upon the nation-state consciousness, an analysis of the international situation according to Marxism and judgment of the relations with the USA and Soviet Union. It was a policy demonstrating the harmony between the nation-state consciousness and political ideology.

World Literature, a journal edited by the Association of Chinese Writers, a governmental organization, with the Minister of Culture Mao Dun as chief editor, published its first issue in 1953. The PRC’s status as a newly-established socialist country demanded that a close literary relationship with the Socialist Camp as a whole, especially the Soviet Union, should be forged. During the early years of the PRC, political discourse and nation-state discourse corresponded with each other with regard to the choice of foreign literature. Nearly all influential Soviet works were translated into Chinese. From the first issue of 1953 to the April issue of 1956, *World Literature* gave an unprecedented coverage of Soviet works which revolved around themes of anti-Fascism and construction of socialist Soviet Union. These two themes showcased the ideological transition of the early 1950s from a “war mindset”

formed during the CPC-Kuomintang Civil War and the North Korea War to the mindset of constructing a socialist country. Because of this instability of ideology in the newly-founded nation, from February 1953 to July 1955, *World Literature* published a large number of literary translation works with little socialist ideological influence.

The “Hu Feng Event”, which was sparked by the suggestions of Hu Feng, a representative of Chinese intelligentsia, to the CPC, quickly ended this brief transitional stage. Being essentially contradictive with Mao Zedong’s idea towards literature and art, Hu’s suggestions infuriated the high-rank CPC members. Mao Zedong gave orders to launch the Rectification Movement, spearheading against intellectuals. Hu Feng was consequently imprisoned for 20 years. It was not until then that the majority of intellectuals, including translators, realized that the “honeymoon” with the CPC had ended and that in order to survive they need to identify themselves with the mainstream ideology. As an official journal, *World Literature* increasingly engaged in political propaganda rather than in literary activities. On the August issue of 1955, five translators published critiques of Hu Feng, professing their willingness to submit to CPC’s authority and to follow Mao Zedong’s Thought. These articles were given an equal share of space on this issue with other seven literary works, marking the climax of mainstream ideological influence over *World Literature*. From the July issue of 1955, political essays by Soviet authors of both literary and political background were published on *World Literature* in succession. Most of them concerned themselves with issues such as

literature in service of mainstream ideology, construction of the workers' image, and, peasants and soldiers' loyalty to the country, political party and socialist system. It was not until Mao Zedong put forward the "Double Hundred Principle" ("Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought contend.") in April, 1956, that such situation changed.

During the first phase, the focus of translation was on classic literature reflecting anti-class oppression and national crisis, and "revolutionary" and "progressive" modern and contemporary literature. Albert Maltz, an inconspicuous American writer, whose works were hailed as "forceful in exposing and criticizing the society" in the Chinese translation circle, came into the limelight of *World Literature* simply because he had serviced prison terms as a communist during the prevalence of McCarthyism.

Howard Fast, another American communist writer, was recorded in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* as follows:

Fast, Howard Melvin (1914-), New York author of historical fiction. ... Fast's other writings include children's books, short stories, plays, biographies, and, under the pseudonym E. V. Cuningham, detective and police novels, but his greatest success has been as a historical novelist.¹¹

Barely mentioned in western literary history, Howard Fast was celebrated as the representative of progressive writers in China. His

¹¹ Hart, James D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, Beijing: Foreign Languages and Research Press, 2005, p.209.

works enjoyed such celebrity in the 1950s that sometimes several translators might translate one of his works simultaneously. Before Fast apostatized from the American Communist Party, almost all of his eighteen works, among which there were thirteen novels, had been translated into Chinese. In February 1957, *World Literature* published Fast's works of every genre, including poems, short fiction, essay, prose and letters, and "Howard Fast", a critical essay by Soviet literary critic E.C. Romanova, was also included in the same issue. Such a comprehensive coverage of a single writer's works was unprecedented. However, once he abandoned his communist belief, he and his works lost legitimacy in China and critics launched fierce attack on him subsequently. *World Literature* ceased the translation of his works and published "The Two Confessions of Howard Fast", a political essay accusing Fast's "treachery" by Bob Isakov, a Soviet author.

The Second Phase: The Adjustment, namely the Influence of the Anxiety over and Reflection of Nation-state Discourse on World Literature (April 1956-July 1958)

The blind imitation of the Soviet Union in the early period of the PRC weakened the nation-state consciousness and obscured the national image. The mid-1950s saw the growing estrangement between nation-state discourse and political ideology. Mao Zedong, the top leader of the PRC, was among the first to show the anxiety. During the preparation for the Second Artists' Congress, Hu Qiao Mu, the Minister of Publicity, proposed the dismissal of the Artists' Association and the

establishment of Writers' Association, Playwrights' Association and so on, which infuriated Mao Zedong, for following the footsteps of Soviet Union was what he opposed to. The anxiety over the possible disappearance of nation-discourse evolved into a reflection trend in 1956. Khrushchev's report presented at the 20th Congress of The Communist Party of the Soviet Union broke the superstition on Stalin, prompting Mao Zedong to voice against dogmatism and to explore China's own way of socialist construction. The "Hungary Event" and the "Poland Event" sped up this exploration. Mao Zedong and other top leaders in the Communist Party put forward the influential "Double Hundred Principle", calling on the intellectuals to discuss and debate various subjects, to maintain "national self-respect" while following the example of Soviet Union and to create "a unique national style".

The anxiety over the fate of literature agonized the intellectuals since the translation of foreign literature had become a ritual reflecting the Sino-Soviet relationship. *World Literature* was among the first to express this anxiety and in April, 1956, published an article entitled "Readers, Authors, Translators and Editors", summarizing readers' opinions and engaging in self-criticism. That foreign literature was not widely introduced, that few literary works from Asian countries were translated, and that influential classical works in not only the world literary history but also the human history should be systematically translated and introduced were among the problems acknowledged. The wish to make the introduction of literature, rather than political ideology, the criteria and aim for translation was expressed. At a

symposium in May 1957, famous translators such as Luo Dagang, Wang Zuoliang and Zhu Guangqian urged more interaction with world literature and warned that the neglect of western literature would induce narrow-mindedness and hinder the development of New Literature. There was yet another change that merited notification. *World Literature*'s notice to contributors in the January issue of 1955 stated that "translations of ancient and modern literature of Soviet Union, democratic countries as well as other countries are welcome"; in the September issue of 1956, the notice changed to "translations of excellent modern literature reflecting the daily life, thought and struggle of people in Soviet Union, democratic countries as well as other countries, and, translation of representative classical literature are welcome". The demand on the realistic feature as well as good quality of the original texts emphasized the literariness of the original texts; in the January issue of 1957, the notice was that "translation of excellent modern literature from all over the world and of representative classical literature are welcome"; in the May issue of the same year, notice to the contributors was published in the form of reader's letter, stating that "we should break the outdated rules, step out of the narrow circle and dive into the vast ocean of excellent world literature", that "let beautiful literary flowers from different countries, from ancient and modern times, of various schools, styles and themes blossom in the garden of *World Literature*", that "more and more classics, though not socialistic realistic works, of various schools and styles from capitalist countries should be published." All these requests demonstrated a desire for the

literary discourse to break out of the control of political ideology and to choose for itself the original text to translate. From January 1957, translated literary works from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and other countries greatly increased whereas the number of Soviet Union literary works comparatively decreased, with three short fictions from Britain, America and Germany and only four Soviet Union short fictions published during the first six issues of 1957. The April issue published only one short fiction – *Destiny of A Man* by Sudba Cheloveka – from Soviet Union, while all the rest were American works. A few pieces of French Impressionistic painting and “The Impressionistic Painting”, an article introducing formalistic art by a Chinese scholar also appeared in this issue. The portrait of Charles Baudelaire, the cover of the first edition of *The Flower of Evil* revised by Charles Baudelaire personally, “Charles Baudelaire and his *The Flower of Evil*” by Soviet author Levik, and excerpts of *The Flower of Evil* appeared in the July issue. William Faulkner’s works were published in the April issue of 1958. The modern and contemporary literature of Europe and America as well as modernist literature became priority on the translators’ agenda.

The Third Phase: New Changes (August 1958-December 1964)

The prosperity of literature and art circle after the “Double Hundred Principle” was brought to an end by “Anti-right Movement” launched by Mao Zedong who obviously came to feel the threat of freedom of speech to his ruling. From mid-1957, the Rectification

Movement started to purge “anti-revolutionaries who embrace liberalism, individualism and who have greatly harmed the Party’s literature and art cause”. At least 550,000 persons, including a large number of scholars, translators and writers, were categorized as “rightists” that single year. Political ideology again took the lead in social discourse. With the aggravation of the Cold War and the complete break-off of Sino-Soviet relationship in the 1960s, nation-state discourse once again united with political discourse, overshadowing literary discourse. The adjustments of literary policy started from the mid-1950s were annulled.

From the August issue of 1958, with the omission of the notice to contributors, *World Literature* stopped claiming open welcome to “excellent modern literature from all over the world and of representative classical literature”. A new situation in the translation of foreign literature had emerged.

First of all, Asian, African and Latin American literatures were greatly appreciated. The September and October issues of 1958 and a special column in the November issue were devoted to Asian and African literature and to modern Latin American Poetry. Asian, African and Latin American literature composed the greater part of the February issue of 1959 and a column was devoted to “Black African poetry” in the April issue. The appreciation of Asian, African and Latin American literature was not for the sake of literature but because it would be “helpful for the unity of Asian, African and Latin American people as well as the anti-colonial and national independence struggle

of all countries”, as Guo Moruo, one of the most influential official writers, pointed out. With mainland China’s increasing craving for nationalism, the period from the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s witnessed not only the translation of literature from the socialist camp but also that of Asian, African and Latin American literature.

Secondly, criticism and rejection of the western literature replaced the initial positive reception. In 1958, Mao Dun, the chief editor of *World Literature*, remarked that the western modernists were “full of whims and good at grotesquery and absurdity”¹². In the same year, Zhou Yang, Vice Minister of Publicity as well as a powerful figure in the literature circle of 1950s and 1960s, called the western culture and literature colonial pornography. The enthusiasm for translating western literature cooled down thereafter. Take the American literature as an example, eighteen works were translated in 1957, five in 1960, four in 1961, one in 1962, two in 1963, one in 1964, one in 1965 and none in 1966. In the December issue of 1958, an ideological criticism of capitalist literature was carried out simultaneously in the report of Boris Pasternak’s¹³ turning down of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

“Great Britain’s ‘The Angry Young Men’” by Cao Yong, a critical introduction of *The Angry Young Men* was published in the January issue of 1959; Ge Ha called the American literature of the Beat Generation “a decadent literature of a dying class” in the February issue

¹² Dun, Mao. “Ye Du Ou Ji”, *The Journal of Literature and Arts*. Vol.1, 1958.

¹³ Boris Pasternak is a Soviet Union writer, the author of *Doctor Zhivago*.

of 1960; “The Soil of Imperialism, The ‘Flower’ of Imperialism” criticizing contemporary capitalist literature of East Germany appeared in the June issue; “An Analysis of Pearl S. Buck, an American Reactionary”, an article criticizing American literature, was published in the September issue. Wang Zuoliang, the famous translator who once called out for more translation works in 1957, condemned the American and British contemporary literature such as those by George Eliot, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats and Sean O’casey in a 1962 article. Practically no translation of western contemporary literature was published during this period, which was partly due to the Cold War and partly a reflection of the strong anti-colonial national consciousness in the process of constructing national literary image.

Finally, the literary relationship with Soviet Union had entered upon a more complex stage. With the aggravation of the Cold War, the communist camp members, with an eye on safeguarding the nation’s independence, increasingly identified themselves with communist ideological discourse. The questioning and negating the Soviet Union literature in the 1950s reverted to the previous large scale translation and introduction of Soviet Union literature. For instance, Mao Dun negated some scholars’ questioning of socialist realism and expressed his will to defend the socialist realism. Slogans such as “learn from the Soviet Union literature”, “follow the example of and value Soviet Union literature”, and “defend Soviet Union literature” prevailed again. Unlike the earlier uncritical reception of Soviet literature, the tense relationship with the Soviet Union demanded a clear national

consciousness in the study of Soviet literature. The Sino-Soviet literary relationship embarked on a more complicated stage: on the one hand, a vigorous introduction of Soviet literature was conducted and the necessity to learn from the Soviet literature was emphasized; on the other hand, the vigilance against Soviet literature, which was manifested in the small number of Soviet literature translated during this period, was retained. From the 1960s until the Cultural Revolution, with the total break-off of Sino-Soviet political relationship, the number of translated Soviet literary texts dropped dramatically. Not a single Soviet literary work was published in the April, June, September and December issues of 1960; in the January, July and December issues of 1961; in the March, April, July/August, November and December issues of 1962; in the February, March, May, July to December issues of 1963 and during the whole year of 1964.

Despite the general neglect of Soviet contemporary literature before the mid-1960s, many Soviet contemporary works, such as Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, Allenburg's *Thawing* and Aksenov's *A Ticket to the Stars*, were translated and published by publishing houses like Writers' Press and China Drama Press. Dubbed as "the yellow covers", these so-called "non-socialist works", were circulated strictly among higher-rank officials as a reference to the criticism of revisionism. The so-called European and American Decadent Literature, such as *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger and *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, were also on the list of "the yellow covers".

II. Conclusion

The study of *World Literature* sheds light on the translation of western literature in mainland China during the seventeen years and discloses before us the fact that during the seventeen years, translation activities were determined by political discourse and nation-state discourse, thus rendering the choice and reception of foreign literature a political action. With the literary discourse overshadowed, translation activities took an exclusive stance to western capitalist literature from the very beginning. A demand made by Political ideology, translating socialist camp literature became a political responsibility rather than a personal action.

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