Subterranean translation: The absent presence of Shen Congwen in K.M. Panikkar's "Modern Chinese Stories"

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The Indian reception of modern Chinese literature in the 1950s was marked by the emergence of China's Foreign Languages Press (FLP) as the major text supplier (Jia 2016). Produced in Beijing as part of the PRC's external publicity project and transmitted to different areas of India mainly by local communist publishers and distributers, the FLP's English translations of Chinese works reached a large number of Indian readers who desired to know about China's revolutionary experience and its contribution to the new communist state. Some of these works, such as the novel *Xin Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan* (New Legend of Heroic Sons and Daughters, 1949), represented the Chinese revolution as a triumphant historical narrative, while others like Lu Xun's (1881–1936) social critical short stories were valued significantly by Indian intellectuals for their relevance to India and thus their potential to revolutionize India's postcolonial yet largely feudal society (Jia and Jiang 2017).

However, the preponderance of the PRC's self-initiated translations in 1950s India should not blind us to the translation projects self-initiated by Indians themselves. Though much smaller in number, these projects provided different literary imaginations of the Chinese revolution, some of which found no expression in FLP publications, by considering the revolution's "hidden" side – that is, by focusing on the figures and texts that were marginalized or silenced after the communist takeover due to their discordance with the PRC's mainstream political and literary norms.

One such example can be seen through a case study of the English anthology entitled *Modern Chinese Stories* (1953) compiled by K.M. Panikkar (1895–1963), the first Indian ambassador to China between 1948 and 1952. After a brief analysis of the organizational aesthetic of the anthology as a whole, I will focus on the counter-intuitive inclusion of a specific author and the tactics Panikkar might have employed to negotiate the relationship between his official identity as the Indian ambassador and a critical observer of the PRC's revolutionary legacy. As we shall see, this anthology included Shen Congwen (1902–1988), a prominent Chinese author who was labelled "illegitimate" by the PRC's cultural bureaucrats in the late 1940s and 1950s, not through a direct translation of his works, likely due to political considerations, but rather through a translation of a text by Shen's wife, Zhang Zhaohe (1910–2003), that mirrors Shen's writing and life in crisis. I term this kind of creative cross-cultural transplantation "subterranean translation".

Subterranean translation can be defined as a double layered transculturation that simultaneously deals with two interrelated foreign authors/texts, with one author/text being explicitly translated on the surface and the other author/text – the intended one – transported in an implicit manner. Intrinsically strategic, subterranean translation offers an alternative for those who desire to translate a certain author or text but at the same time feel hesitant to do so, mostly due to high political or ideological pressures from either the source culture or the receiving one. At the core of such a strategic act is the interrelatedness between the two foreign authors/texts involved, which makes the intended hidden elements readily transferable onto the surface and immediately discernable to an informed readership. The interrelatedness can be either interconnections between the two authors or intertextualities (lexical, thematic, stylistic, emotive or philosophical) between the two texts – sometimes both, as in Panikkar's anthology. Subterranean translation, I argue, opens a conceptual space in which the intricate interplay between literary translation and politics can be usefully observed: shunning the explicit presence of the desired author/text as subject of translation is clearly a sign of compliance, but using an author/text unequivocally interrelated with the desired one to fulfill, however partially, the intended translation turns compliance into resistance. Therefore, identifying and interpreting these interrelations at both empirical and conceptual levels are the key methods to studying subterranean translation and revealing its interrogative dimension.

THE ANTHOLOGY AND ITS ARCHITECT

Compiled by K.M. Panikkar and translated by Huang K'un, *Modern Chinese Stories* is a 429-page English anthology that includes 12 short stories by nine modern Chinese authors. It contains rich paratextual materials, including a preface and acknowledgements by Panikkar, biographical notes of varying length on each author, and an essay in the appendix entitled "The Modern Chinese Literary Movement" by the translator Huang K'un.[1] As the first English anthology of modern Chinese literature compiled by an Indian and perhaps the only one in the 1950s, *Modern Chinese Stories* was well received in India and was subsequently translated into Hindi as *Ādhunik Cīnī Kahāniyāṃ* (Modern Chinese Stories, n.d.) by noted Hindi author and critic Shivdan Singh Chauhan and his wife Vijay Chauhan.

In terms of production, this anthology was a highly collaborative enterprise involving the conspicuous participation of Chinese agents and agencies, including the translator Huang K'un, a few Chinese literary consultants from Peking University, and even the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in New Delhi, which lent the designs for the woodcuts inserted in the book and aided in designing the outer jacket. However, this qualifies as an Indian-led project, not only because it was published by an Indian press and compiled by an Indian academic-diplomat, K.M. Panikkar, who had good knowledge and taste of Chinese literature, but also because the preface written by Panikkar himself – a sign of paramount editorship – clearly indicates that his own interests and evaluations played a crucial role in the selection of materials. This collection is therefore illustrative of Panikkar's own perception of China's literary landscape during the revolutionary period.

Given that the collection was mostly prepared during Panikkar's tenure in Beijing, with considerable involvement of Chinese collaborators, his choice of authors and texts could not have been uninfluenced by the mainstream literary conventions of 1950s China. As we shall see, the interplay between Panikkar's subjectivity (and that of his literary consultants) and the interference of Chinese literary norms created an ambiguous space in the anthology, to such a degree that Shen Congwen, an accomplished writer who was deprived of literary legitimacy on the eve of the founding of the PRC due to political problems, acquired an "absent presence".

The primary aim of the anthology, as Panikkar claims in the preface (dated 1951), was to offer a picture of "the actual, living people of China whose manners, customs and outlook have been changing rapidly in a revolutionary era" (1953, v) that was little known about abroad. Despite the fact that the anthology was published in Delhi, Panikkar did not address a particular "Indian" audience in his preface. The choice of English, rather than Panikkar's mother tongue, Malayalam, as the linguistic medium also suggests that he had a broader audience in mind when compiling the anthology.

Having lived in China for over two years and become deeply fascinated by its history and culture, Panikkar aspired to introduce the country and its impressive social-political transformation from an insider's point of view. Although neither a communist nor a leftist, Panikkar largely sympathized with the PRC as a result of first-hand experiences and academic research. The years following his tenure in Beijing saw the publication of three important books, through which Panikkar expressed his sympathy from different perspectives. *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (1955) recounts fascinating anecdotes in the diplomatic life of Beijing, and shows genuine appreciation of the PRC's leaders for their governing competence and charming personality. *India and China: A Study of Cultural Relations* (1957) presents a well-studied history of the intimate religious, cultural and social exchanges between the two major civilizations of Asia before Western powers intervened. While these two books are essentially Panikkar's own findings and reflections, *Modern Chinese Stories* marks a different approach that lets the Chinese speak for themselves. Clearly reflecting discontent with how China's revolution had been "misinterpreted abroad" (v), Panikkar held that "only the Chinese writers themselves can tell adequately of the problems confronting their people and of how they have been solved" (vii).

Although the selected texts are unquestionably Chinese, it was Panikkar who ultimately determined the ways in which these texts were arranged and presented to the reader. The organizational rationale and aesthetic used by him, therefore, generates an interesting "Indian" narrative of modern Chinese literature and the Chinese revolution. In his preface, Panikkar explains the criteria of selection in detail. He emphasizes both the texts' "intrinsic interest" and their ability to "give a true picture of the development of China since the Revolution of 1911" (v). Partly because he was trained as a historian, Panikkar saw the potential for the literary anthology to be read not only as an artistic creation, but also as a historical archive. He made the latter objective even more conspicuous by placing the authors in a roughly chronological order: Lu Xun and Yu Dafu (1896–1945), who had died by the time the anthology was published, are followed by seven living authors in sequence of the period in

which they gained recognition within literary circles. More significantly, the stories are arranged chronologically in that each portrays an episode in the revolution's progress. Placing Lu Xun and the peasant writer Zhao Shuli (1906–1970) at opposite ends of the collection, Panikkar regards the three decades in between as a "big" but "logical" step: "Lu Hsün [Lu Xun] cleared the way for the triumph that Chao Shu-li [Zhao Shuli] epitomises. Lu Hsün's fierceness has turned into good humor in Chao Shu-li, which breaks out like sunshine" (vi). Read as an episodic narrative, the anthology charts the communist revolution of China as a linear and ascending course from old to new, from pessimistic to optimistic.

In other words, aside from being a "synecdoche" of contemporary Chinese fiction, this anthology also acted as an "allegory" of modern China, to borrow the terms Neelam Srivastava (2015, 154) uses in analyzing post-independence South Asian literary anthologies in English. But is this double-layered historical narrative really as coherent as it seems to be?

A COUNTER-INTUITIVE INCLUSION

At first glance, Panikkar's selection of authors largely conforms to the PRC's officially sanctioned literary norms in the 1950s. While Lu Xun, Yu Dafu, Mao Dun (1896–1981), Lao She (1899–1966) and Yang Zhensheng (1890–1956) were accomplished "new literature" (*xin wenxue*) writers influenced by the May Fourth Movement, Ding Ling (1904–1986) and Zhao Shuli were models of the "liberated area literature" (*jiefang qu wenxue*) of the 1940s, following the creed of Mao Zedong's 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Arts". Their works not only entered the literary canon of socialist China in the early 1950s, but were also well-known in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries due to their adherence to the tenets of socialist realism. The inclusion of Shao Zunan (1916–1954), a writer scarcely remembered today, was not surprising in the 1950s. As an author who fought in and wrote about the anti-Japanese guerrilla war, Shao exemplified the third aspect of "worker-peasant-soldier literature" (*gong nong bing wenxue*), the literary category that Mao encouraged in the 1940s and '50s. In justification for the rationale of this selection, Huang K'un's essay, inserted at the end the anthology, positions most of the selected authors in a well-elaborated yet highly teleological account of the revolutionary movement that led up to the accomplishment of the country's "miracle" today (Panikkar 1953, 411).

Among this constellation of canonized authors, what is unexpected is the inclusion of Shu Wen, pseudonym of Zhang Zhaohe, who is more widely known as the wife of Shen Congwen, one of the greatest Chinese writers of the 20th century. From the perspective of literary merit, the anthology's choice of Zhang Zhaohe over Shen Congwen seems rather problematic. Shen was acclaimed nation-wide for his "nativist writing" (*xiangtu wenxue*) in the 1930s and '40s. He could have won the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature if he had not died the same year. By contrast, far from being a prolific author, Zhang's oeuvre consisted of only five short stories and four translations, all published in the 1930s. From 1940 onward, she stopped writing fiction. Although four of her short stories were published collectively under the title *Hupan* (Lakeside)

as part of the noted "Wenxue Congkan" (Literature Series) edited by Ba Jin, they did not receive much attention apart from a few reviews. Personally connected to many prominent intellectuals, Zhang did not play a significant role in advancing literary, academic, or educational reforms during the Republican period, and her position in the PRC's literary life was limited to that of an editor at the People's Literature Publishing House. In terms of international reception, Zhang's literary fame was barely recognized abroad, whereas almost all English anthologies of modern Chinese literature published in the 1930s and 1940s contained works by her husband. In fact, Panikkar's *Modern Chinese Stories* is by far the only anthology I have discovered that makes Zhang Zhaohe's fictional writing available in English. It was only until recently that scholars like Raoul David Findeisen (2007) started to reassess Zhang's creative role in modern Chinese literary history, which, they argue, was "eclipsed" by her famous writer-husband, Shen Congwen. Yet this reassessment was based less on her own literary ingenuity than on her contribution to "molding" her husband's towering literary persona, by inspiring his writing, editing his works, preserving his manuscripts, publishing his family letters after his death, and managing his literary legacy.

So why the inclusion of Zhang, not Shen? Given the engagement of Chinese intellectuals in preparing the anthology, as well as Panikkar's own taste and prudence, I consider this seemingly uncanny inclusion not a misjudgment. This is confirmed by the fact that the biographical sketch of Shu Wen (i.e. Zhang) refers to her plainly as "Mrs. Sheng Ts'ung-wen [Shen Congwen], wife of the famous novelist" (Panikkar 1953, 97). This is the only mention of Shen throughout the anthology, but it reveals an important paradox: the anthology makers fully recognized the literary significance of Shen, but they nonetheless chose a work by his wife. This paradox signals a sophisticated decision-making process. And in order to fully understand this decision, we need to revisit Shen's position within the PRC's literary field and his relations with those who involved in producing Panikkar's anthology.

From 1948, Shen Congwen became rapidly sidelined as part of a "structural change" in the literary sphere, which was characterized by a "large-scale replacement of writers and groups of writers, and the shift in their positions" (Hong 2007, 33). This shift in positions was "the result of the typological delineation of authors and literary groups begun in the late 1940s by the left-wing literary powers to establish a 'new direction for literature'" (34). An advocate of the "independence" of literature, Shen had cautioned against the politicization of literature since the 1930s, and his works were characterized by distinct personal expression and lyricism. This stark divergence in ideological position and creative outlook rendered Shen vulnerable to critique by leftist writers who became the literary authorities when the PRC was founded. During the reshuffling of writers, Shen was officially labelled "reactionary" in 1948 and subsequently disqualified from participating in the first All-China Congress of Literature and Art Workers held in July 1949. Being ostracized from the PRC's "united front" of writers didn't just mean forfeiture of symbolic capital, but also denial of the right to publish. Shen also lost his job at Peking University, where he taught Chinese literature, and he even became estranged from his wife, Zhang Zhaohe, who had a more "progressive" outlook. While many writers of the 1920s and

1930s faced difficulties harmonizing their creative tenets with the new literary principles, yet managed to secure a place within the literary circles, partly by criticizing their past writings, Shen Congwen found it altogether impossible to be accommodated in the new age and suffered severe mental crises that caused him to attempt suicide in March 1949. Saved, but still deeply confused, Shen stopped writing fiction and became a textile archaeologist in 1950. The official restriction on publishing his previous works was not lifted until the "Hundred Flowers" period between 1956 and 1957.

As mentioned above, Panikkar prepared the anthology in Beijing during his tenure (1949–1952) as the first Indian ambassador to the PRC, a period that coincided with the official expulsion of Shen from the Chinese literary sphere. There might have been serious concerns given to the diplomatic hazards of translating such an officially "illegitimate" figure, because translation is usually considered a sign of recognition, not to mention a translation endorsed by a leading Indian politician. For Indian officials, carrying out cultural diplomacy with the PRC in the early 1950s had to be carefully managed, because insufficient knowledge of the dramatic change in China's social, political and intellectual lives may turn a gesture of goodwill into political tensions. For instance, when the PRC's first cultural delegation visited India in 1951, Rajendra Prasad (1884–1963), president of India and vice-chancellor of the University of Delhi, conferred an honorary doctorate on the delegate Feng Youlan (1895–1990), a world-renowned Chinese philosopher, in recognition of his academic achievements, especially the two-volume *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi* (A History of Chinese Philosophy) and the collection "Zhenyuan Liu Shu" (Six Books of Zhenyuan). Despite Feng's adaptation to the new socialist culture, these works produced in the 1930s and '40s had been under attack since the founding of the communist regime because they did not conform to the Marxist-Leninist school of philosophical thought. Instructed by the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Feng claimed on a later occasion of the visit that his past research was "worthless" (Xie 2013, 3–4), leaving inevitable embarrassment to his Indian host. It is therefore safe to assume that with his diplomatic sensitivities and knowledge of China, Panikkar would have not run the risk of translating Shen Congwen, who was facing even stronger criticism than Feng Youlan because of his past liberalist writings.

Under such seemingly impossible circumstances, why should Panikkar's anthology include Shen Congwen after all, even in disguise? Shen's literary excellence needs no introduction. What needs to be stressed here, I argue, is the subjectivity of those who produced this particular anthology.

One factor that requires emphasis is Shen's close relationship with Yang Zhensheng and Chang Fengzhuan (1910–2002), two scholars who helped in selecting and editing the works and whose advice, as Panikkar put it in the preface, was "of the utmost value" (1953, iv). Yang and Chang were Shen's colleagues at Peking University when he became subject to political attack. The three of them had been friends since the 1930s and they all held similar literary outlooks. Between 1933 and 1935, Yang and Shen co-edited the Literary and Art Supplement to the Dagong Daily (*Dagong Bao wenyi fukan*), an influential non-leftist literary forum, to which Chang frequently

contributed critical essays and book reviews. More significantly, Shen and Yang spearheaded a literary group later known as the Beijing School (*jingpai*), marked by a particular cultural position that "simultaneously opposed both May Fourth Occidentalism and the commercialism of the Shanghai School, *haipai*" (Shih 2001, 175). Over nearly two decades of intimate professional and personal contact, Yang became not just a co-worker to Shen, but also a mentor and family friend. This special relationship, alongside a shared dissent with the politicization of literature, may have led to Yang recommending Shen.

As for Panikkar, although he developed a largely favorable concept of communist China, this does not mean he did not have reservations. Reflecting on his impressions of the PRC, Panikkar concludes *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* with the following remarks:

> In general I may summarize my impression of New China as a tremendous upheaval which has transformed what was a highly civilized but unorganized mass of people into a great modern State. It has released great energies, given the Chinese people a new hope, and a new vision of things. It has brought forth great enthusiasm and an irresistible desire to move forward, but the means employed to achieve these very desirable ends are in many cases of a kind which revolts the free mind. Compared to the State, the individual has lost all value, and this is the strange thing in China which adds a tinge of *sorrow* even when one appreciates and admires what the revolution has done for China and Asia generally (1955, 179; emphasis added).

Panikkar's strange sense of "sorrow" makes his understanding of the revolution a nuanced one, as it simultaneously attends to the greater cause of the collective "people" who moved forward enthusiastically under the Party's leadership, as well as the consequences faced by individuals who "hung back". Thus, making Shen Congwen present in the anthology, together with the May Fourth writers and the Yan'an writers, could give full expression to Panikkar's complex understanding of the Chinese revolution. And given the potential political hazards, I suggest, the explicit translation of Zhang Zhaohe's short story "Xiaohuan de Bei'ai" (The Sorrow of Little Huan, 1934), which happens to bear the word "sorrow", might have functioned as an implicit inclusion of Shen.

LITTLE HUAN AS SHEN CONGWEN

To use Zhang Zhaohe as Shen Congwen in disguise was, first of all, to acknowledge the entangled relationship between their fictional creations in terms of both praxis and style. They frequently consulted each other's opinion when opting for a new subject of writing, and they often edited one another's drafts before they were sent for publication. As a result, many of their works featured similar themes and expressions, such as childhood, rural life, and strong lyricism. At times, they wrote short stories that were thematically complementary with each other – such as Shen's "Nüren" (Women) and Zhang's "Nanren" (Men) – as a kind of "literary marriage" mirroring their married life in reality (Findeisen 2007, 15).

Like most of Zhang Zhaohe's short stories, "Xiaohuan de Bei'ai" (hereinafter "Xiaohuan") features a child named Little Huan as the protagonist and depicts the

"solitariness of childhood" by investigating the protagonist's psychological activities (Zhao 2015, 140). Artistically speaking, "Xiaohuan" is not the maturest work in Zhang's oeuvre, but it is the only work marked by historical depth. Set in Republican China, the story begins with a history class in which Big Head Wu, the teacher, preaches about how the opium thrust on China by the foreign imperialists has been destroying the country and the race. Wu's nationalist argument ignites fierce discussion among the students and leads to a point at which everyone shouts, "Down with opium fiends!" (Panikkar 1953, 104). Little Huan is isolated because the students call his mother, who smokes opium to lighten her illness, a "traitor" and they claim that he has "the poison in his veins" (106).

Escaping the classroom with his heart "filled with indescribable ferment" (98), Little Huan goes home and tries to persuade his mother to give up smoking opium, only to be rebuffed by her stubborn attitude and harsh words. The most engaging part of the short story is Zhang's depiction of Little Huan's inner struggle on his way home: he runs into rickshaws, collides with a fruit vendor, passes people of all kinds, and goes into a trance:

> Little Huan was quite dizzy. People came and people went. The noise of shouting and of traffic invaded him. Motorcars passed, raising clouds of dust. He tried to concentrate, and wiping the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve, he murmured to himself, "It was all a dream" (100).[2]

Knowing "perfectly well that it was not a dream", Little Huan moves on and reaches the front door to his home:

> He lingered on the doorstep with a feeling of shame mounting in his heart. He hesitated. He didn't want to go in. From this day, from this very moment, he disliked that dirty old front door. He positively hated someone, something. But who it was he hated so, he could not have said (101).

What makes Zhang's "Xiaohuan" a particularly powerful text that enabled Shen's presence and a critical engagement with the PRC's policy in the anthology is the work's intertextuality with the private writings Shen kept in 1949, which recorded his mental crises. The hallucination, shame, and inexpressible anger of Little Huan, the protagonist of Zhang's 1934 short story, incredibly mirror Shen's predicament 15 years later.

On the evening of May 30th, 1949, Shen Congwen wrote a short essay entitled "Wuyue Sa Xia Shidian Beiping Sushe" (In a Dormitory, Peking, May 30, 10 pm; hereafter "Wuyue"), filled with fragmentary, raving sentences indicative of his mental instability after surviving a suicide attempt. The essay, which remained unpublished until the 1990s, instigated a stream of what Chen Sihe calls "subterranean writing" (*qianzai xiezuo*) or "the private works of those intellectuals deprived of the right to write in their time" (1999, 30). For Chen, such works deserve a place in the history of Chinese literature because they contain genuine and sophisticated reflection upon Mao's era, which mainstream writings following the party line could not offer. David Der-wei Wang also finds this short piece unique, because "it exemplifies Shen's lyrical sensibility at its most intricate" (2015, 80).

Like Little Huan, the narrator in "Wuyue" – Shen Congwen himself – is overwhelmed by a deep yet indescribable sense of "sorrow". He tries to explain where the sorrow came from by making sense of the world around him, but he fails. Asking himself "Am I mad, again?" Shen writes:

> My family appears exactly the same as it was before. Zhaohe is healthy and high-principled, the kids are full of great self-respect, and I am still working at my desk. But the world has changed. Everything has lost its original meaning. It seems that I have returned to the long-gone past of oblivion, segregated from all happiness. I don't know where the *sorrow* comes from. I am simply facing the world without aim. All things are moving, whereas I am looking at them, motionlessly and pityingly, without playing a role in any of them. I am not mad! But why am I feeling so isolated and helpless while my family remains the same. Why? Answer me, please (1996, 160–161; emphasis added).

While the causes of Shen's sense of sorrow and isolation are left unanswered in "Wuyue", we can better understand this by considering Little Huan's experience. As Zhao Huifang observes, the sorrow Little Huan experiences originates from the pressures of history, society, and family (2015, 142), which are comparable to the pressures faced by Shen Congwen.

Both Little Huan and Shen live in a time of transformation when a new political and social force is gaining power and the complex history is being placed into a grand narrative attached to a dominant ideology, which tends to ignore particularities and exceptions. The nationalist message "all opium fiends are traitors" the history teacher conveys to Little Huan and his classmates seems to have unchallengeable validity in the anti-imperialist era. However, Little Huan intuitively questions this message because although his mother developed an opium habit due to illness, she has never betrayed the country. At the end of the story, Little Huan's attempt to persuade his mother to give up opium proves to be all in vain when the mother replies unfeelingly: "Rubbish, child. Your mother has smoked opium for twenty years. Give it up! Give up your grandma!" (Panikkar 1953, 110). The mother's words remind us of another historical force, that is how the centuries-old opium trade ruined millions of common lives in China. Hence, the dilemma in which Little Huan is caught up is at once present and historical. Zhang expressed her discontent with the imposition of generalized historical narratives by satirically portraying teacher Wu – the authority figure in the class – as a dull, ill-tempered and didactic person. She shows a similar disagreement with the mother, who she depicts as a stubborn and uncaring woman. Little Huan is the only character Zhang portrays sympathetically, though she shows no intent to give him a way out.

If Little Huan is "illegitimate" in his time because of the "original sin" passed on from his mother (he is deemed to have "the poison in his veins"), Shen Congwen was denied legitimacy because of his long-lasting dissent with the leftist intellectuals who became the writers of China's revolutionary history after the founding of the PRC. Despite the fact that Shen aspired to contribute to the literary enterprise of the new regime by "writing a dozen of books wholeheartedly" (Chen 1999, 28), he was nevertheless disqualified from being part of the PRC's literary united front. It may sound abrupt to liken Shen's past individualist tendency to the opium-smoking mother in

"Xiaohuan", but the metaphor usefully demonstrates how an engrained and inseparable habitus can become a staggering historical burden when it is deemed detrimental by a new, authoritative ideology. Admittedly, some non-leftist Chinese writers who were active before the 1940s, such as Ba Jin, Lao She, Feng Zhi and Ai Qing, managed to secure a place in the PRC's literary sphere mainly by criticizing their previous works or imitating the socialist realist style. But they nevertheless faced the historical dilemma analogous to Shen Congwen's. "The relationship between the majority of these writers and the creative notions and methods stipulated by the 'new direction in literature and the arts' remained tense, as they found it difficult to mix in or find harmony with the new age" (Hong 2007, 35).

Historical illegitimacy inevitably leads to the breakup of social relationships and subsequent segregation. Like Little Huan, who leaves the class due to the unbearable scorn and stigma he faces, Shen Congwen was discharged from public employment and became a social outcast. Both of them are pushed over the edge of their social relations because of the prevailing dichotomy used in judging a person's worth. The unquestionable consensus reached by Little Huan's teacher and his classmates that "all opium fiends are traitors […] black sheep […] beasts" (Panikkar 1953, 105) finds an echo in Shen's anxiety – "Everything is extremely unambiguous, yet the only thing I don't understand is where I am standing and what I am expecting" (1996, 161). More notably, at the beginning of "Wuyue" Shen mentions looking at a photo he took with Ding Ling, a close friend from 19 years earlier. It was a time when Shen risked his life escorting the widowed Ding and her baby in an escape from Kuomingdang's persecution. As Ding followed the Yan'an path and became one of the PRC's literary authorities in the early 1950s, she ended her friendship with Shen, like many others. Whereas looking at the photo makes Shen stuck in an "intangible situation" in which he feels "dissociated from the collective" (160), the translator Huang K'un (or Panikkar) makes the situation much more tangible through an act of textual manipulation. Perhaps in order to imply how Shen was deserted by friends and colleagues in reality, Huang added a maxim-like sentence to describe Little Huan's isolation in the class, which was completely absent in the original text: "One by one they sneaked away, obeying the primitive instinct to abandon the wounded of their kind" (Panikkar 1953, 106).

In both "Xiaohuan" and "Wuyue", home is not a haven where social pressures can be left outside and the isolated can gain a sense of belonging. Instead, returning home intensifies pressure and restlessness. Little Huan's hesitation on the doorstep is suggestive of his struggle between understanding his mother's reliance on opium and the effort of persuading her to give up the habit. But Little Huan's struggling mind fails to touch a mother's heart, for all she craves is another taste of the opium smoke. As Amah Chao shows up towards the end of the story and takes Little Huan away from his mother's bed, we expect her to play the typical role of a considerate nursemaid who really cares about the children's feelings in a broken family. Yet she turns out to be yet another frustration: when Little Huan finally bursts into tears in her arms, Amah Chao exclaimed impatiently "What's the matter with the child?" Here, Huang K'un performed once again the translator's activism by adding a commentary of his own: "But what could she know of the sorrow in Little Huan's heart?" (111)

Huang's textual interference can be interpreted as an assertion of Shen Congwen's isolated situation in his family. In "Wuyue", Shen's restlessness and self-doubt contrast sharply with the "healthy and high-principled" Zhang Zhaohe and their "self-respected" kids. The temporary tranquility of the dormitory at night-time does not conceal Shen's tension with Zhang, who had just enthusiastically completed her Marxist training courses at North China University and become well-prepared to embrace the new age. Therefore, the physical status of Shen (awake) and Zhang (asleep) as depicted in "Wuyue" contrasts with their ideological status as perceived by society. In a retrospect, Zhang Zhaohe admitted that for a long period of time following Shen's mental breakdown, both she and the kids were unable to enter his inner world. Instead of comprehending Shen's pains, they found him "retrogressive" and "holding them back" (Chen 1998, 30). It was only until 1950 that Shen started to attune himself to the country's new direction by doing research on China's cultural relics, and that his relationship with Zhang Zhaohe became less strained.

Precisely because the threefold pressures work on Little Huan and Shen Congwen in similar ways, the fictitious story of an isolated boy can be interpreted as an allegory for the real-life suffering of an outcast intellectual who was unable to keep up with the fast-changing world.

CONCLUSION

In *Modern Chinese Stories*, Zhang Zhaohe's text plays a double role. Superficially, it fits in the anthology's temporal framework and fulfills Panikkar's purpose in projecting a "pessimistic" literary image of pre-revolution Chinese society. At a deeper level, it serves as a transcoding mechanism comprised of delicate interrelational nexuses, through which the "forbidden" sorrow of Shen Congwen gets thematically and emotively represented, giving expression to the sorrow of Panikkar and his Chinese collaborators.

Admittedly, for the average Indian reader who did not stay abreast of the PRC's literary activities, it would be very likely that they have only read the text at the surface level. They may have developed a sense of curiosity from browsing the biographical note of Zhang Zhaohe, which talks so little about her literary accomplishments and calls her "wife of the famous novelist Shen Congwen" while failing to engage with the novelist himself. But it would be difficult for them to decode the implications of the inclusion of "Xiaohuan" in the ways that I have. This is the problem that usually rises when a reader encounters a translation featuring dense intertextuality. "The reader", as Lawrence Venuti argues, "must possess not only the literary or cultural knowledge to recognize the presence of one text in another, but also the critical competence to formulate the significance of the intertextual relation, both for the text in which it appears and for the tradition in which that text assumes a place when the intertextuality is recognized" (2009, 157–158). This task can only be fulfilled by "professional readers", such as translators or scholars who study translation (171). In the case of *Modern Chinese Stories*, neither the compiler nor the translator divulged their decision-making process, but they left clues here and there, presented in the form of counter-intuitive inclusion, paradoxical statement, textual alteration and so

on. What I have done is to discern, analyze and interpret these clues like a detective, using a method that holds together the textual and the historical, as well as the source culture and the target one.

By reading the surprising inclusion of Zhang's "Xiaohuan" as a subterranean translation of Shen's "Wuyue" as well as an allusion to the ending remarks in Panikkar's memoir, this essay refreshes our knowledge in several ways. First, it shows the diversity and complexity of Chinese literature in Indian reception in the 1950s, which has been primarily known as a left-dominated scene. Second, it enriches existing scholarship of modern Chinese literature by activating new and meaningful linkages between two texts by one of the most famous writer couples in modern China, linkages that have yet to be discovered by literary historians. Third, featuring Panikkar as a key intermediary, this case study has showed how literary figures possessing high diplomatic significance navigate strategically between their subversive subjectivity and broader considerations for bilateral relations in carrying out transcultural enterprises. Here, the dividing line between seemingly antithetical textual processes get obfuscated: superficial exclusion is coupled with subterranean inclusion, and the compliance of literary agents comes together with their unspoken yet powerful resistance. Finally, this interpretation allows us to fully appreciate the interventionist nature of Panikkar's *Modern Chinese Stories* and its importance to modern China–India literary relations: it not only represented a wide spectrum of revolutionary heroes and heroines who collectively built modern China as an unstoppable historical course from pessimistic to optimistic, but also enabled reflection on the dilemmas of marginalized individuals who also hoped for the best for the nation, yet in a different way.

NOTES

[1] In this anthology, the translator and author of the appendix, Huang K'un, is largely invisible: neither did the anthology offer any information about him, nor did Panikkar appreciate his translation work in the front material. I speculate that he might be the celebrated Chinese physicist Huang Kun (1919–2005) because: a) he mastered English, partly because he studied in the UK for years during the 1940s and partly because he had a British wife; b) he returned to Peking University in 1951 and became colleagues with some of the senior Chinese scholars Panikkar consulted in preparing this anthology; and c) he had been enthusiastic about literature and literary translation since childhood. His invisibility may be best attributed to his young age. In fact, I exchanged emails with Huang Zhiqin, Huang Kun's eldest son, in January 2018 in the hope of getting my assumption confirmed, but he said that his parents had never mentioned the anthology.

[2] Excerpts from "Xiahuan" are translated by Huang K'un. All other translations are mine.

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Subterranean translation: The absent presence of Shen Congwen in K.M. Panikkar's "Modern Chinese Stories"

Chinese literature in India. K.M. Panikkar. "Modern Chinese Stories." Shen Congwen. Zhang Zhaohe. Subterranean translation.

This paper performs a critical reading of the counter-intuitive inclusion of Zhang Zhaohe, a minor writer best known as the wife of the great novelist Shen Congwen, in *Modern Chinese Stories*, an English anthology compiled by Indian diplomat K.M. Panikkar. Proposing the concept of "subterranean translation", this paper shows how the explicit translation of Zhang's story functioned as an implicit inclusion of Shen, when he was denied legitimacy by the state's literary authorities due to his non-compliance. Shen was present in the anthology not through direct translation of his works, but through a strong intertextuality between his real-life predicament and the protagonist's dilemma in Zhang's story.

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