

ish literature. One could also imagine a chapter on how internationally acclaimed film adaptations contributed to the international promotion of the novels of Harry Mulisch, Ferdinand Bordewijk and Multatuli.

Thus, the volume *Dutch and Flemish Literature as World Literature* leaves us puzzled about what it does not include and what it should have presented more subtly, so that we could speak of a compact volume of comparative studies bringing new knowl-

edge, rather than popular information on selected phenomena. It also leaves us puzzled by the lack of clarity regarding the concept of world literature which could be valid for the development of literary cultures from the Middle Ages to the present.

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**JIANKAI WANG: 中国当代文学作品英译的出版与传播 [Zhōngguó dāngdài wénxué zuòpǐn yīng yì de chūbǎn yǔ chuánbō – A history of publication and traveling of English-translated contemporary Chinese literature]**  
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Over the past several decades, the cultural turn has exerted a powerful influence over translation studies. It is no surprise that the cultural turn has gained wide popularity among Chinese academics as well. What is worth noting is that China has undergone more than a century of translation practice both inward and outward, which has provided a fertile ground for scholars to explore and analyze the various aspects of translation. The outward translation starting from 1949, spanning over 70 years, is a rarity in the history of translation and serves as a valuable resource for understanding the interplay among politics, literature, translation, and culture. There have been several important studies that look into the phenomenon, such as Qiang Geng's (2010) case study of the Panda Books series, the translation of a particular writer, such as the study of Yan Mo by Zhiqin Jiang (2019), or the more comprehensive analysis conducted by Xiuhua Ni (*A study on outward translation of Chinese literature [1949–1966]*, 2021), that focuses only on the first seventeen years; yet it is not hard to notice that these studies, though done in a detailed and focused way, have

one serious drawback and that is a lack of systematic view on China's unusual outward translation.

This challenge was taken up by Jiankai Wang more than six years ago. Building on his previous efforts that include research on a history of China's translation of English literature since the May 4th Movement in 1919 and the study of the translation of English literary works in China's modern literary journals, he now presents us with *Zhōngguó dāngdài wénxué zuòpǐn yīng yì de chūbǎn yǔ chuánbō* (*A history of publication and traveling of English-translated contemporary Chinese literature*, 2020), which represents his endeavor in mapping out the political, social, and translational aspects of China's seven-decade translation practice in a systematic and comprehensive way. The book takes as its research object the 70-year English translation of Chinese contemporary literary works, which is divided into four time periods. Thus, the book contains four parts, in correspondence to the social and economic development of China; each part delves into the four aspects of the social context, the publication of the English-translated contemporary literary works, the role of the translators and

its relationship with the patron, and the reception and effect of the translated texts. Overall, it tries to paint a general picture of the development of the translated works and provide suggestions for further research.

The first part deals with the 17 years (1949–1966) prior to the Cultural Revolution, which marks the beginning of a government-led translation practice. The presence of politics was paramount; it guided China's foreign language education as well as translation in a pro-Soviet and counter-Western direction. Publication-wise, special agencies were founded for large-scale outward translation and publication, such as Foreign Languages Press, China Translation and Publishing Corporation. Translation choices were made based on whether contemporary literary works reflected aspects of China's Land Reform Movement, the Korean War, or the construction of socialism. It is worth noting that *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* was the most-printed work and was specially attended by a translation office. The group of translators was a mixture of domestic and foreign ones, with domestic translators taking the major role and foreign translators overseeing revision and editing. The influence of patronage over translators was rather palpable: their subjectivity was greatly undermined, and they faced various criticism and political labeling. The promotion and reception of these translated works varied among different countries, with the Soviet Union and developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America being the most important; the translation was less welcomed in Western countries with only their communist or leftist parties distributing the books.

The ten-year Cultural Revolution brought translation to an even more politicized situation. Translations were drastically reduced, and what remained was mostly about the export of revolution literature and ideologies. Again, translators were put into even worse situations. They went through thought reformation in labor farms, and some were even interrogated or jailed. They were marginal-

ized further compared to that of the "17-Year Period". But the "white-paper book", a translation which was created for political decision-making, stood out as a special case representing the translator's unvoiced accomplishment. As a result of the political situation, the quality of translations in Chinese literature dropped dramatically and met with criticism from foreign readers. During this time, Ran Hao, thought by some to be one of the most important proletarian writers since the Cultural Revolution, was the most translated writer; all of his works on the depiction of "New Socialist Citizen" were translated.

The third part starts from 1977 up to the end of the century. This period could be considered the first truly golden era of China's translation practice both inward and outward. Thanks to the opening up and reform policy, China's literary creation and translation enjoyed a boom like that of its economy, with young and talented writers began taking the stage. They created literary themes that reflected the true reality of Chinese society in the Cultural Revolution, like "scar literature" (also known as "the literature of the wounded", portraying the life of Chinese intellectuals), and "zhiqing literature" (a term that first appeared in 1983, which represents the writings of a group of young intellectuals covering topics from scar literature to nostalgia and reflections of life in this period). Changes were made to the book categories for translation. As a comparison, the number of political works translated between 1949 to 1979 accounted for 62% and that dropped to 0.005% between 1980 to 2009. Instead, many high-quality literary works that described social life after 1978 were translated and promoted. The publication of the Panda Books series was considered the most important post-Cultural Revolution translation practice that excelled in scale and duration. It also acted as a window for understanding Chinese literature. Compared to that of the 17-Year Period, the publication of Chinese classics increased in scale and significance: the project

of the “Chinese-English Library of Chinese Classics” was initiated in 1994, involving more than 15 publishing agencies; the translated works further helped overseas Chinese language education and China’s international relations. Works about the society and the common people, like *Hibiscus Town*, were more favored; women writers during this time were able to receive more attention and their works were actively translated and promoted.

In the 21st century, China’s translation practice took on a new look. The role of government was strengthened in terms of economic and institutional support. A top-down publication organization was formed, where the state-level agencies and institutions initiated over ten translation projects and a hundred-book translation series and at a local level, public and private publishing agencies were more engaged than before. The role of domestic translators was still dominant only to a stronger degree, and changes were made to incorporate college and university teachers to compensate for the ever-growing need for translation. On the reception side, new forms have emerged such as international book fairs, copyright transfer, and public reading. The last two chapters focus on the overseas influence of China’s translated works and the author’s suggestions of evaluative aspects for a more objective and detailed analysis of this translation practice.

The challenge to provide a systematic description of China’s 70-year translation practice is truly demanding but Wang was able to meet this challenge. Taking China’s contemporary literature as his object of research has allowed him to tackle the problem with both depth and breadth. The book’s framework is designed in a clear and logical fashion that permits easy access to specific periods and events. Its de-theorization is also worth noting since most of the other studies that focus on this period are done with a guiding theory followed by important case studies, but the book aims at highlighting the facts, materials, and their logical connections while refraining from arriving at certain conclu-

sions or judgments, which serves as a necessary complement to other studies. However, the book is not without faults. The rationale is needed to explain the division of the last two periods of time. To divide the last two periods based on the turn of the century is less persuasive than the first. It would be better to split the timespan based on the year 2001, when China joined the World Trade Organization, or the year 2007, when president Hu Jintao proposed the strengthening of China’s cultural soft power. Also, there is not enough discussion about the effects of the translation practice apart from the last two chapters. Overall, this book is a laudable achievement. On the one hand, it is a timely and necessary complement to previous literature in that it not only provides a systematic analysis but pave the way for future studies into the publication and impact of China’s translation of contemporary, modern, and classics works. On the other hand, the book provides great resources and insights for scholars in the field of comparative literature and translation studies, especially those working on China’s contemporary literary works and its translation, the interactions among literature, translator, and ideology, and the history of translation.

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